Chinese new migrants in Suriname: the inevitability of ethnic performing
Tjon Sie Fat, P.B.

Citation for published version (APA):

General rights
It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations
If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: http://uba.uva.nl/en/contact, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

UvA-DARE is a service provided by the library of the University of Amsterdam (http://dare.uva.nl)
9. THE 2005 LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS

The 2003 Commemoration of Chinese Immigration Day heralded the successful creation of Chinese ethnicity as a political project, the goal of which was participation in the next round of apanjahpt political power-sharing in 2005. For the first time, Laiap and migrant elites were forced to define their constituency as Chinese voters and bridge all subgroups covered by the Chinese ethnic label, and appeal for their support as citizens of Suriname. With the 2004 celebrations, the elites showed that they had been anticipating this election campaign, but none expected the issue of Chinese identity to loom as large as it eventually did in the narratives which emerged from the campaign speeches and texts.

Ethnic Chinese political participation in Suriname has never been measured, but it has certainly never been high. There is no proof that ethnic Chinese are less likely to actually vote, or that Laiap or migrants voice the same attitude towards voting as the average Surinamese.¹ Having relatively small numbers and in particular language barriers formed real restrictions to full participation, but other concrete factors also include citizenship issues, ingrained aversion to politics, and the absence of a unified ethnic Chinese constituency. Formal citizenship issues are obviously a problem for immigrants, as only Surinamese nationals can vote or stand for office in Surinamese elections.² But candidates who could be consistently identified as ethnic Chinese by ethnic Chinese voters and managed to stand for office, could not rely on ethnic loyalty from Chinese voters.³

On the one hand there was a clear lack of ethnic Chinese interest in public life, due in part to the sojourner mentality:

For more than a century Chinese have treated politics rather like the god of plague; they keep it at a respectful distance, and endured anything it aimed at them. Disunited like loose sand, and changing over time into

---

¹ Voter turnout in the Surinamese legislative elections has hovered around ⅔: the percentage was 70% in the 1991 elections and 65% in the 2005 elections.
² As ethnic Chinese have never been formally excluded from naturalization, it follows that they were never barred from voting or holding public office during any period of Surinamese history. By contrast political participation of ethnic Chinese citizens in the newly independent Southeast Asian states such as Indonesia, the Philippines and Malaysia was officially limited despite formal national ideals of multiculturalism (Suryadinata 1998).
³ Lists of Chinese politicians and statesmen in Suriname (such as in Zijlmans & Enser 2002) generally contain people with Sino-Surinamese surnames rather than naturalized immigrants or first generation Laiap (i.e. children of Fuidung'on Hakka immigrants), and are composed as political statements by people wishing to extol the importance of the ethnic Chinese group in Suriname.
‘economic animals’. As long as they could earn money and return to China, everything was fine. They said that no matter how tall the tree grew, its leaves would always fall to its roots, but how many men actually returned, like leaves, with their wives and children to their roots? Busy work, assimilated children, different systems, these severed the ties with the Chinese roots, and without quite realizing it they had settled in Suriname.4

Tong’ap view themselves as a vulnerable group, and actively teach their (Suriname-born, i.e. Laiap) children to stay out of the spotlight. On the other hand it is very difficult to find ethnic Chinese candidates who are unanimously acceptable to the majority of ethnic Chinese voters and migrants supporters. An ideal candidate would need to have an spotless moral and political record, as well as be ‘truly Chinese’, which would imply an unblemished pedigree, fluency in qiaoxiang dialect, PTH, and written Chinese, as well as competence in handling Chinese cultural and ethnic markers. Of course, the ideal candidate must also be a serious option, and actually be likely to wield some power once elected.

The lack of a unified ethnic Chinese constituency is probably the most important limiting factor. The eternal challenge to anyone aspiring to engage apanjaht consociationalist power-sharing as an ethnic Chinese is mobilization of ethnic Chinese support. Disparate interests, cultural and linguistic differences and weak in-group cohesion, in particular between Tong’ap and Laiap, make concerted political action difficult among ethnic Chinese in Suriname. Tong’ap were entrepreneurial chain migrants, which meant that they used family and hometown networks, not broad clan networks or even broader ‘ethnic Hakka’ networks. Laiap of any generation, sensing that Chinese identity is not welcome in Suriname, often have the option of selecting other positional ethnic labels than Chinese when participating in public life. Fragmentation of the ethnic Chinese constituency only became more acute with the entry of the New Chinese; ideal Chinese candidates now also needed to be able to negotiate growing anti-Chinese sentiments while promoting and protecting the interests of the Chinese minority, and they had to be both legitimately Surinamese-Chinese as well as universally Chinese.

9.1. Chinese Political Participation in Suriname

Chinese political participation has historically been marginal in Suriname. Though the ethnic Chinese entrepreneurs managed to cross the tax assessment barrier to voting in 1897, requirements of democratic procedure disqualified many Chinese immigrants. Moreover, prior to general suffrage in 1948, democratic participation of Chinese was limited by requi-

---

4 ZHRB 2 April 2005 / XNRB 4 April 2005, Zhong Fu’an, ‘開拓未來’ (Open up the future). Pertjajah Luhur (NF coalition member) text.
ments related to class.\footnote{Zijlmans & Enser 2002: 87-88.} Up to the creation of the \textit{Koloniale Staten} representation in 1866, shortly after the abolition of slavery in 1863, the colony of Suriname was basically ruled autocratically. Standing for office in the Staten was not an easy option for Chinese migrants; census and capacity greatly limited the number of voters and candidates for the 9 of the 13 seats not appointed by the Governor.\footnote{In 1928, 116 out of a total of 1391 voters (8.3\%) were considered ‘Chinese voters’. Zijlmans & Enser 2002: 88.} In 1901 three Chinese entrepreneurs managed to overcome class and language limitations and translate their financial success into candidacy for the \textit{Koloniale Staten}. Their bid was unsuccessful, and no ethnic Chinese attained a seat in the Staten until F.H.R. Lim A Po, a Suriname-born jurist of mixed Chinese descent, was elected in 1938. China-born candidates were not elected to office.\footnote{Zijlmans & Enser 2002: 88-89.}

The apaanjaht consociationalism that flourished after the introduction of general suffrage in 1949 was originally seen as distinguishing the established and ‘original’ population of the colony (i.e. the Afro-Surinamese majority, and the elite of white Europeans, Jews and mulattoes) from the outsiders (i.e. the Asian migrants, in particular the East Indians and Javanese). Unable to rely on ethnic loyalty from a Chinese constituency or non-Chinese votes, ambitious Chinese would need to cooperate with outsiders if they wanted to run for office. In this sense, the political power-sharing through coalitions of ethnically based political parties increased the chances of the Chinese elites. The earliest ‘Chinese politicians’ were Laiap. As early immigrants, Fuidung’on Hakkas had developed links with the Creole majority, and successful Chinese had assimilated into the fair-skinned urban elite, at the other end of the Black-White continuum. The early Laiap politicians were of mixed Chinese descent, often of Afro-Surinamese and Fuidung’on Hakka heritage. Their success depended largely on their ability to shift strategically between multiple identities, and to act as gatekeepers for the Fuidung’on Hakka shopkeepers and Tong’ap elites.

As ethnic Chinese in Suriname were careful to avoid the spotlight as a group, mobilization of the small ethnic constituency was a constant problem. With regard to political mobilization ethnic Chinese in Jamaica, Li suggests that keeping a low profile in local politics had roots in Chinese political traditions.\footnote{Li 2004: 67.} Most prominent were local concerns that ethnic unrest would endanger the livelihoods of Chinese shopkeepers in Suriname, but these were fed by fears that Chinese could be targeted in the way Chinese had been treated in Malaysia and Indonesia. Elites of local-born ethnic Chinese in particular realized the need for participation in apaanjaht consociationalism, but immigrant shopkeepers and the immigrant establishment of Chinese associations preferred diplomacy from the sidelines,
making a show of equal support to various parties which had real access to power.

The strategy of spreading Chinese support among different political parties, whether or not these belonged to the apanjaht coalitions, undermined any concerted effort to get Chinese support for ethnic representation. Perhaps more importantly, the cleavage between those born in China and local-born (Tong’ap and Laiap, see below) made it fundamentally difficult to find an acceptable ‘Chinese’ candidate to stand for office. Citizenship requirements remain a barrier to full participation of Tong’ap. Full participation was far less of an issue for Laiap, but Tong’ap support of Laiap candidates in existing apanjaht parties could never be guaranteed. Not only was it important to spread support, but to be acceptable to an immigrant a local-born ethnic Chinese candidate needed to be able to carefully navigate Chinese immigrant sensibilities (which meant fluency in Fuidung’on Hakka culture and Kejia language), while also being able to fully bridge the cultural and linguistic gap with the Surinamese state. These requirements disqualified most local-born candidates.⁹

The most stable form of Chinese political participation was through the Creole Nationale Partij Suriname (NPS) since the late 1940s, if one assumes that the local-born, assimilated Chinese and mixed Chinese were accepted as representatives by the broader Chinese segment. In the 1960s the NPS attempted to broaden its constituency by establishing non-Creole party segments, one of which was a Chinese wing. The NPS remains associated with Chinese interests in the minds of many Surinamese, but not always favourably. In fact, the elites and the middle class of the Chinese segment tended to access the political centre indirectly via personal networks – another factor that worked against transparent Chinese participation in apanjaht consociationalism. The Chinese section of the Creole-dominated NPS which was formally set up on 20 January 1967 during the final years of the Pengel Administration, was actually the first distinct Chinese political organization. In the 1960s the ideal of non-ethnic liberal democracy was eroding quickly in Suriname, and the major parties (reflecting the major ethnic groups) were becoming more blatantly ethnic on the one hand, while turning to mining support among smaller ethnic groups on the other.

The benefits of having explicitly (non-Creole) ethnic party constituencies were clear to the NPS. These were extension of its electoral base and, in the case of the Chinese who were perceived as relatively well-off, the promise of extra funds. The benefits to the Fuidung’on Hakka elites were direct access to the centre of power, and extension of elite power

---

⁹ Zijlmans & Enser (2002) provide a historical overview of Chinese political participation in Suriname as reflected in the Surinamese media, but they do not consistently distinguish between migrants and Suriname-born, Tong’ap and Laiap, or ‘pure’ versus mixed ancestry.
bases beyond the existing socio-cultural associations or huiguan. The Chinese point of view saw cooperation with the NPS as a way to guarantee protection of immediate Chinese interests, most obviously against their common East Indian competitors. In the Cold War atmosphere of the 1960s, Fuidung’on Hakka references to the PRC as ‘the motherland’ were interpreted as a threat of Communist infiltration in Suriname via Chinese migrants. In 1968, not long after the establishment of the Chinese Section, the Surinamese Ministry of Justice decided to issue two-year residence permits to Chinese migrants rather than granting permanent residence as had been the case up to then. The Chinese Section successfully asked the support of the NPS leadership to counter what to the Chinese Section was a policy to prevent Chinese immigration. In fact, after the Pengel Administration, the NPS continued to block moves to limit Chinese immigration.

However, the NPS route never enabled an ethnic Chinese candidate who was acceptable to every aspect of the Fuidung’on Hakka group (i.e. someone respectable, fluent in spoken and written Chinese and Dutch, and sure to defend the Chinese ownership economy) to achieve a position of power. Chinese participation in apanjaht politics outside the NPS, however, was mainly limited by the fact that any available ethnic Chinese constituency would always be a small group reluctant to get involved. Participation in apanjaht consociationalism as an independent political entity under culturally Chinese terms was attempted during the legislative elections of 1973, just before independence in 1975. The only ethnic Chinese party ever in Surinamese history, Nyinmin Lènhap Tong (‘United People’s Party’) was set up by Tong’ap shopkeepers, supported by Laiap gatekeepers. As an ethnic party made up of a small urban minority, it could never acquire enough votes to make any real impact, and so it entered the 1973 elections in an alliance with the Surinaams Vrouwen Front (SVF, Surinamese Women’s Front); the VVP-SVF coalition won no seats. Apparently, the greatest part of the Chinese vote went to the NPS in the NPK coalition, which included PNR and PSV as well as the Javanese-dominated KTPI; Chinese shopkeepers wanted to avoid a repeat of the riots and arson attacks under the previous government, which was led by the (East Indian-dominated) VHP. Nyinmin Lenhap Tong was never formally disbanded, but its greatest lesson was that political participation outside the NPS needed to be low-risk as well as secure. This meant participation via some other substantial group, preferably without

---

10 Huiguan (lit.: ‘public place for meetings’) is a common term for voluntary associations of Overseas Chinese. See Chapter 8.
11 XNRB 18 May 2005, ‘歷史的回顧 -- 漫談 NPS 華人支部’ (In Retrospective; An Open Discussion of the Chinese Section of the NPS).
12 Ngien Mien Len Hap Tong was apparently set up by Tong’ap and Laiap. Zijlmans & Enser note that it was started by “a number of Chinese shopkeepers and various other men of Chinese and Chinese-Creole origin who had come to the fore.” (2002: 95, translation mine).
choosing either of the dominant blocs (Creole or East Indian) in the consociationalist balance. Consequently, Javanese apanjaht parties were the logical choice.

Chinese political participation had grown during the roughly thirty years of apanjaht power-sharing between 1949 and the military coup of 1980. Numbers of ethnic Chinese voters had steadily increased, though it is difficult to estimate what that meant in terms of percentages of local-born and foreign-born voters, or what ratio of Laiap to Tong’ap voters actually cast their votes. Chinese are considered to have regularly held public office in this period, though their numbers are probably overstated by the inclusion of Moksi Sneisi who did not identify themselves as Chinese. Still, Laiap did dominate the political scene while Tong’ap remained absent from public office through lack of incentive to acquire Surinamese citizenship and lack of mechanisms by which the State could assimilate immigrants as active citizens.

9.1.1 Chinese Participation via Javanese Apanjaht Parties

Chinese group participation in national politics required ethnic Chinese politicians to seek out coalitions with political entities that stood a reasonable chance of being elected to the centre of power, and that were not only willing to accept ethnic Chinese group representation within their ranks, but were also amenable to granting Chinese representatives access to positions of power following the elections. Anti-apanjaht parties such as the NDP would be happy to host Chinese members in deference to the national Mamio Myth of cultural harmony, but it could never be a platform for ethnic representation. It therefore also cannot provide elites with the leverage to pursue their own intra-ethnic ambitions. The Chinese wing of the Creole NPS had provided protection of Chinese interests, but it is not proven to be a vehicle for ethnic Chinese representation in parliament. More concerted efforts to achieve the goal of an ethnic Chinese member of the National Assembly via NPS included the creation of a huiguan (see Chapter 8), but none were successful. By the 1990s, some in the ethnic Chinese elite had decided to try their luck with the pivotal Javanese parties, which were essential to consociational harmony between the Creole and East Indian parties by virtue of their perceived constituency, the Javanese who are the third largest ethnic group in Suriname.

Throwing in their lot with Javanese coalition partners assured Chinese access to the centre of power, but it also exposed them to negative publicity generated by Javanese party leadership. To explain this inherent political risk we need to take a closer look at the way the parties have developed. The leaders of Javanese parties had learned to exploit their position as power brokers in the apanjaht consociationalist coalition system by the 1970s. Political participation of the Javanese segment in Post-War apanjaht consociationalism was initially limited by suffrage
based on property ownership, educational background and citizenship issues.\textsuperscript{14} Javanese initially participated as Asians, in the Hindoestaans-Javaanse Centrale Raad (East Indian-Javanese Central Council), and the Moslim Partij (Muslim Party) that derived from it, but soon became dissatisfied with perceived East Indian dominance. Iding Soemita founded the first Javanese party, Persatuan Indonesia (Indonesian Union), in 1946 around the failed dream of return to the homeland: Mulih nJâwâ (Surinamese Javanese: ‘Return to Java’).\textsuperscript{15} Soemita renamed his party the Kaum Tani Persatuan Indonesia (KTPI, Indonesian Peasant Party) to participate in the first legislative elections in 1949.\textsuperscript{16}

Iding Soemita’s KTPI won two of the 21 seats in the colonial representation in the 1949 elections. By then Soemita had abandoned the Indonesian homeland ideology, and changed the content of the acronym to Kerukunan Tulodo Prenatan Inggil (Party for National Unity and Solidarity of the Highest Level). During the next twenty years, the pivotal role of the KTPI (now headed by Iding’s son Willy) as a coalition partner in the apanjaht consociationalist system became exceedingly clear. Fragmentation soon followed. On the one hand the Creole NPS and East Indian VHP both created special Javanese sections (NPS-djawa and VHP-djawa) to woo the Javanese vote, while on the other hand internal squabbles erupted over power-sharing, which resulted in KTPI defectors setting up an alternative party, the Sarekat Rakjat Indonesia (SRI, Indonesian Popular Union). The SRI was transformed into the Pendawa Lima (‘The Five

\textsuperscript{14} After the Republic of Indonesia was proclaimed in 1945 and Suriname acquired limited autonomy under the Charter for the Kingdom of the Netherlands in 1954, Javanese indentured labourers (who had migrated from Java to Suriname within a unified Dutch colonial empire as Dutch subjects) had to choose between Indonesian and Dutch nationality, which in practice meant having citizen rights in the Surinamese part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, not broader Dutch citizenship rights.

\textsuperscript{15} Javanese indentured labourers in Suriname had been Dutch subjects, not Dutch citizens. After Indonesia declared independence from the Netherlands in 1945, return to the homeland meant moving to a completely new post-colonial state. Javanese in Suriname were faced with the choice between Dutch and Indonesian citizenship, and it was this choice that dominated early Javanese political mobilization. In the years immediately following Indonesian independence, KTPI exploited the wish to return and caused real suffering among the predominantly rural Javanese (Derveld 1981: 40-41). Resistance to KTPI hegemony came from two sides. The Pergarakan Bangsa Indonesia Suriname (PBIS, Union of Indonesians in Suriname) opposed the Mulih nJâwâ principle, while SRI/KTPI exploited the disillusionment with Soemita’s promises as an alternative Mulih nJâwâ party. The Mulih nJâwâ principle was gradually abandoned, though there were still calls for mass returns by Javanese politicians up to Independence in 1975, and in 1982 nine former indentured labourers actually returned to Java. (Keynote speech by Minister of Social Affairs and Public Housing, Soewarto Moestadja (KTPI) at IMWO conference on the occasion of the 110th anniversary of Javanese Immigration, 9 August 2000).

\textsuperscript{16} A Sundanese, Iding Soemita apparently intended to unify his predominantly Central-Javanese constituency under a religious banner, for which he elicited the support of Javanese Muslim religious leaders. The KTPI acronym originally stood for Koran Tuntunan Pustaka Islam, ‘the Koran is the teaching of Islam’. (Kartokromo 2006: 55).
Pandavas'\footnote{The sons of Pandu in the Mahābhārata: Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadéva. In the Javanese Wajang Kulit tradition, the names of the heroes are: Yudistira, Bima(sena) / Werkudoro, Arjuno / Janoko, Nakula, Sadewa.}, alternatively spelled *Pendawalima* despite the PL acronym) for the first post-independence elections in 1977.

Apanjaht consociationalism was put on hold during the period of military rule, but following the end of military rule in 1987, KTPI joined NPS and VHP in the *Front voor Democratie en Ontwikkeling* (Front for Democracy and Development) coalition. The Front Coalition won 40 of the 51 seats in the National Assembly, while Pendawa Lima won four seats. In 1993, Paul Slamet Somohardjo, one of the founders of Pendawa Lima, returned from self-imposed exile in the Netherlands. The early elections following the brief military coup of 1990, were won by the ruling coalition (now renamed Nieuw Front, NF, after the inclusion of the Surinamese Labour Party, SPA), albeit with a narrower margin. In the 1996 elections, the Nieuw Front won only 24 of the 51 seats. Coalition partner KTPI had reliably contributed five seats, but Pendawa Lima acquired four seats in the National Assembly.

Despite the fact that he was not the *lijsttrekker*, at the top of the list of Pendawa Lima candidates, Somohardjo considered himself a presidential candidate. His demands proved too high, and Pendawa Lima was left out of the NDP-led coalition. Despite the narrow victory of the NF coalition, defections by a VHP splinter group and the KTPI to the NDP of ex-military strongman Desi Bouterse resulted in the Wijdenbosch Administration (1996-2000). Soemita’s party was rewarded for the defection with five government ministries. The Pendawa Lima split in two, with one side led by *lijsttrekker* Mohamed Kasto and referred to as Pendawa Lima, joining the NDP, and Somohardjo’s side which was prohibited by the courts from using the Pendawalima name. Somohardjo’s group then changed the content of the PL acronym to *Pertjajah Luhur* (‘Exalted Faith’). The ruling coalition eventually ran into trouble, with President Wijdenbosch starting his own party (DNP, a reworking of the NDP acronym). So the government was forced to call early elections in 2000.

KTPI joined the DNP-led *Millennium Combinatie* (Millennium Combination) coalition for the 2000 elections. The Millennium Combinatie won only 2 seats in the Paramaribo electoral district, which meant that Willy Soemita did not return to power. Somohardjo’s Pertjajah Luhur, however, had filled the vacuum left by KTPI in the Nieuw Front coalition, and was rewarded for helping to secure the Javanese vote with three of the sixteen government ministries: the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Trade and Industry, and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Public Housing. Though the results of the 1996 elections showed that the KTPI was no longer the default Javanese apanjaht party KTPI, the schism in the Pendawa Lima had effectively prevented it from becoming a unified alternative. Being focussed on their ability to flip the balance of power in
apanjaht consociationalism, none of the Javanese parties ever developed any clear-cut ideology. Clientelism remained their main tool in their competition for the attention of the Javanese constituency, which in turn was their main legitimization in the eyes of other apanjaht parties. The Javanese political elite projected a rhetoric of ‘emancipation’ towards its constituency; in the past the Javanese were used and manipulated by other apanjaht groups, but now they were becoming a power to be reckoned with.

The various Javanese parties had basically the same reasons for seeking coalitions as the other major apanjaht parties. Political fragmentation plagued all three major ethnic groups, so that no party could claim full control over its ethnic base, which weakened their positions at post-election power-sharing negotiations. Besides the formation of grand coalitions, apanjaht parties had three options. They could try to re-integrate splinter parties. In the 1990s and 2000s, there were calls for the Javanese parties to form a ‘Java Bloc’, as well as talk of a Pancanama (‘five names’) regrouping of the East Indian splinter parties. Less feasible was a fusion of apanjaht parties from across the ethnic spectrum. Finally, one could try to incorporate marginalized groups, in particular minority groups such as Amerindians, Maroons, and Chinese. Amerindians were numerically weak, Maroons less so. Numbers of eligible voters among the ethnic Chinese might have been unclear, but their economic clout made them into an asset.

Somohardjo decided to extend his power base beyond the confines of the Javanese group. Javanese parties had always been beset by a chronic lack of qualified ethnic Javanese who are able and willing to strengthen the party and man crucial government posts. Moreover, by narrowing their focus on gaining and maintaining the allegiance of ethnic Javanese, the parties could be accused of being un-patriotic and lose legitimacy at the formally non-ethnic and nationalist level of the State.

18 Javanese parties at times seemed like personality cults, centred on the Soemita dynasty in the case of KTPI, and Somohardjo in the case of Pendawa Lima / Pertjajah Luhur. According to various sources, the Soemita clan has the advantage of being more respectable; the Sundanese birthplace of KTPI founder Iding Soemita is often stressed. Somohardjo is described as less aloof and distant from the common man than Willy Soemita. Both Soemita and Somohardjo have been linked to corruption and have been convicted. Soemita had been Minister of Agriculture after the 1973 elections, but was convicted in 1977 for taking bribes in return for agricultural plots, and therefore could not return as Minister. Somohardjo was Minister of Social Affairs when he was accused of assaulting contestants of the Miss Jawa 2002 beauty pageant (in which he was first involved more than thirty years earlier), and resigned after his conviction for indecent assault. Somohardjo was almost constantly embroiled in scandals, particularly with regard to public housing and real estate, through the ‘Javanese’ Ministry of Social Affairs and Public Housing.


20 Kartokromo 2006: 147.

21 This option was suggested in the Netherlands as a response to the instability of the grand coalition following the 2005 elections. Cf. De Ware Tijd, 26 May 2008, ‘Voorzitter NPS-Nederland: “VHP en NPS fuseren en dan nieuwe partners zoeken” (NPS-Netherlands chairman: “Merge VHP and NPS, then seek new partners).
Somohardjo did not intend to publicly elevate Pertjajah Luhur above ethnic politics by incorporating nationalist ideology or patriotic discourse. It was unrealistic to expect members of the larger Creole and East Indian segments to switch allegiance. However, marginalized and minority groups who had been excluded from apanjaht power-sharing in the past were more likely to respond to Pertjajah Luhur clientelism. The party focussed on ethnic minority groups such as the Chinese and later worked to include Amerindian groups and Maroons. Somohardjo, who was increasingly personalizing his position as Javanese power broker, however, was not subtle about his goals, and famously referred to his intended Amerindian constituency as ‘Bosjavanen’ (Bush Javanese).22

9.1.2 Ethnic Chinese Participation in the 1996 and 2000 Elections

Somohardjo’s strategy became more concrete when he was approached by Chinese attempting to find a suitable apanjaht coalition partner to piggyback on the road to the centre of power. Leading up to the 1996 elections, Fa Foe Foei, the group behind the Chinese celebrations of 1993 and 2003 (see Chapter 8), conducted ‘hearings’ with various apanjaht parties such as the Creole NPS and the Javanese Pendawa Lima and anti-panjaht, or ‘pan-ethnic’ parties such as DA’91 and SPA. Officially, the meetings of the Fa Foe Foei ‘think tank’ (denkgroep) were to inform ethnic Chinese voters about party programmes and advise the ethnic Chinese electorate, while informing the political parties of specific problems of the Chinese – a euphemism for dangling the carrot of an apparently high number of Chinese votes. The willingness of the parties to assist in setting up a Chinese television station was apparently also gauged.

The huiguan establishment had been careful to hedge their bets in the 1996 elections, making sure that they favoured no party above any other in public. Acquiring a share of political power had not been a publicly declared goal of Fa Foe Foei, and none of its members held government posts in the Wijdenbosch Administration. The inflated size of the Chinese segment apparently made little impression on the winning parties, though the upper echelons of the NDP showed keen interest in increasing Chinese globalization. Fa Foe Foei articulated Chinese interests mainly with regard to citizenship. Naturalization and legal residence were a constant headache for Tong’ap, but the influx of New Chinese Migrants in the first half of the 1990s increased the scope of the problem of legal residency for Chinese immigrants. The government failed to cope with the situation amid growing anti-Chinese sentiments, and Fuidung’on Hakka generally avoided taking up the issue of residency of non-Fuidung’on migrants. There was an idea that any group (influential individuals fluent

22 Analogous to the now politically incorrect term for Maroons: Bosnegers, ‘Forest Negroes’ / ‘Bush Negroes’. 327
in different varieties of Chinese as well as Dutch were exceedingly rare at that time) able to bridge the gap between Chinese migrants and the Surinamese State would have access to a relatively wealthy constituency. Chinese immigrants who acquired Surinamese nationality would also become voters, and such new voters might be happy to oblige the wishes of those who had helped them. In any case a group helping Chinese immigrants to acquire Surinamese nationality would be greatly empowered in the eyes of the political establishment simply by the impression that it could command new votes.

Fa Foe Foei was the only partly which was successful with regard to citizenship for Chinese immigrants. Protests against unfair treatment of Chinese applicants for naturalization and residency permits had no resonance among a public increasingly unsympathetic to migrants in general and Chinese migrants in particular. Fa Foe Foei also had a hard time convincing its supposed constituency of its effectiveness. Not being a grassroots organization, it could not be seen to provide immediate assistance with the concrete day-to-day problems of New Chinese Migrants. The public goal of promoting the integration of local-born and immigrant Chinese remained elusive, as Fa Foe Foei’s members (entrepreneurs who self-identified as ethnic Chinese) saw their platform as a way to guide and develop a poorly organized and aimless group. They either dismissed or underestimated the deeper split between Laiap and Tong’ap, and risked appearing to place their own political interests above the economic interests of Chinese retail traders. Fa Foe Foei and the huiguan associated with it had thrown in their lot with the NDP government of President Wijdenbosch, and found it difficult to disassociate themselves from government actions and policies that harmed Chinese interests.

Faced with mounting international debt, the Venetiaan I Administration turned to monetary financing and devalued the Surinamese Guilder in July 1994.23 Though Chinese entrepreneurs and traders were directly affected, none of the Chinese organizations publicly protested.24 There were also no protests against price monitoring operations which were meant to dampen social unrest by cracking down on shopkeepers, most of whom were ethnic Chinese. Public dissatisfaction with deteriorating economic conditions boiled over onto the streets in 1999, after which the Wijdenbosch Administration was forced to promise new elections a year early in May 2000. In the run-up to those elections Fa Foe Foei remained quiet, which gave the impression that it was distancing itself from the Wijdenbosch Administration and the NDP (whose leader, Bouterse, had fallen out with President Wijdenbosch).

In anticipation of the 2000 elections, Fa Foe Foei switched back to NF, this time joining the Javanese component led by Somohardjo. However, any mention of the name Fa Foe Foei was quietly avoided through

---

23 Bulletin of Act and Decrees 1994 Nr. 64.
24 Zijlmans & Enser 2002: 196.
oblique statements about four huiguan announcing through Jack Tjong Tjin Joe that some members had joined Pertjajah Luhur. The 2000 elections were won by the NF coalition, and the ethnic Chinese elite acquired a share of political power in the Venetiaan II Administration without the benefit of ethnic celebrations or distinct politics of recognition; Jack Tjong Tjin Joe, chairman of Fa Foe Foei, became Minister of Trade and Industry as a reward for Chinese support of Pertjajah Luhur.

In the broader strategy of the Laiap and Tong’ap elite, representation of Chinese interests meant consolidating the existing powerbase to achieve greater access to scarce resources; basically, creating the conditions for ethnic Chinese clientelism. Prior to the 2005 elections one source described the best scenario as gaining control over business permits through the Ministry of Trade and Industry as well as over land allocation via some other government ministry. Nobody doubted that Pertjajah Luhur would facilitate Chinese participation in the 2005 elections. In March 2005 a ‘Provisional Chinese Electoral Support Committee’ was announced in the Chinese newspapers. In its first text, the Committee linked itself to the Chinese Electoral Support Committee in the 2000 elections, revealing its roots in Fa Foe Foei25:

[...] Two years ago we had the success of the celebration of 150 Years of Chinese Settlement, when the spirit of unity among all the Chinese of Paramaribo made a very deep impression on the Surinamese people. Let us now once again join hands and succeed in entering the forbidden terrain of Surinamese politics, and together build a glorious future for the Chinese.

9.1.3 Inflating the Chinese Constituency

Chinese participation in apanjaht ethnopolitics relies on the image of Chinese as important in spite of limited numbers. The 2003 Commemoration had already established the importance of Chinese ethnic identity in the narrative of Surinamese multiculturalism. However, the only rational reason an apanjaht party would consider Chinese partners could be to gain their support; either substantial numbers of voters or financial support. Leading up to the 1996 elections, the size of the ethnic Chinese vote was inflated to 10,000 out of a Chinese segment numbering 50,000 or even 70,000 persons. The number of 10,000 voters was quoted in KOMPAS of 17 April 1996: “The Chinese community in Suriname is said to be good for 2 seats in parliament. But more than half of the more than 10,000 voters speak no Dutch. This might be a big problem in the upcoming elections. There are initiatives in the Chinese community to inform the people of developments in the country. However, language will remain an obstacle

25 ZHRB 19 March 2005 ‘蘇里南大選與你; 推選李嘉林小姐為候選國會願意’ (The Surinamese elections and you; Miss Li Jialin to run in the general elections)
to further integration in the foreseeable future.” Zijlmans and Enser quote the higher estimate of 70,000 ‘Chinese and Surinamese Chinese’ people in Suriname.

Some of the strategies for achieving Chinese political participation in Suriname were transplanted from the Netherlands, where Chinese had finally been recognized as an official minority group on 1 October 2004. Su-Ying Tsai (of mixed Dutch and Wenzhounese heritage) and her husband Eddy Tjin A Lien (Suriname-born Laiap) from the Netherlands had settled in Paramaribo following a visit a few years earlier. They had become involved in the Pertjajah Luhur project after a visit to Suriname, and Tjin A Lien had become policy advisor at the ‘Chinese’ Ministry of Trade and Industry under Minister Tjong Tjin Joe. Tsai had worked in Stichting Chinese Brug in The Hague, and Tjin A Lien had worked at the Haagsche Hogeschool (The Hague University of Professional Education). Their approach basically required Chinese ethnicity to be as inclusive as possible in order to shore up the numerical significance of the Chinese segment, and to increase the pool of available young ‘Chinese’ talent. According to Tjin A Lien the number of ethnic Chinese in Suriname was in excess of 47,000, based on racial features, Chinese roots, Chinese surnames, and active participation in and conscious experience of Chinese culture. Despite the selectively strategic use of Chineseness, self-identification was dismissed as nonsensical, as Chinese identity was considered to be self-evident, primordial, dominant and certainly not situational or multiple.

The high estimate of 10,000 ethnic Chinese voters remained intact in the run-up to the 2005 legislative elections. The credibility of the number was apparently bolstered by the dominant Yellow Peril stereotype of the anti-Chinese sentiments current at the time, which described Chinese migrants as a huge flood (see Chapter 6). As anti-Chinese sentiments took the form of a conspiracy theory, the supposedly enormous dimensions of the hidden Chinese migrant population became unchallengeable. The conspiracy theory held that the ruling Nieuw Front coalition was actively importing Chinese, in order to increase the number of Nieuw Front voters by naturalizing them. In fact, the number of eligible voters among naturalized Chinese was limited. As can be distilled from Table 2, naturalization of Chinese migrants actually stagnated under the Venetiaan II administration (1996-2000). As noted earlier, the number of foreign-born ethnic Chinese and Chinese nationals in the 2004 census was far less than 10,000: they were respectively 5,575 and 3,654. Even the total

---

26 De Ware Tijd 17 April 1996. KOMPAS supplement, ‘De Chinese Taalbarrière’ (The Chinese language barrier).
28 Interview 20 August 2005. The number implied that one out of every ten Suriname would be recognizably Chinese (i.e. mistaken for someone from China) to any observer, which is obviously not the case.
29 State Decrees for 1960 are unavailable. Naturalization indicates that applicants resided in Suriname for a number of years, but it says very little about ‘integration’ in the sense of full commitment to life in Suriname.
Table 2: Numbers of Naturalized Chinese, 1956-2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Numbers of Decrees Referring to Chinese</th>
<th>Numbers of Chinese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>1 GB 121, enacted through GB1957.26</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>3 GB 78, 103, 184,</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>2 GB 137, 190</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>3 GB 52, 53, 146</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>2 GB 14, 44</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>5 GB 29, 74, 82, 83, 84</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>6 GB 1, 2, 68, 93, 94, 95</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>4 GB 20, 23, 90, 91</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>2 GB 48, 50</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>8 GB 4, 33, 45, 69, 70</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>7 GB 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 72, 120</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>10 GB 79, 90, 125, 127, 132, 134, 162, 163, 164, 203</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>11 GB 15, 16, 72, 75, 76, 77, 78, 105, 155, 167, 174</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>6 GB 92, 93, 94, 95, 118, 178</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>11 SB 56, 57, 106, 107, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>3 SB 6, 7, 8</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>5 SB 27, 28, 29, 30, 31</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>5 SB 13, 14, 29, 37, 38</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>9 SB 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 139, 156</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>4 SB 47, 115, 154, 161</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>6 SB 4, 49, 101, 11, 135, 163</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>9 SB 25, 30, 53, 56, 57, 89, 90, 113, 121</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>10 SB 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 81, 114</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>5 SB 75, 76, 77, 78, 79</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>10 SB 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 112, 113, 114, 115</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>3 SB 18, 19, 20</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>1 SB 1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>4 SB 92, 108, 109, 110</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>11 SB 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 42, 43, 44</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>4 SB 29, 30, 31, 32</td>
<td>447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>2 SB 115, 116</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>2 SB 37, 50</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>1 SB 74</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>175</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of self-identifying ethnic Chinese was under 10,000: it was 8,775. Numbers of eligible ethnic Chinese voters cannot be distilled from the voter registries, though the number of eligible voters who were born in China was available: they were 1,898, of whom 1,750 were born in the PRC and 148 in Hong Kong.

---

30 SIC 225-2006/07.
9.2 The 2005 Chinese Election Campaign

There were two sides to the election campaigns involving ethnic Chinese. On the one hand, Chinese support was implied to the non-Chinese public by presenting ethnic Chinese supporters at party gatherings and by construing Chinese surnames of supporters as an ethnic Chinese presence. On the other hand, ethnic Chinese were directly approached in written and spoken Chinese (Kejia, Cantonese, Mandarin) to secure financial or voter support. Non-Chinese were largely unaware of the Chinese election campaign which was aimed at the ethnic Chinese segment in the Chinese language. Like the broader political campaigns, the Chinese one was largely 'content-free'; with the possible exception of NDP, no Surinamese political party ever campaigned on clear issues of ideology or party principles. Moreover, like the broader campaigns, the Chinese-language lobby had to deal with an increasingly cynical Surinamese public that suspected any candidate of running for office only for personal advancement.

It was clear from the start that the quest for the Chinese vote would be dominated by the NPS with its longstanding Chinese connections, Pertjajah Luhur with its new-found Chinese support, and the opposition NDP of Desi Bouterse who was known to be keenly interested in the PRC. The campaign in the Chinese newspapers was heralded in February 2005 by the expected notices and summons for meetings and events organized by political parties with established Chinese links. The Chinese branch of the NPS announced changes in its governing body, and posted reminders to Chinese to check their names on the voter registration list. Two weeks later the Chinese group of Pertjajah Luhur started its mobilization campaign with a string of articles in quick succession, which laid the foundation of the discourse on Chinese positioning that followed.

---

31 If the 12 Malaysia-born registered voters and the one from ‘North Vietnam’ were members of the Fuidung’on Hakka chain migrant network, then that would bring the total of foreign-born ethnic Chinese voters in Suriname in 2005 to 1,917.
32 These were not the only parties wooing the Chinese voter: SPA had a Chinese candidate who addressed the Chinese-speaking public in Kejia and Cantonese on the radio. On 21 and 23 May 2005, just before the election date of 25 May, the A1 coalition (DA91, PVF, D21, Trefpunt 2000) of Winston Jessurun and Monique Essed-Fernandes, placed an advertisement in the two Chinese newspapers presenting itself as a multi-ethnic party that does not distinguish according to race, religious conviction or social class. None of these candidates were elected.
33 XNRB 25 Feb 2005; ZHRB 1, 3, 5 March
34 ZHRB 19 March 2005 ‘蘇里南大選與你；推選李嘉林小姐為候選國會願意’ (The Surinamese elections and you; Miss Li Jalin to run in the general elections); ZHRB 22 March ‘臨時助選委員會召開第一次會議’ (First meeting of the Provisional Chinese Electoral Support Committee); ZHRB 24 March 2005 ‘華人助選委員會成立’ (Chinese Electoral Support Committee set up); ZHRB 24 March 2005 ‘我為何要參選國會議員? 李嘉林小姐在第一次臨時助選會議上的講話’
presenting its election strategy, the ‘Provisional Chinese Electoral Support Committee’ described Pertjajah Luhur as an instrument for achieving ethnic Chinese participation in Surinamese politics.35

The Committee concisely and fairly systematically described the problem and its solution in its first article in the two Chinese-language papers, despite typically Chinese and Surinamese obliqueness.36 Chinese participation in national politics was minimal through traditional Chinese avoidance of involvement, and limited access for ethnic Chinese. The text suggested that the interests of Chinese immigrant shopkeepers were being threatened in the National Assembly by an East Indian establishment. The Chinese Electoral Support Committee for the 2000 elections had managed to get doctor Jack Tjong Tjin Joe appointed as Minister of Trade and Industry, and after his unexpected death a Chinese presence at that post was preserved by the appointment of Michael Jong Tjien Fa. This was a crucially strategic post; Minister Jong Tjian Fa had managed to prevent a bill from being passed in the National Assembly that would require applicants for retail trade licenses to prove competency in the Dutch language. A Chinese cabinet minister might be able to block laws and policies detrimental to Chinese interests, but Chinese viewpoints were not directly and promptly defended in the National Assembly. Though no Chinese constituency played any role in the appointment of the only ethnic Chinese Minister, an ethnic Chinese presence in the National Assembly required the support of the ethnic Chinese segment.

The Committee presented Sandra Lee, a 25-year old local-born student of Economics at the Anton de Kom University in Paramaribo and employed at the ‘Chinese’ Ministry of Trade and Industry (led by Tjong Tjin Joe), as the ideal candidate.37 The daughter of Fuidung’ on Hakka migrants, her father a former member of the board of Chung Fa Foei Kon, she was “raised in a family with a Chinese cultural background, proficient in both Chinese and Western culture”. She was “pretty as well as talented”, fluent in multiple languages such as Mandarin, Cantonese, Kejia, “and other Chinese dialects”. She was therefore an ideal master of cere-

(Why do I want to stand for office? Miss Li Jialin addresses the first meeting of the Provisional Chinese Electoral Support Committee); ZHRB 31 March 2005, XNRB 1 April 2005 ‘敬請僑胞擁護參加 PL 黨宣行國會候選人黨部大會’ (Overseas Chinese brothers please enthusiastically attend announcement of nominations during mass meeting at the Pertjajah Luhur headquarters); ‘請僑胞抗擊接壤 支助華人參選國會會員’ (Overseas Chinese brothers please readily donate to the cause: support the Chinese candidate); ZHRB 2 April 2005 ‘華人 助選委員會通告’ (Announcement of the Chinese Electoral Support Committee).

35 None of the texts produced by the Committee ever hinted that the Committee itself was an actualization of the broader Pertjajah Luhur strategy to extend its electoral base beyond the Javanese segment.

36 ZHRB 19 March 2005 ‘蘇里南大選與你; 推選李嘉林小姐為候選國會願意’ (The Surinamese elections and you; Miss Li Jialin to run in the general elections).

37 Her Chinese name is 李嘉林 (Mandarin: Li Jialin), the Kejia pronunciation of which yields the basis for the name with which she styles herself: Kailin Lee.
monies at Chinese cultural events, such as the annual Moon Festival in De Witte Lotus. She had used her experience with public speaking before a Chinese audience during Pertjajah Luhur meetings and on TV. Sandra Lee was theoretically fully acceptable to any ethnic Chinese subgroup. She bridged the Kejia-Dutch as well as the Kejia-Mandarin language gaps, as well as the Laiap-Tong'ap and Chinese-Surinamese divides while remaining ‘truly Chinese’. The fact that Sandra Lee was born in Suriname was not explicitly mentioned in the article presenting her candidacy, but in her case proven fluency in Chinese culture would make her acceptable to the vast majority of Tong’ap. The Pertjajah Luhur propagandists made an effort to show that Sandra Lee was supported by people from different Chinese backgrounds as well as by Chinese institutions. The second Pertjajah Luhur article specifically suggested that her candidacy was supported by Kong Ngie Tong Sang, Chung Fa Foei Kon, Fa Tjauw Song Foei, Hua Chu Hui, Sociaal Culturele Vereniging Chung Tjauw, Zhejiang Tongxiang Hui, Fujian Tongxiang Hui, Hainan Tongxiang Hui, the Christian American Missionary Alliance church, the Moravian Tshoeng Tjien Church, as well as ‘representatives of local-born people of Chinese descent’.

---

38 One article was intended to prove her ability to handle written Chinese. ZHRB 24 March 2005 ‘我為何要參選國會議員？李嘉林小姐在第一次臨時助選會議上的講話’ (Why do I want to stand for office? Miss Li Jialin addresses the first meeting of the Provisional Chinese Electoral Support Committee).
Sandra Lee had been selected from a pool of ‘young Chinese executives’ (jong Chinees kader) who had followed a leadership course\(^{39}\) organized by Su-Ying Tsai and Eddy Tjin A Lien. However, the strategy of inflating Chinese numbers and training eligible young Chinese lacked a clear narrative to account for the need for Chinese participation; citizenship is broader than just political participation, so if Chinese were such successful immigrants, why was political participation essential, why was mobilization so crucial, and who would directly benefit? One possible response to questions such as this was that getting an ethnic Chinese elected to the National Assembly would be a step towards consolidating the Chinese presence in government (a Pertjajah Luhur party member was already the first ethnic Chinese government minister). However, this in turn raised further questions: who controlled the minister, and who would control the Chinese voice in the National Assembly? In any case, no narrative explaining ethnic Chinese political participation in Suriname emerged, save for statements about ‘emancipation’ of the Chinese minority laced with a sense of entitlement.

The ill-defined Chinese constituency had always been considered the domain of the NPS, via its Chinese wing Fa Tjauw. It was assumed that Chinese will be loyal, to the extent that real election campaigns aimed at ethnic Chinese were usually skipped; Chinese voters only needed to be reminded that there was no alternative but the Creole NPS when it came to defending Chinese interests against East Indian pressure. Though the Chinese Pertjajah Luhur propaganda campaign was a real campaign, in the sense that Chinese voters needed to be won over from the NPS, its content was fairly predictable. On the one hand the Pertjajah Luhur texts appealed to Chinese ethnic loyalty, and the Chinese self-image of a unified people linked to a primordial Chinese homeland. On the other hand Chinese were positioned as hard-working contributors to Surinamese society who had earned the right to pursue their livelihoods in peace. Chinese might be an economic power in Suriname, but were weak in the political arena. Chinese ethnic nationalism was remarkably absent from the Pertjajah Luhur campaign, at least initially.

The various political parties who wished to access the ethnic Chinese vote dealt with Laiap gatekeepers between the ethnic Chinese segment and non-Chinese Suriname. But in the actual campaigns, Laiap themselves were confronted with the true gatekeepers to the ethnic Chinese, usually well-connected and multilingual Tong’ap. Generally unable to read or write Chinese, the Laiap campaigners completely relied on Tong’ap assessments of the best ways to reach Chinese-speakers. Chinese texts were products of Tong’ap gatekeepers, as translators or writers. Ideas relating to multiculturalism, ethnicity and citizenship were trans-

\(^{39}\) Leadership courses are a common political strategy of small groups in Suriname who strive for political participation. Fundamentalist Pentecostal Christian sects with a dominionist agenda train young members in leadership courses to increase Christian influence in the public sphere.
lated to match Tong’ap understanding of the concepts. The following excerpts from the Chinese-language texts in the Chinese campaign provide examples of the way issues were translated to the local situation or linked with general Overseas Chinese preoccupations or the image of the Chinese State:

**NDP**

The government is only able to represent the interests of a small elite class and special ethnic groups. They have already degenerated into a minority government and a tool in the hands of certain ethnic groups to foster corruption and self enrichment and to dominate the Chinese. They think that Chinese are easily dominated and fooled. To suppress the Chinese, that is to destroy the democratic principles of the multiethic unity, that is the destruction of the reputation of Suriname, such is the action of a common enemy of all the people.40

**NDP**

We Chinese are but a weak minority with limited power and influence, all are employed in trade and only want a calm society and stable prices and exchange rates in order to earn some money and support a family. And so we treat every government and every party that leans in our direction with the utmost respect, earnestly and sincerely, as we would esteemed guests.41

**NF: Pertjajah Luhur**

You might be lucky and find yourself living under a good government, but what about the next one? And the one after that? Our president is definitely not Chinese, is he likely to feel any sympathy for the misery of the Chinese? Is he under any obligation to help us?42

**NDP**

If we take the Chinese as an example, many brought money to invest in business here. With a fantastic array of beautiful products, cheap yet good (people stare in amazement at the low prices), available throughout the country, who hold a proportionate section of the market, the Chinese prop up the domain of consumption in this country. It is the same with regard to income from residence permits. Actually, in the way it keeps the market lively and prices stable, the economy of the Chinese is like one leg of a tripod supporting a stable society and politics, and is

40 XNRB 11 April 2005, ‘為什麼要支持包特斯競選總統; NDP 華人工作小組告全體華人通報書’ (Why Bouterse’s run for the presidency should be supported; open letter to all Chinese from the Chinese wing of the NDP).

41 ZHRB 19 April 2005 / XNRB 20 April 2005, ‘我為什麼堅決支持鮑特斯當下一屆蘇里南政府總統’ (Letter to the editor: Why we definitely must support Bouterse’s bid to become president in the coming elections).

thus invaluable. If the government treats you like this it clearly means that they have bad intentions. [...] Examples of ethnic persecution are too numerous to list. The persecution of the Jews during the Second World War is known, of course? In modern Indonesian history there have been three waves of anti-Chinese sentiment, of which those of 1959 and 1990 were particularly bad! Expelling illegal immigrants is just one example. Our fatherland has become powerful now, and still there are those who dare to pull the tiger’s tail!43

NF: Pertjajah Luhur
Except for one single Chinese member of parliament twenty years ago, no Chinese voices have been heard in parliament up to now. This is not because the Chinese do not feel this need, but because the big political parties have enough executives of their own and so no openings arise, while the small political parties have few opportunities. The main reason is that we Chinese are always indifferent to politics. From the time they are small we insist that our children secure their future and become lawyers or doctors, that they open a shop and go into trade.44

NF: NPS
The 1969 elections were won by the VHP (the East Indian party) and the PNP (split from the NPS), and they formed a coalition government. Adhin, the Minister of Justice at the time, made very anti-Chinese statements in parliament; he proposed that procedures for shop licenses and residence permits should include proof of competence in the Dutch language. But that was immediately reasoned away by Calor, member of parliament for NPS. In those days it was actually very difficult to get relatives and friends from China to enter Suriname. In 1970 a Chinese applied for permission for a relative (a brother-in-law) to enter Suriname and up to 1973 permission had still not been granted. When they personally raised the matter with the then president of the Central Bank, nothing made sense. They heard that the person involved had been checked by the Dutch consul in Hong Kong, and it had been discovered that he had been employed by a leftist trade union in Hong Kong, and so he was branded a communist and refused entry into Suriname.45

As is clear from the texts above, the quest for the Chinese voter did not stay one-sided for long. The image of broad and cross-segmental support within the ‘Chinese community’ for the Pertjajah Luhur candidate as the only real alternative was marred by a NDP text in the Chinese-language

45 XNRB 18 May 2005, ‘歷史的回顧 -- 漫談 NPS 華人支部’ (In retrospective; an open discussion of the Chinese wing of the NPS).
newspapers. The anonymous author rejected the rosy picture painted by the Pertjajah Luhur propagandists and presented Desi Bouterse as the proper candidate for the ethnic Chinese constituency. A long article singing Bouterse’s praises as a former military strongman in terms reminiscent of PRC nationalism, was the first of an unexpected barrage of nine NDP articles. The Pertjajah Luhur team responded strongly to the NDP attack. The Pertjajah Luhur strategy was to present its carefully selected ethnic Chinese candidate as having broad, popular, and institutional support, while the NDP suggested that there was in fact no real support for the obviously inexperienced Pertjajah Luhur candidate.

In its turn, lacking a ‘perfect candidate’ (the Pertjajah Luhur team pointed out that Bouterse was not Chinese, and was therefore fundamentally unreliable when it came to defending Chinese interests) and with no clear indications of broad ethnic Chinese support, the NDP stressed the failure of the previous Nieuw Front government to deliver on any of its promises to the Chinese. However, Pertjajah Luhur found itself forced to outline more pragmatic reasons for voting Pertjajah Luhur rather than simply Nieuw Front. Although the tone of the various texts was not unusually offensive or harsh in the context of the broader 2005 campaign elections, the editors of the huiguan papers stepped in and announced that texts could not be submitted anonymously, and could not contain attacks on individuals or Chinese organizations.

As the Chinese campaign developed in the two huiguan papers Zhonghua Ribao and Xunnan Ribao, the pretence of a clearly defined audience - a coherent Chinese community - soon became apparent. The strategy for reaching ethnic Chinese voters had been rational; the great Chinese language barrier had to be scaled by addressing shopkeepers on their own turf in Kejia, and via the Chinese language media. However, there were not nearly enough Kejia-speaking volunteers for visits to shopkeepers and restaurateurs, who in any case were apparently no less closed to Chinese-speaking / ethnic Chinese propagandists than they were to non-Chinese. As usual, the two widely read huiguan newspapers emerged as the main line of communication to the ‘Chinese community’. In their pursuit of the Chinese constituency, Chinese speakers not only found themselves putting their ideas of Chinese ethnicity on public record, but also challenging each other’s concepts of Chineseness in the two newspapers. Issues of primordial Chinese identity, hybridity, race relations,

46 XNRB 11 April 2005, ‘為什麼要支持寶特斯競選總統; NDP 華人工作小組告全體華人通報書’ (Why Bouterse’s run for the presidency should be supported; open letter to all Chinese from the Chinese wing of the NDP).
47 XNRB 29 April 2005 / ZHRB 30 April 2005, ‘李嘉林助選委員會至支持者書’ (Letter from the Li Jialin Supporting Committee to its supporters).
48 This was neither the first nor the harshest polemic that developed in the Chinese-language papers. In practice the two newspapers combined read as an advertising journal; feedback from readers is rare but can be sharply worded and even venomous. A quarrel between members of the huiguan establishment that spilled over into the two Chinese-language
unity, nationalism, participation, immigration and citizenship came to the fore, enveloped in antagonistic propaganda and obscured in anonymity.

9.2.1 The Texts

Chinese media (Chinese newspapers, CCTV broadcasts, DVDs, karaoke), most of which are produced in the PRC, are shared to such an extent that their consumption can almost be used to define ‘Chineseness’, in the sense of ‘being on the correct side of the Chinese language barrier’. Traditionally, the most important Chinese media in Suriname have been Zhonghua Ribao and Xunnan Ribao, the newspapers published by Chung Fa Foei Kon and Kong Ngie Tong Sang, respectively. Between 26 February and 27 June 2005 these two Chinese-language newspapers carried 72 items directly related to the 2005 elections, ranging from practical announcements from the editors, full page articles submitted by political parties, to congratulatory poems from readers and letters of thanks to the public from the parties.49 Five political parties, Pertjajah Luhur, NDP, NPS, VVV, and A1, submitted a total of 69 items,50 and as is clear from the table below, most texts were produced by Pertjajah Luhur, NDP and NPS. Party propagandists of the three parties produced about 5 texts each, but if one includes propaganda texts by individuals (nominally) outside the party election committees, then Pertjajah Luhur and NDP each had about 12 texts of propaganda versus 5 NPS texts.

Table 3: Contributors of Chinese Campaign Texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PL</th>
<th>NDP</th>
<th>NPS</th>
<th>VVV</th>
<th>A1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Propagandists</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third party contributors</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Announcements</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voting instructions</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanks and congratulations</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News reports</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>38</strong></td>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

newspapers in the 1980s is remembered as a particularly shameful and unnecessary episode. However, the 2005 campaign was the first public discourse on Chinese identity and positioning in the Chinese-language community in Suriname.

49 Most texts appeared twice, once in ZHRB and once in XNRB. The 72 items do not include the repeats.

50 Three texts on Pertjajah Luhur's Chinese committee were presented as news reports produced by the newspapers themselves.
However, NPS produced the longest texts, covering a full page in one case. The Pertjajah Luhur texts linked together to form a single campaign, whereas the NDP texts appeared more ad hoc, reactive and populist. With regard to authorship, the Pertjajah Luhur Chinese committee was the most transparent, allowing the publication of the names of all directly involved in the Chinese language campaign. In the case of NDP, third party contributions were all submitted anonymously. Remarkably, the ethnic Chinese NDP propagandists (all Laiap) were unaware of the exact content of the texts. The Pertjajah Luhur and NPS texts did not mesh to reflect the Nieuw Front coalition viewpoints; there were no pieces countering the NDP viewpoints, only mobilization for the causes of the Chinese party sections. The NDP committee published a Chinese-language summary of the NDP election programme, whereas the Pertjajah Luhur committee had its candidate state her political goals. The NPS committee only reminded readers of the history of the Chinese section of the Creole NPS and stressed that naturalization and residency of Chinese migrants were its achievement, thereby suggesting that it was both an established entity as well as a safe bet.

The issue of New Chinese support permeated the Pertjajah Luhur and NDP campaigns. The Pertjajah Luhur campaign was designed to present Sandra Lee as the only legitimate candidate for all ethnic Chinese, and it portrayed the image of a unified Chinese constituency by explicitly mentioning the support and cooperation of Hainan Tongxiang Hui and Zhejiang Tongxiang Hui, and statements from Zhejiang Tongxiang Hui. Though the Chinese section of the NDP was dominated by Laiap, it also explicitly mentioned New Chinese support and used texts by New Chinese authors. Appeals to migrants were not clearly distinguishable from

51 ZHRB 24 March 2005 ‘華人助選委員會成立’ (Chinese Electoral Support Committee Set Up)
52 As the language of their texts grew increasingly confrontational (apparently reflecting a process of character assassination outside), the editorial boards of the two newspapers stepped in. Authors were not required to sign their names under their texts, but anonymous submissions would no longer be accepted. Announcement in ZHRB 5 May 2005 / XNRB 6 May, 9 May 2005.
54 ZHRB 24 March 2005 ‘我為何要參選國會議員? 李嘉林小姐在第一次臨時助選會議上的講話’ (Why do I want to stand for office? Miss Li Jialin addresses the first meeting of the Provisional Chinese Electoral Support Committee)
55 ZHRB 22 March 2005, ‘臨時助選委員會召開第一次會議’ (Provisional Support the Elections Committee meets for the first time); ZHRB 24 March 2005 ‘華人助選委員會成立’ (Chinese Electoral Support Committee Set Up); ZHRB 31 March 2005 / XNRB 1 April 2005, ‘捐助李嘉琳小姐參選國會議員芳名 (第一批)’ (Donors for candidate Li Jialin, first group); ZHRBA 7 April 2005 / XNRB 8 April 2005, ‘當一書’ (A proposal).
56 XNRB 11 April 2005 / ZHRB 12 April 2005, ‘鳴謝啟事’ (Letter of thanks); ZHRB 21 April 2005 / XNRB 22 April 2005, ‘為這樣的好僑胞而感動叫好!’ (Praise for this good Chinese brother!).
appeals to New Chinese sentiments. To the NPS the issue of Surinamese citizenship was embedded in the tradition of chain migration; Chinese who are eligible to vote do so to ensure continuation of chain migration.

The logic of voting and citizenship was less marked in the Pertjajah Luhur texts, and rather muddled in the NDP texts. The NDP committee allowed authors to link party chairman Bouterse with the entry of the New Chinese, but was unclear about what New Chinese support meant. Their texts seemed to focus on New Chinese migrants rather than on a broad ethnic Chinese base and on criticizing the Nieuw Front coalition members, and so it appeared preoccupied with undermining rivals rather than being aimed at mobilization of actual voters. The way New Chinese support was approached did give the impression of substantial numbers of New Chinese voters. Outside the Chinese-language press, there had been allegations of voter fraud involving Chinese migrants. Wijdenbosch of the VVV claimed that there were ‘huge numbers of voter registration cards belonging to Surinamese with a Chinese background’ and that registration cards were being printed for people who were either deceased or no longer residing in Suriname.\(^57\) However, no proof ever emerged of Chinese voter fraud.

### 9.2.2 Basic Issues

In a Chinese-language election campaign, the target group by default consisted of immigrants, Tong’ap and New Chinese; as assimilated ethnic Chinese, Laiap could be reached via the Dutch language and could be assumed to be illiterate in Chinese. All political factions identified the same basic problem of the target group: legal residency. The system of residence permits had not been adapted to accommodate the greater influx of non-Dutch immigration (i.e. Guyanese, Brazilians, Chinese, and Haitians) since independence in 1975, and had become exceedingly bureaucratic and irrational. Chinese migrants had real trouble acquiring residence permits, necessary for acquiring many other documents such as work and business permits. Application procedures were lengthy, without possibility of appeal, and bribing was a problem. Popular anti-Chinese sentiments which held that Chinese migrants are shown preferential treatment in applications for residence permits, business permits and driving licences, sent strong feedback to the bureaucracy of the departments responsible for residency issues. It will probably never be clear whether Chinese applications were really excessive or were actually given preferential treatment in any year since about 1990, but bureaucrats tended to single out Chinese as problematic and likely to be illegal.

\(^57\) De Ware Tijd 27 April 2005, ‘Chinese investeerder afgewezen door vorige regering’ (Chinese investor rejected by previous government).
The Pertjajah Luhur propagandists explained the problem as a project under construction. Minister Tjong Tjin Joe of Trade and Industry and his successor Minister Jong Tjien Fa had striven to simplify the link between legal residency and the issuing of business permits. Gains were being made in protecting Chinese interests despite apparently East Indian attempts to crush Chinese competition from within the Nieuw Front coalition. Venetiaan I and II had brought monetary stability, and could offer Chinese entrepreneurs further stability. As Nieuw Front coalition partners, Pertjajah Luhur and NPS shared this basic view, but needed to distinguish their individual positions with regard to the ethnic Chinese constituency. The Pertjajah Luhur team pointed to the fact that there was now a Chinese minister, with the virtual certainty that there would also be a Chinese voice in the National Assembly. NPS simply pointed out the fact that its Chinese Section was the oldest surviving Chinese political grouping in Suriname, and thus it also guaranteed stability.

The NDP team explained the permit problem as a Nieuw Front construct; the old apanjaha parties constantly wooed the Chinese as voters and donors, but always reneged on their promises. The Nieuw Front coalition had betrayed the Chinese in Suriname, and actually turned on them in the aftermath of every election. Pertjajah Luhur, NDP and NPS all took credit for facilitating Chinese migration:

**NF: Pertjajah Luhur**
Everyone; the fact that we can sell things here today is all due to the support of certain Chinese leaders and certain members of Pertjajah Luhur.\(^{58}\)

**NDP**
The last years Chinese have come to Suriname in large numbers. Who was it that opened the doors of friendship between Suriname and China, and opened the door to allow Chinese to enter smoothly? That was Bouterse when he had just come to power.\(^{59}\)

Therefore, if there were any problem with regards to migration, from entering the country, acquiring legal residency, to acquiring a Surinamese passport, then Pertjajah Luhur / Bouterse would solve it. The NPS promised that immigration procedures would be updated and smoothed out.

Both Pertjajah Luhur and NDP referred to the presence of anti-Chinese sentiments - both groups spoke of Chinese in Suriname being treated as second-class citizens. The NDP team suggested that anti-Chinese attitudes in Suriname are institutionalized at the highest level by

---


\(^{59}\) XNRB 11 April 2005, ‘為什麼要支持寶特斯競選總統; NDP華人工作小組告全體華人通報書’ (Why Bouterse’s run for the presidency should be supported; open letter to all Chinese from the Chinese wing of the NDP).
the Nieuw Front, whereas the Pertjajah Luhur propagandists suggested very obliquely that the VHP was the problem. The issue of unequal treatment, though ringing true with many readers, eventually proved too controversial; the ethnic Chinese of Suriname had dealt with the anti-Chinese discourse by ignoring it, and evoking ethnic pride was not an option.

9.2.3 The Development of Chineseness in the Chinese Campaign

Despite the development of hyphenated Surinamese-Chinese identity, identity discourse within the Chinese language communities in Suriname remained firmly based on notions of monolithic Chinese identity. However, no single Chinese identity label emerged from the campaign text; the variety of Chinese backgrounds in Suriname never resolved into a single coherent vision of Chineseness. On the contrary, the distinction between China-born and local-born was upheld in a way that was suggestive of ethnic difference. The Chinese propagandists of Pertjajah Luhur, NDP and NPS, approached those literate in Chinese as a monolithic Chinese constituency, either as eligible voters or non-citizen donors. All authors either overstated the obvious or wrote suggestively in an exhaustingly roundabout fashion, in typically Chinese (and Surinamese) style. Though the (Provisional) Chinese Electoral Support Committee was steered by Laiap, its face in the Chinese newspapers was of necessity Tong'ap as Tong'ap read and write Chinese. The anonymous author(s) of the NDP texts was / were said to be New Chinese, and the vocabulary and style of their texts (if not the orthography, which was often mixed PRC and traditional) seems to confirm this. The writers of the NPS texts betrayed their strong Fuidung’on Hakka background in their use of written forms of Surinamese Kejia dialect terms such as tongsan (‘Chinese homeland’, PTH: zhongguo ‘China’, zuguo ‘the motherland’) or loi feu (lit. ‘come to the port (i.e. Paramaribo)’: enter Suriname as a sojourner / chain migrant’. PTH: lai sulinan, ‘come to Suriname’).

Excavating a developing Chinese discourse on Chinese identity in Suriname from among individual stylistic and dialectical variations, positive clichés about Chinese, and chronically oblique statements is not straightforward, even in the limited corpus of the 2005 campaign texts. However, none of the writers could avoid using some of the same words to refer to the idea of a basic, stable and primordial Chineseness. These were common written Chinese words referring to the Chinese homeland and Chinese identity which contain the characters hua (‘flower’; ‘magnificent’; ‘China’), qiao (‘emigrant, sojourner’, an abbreviation of huaqiao, ‘Overseas Chinese’), and zhong (‘middle, centre’; ‘China’). Generally speaking, hua and qiao were more inclusive than zhong, which implied a certain emotional distance. Qiao was mainly the central morpheme in inclusive terms of address, such as qiaobao (‘fellow Overseas Chinese’) and its more emotional plural variant qiaobaomen (‘our Overseas Chinese bro-
### Table 4: Hua, Qiao and Zhong in the Chinese-Language Newspapers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PL</th>
<th>NDP</th>
<th>NPS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hua</strong> 華</td>
<td>Hua (ren) 華(人): Ethnic Chinese</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Huaqiao 華僑: Overseas Chinese</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Huayi(men) 華裔(們): People of Chinese descent</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Qiao</strong> 僑</td>
<td>Qiaobao(men) 僑胞(們): Fellow Overseas Chinese</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Qiao 僑: Overseas Chinese (adj.)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Zhong</strong> 中</td>
<td>Zhongguoren 中國人: Chinese people</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zhong(guo) 中(國): Chinese / China</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zhonghua 中華: Chinese (adj.)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

thers’). As a fixed part of the term qiaotuan (‘Chinese organizations’), qiao is like the more neutral character zhong. In principle, all words containing these three characters may be used in self-identification as well as when ascribing identities.

The frequency of the characters, and their contexts in composite terms reflected fundamental opinions about Chinese identity. To the NPS qiaobao and huaren (‘ethnic Chinese’) referred to the same concept, the former as a term of address, the latter as the regular noun.\(^{60}\) The three long NPS texts clearly treated huayi (‘people of Chinese descent’) as a euphemism for Laiap by maintaining the distinction with huaren. Only in one instance was huayi inclusive: wo huayi (‘we people of Chinese descent’). The Pertjajah Luhur texts similarly featured huaren as the regular noun and qiaobao as the term of address for the same concept: ethnic Chinese. NPS and Pertjajah Luhur both used zhongguoren (lit.: China + person; ‘Chinese; Chinese citizen’) in contexts implying distance and objectivity. Pertjajah Luhur also used huayi as a euphemism for Laiap, but did not contrast the term strongly with huaren. Remarkably, Pertjajah Luhur did allow the use of Laiap (twice in one short sentence) in a privately submitted text.\(^{61}\)

The NDP texts also firmly used huaren as the regular noun for ‘ethnic Chinese’, but pointedly avoided the qiao root. The New Chinese authors used the hua and qiao roots to distinguish (established) Fuidung-on Hakkas and New Chinese. Huaren was a general identifier as well as an inclusive group identification: women huaren (‘we Chinese’), xin hua-

---

\(^{60}\) Strictly speaking the noun linked to the Qiaobao term of address should have been the limited term huaqiao (‘Overseas Chinese’).

\(^{61}\) ZHRB 2 April 2005 / XNRB 4 April 2005, Zhong Fu’an, ‘開拓未來’ (Open up the future). This was apparently the first time the word laiap appeared in the Chinese newspapers, but in any case the simple fact that it was printed caused something of a stir. The word was printed with a variant character for ‘mud’ (坭 instead of the more usual 泥).
ren tongbao (‘our New Chinese brothers’), xinlao huaren (‘Old and New Chinese’), women xin huaren (‘we New Chinese’), zai sulinan de huaren qiaobao (‘ethnic Chinese in Suriname’). All texts used huaqiao (‘Chinese sojourner; Overseas Chinese’) as a distant and objective term for Overseas Chinese, but there is only one occurrence in the NDP texts, as a non-inclusive ethnic identification: lao huaqiao (‘the Old Chinese here’; ‘the earlier sojourners’). Qiaobao was rarer than in the Pertjajah Luhur and NPS texts, occurring as an inclusive group identification (guangda qiaobao (‘Chinese in the broadest sense’), huaren qiaobao (‘our ethnic Chinese brothers’) and as an oblique (familiar, through the animate plural suffix) term of address implying inclusive group identity: qiaobaomen.

It would certainly be unwise to make assumptions about the feelings of the Chinese segment based on the styles and opinions of a few authors of a limited number of texts. However, the two basic ways of dealing with the reality of fragmentation under the myth of Chinese ethnic unity in the texts reflect the fundamental ethnic distinctions within the Chinese segment in Suriname: Tong’ap versus Laiap, and Fuidung’on Hakkas / ‘Old Chinese’ versus New Chinese. All authors used the term huayi as the general descriptor of ethnic Chinese identity, accepting the idea of Chinese ethnic unity. To the Fuidung’on Hakka authors (identifiable by names and style), the nationalism of the PRC did not carry over into the dogma of Chinese ethnic unity, whereas to the New Chinese author(s) ‘Old Chinese’ were not zhongguoren, but a local development. The conservative Fuidung’on Hakka went along with viewpoint of the NPS authors and made Chinese in Suriname qiao, Chinese abroad; the Chinese-ness of the Chinese constituency was predicated on the idea of a local livelihood. To them, New Chinese were zhongguoren (PRC citizens) and outsiders. Pertjajah Luhur seemed to attempt to go beyond these and capture an all-inclusive view of Chinese identity, recognizing but not defining ethnic variety while unifying all possible varieties in the term huaren.

To the New Chinese author(s) who can be identified through their writing style, the ‘Old Chinese’ were qiao while the New Chinese were zhongguoren. In their texts the distinction between huaren and zhongguoren became vaguely synonymous. Logically, this either made PRC citizenship global and the Chineseness it reflected universal, or Chinese ethnic identity was associated with the PRC. Qiao became the mutation derived from the central concept of the hua root. Huaqiao were out of touch with the reality of modern Chinese identity, of which modern PRC nationalism is a part. In the NDP texts Chinese were New Chinese immigrants. Most New Chinese were zhongguoren in the very exact sense of PRC citizens, and were therefore not eligible to vote; they were therefore approached as supporters rather than voters. One could speculate on the reasons why the NDP texts focussed almost exclusively on New Chinese; perhaps the NDP considered ‘Old Chinese’ monopolized by the Nieuw Front coalition, or that the New Chinese were being wooed as a source of funds and support, but it might also have been because of lack of com-
communication between Laiap or other Surinamese campaign managers and New Chinese text writers.

The lack of clear distinctions between *huaqiao*, *huaren* and *huayi* reflects the rearticulation of these terms in the patriotic discourse aimed at New Migrants in the PRC. Nyíri notes that “...previously rigidly separated categories of *huaqiao*, *huaren* (ethnic Chinese), and *huayi* (person of Chinese ancestry) are conflated, and the usual term is now *huaren*, sometimes qualified as *waiji huaren* (ethnic Chinese with foreign citizenship).”62 He also notes that *zhongguoren* acquires the meaning of ‘ethnic Chinese’ in the same way. Equating *huaren* with *zhongguoren* not only meant disassociating Chineseness from huaqiao (‘Overseas Chinese’), but also implied questioning the normative assumption of the Chinese Community. Pertjajah Luhur and NPS elaborated on this concept which comes from the Surinamese anti-Chinese discourse, and heaped assumptions about Chinese ethnic loyalty and the existence of civicmindedness onto it (*huaren shehui*: ‘ethnic Chinese society’, *huaqiao shehui*, *qiaoshe*: ‘Overseas Chinese society’, ‘Overseas Chinese community’). The NDP texts ignored the ‘Chinese community’ and centred Chinese ethnic loyalty around nationalistic ideas; PRC nationalism was firmly linked to the Surinamese patriotism of the NDP.

New Chinese (*xin yimin*: ‘new migrants’, but more often *xin huaren*: ‘new Chinese’ in the texts) thus appeared not to consider themselves huaqiao ‘Overseas Chinese’, but actual PRC citizens, *zhongguoren* ‘Chinese’. As immigrants, those members of Fuidung’on Hakkas who were born in China and New Chinese agreed that their interests in Suriname centred on acquiring the status of legal residents: work permits, business permits, and residence permits. Difficulties in acquiring Surinamese citizenship were consistently mentioned, though the actual meaning of citizenship other than acquiring a Surinamese passport as a kind of permit, was not elaborated on. The narratives leave one with the distinct impression that Chinese citizenship stands for primordial, enduring Chinese identity, that underlies and overrules any other formal citizenship status, not unlike the way earlier Fuidung’on Hakka immigrants considered Chinese names ‘true’ names, thus underlying and overruling formal Dutch-style names under Surinamese law.

The orthographies used in the various texts suggest that *zhongguoren* is not a contested concept. It is important to note that though in principle Xunnan Ribao and Zhonghua Ribao are separate entities linked to different huiguan, both papers share the same editorial board. However, the Xunnan Ribao uses the basic orthography of the PRC (simplified characters in horizontal lines from left to right), which symbolically reflects allegiance of its parent huiguan Kong Ngie Tong Sang to the PRC. Zhonghua Ribao similarly reflects the Taiwanese links of its huiguan Chung Fa Foei Kon by following basic Taiwanese orthography (meaning

traditional characters in vertical columns from right to left). However, no consistent pattern emerged from the campaign texts and orthographies were highly mixed. It was the ability to manipulate Chinese characters, rather than full mastery of official orthographies, which defined fluency in Chinese culture.

There are many suggestions of primordial Chineseness in the texts, with some vague suggestions of Chinese racial superiority. The style of PRC patriotic discourse was readily apparent in the texts in appeals to ethnic loyalty as a matter of race, for instance the reference to ethnic Chinese as the ‘Sons of the Yellow Emperor and Emperor Yan’. One NDP text ends with the shopkeeper author feeling sorry for poor black people (heiren), while suggesting that Chinese are inherently better at striving for development. Other texts reproduced positive auto-stereotypes in the quest to mobilize Chinese ethnic loyalty: Chinese are naturally good, hardworking, patient, loyal, peaceful, etc. Interestingly, these positive auto-stereotypes used to flesh out the image of those who are born in China in the texts are almost identical to the ones used by the local-born / Laiap in the construction of Surinamese Chinese identity. In some cases the positive stereotypes that underlie Surinamese Chinese identity as a reaction to the anti-Chinese discourse surface more directly: Chinese are successful and hardworking immigrants and legitimate citizens that are victimized by hostile Surinamese.

The NDP campaign texts contained one obvious reference to the anti-Chinese discourse in Suriname. The context was a prevailing rumour that New Chinese were said to be benefiting from NPS clientelism, and were thus assumed to be acquiring permits easily. Driving licences became symbolic of that assumed favouritism. While the public was convinced that Chinese immigrants were getting driving licenses without any knowledge of local traffic laws, the traffic police claimed that many ethnic Chinese were driving without licences. The author of the one NDP text called this the result of discrimination and ethnic profiling:

[...] If they saw locals driving, they would wave them by; if they saw a Chinese face, the car was stopped immediately and the driver told to enter and park in a designated area, after which they inspected the driving licence. More than 20 cars belonging to Chinese were stopped,
among whom many brothers from Zhejiang and some Fujianese drivers. The vast majority had no driving licence, surprise, surprise! Our Chinese brothers keep complaining: How can you run a shop without transport? For driving lessons you need a residence permit, but they will not give us that document. But we have no choice but to start up a business, do they expect us to starve? Why don't they give us a residence permit?

The report of the so-called driving license checks initiated in the second half of last year by the Ministry of Justice and Police clearly shows that if so many tens of people without driving licences in the whole country are fined so many tens of Surinamese Dollars, then the State receives so many millions of extra income. That means state funds. There is no proof whatsoever that only Chinese drive without driving licences and that Surinamese or other foreigners all do have driving licences. They're picking out Chinese at the checkpoints, I ask you, is that not racial discrimination? [...] 67

This was followed by a text on the issue of residence permits that linked unfair treatment of Chinese immigrants to the risk of Indonesian-style anti-Chinese pogroms. 68 This seems to have contributed to the decision of the editors of the two huiguan papers to limit the contributions during the campaign period. In the small, network-driven world of Chinese immigrants in Suriname, open quarrels in the papers were to be avoided, and the risk of the dialogue between Pertjajah Luhur and NDP escalating into a war of words was just too great. A direct response to the increasingly harsh anti-Chinese sentiments in Suriname was potentially more dangerous, as it could cross the language barrier and lead to polarization between a weak Chinese minority and an angry anti-Chinese majority.

The Chinese propagandists were well aware that growing anti-Chinese sentiments did play a role in the broader campaigns. The VVV of ex-president Jules Wijdenbosch expressed concern about the ‘enormous number of poll cards for Surinamese of Chinese descent’, which might be interpreted as an oblique attack on the Nieuw Front / NPS. 69 Candidates for New Front coalition partner VHP were reported to have spoken out against Chinese in Sarnámi on the campaign trail in the East Indian-dominated countryside, at one point even calling for the Chinese to be sent right back where they came from. 70 In a newspaper interview Rajan Nan Nan Panday of Nieuw Suriname, a party striving for transnational citizenship for Surinamese in the Netherlands, specifically mentioned Chinese
as a type of unwanted immigrants. On the night of the elections, during live coverage of the polls on the State broadcaster STVS, the late Humbert Pinas interviewed the consultant D. Samson about developments in the thirty years since independence, such as the survival of ethnic multi-party politics, the rise of globalization, and the current relationship with the PRC. Samson praised the ties with China, but deplored the lack of policy:

You can’t just allow just anybody to enter; Chinese medical professionals are welcome, but if only shopkeepers come, there will be too many and then there might be Indonesian situations...

Samson became increasingly shrill, at which point Pinas politely but firmly interrupted and cut to a jingle.

The Chinese script proved an effective, though not a foolproof, barrier to keeping every issue of Chineseness and any suggestion of disagreement among Chinese-speakers hidden from the non-Chinese speaking outside world. To outsiders, the Chinese seemed relatively united, as usual. The huiguan made a show of donating to all parties equally, and the visible Chinese presence on the campaign trail was spread as evenly as possible, or downplayed if necessary. The myth of the ‘Chinese community’ in the broader discourse of Chineseness was presented to the non-Chinese public, while the passivity and lack of civic-mindedness of Chinese in Suriname was deplored in texts aimed at a Chinese public. The Pertjajah Luhur team in particular recognized that Chinese in Suriname did not unite under an ethnic banner:

Of course we will have to see whether we Chinese can manage to unite as a group.

Chinese immigrants and people of Chinese descent, the time of shoveling the snow from your own door and ignoring the ice on your neighbour’s roof tiles is over for good!

The Pertjajah Luhur and NDP propagandists failed to realize how social capital accumulates in the small-scale chain-migrant group. This is done through networks of personal reciprocity, where ethnic loyalty is often less relevant than immediate contact with one’s immediate community of neighbours and clients. On the contrary, the NPS basically warned its

71 De Ware Tijd 27 April 2005, ‘De prangende vraag: “Die boost komt niet als we stamhoofdenmentaliteit hebben”’ (The sticky question: “No boost will never come if we keep the Tribal Chief mentality”).
72 ZHRB 19 March 2005 ‘蘇里南大選與泥；推選李嘉林小姐位候選國會願意’ (The Surinamese elections and you; Miss Li Jalin to run in the general elections).
73 ZHRB 2 April 2005 / XNRB 4 April 2005, Zhong Fu’an (Kejia pronunciation: Zung Fuk’on) ‘開拓未來’ (Open up the future).
public about the risk of moving away from traditional and proven allegiance to the Creole-dominated, anti-East Indian segment of the apanjaht coalition. In any case, the issue of Chinese unity as somehow central to Chineseness remained unresolved.

9.3 After the Elections

The 2005 elections were considered to have been fair with a reasonable turnout (65.4% of 333,985 registered voters), despite problems with the electoral register and some allegations of voter manipulation. The Nieuw Front won more than 40% of the vote, though as a single party the NDP had more votes than any of the Nieuw Front coalition partners. The number of seats held by the Nieuw Front dropped from 33 to 23. The results of the 2005 elections reflected the changing ethnic landscape underpinning the traditional apanjaht logic; the growing Maroon segment in Paramaribo made a surprise winner out of A-Combinatie, a coalition of various Maroon parties.

Sandra Lee received about 1,000 votes, ten times more than the number 2 on the NPS candidate list, Otmar Rodgers. Both Sandra Lee and Sylvia Kajoeramari (Pertjajah Luhur’s Amerindian candidate) had safe seats on the Nieuw Front list, and were now Members of the National Assembly. Pertjajah Luhur’s Chinese team declared the successful election of Sandra Lee to the National Assembly and the retention of Michael Jong Tjen Fa as cabinet minister to be a ‘Chinese victory’. It organized a number of receptions to thank the Chinese public; the Chinese committee had managed to raise roughly US$ 53,014 via its ads in the two Chinese newspapers. Ironically, by entering government, ethnic Chinese had become part of the political system that popular opinion was rebelling against in the form of anti-immigrant - and anti-Chinese - sentiments. So far Lee has not presented a firm image of defender of Chinese interests in the National Assembly.

Suriname was ranked 61st, as a Flawed Democracy, on the Democracy Index of The Economist (The World in 2007), scoring high on electoral process and pluralism but low on political participation.

The January 2007 IDOS public opinion poll suggested that despite the increased assimilation indicated by the 2004 Census, ethnic tensions were rising, and that the Surinamese public considered the 2005 elections to be far more ‘apanjahtist’ than previous elections. On average 49% of people in each of six ethnic groups (tracked through self-identification: Maroon, Indigenous, East Indian, Creole, ‘mixed’, and Javanese) felt unfairly disadvantaged compared to other ethnic groups. The lowest percentage was among Javanese (30%), though at the same time Pertjajah Luhur was considered most obviously to be an ethnic party (74%; compare 64% for the East Indian VHP and 33% for the Creole NPS). 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/).
Table 5: Results 2005 Legislative elections. Source: Centraal Hoofdstembureau (Central Polling Committee), 7 June 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parties and Coalitions</th>
<th>Percentage of Vote</th>
<th>Number of Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NF: NPS, VHP, Pertjajah Luhur, SPA</td>
<td>39.4%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDP</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VVV: DNP 2000, BVD, KTPI, PPRS</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-Combinatie: ABOP, BEP, Seeka</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1 Combinatie: DA91, D21, PVF, Trefpunt 2000</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPS / DOE</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PALU</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NS</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NU</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPP</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>95.9% valid votes</strong></td>
<td><strong>51</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pertjajah Luhur chairman Paul Somohardjo did realise that the loss of ten seats for the Nieuw Front coalition could not quite mean an election victory for his party. He called on the leaders of the other Javanese parties (Raymond Sapoen of Pendawa Lima, Willy Soemita of KTPI, René Kaiman of Partij Pembangunan Rakyat Suriname / PPRS, Soewarto Mustadja of D21) to join Pertjajah Luhur, and create a united ethnic bloc in the way the Maroon parties had. In a speech to his party, Somohardjo expressed disappointment that Pertjajah Luhur had won no seats in the VHP-dominated and strongly East Indian Districts of Nickerie, Saramacca and Wanica, and ordered the Chinese candidate Sandra Lee and the Amerindian candidate Sylvia Kajoeramari to start mobilizing their ethnic constituencies in view of the next elections. Somohardjo also repeated his overtures to the Maroon segment.

The Nieuw Front coalition had lost a third of its seats and was forced to enter a coalition with A-Combinatie and DA’91 in order to retain a majority in the National Assembly. Ramsoedh and Hoogbergen (2006) note that the opportunism of Surinamese politics was evident in the negotiations leading to the new ‘NF-plus’ grand coalition; the negotiations were about dividing ministries among coalition partners rather than producing a coalition agreement based on clear development goals. Those power-sharing negotiations proved an embarrassment for the Pertjajah Luhur Chinese. Somohardjo aspired to become the first ethnic Javanese Vice President, but was sidelined because of his 2002 conviction for indecent assault, and was eventually placated with the position of Speaker of the National Assembly. Then Pertjajah Luhur lost the Ministry of Trade and

76 Dagblad Suriname 30 May 2005: ‘Somohardjo roept op tot bundeling Jawa partijen’ (Somohardjo calls for Javanese parties to unite).
Industry to the SPA. To accommodate Pertjajah Luhur’s demands, a new
government ministry was set up for former Trade and Industry Minister
Jong Tjien Fa: the Ministry of Resource Planning and Development, Land
Management and Forestry.77

Control of land allocation strengthened the power-base of the
Pertjajah Luhur leadership with regard to clientelism. In the case of the
Chinese, clientelism did not mean civil service jobs, but access to the
apparatus of the Ministry of Trade and Industry. The loss of that Ministry
could not properly be explained to the Chinese constituency. Land alloca-
tion was not very relevant to the Chinese constituency; while larger Chi-
nese investors would benefit from smoother handling of resource deve-
lopment schemes, the average Chinese chain migrant did not get involved
in real estate deals. In the fight over the division of official posts, Per-
tjajah Luhur retained control of the post of Ambassador in Beijing after
the resignation of the Ambassador Wong Lun Hing through the appoint-
ment of Ambassador Mohamed Isaak Soerokarso in early March 2007.78

Rumours of infighting within the Pertjajah Luhur team / Fa Foe
Foel group resurfaced in the face of disappointment. Gossip had it that
Sandra Lee was the creature of a faction opposing the group behind the
Chinese minister (formerly Tjong Tjin Joe, and now Jong Tjien Fa). Ano-
erth embarrassment concerned the size of the Chinese constituency and
the distribution of the votes during the elections. Almost right after the
new ministers were sworn in, the first results of the 7th General Census
containing ethnic data were published. This was almost a month too late,
and it was rumoured to have been suppressed by the apanjah team.79

According to the 2004 census 1.7% voters in Surinamese election were
ethnic Chinese (8,775 individuals, of whom 3,652 were PRC citizens, and
1,750 were born in China). This is very near the guesstimate of 2% that
was used since the last census, but in any case it is far lower than the
40,000-50,000 estimates of the Chinese Pertjajah Luhur strategists.79

77 Ministerie van Ruimtelijke Ordening, Grondbeheer en Bosbeleid.

The January 2007 IDOS public opinion poll indicated that land allocation was a major issue
for voters in Paramaribo. 45% (either respondents themselves or someone in their house-
hold) had applied for a plot of land at least once, but only 12% gained title, whereas 83%
never heard anything from the authorities again. There was no indication of ethnic discri-
mination, however.

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/).

78 It is unclear whether the Chinese elite interpreted this as a Javanese replacing a Chinese;
although he was a descendent of a former Kong Ngie Tong chairman, Wong Lun Hing was
mixed Chinese, and was only called ‘Chinese’ during the power-sharing negotiations follow-
ing the 2000 elections.

79 The game of numbers was important in the run-up to the 2005 elections, not only for the
Chinese. Five population censuses were held in colonial Suriname, in 1921, 1950, 1964, and
1970. The 1950 census was supposed to be the first of a series quantifying Surinamese
society every ten decade, and up to and including the 1970 census, ethnicity was recorded
on the basis of self-identification along ethnic categories established in the 1950 census. The
Though ethnic Chinese participation in the NF government had been virtually guaranteed via Pertjajah Luhur, the actual clout of the Chinese constituency always remained vague; the pattern of Chinese voting had never been probed, and no group had ever been able to control the behaviour of Chinese donors. The Pertjajah Luhur team stated that this time there was a way to gauge the support of the ethnic Chinese constituency, by putting forward an ethnic Chinese candidate:80

The Chinese have been bragging about the numbers of votes they command for a very long time now, and all political parties should believe this. Without real data those parties ignore the Chinese. This time Pertjajah Luhur is presenting us with a chance, with a guaranteed victory while we can finally see how many votes the Chinese have. Five years ago many Chinese supported Doctor Tjong Tjin Joe, but as Ministers are appointed, his name did not appear on the ballots, so it was never actually clear how many votes he got. But now the situation is different, there is no margin for trickery; it’s do or die. If we Chinese cannot get number eight elected with the maximum number of votes, then we have announced to all the people of Suriname that we are a disunited minority that does not merit any attention. But if the results are ideal, it will be of the utmost benefit for the Chinese, whatever party they support. This is Chinese capital...

However, unpublished results of the exit polls suggest that ethnic Chinese voted in a fragmented fashion: roughly a quarter voted Pertjajah Luhur, a quarter voted NDP and the rest voted for the NPS.

9.3.1 The Embarrassment of Coalition Membership

If the ‘Chinese victory’ seemed rather hollow following the elections, in the two years following the 2005 elections having any association with Pertjajah Luhur became increasingly embarrassing to the ethnic Chinese elites. Pertjajah Luhur seemed less concerned with the interests of its ethnic Chinese shopkeeper ‘constituency’ in Suriname, while becoming increasingly involved in the Asian business networks of a small local entre-

first post-independence census in 1980 was conducted in the first year of military rule; ethnicity was completely disregarded, reflecting nationalist, leftist, anti-colonial sentiments. It also signalled a break withapanjaht ethnopolitics, as it explicitly left the question of the actual ethnic make-up of society in the Republic of Suriname unanswered. No census was held in 1990, at the final end of military rule. The ‘ethnic balance’ (namely between Creoles and East Indians) on which apanjaht consociationalism was based remained unchallenged until the seventh census in 2004. This was the result of a recount, as the results of sixth census in 2004 were lost in a fire that destroyed the offices of the ABS. In any case, the results of the seventh census did not support the inflated numbers of Chinese flaunted by Pertjajah Luhur supporters, and in fact showed that the actual ethnic Chinese power-base was very limited.

preneurial elite. Pertjajah Luhur power brokers never appreciated, and never really cared, that one could not approach ethnic Chinese in Suriname as an ethnic constituency without considering notions of uniform Chinese identity, which implied respecting the idea of Chinese unity and therefore supranational Chinese identity - the PRC as the ‘Chinese homeland’. The Chinese elites could afford to ignore the ‘Chinese constituency’ as long as the apanjaht parties they backed did not directly infringe on elite business networks or the immediate interests of the Chinese ethnic entrepreneurs. However, no elite group could survive the loss of face resulting from supporting a party which managed to steer Suriname away from the PRC towards diplomatic recognition of Taiwan under the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). Nor would any Chinese establishment be able to survive renouncing the PRC.

In 2006 and 2007 Somohardjo appeared to be positioning himself as power broker in the ruling coalition. With the trial of Desi Bouterse, former military strongman and chairman of the opposition NDP party, for the murders of civilians in December 1980 looming, Somohardjo suggested that all the accused should be granted amnesty, subject to a popular referendum. This move was interpreted as a message that Pertjajah Luhur could leave the Nieuw Front and join NDP in a new ruling coalition. Nieuw Front dropped hints that his presence in the coalition need not be taken for granted, and eventually Somohardjo yielded and dropped the referendum issue. Somohardjo basically tried a similar kind of power play at the level of international relations when Pertjajah Luhur tried its hand at manipulating the Taiwanese and PRC pocketbook diplomacy. As the head of a parliamentary delegation to Beijing in January 2007, Somohardjo reaffirmed the One-China Principle to Wu Bangguo of the National People’s Congress. Three months later, a hitherto unknown organization, the Suriname-Taiwan Friendship Foundation (http://www.suriname-taiwan.org/index.htm) unleashed a massive campaign in the Surinamese media. David Chin, secretary of the Foundation, announced that Taiwan was offering more than US$ 100 million in aid, in return for recognition of

81 There were suggestions of renewed interest from a Chinese logging company in protected areas in Suriname, this time voiced by European front men using environmentally correct jargon (sustainability, carbon trading, bio-fuels). De Ware Tijd, 29 June 2007, ‘Emerald Group wil shoppen met bossen’ (Emerald Group wants to shop around with forests); ‘China in wachtkamer Bakhuysbauxiet’ (China waiting in the wings with regard to bauxite in Bakhuys area).

82 E.g. De Ware Tijd, 8 January 2007, ‘Pertjajah Luhur niet bang voor verlies coalitiepositie’ (Pertjajah Luhur not afraid of losing coalition partnership).

83 De Ware Tijd, 24 May 2007, ‘Somohardjo ‘krabbelt terug’ in amnestiekwestie’ (Somohardjo backtracks with regard to amnesty issue) De Ware Tijd, 28 May 2007, ‘Geen reshuffling van Pertjajah Luhur ministers’ (No reshuffle of Pertjajah Luhur ministers).

84 De Ware Tijd, 29 January 2007, ‘Somohardjo herbevestigt een-China beleid’ (Somohardjo reaffirms One-China Policy).
Taiwan as the Republic of China. The Surinamese government immediately reaffirmed the One-China Principle.

Even so, a Surinamese delegation prepared to visit Taiwan in July 2007, which apparently reflected conflicting views among various coalition parties on the One-China Policy. The PRC strongly objected to the visit. Deputy Chairman of the Assembly, and chairman of Nieuw Front coalition partner BEP, Mr. Caprino Alendy, was to head the delegation of representatives of various coalition and opposition parties, but pulled out at the last minute. In Taipei, President Chen Shui-bian announced that the offer of aid was an official offer to the Surinamese government. The PRC did prove to be sensitive to the popular feeling in Surinamese that almost 30 years of diplomatic relations with the PRC had yielded only rhetoric of solidarity and little substantial aid, surely compared to the US$ 100 million Taiwan was now offering. By early August the PRC promised to donate a US$ 3.2 million container scanner, speedboats, motorbikes and computers to the Surinamese Customs Service, and a week later a high-level delegation from PRC airplane manufacturer CATIC arrived to discuss extending its operations to Suriname, because of the country’s ‘strategic position in South America and the Caribbean.

---

85 De Ware Tijd, 27 April 2007, ‘Stichting pleit voor vriendschap met Taiwan’ (Foundation argues for friendship with Taiwan); Times of Suriname, 28 April 2007, ‘Bekendmaking Suriname-Taiwan Friendship Foundation’ (Announcement Suriname-Taiwan Friendship Foundation); ‘Taiwan biedt bijkans 200 miljoen dollar hulp in ruil voor “vriendschap”’ (Taiwan offers almost 200 million dollar in exchange for ‘friendship’).
86 De Ware Tijd, 30 April 2007, ‘Suriname houdt de deur dicht voor Taiwan’ (Suriname keeps the door closed on Taiwan); De Ware Tijd, 17 May 2007, ‘Suriname bevestigt “One China policy”’ (Suriname reaffirms One-China Policy).
87 De Ware Tijd, 20 June 2007, ‘Alendy naar Taiwan’ (Alendy heading to Taiwan); De Ware Tijd, 24 July 2007, ‘Politici zien geen probleem in samenwerking Taiwan’ (Politicians see no problem in Taiwan cooperation).
88 De Ware Tijd, 4 July 2007, ‘Beijing fel gekant tegen Taiwanreis Alendy’ (Beijing strongly opposed to Alendy’s trip to Taiwan); De Ware Tijd, 25 June 2007, ‘China ontbiedt Soerokarso om Taiwantrip’ (China summons Soerokarso because of Taiwan trip); De Ware Tijd, 28 June 2007, ‘China betreurt deelname coalitieleden aan Taiwantrip’ (China deplores participation of coalition members in Taiwan trip).
89 De Ware Tijd, 14 July 2007, ‘Alendy zegt af voor Taiwan’ (Alendy no longer going to Taiwan). The delegation consisted of Henk Deel (A-Combinatie), Hendrik Sakimin (Pertjajah Luhur), Rashied Doekhie (NDP), Theo Vishnudatt (VVV), Frank Gummels and Fried Meyer (DA’91) and two representatives of the business community, Danny Lo Fo Sang (VSB, Surinamese Business Community Association) and Antony Wong (Surinamese Chamber of Commerce and Industry). Pertjajah Luhur had asked Sakimin not to present himself as a party representative (De Ware Tijd, 22 June 2007, ‘Pertjajah Luhur stapt uit Taiwandelegatie’ (Pertjajah Luhur exits delegation to Taiwan)).
90 De Ware Tijd, 23 July 2007, ‘Hulpaanbod Taiwan aan Suriname nu officieel; Lidmaatschap VN aangevraagd’ (Taiwanese offer of aid to Suriname now official; UN membership application submitted) The offer was formalized by deputy minister vice-minister Javier Ching-shan Hou, by handing a letter to the (unofficial) Pertjajah Luhur representative Sakimin.
91 De Ware Tijd, 7 July 2007, ‘Containerscanner moet inkomsten staat verhogen’ (Container scanner should increase State income).
92 Of course CATIC will not start up operations in Suriname, due to prohibitively high costs.
The Surinamese huiguan and shetuan had always been careful to seek the approval and recognition of the PRC ambassador in Paramaribo.⁹³ They now rushed to limit the damage right after the Suriname-Taiwan Friendship Foundation announced the Taiwanese offer. In a full-page advertisement in The Times of Suriname, a ‘Federation of Chinese Associations in Suriname’ (Fa Tjauw Tjoen Foei), consisting of the usual ‘Old Chinese’ and New Chinese huiguan and institutions (Kong Ngie Tong Sang, Chung Fa Foei Kon, Fa Tjauw Song Foei, De Witte Lotus, Hua Chu Hui, Fujian Tongxiang Hui, Hainan Tongxiang Hui, Zhejiang Tongxiang Hui, Chung Tjauw, Fa Tjauw Foei Kon), as well as three new entities (Stichting Oriental Foundation, Guangzhou Tongxiang Hui, Dongguan Tongxiang Hui), stressed the loyalty of the Surinamese Overseas Chinese (huaqiao) to the PRC and the One-China Policy.⁹⁴ Any mention of Chinese support of Pertjajah Luhur – which was so obviously ignoring Chinese sensibilities – was carefully left out of the picture.

Political participation was never impossible for ethnic Chinese in Suriname, as ethnic Chinese with citizenship rights were free to vote and stand for office as individuals. Chinese migrants who lacked the right to vote could also be reasonably sure that their interests (in particular with regard to the retail trade, migration, and naturalization) were protected through the influence of ethnic Chinese elites in non-Chinese apanjaht parties, of which the Chinese wing of the NPS is the oldest and best example. However, Chinese elites wishing to extend their powerbase from the adaptive institutions that were a consequence of the Chinese ethnic ownership economy (or rather, the Fuidung'on Hakka ethnic ownership economy) into the political mainstream needed to be able to convince apanjaht parties of the benefits of guaranteeing direct Chinese representation in cabinet and the National Assembly.

The NPS route had never resulted in an ethnic Chinese representative, and Laiap cabinet ministers had not been reliably linked to huiguan networks. However, New Chinese immigration provided Chinese elites with a political opportunity. Aimed at preserving the status quo, apanjaht – the system of political power-sharing as well as multiculturalist ideology of inclusion and exclusion – does not cope well with immigration. Apanjaht logic dictated that there was only one Chinese ethnic group, and

⁹³ Cf. Li 1999b: 163.
⁹⁴ Times of Suriname, 28 April 2007, ‘Communique “Fa Tjauw Tjoen Foe”’ (Communique from Fa Tjauw Tjoen Foei). This instance of dollar diplomacy, which grew into a minor item in the global media, reflected broader regional developments in the ongoing tug of war between Taiwan and the PRC for recognition. St.Lucia switched from Taiwan to the PRC when the St.Lucia Labour Party came to power in 1997, but switched back to Taiwan in April 2007 following the United Workers Party’s win in December 2006 elections. In June 2007, long-standing Taiwanese ally Costa Rica switched to the PRC. At the local level, the Suriname-Taiwan Friendship Foundation was rumoured to be rather intimately tied to Pertjajah Luhur; David Chin was said to be a relative of a prominent Laiap Pertjajah Luhur advisor.

356
according to the same logic dramatically increased Chinese migration in the late 1990s (see Chart 1) implied that the Chinese might now be turning into a wild card in consociationalist power-sharing negotiations. Chinese migrants would likely play a clear role in upcoming elections, not primarily in terms of a constituency of registered voters (New Chinese migrants were not Surinamese citizens, and could not be made so without discrediting the ruling apanjaht elites), but in terms of apparently unprecedented numerical and financial power. Changing demographics could be used to the advantage of ambitious apanjaht elites, ethnic Chinese or otherwise, but also endanger an already vulnerable and highly visible minority group. For a constituency of self-employed Chinese entrepreneurial chain migrants, apanjaht clientelism meant control of the Ministry of Trade and Industry and influence in other state institutions that govern issues of migration and citizenship.

In the run-up to the 2005 elections, a Javanese route was chosen by rivals of the NPS Chinese; in return for the ethnic Chinese vote and material and financial support, an ethnic Chinese minister as well as an ethnic Chinese member of the National Assembly were virtually guaranteed. Probably for the first time a heated Chinese election campaign erupted in the huiguan-run Chinese language newspapers in Suriname to mobilize and reveal the actual strength of the ethnic Chinese vote, which pitted three Chinese views (associated with the Javanese Pertjajah Luhur, the Creole NPS, and the anti-apanjaht NDP) against each other. Though the Javanese route was successful and an ethnic Chinese minister and member of the Assembly were installed, in the power-sharing negotiations following the 2005 elections, Pertjajah Luhur traded the post of Minister of Trade and Industry, which had been held by two ethnic Chinese in succession, in favour of a specially created ministry in charge land allocation. Not only had the limited size of the ethnic Chinese vote become apparent, but the Chinese agents at the centre of the power-sharing negotiations were shown to be at the mercy of its Javanese-led partner. Then Pertjajah Luhur overreached itself by challenging the One-China Policy in an attempt to persuade the PRC to raise the stakes in its dollar diplomacy, which alienated ethnic Chinese supporters in Suriname even further and diminished the standing of those who had worked to unify the Chinese vote during the 2005 elections.

It would seem that Chinese ethnopolitics – the bid for structural participation of ethnic Chinese in Surinamese apanjaht politics beyond the established Chinese power bases – had failed. This is not unexpected given the disillusionment of the Chinese public with the consequences of the 2005 elections, the inability of the Chinese elites to explain citizenship to a Chinese constituency, which they were also hard pressed to define and mobilize, and the centrifugal tendencies inherent in local Chinatown politics. No matter how instrumental Chinese ethnic identity is evoked, and no matter what political entity will be prepared to host Chinese ambitions, reliable mobilization of a Chinese constituency in the future will
depend on whether Chinese in Suriname can unite despite various sub-ethnic divisions.

Identity will determine the role ethnic Chinese agents will be able to play in specific contexts in the future. For example, realignment of Chinese identity with the PRC could unify Chinese in Suriname, but would likely hamper their political empowerment if they would come to be viewed as representatives of a foreign power. The majority of ethnic Chinese in Suriname – people of Fuidung'on Hakka heritage, whether Tongap, Laiap or New Chinese – could conceivably claim Surinamese-Chinese identity, but that would effectively mean foregoing Sinocentric Chineseness on which traditional notions of Chinese migrant identity are based. In the logic of apanjaht ethnopolitics, Chinese participation will depend on public articulation of ethnic identity on specific occasions.

The 2005 legislative elections were important to Chinese socio-political participation because its timing uniquely allowed Chinese ethnic power brokers to negotiate continued and even increased participation in the apanjaht coalition that had won the previous elections. The elections of May 2005 followed the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the first Chinese indentured labourers and the sixth population census (that would define the ethnic balance so central to apanjaht consociationalist power-sharing), both in 2003. Future participation will likely be timed around celebrations of Chinese belonging in apanjaht multiculturalist ideology.