

# The search for national identity of an Indonesian Chinese : a political biography of Liem Koen Hian

Leo Suryadinata

## Ringkasan

L. Suryadinata menceritakan riwayat hidup Liem Koen Hian (1896-1952) dan membahas pikiran politiknya. Tokoh tersebut adalah salah seorang tokoh politik keturunan Tionghoa yang paling berpengaruh di Indonesia sebelum Perang Dunia II. Dia jadi wartawan di Kalimantan, di Sumatra dan terutama di Jawa, dan dia adalah yang mendirikan Partai Tionghoa Indonesia pada tahun 1932. Sebelum memperjuangkan nasionalisme Indonesia dia sebetulnya mempropagandakan nasionalisme Tionghoa ; dan tidak lama sesudah kemerdekaan dia akhirnya memilih kewarganegaraan Tionghoa. Meskipun demikian dia tetap dianggap sebagai bapak dan pelopor faham assimilasionalis.

## Abstract

Leo Suryadinata gives the biography and analyses the political thinking of Liem Koen Hian (1896-1952) who was one of the most influential Chinese-born political men in pre-war Indonesia. Being a journalist in Borneo, Sumatra and principally Java, he founded the Indonesian-Chinese Party (P.T.I.) in 1932. He had been a partisan of Chinese nationalism before choosing Indonesian nationalism. Just after the independence he finally adopted the Chinese nationality but despite this ultimate choice, he is still regarded as the father and the promoter of the assimilationist theory.

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## **THE SEARCH FOR NATIONAL IDENTITY OF AN INDONESIAN CHINESE: A POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY OF LIEM KOEN HIAN**

*by LEO SURYADINATA*

Liem Koen Hian (1896-1952) was a major political figure in pre-War *peranakan* \*) Chinese politics. He was the founder of the Indonesia-oriented Chinese party, the Partai Tionghoa Indonesia (PTI, the Indonesian Chinese Party), the ideas of which were shared by the post-War Chinese socio-political organization: the *Badan Permusjawaran Kewarganegaraan Indonesia* (Baperki, the Indonesian Citizens Consultative Body). Siauw Giok Tjhan, the chairman of the Baperki, was a member of the PTI \*\*) and was certainly exposed to Liem's ideas. The rival of the Baperki, the *Lembaga Pembinaan Kesatuan Bangsa* (LPKB, the Institute for the Development of National Unity) which was a semi-governmental organization, claimed the PTI as the vanguard of the "assimilationist movement" and indirectly claimed

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\*) The Chinese in Indonesia can be divided into two sub-cultural groups, i.e., Indonesian-speaking peranakans and Chinese-speaking totoks. Nevertheless, many totok children born after Indonesia's independence are being peranakanized. For various definitions of peranakan, see Charles A. Coppel, "Mapping the peranakan Chinese in Indonesia", *Papers Far Eastern History* (Canberra) Vol. 8 (September 1973) pp. 143-167. For peranakanization of totok children, see Leo Suryadinata, "Indonesian Chinese education: Past and Present", *Indonesia* (Cornell Modern Indonesia Project) Vol. 14 (Oktober 1972) pp. 83-94.

\*\*) Bujung Saleh, "Latar Belakang Sedjarah, Ekonomi, Politik dan Sosial Undang2 Kewarganegaraan RI 1958", in Baperki, *Segala Sesuatu Tentang Kewarganegaraan R.I.* (Djakarta, n.d.) p. 50.

Liem as its progenitor.\* ) Writers of the younger generation also consider Liem as the father of their assimilationist ideas.\*\*) It is surprising that no proper study has been made of this complicated and in many respects extraordinary person. Starting off as ardent Chinese nationalist, Liem in the 1920's joined the cause of Indonesian nationalism and threw his whole personality into the achievement of Indonesia's independence. Ironically, he felt compelled to renounce Indonesian citizenship only a few years after the establishment of an independent Indonesia.

The present study attempts to examine Liem's life and experience with special emphasis on his political thinking. Primary sources used for this study were newspapers, periodicals, pamphlets, books and personal interviews.

### **Liem the chinese nationalist**

Liem Koen Hian was born in Bandjarmasin, South Kalimantan, the eldest of seven children, in 1896. (1) His father, Liem Ke An, was a businessman. As usual among some well-to-do peranakan families, Liem was sent to a Dutch school in his home town for primary

\*) "Hari Piagam Assimilasi ke IV di Banjumas", *Bara Eka*, No. 5 (January-June 1965) p. 9 ; Sindhunata, "Masalah Tionghoa di Indonesia dalam Rangka Pembinaan Persatuan dan Kesatuan Bangsa", in Asikin Koesoemaatmadja SH, et al. *Himpunan Kuliah Politik Dalam Negeri* (Departemen Angkatan Darat Sekolah Staf dan Komando, July 1966, 61-720-08).

\*\*) Soe Hok-gie, "Liem Koen Hian dan Perjuangan Pembinaan Bangsa", *Bara Eka*, No. 6 (July-August 1965) pp. 6-11 ; Bud L. Worang, "Tjatatan Dari Assimilasi Keturunan Asing : Polemik Disertai Batjokan", *Sinar Harapan*, January 16, 1970.

(1) It seems that no one is sure about the date of birth of Liem Koen Hian. Tan Hong Boen did not mention when Liem was born (*Orang-Orang Tionghoa Jang Terkemoeka di Java*, Solo, 1935, p. 198). The editor of *Hoa Kiao* in Surabaja was of the opinion that Liem was about thirty in 1926. (*Hoa Kiao*, January 25, 1926, p. 11), i.e. he was born around 1896. Soe Hok-gie gave 1897 as the year of Liem's birth ("Liem Koen Hian", p. 6). After studying the biography of Liem, the present author is of the opinion that 1896 fits into the context quite well.

education but did not graduate.<sup>(2)</sup> After leaving school, he briefly worked for the Shell Oil Company in Balikpapan, but clerical work did not interest him. He left Balikpapan and returned to Bandjarmasin where he began to develop an interest in journalism, working for *Penimbangan*, a peranakan newspaper, before he made a name in journalism in Java.<sup>(3)</sup>

When World War I broke out, Liem sailed to Surabaja where he worked for a peranakan newspaper, *Tjhoen Tjhioe*,<sup>(4)</sup> under the chief editorship of Tjan Kiem Bie, a Dutch-educated peranakan journalist who had once been correspondent for *De Locomotief* in Semarang.<sup>(5)</sup> In early 1917, Liem resigned from *Tjhoen Tjhioe* and published a short-lived weekly of his own, *Soon Lim Poo*. This led to his withdrawal from the journalistic world for almost a year and half, while he set up a business in Atjeh.

In December 1918, however, Liem was invited to become the editor-in-chief of the Padang based *Sinar Sumatra*.<sup>(6)</sup> He was

(2). On early education of Liem, Tan Hong Boen noted that Liem received ELS education. (Tan, *Tionghoa Terkemoeka*, p. 198). Soe Hok-gie mentioned that Liem received six years HCS education. (Soe, "Liem Koen Hian", p. 6.) The present author believes that Tan was right for the following reasons: The first HCS was established in Djakarta in 1908 and followed by other cities in the Dutch Indies. It is most likely that the HCS in Bandjarmasin was established later than 1908. If Liem went to school at the age of seven, i.e. in 1903, the HCS was not yet established. By 1908 Liem was already twelve years old and it was unlikely that he went to the HCS at that age. Even if he attended the HCS in 1908 (more likely in 1909) and studied for six years, i.e., until 1914-1915, in 1915 (perhaps earlier than that) he was already in Java to become an editor of *Tjhoen Tjhioe*. He must have left school some years earlier since he worked for a Dutch Company and then for a Peranakan Chinese newspaper in Bandjarmasin. (Soe, "Liem Koen Hian", p. 7; Tan, *Tionghoa Terkemoeka*, p. 198.) If Liem received only three or four years HCS education, it would mean that he left school in 1912 or 1913. This is not likely the case because a student of the HCS who only learned Dutch for a couple of years in primary school could not have written articles in Dutch and translated English articles published in a leading Dutch newspaper in Surabaja in 1916. (Liem Koen Hian, "Oendang-Oendang Kerakjatan Olanda", *Sinar Sumatra*, February 3, 1919.)

A portrait of Liem Koen Hian will be found hereunder facing p. 65.

(3) Tan Hong Boen said the paper was called *Pengharepan* (Tan, *Tionghoa Terkemoeka*, p. 198); Soe Hok-gie said it was *Borneo Post* (Soe, "Liem Koen Hian", p. 7); Tio Ie Soei gave a different name, *Penimbangan*. (Interview). None of them are available in the library of the Djakarta Museum.

(4) *Tjhoen Tjhioe* was first published in 1914, but the earliest edition which was available in the library of the Djakarta Museum was published in 1915.

(5) Interview with Tio Ie Soei.

(6) One source said that Liem went to Medan and became the editor of a newspaper (probably *Medan Min Bao*). See Soe, "Liem Koen Hian", p. 7. The fact is that he went to Padang to edit *Sinar Sumatra*.

outspoken among peranakan journalists who believed in Chinese nationalism for the overseas Chinese. *Sin Po* was the main advocate of Chinese nationalism in Java; *Sinar Sumatra* was its counterpart in the Outer Islands.

To understand Liem during this period, one has to place him in the proper historical context.

The rise of the Pan-Chinese movement occurred in Java in the beginning of the twentieth century. This movement was not merely an expression of Chinese nationalism in China but also one of Chinese resentments against their inferior status in colonial society. The social structure in the Dutch East Indies was based on race. At the pinnacle of this social system were the Dutch; next came the *Vreemde Oosterlingen* (Foreign Orientals), composed mainly of the Chinese. At the bottom of the social rung were the indigenous Indonesians.

The Dutch legal system also gave the Chinese the worst of two worlds. As elsewhere they were under the jurisdiction of the Native Court (*Landraad*) which they regarded as inferior. But they were not allowed to own new agricultural land and were confined to ghettos and could only travel out of them with passes from the Dutch authorities. Toward the end of the 19th century, these Zoning and Pass systems were more rigidly imposed, and the Farming System (7) which was an important source of income for the Chinese in Java was abolished. The grievances of the Indies Chinese were intensified by the indifferent attitudes of the Dutch authorities toward the education of Chinese children.

In 1899 the Dutch recognized the growing power of Japan and allowed the Japanese in the Indies, who were classified as "Foreign Orientals", to be assimilated into the European legal status. This too stimulated nationalist sentiment and gave rise to Chinese nationalism in Java. The belief that their grievances would be redresser once China became strong gave further impetus to this sentiment.

Chinese nationalism at the beginning of the present century manifested itself in the formation of a Pan-Chinese association such as the *Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan* (THHK, the Chinese Association), which established Chinese-medium schools throughout Java. It was followed by the emergence of peranakan Chinese newspapers in *Bahasa Melaju Tionghoa* (peranakan Malay) such as *Li Po* (1901, Sukabumi), *Pewarta Soerabaia* (1902, Surabaya), *Kabar Perniagaan* (1903,

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(7) For a fuller account of the Revenue Farming System and the Chinese in Java, see Lea E. Williams, "The Ethical Program and the Chinese of Indonesia", *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, II (1961), 35-42.

Djakarta), *Djawa Tengah* (1909, Semarang) and *Sin Po* (1910, Djakarta). (8)

The rise of the pan-Chinese movement in the early twentieth century made the peranakan Chinese China-oriented. The THHK which originally aimed at promoting Chinese culture and Confucianism served the purpose of Chinese education. Chinese medium schools run by the association were set up in Java, and later throughout the Dutch East Indies. By 1911, there were already 74 schools in existence. (9)

The Chinese Imperial Government, realizing the importance of the Overseas Chinese for political support, increased its contact with the Indies Chinese, Chinese officials were sent to the Indies to supervise Chinese schools, scholarships were given to Chinese children to study in China. A few graduates of the THHK schools took the scholarships and went to their "ancestral land". In 1909 Imperial China, for the first time, promulgated a Nationality Law which claimed all the Chinese inside and outside China as Chinese citizens.

The development of the THHK schools and the increasing interest of the Chinese Imperial Government in the Indies Chinese alarmed the Dutch authorities. In 1908, the first Dutch primary school for the Chinese, the *Hollandsch Chineesche School* (HCS), was established in Djakarta and followed by other major cities. In 1910 one year after the announcement of Imperial China's Nationality Law, the Dutch announced the Dutch Nationality Law (*Nederlandsch Onderdaanschap*)<sup>(10)</sup> in which the Indies-born Chinese were considered to be Dutch subjects. This was meant to prevent the intervention of the Imperial Government of China over the Indies Chinese. The Dutch claim to the Indies Chinese led to a Consular Treaty between the Dutch and China in 1911 in which China agreed to give up the jurisdiction over the peranakan Chinese in return for a consulate in Djakarta. However, China by no means abandoned her claim to the overseas Chinese. (11)

(8) Leo Suryadinata, *The Pre-World War II Peranakan Chinese Press of Java: A Preliminary Survey* (Papers in International Studies Southeast Asia Serie No. 18) Ohio University, 1971.

(9) Lo T'ien, "Tung-yin-tu hua-ch'i'ao kuo-min chiao-yü kai-lun" (A Note on Overseas Chinese Education in the East Indies) in *Sin Po Jubileum Nummer 1910-1935* (Batavia), 1935), p. 89.

(10) The correct translation of the *Nederlandsch Onderdaanschap* is not "Dutch Nationality Law", but since there is no English equivalent the author uses a rough translation for esthetical purposes.

(11) For a full account on the Chinese national status in Indonesia see Donald E. Willmott, *The National Status of the Chinese in Indonesia*, Ithaca, N.Y. 1961.

In order to counter the Pan-Chinese movement, the Dutch further introduced a series of reforms including the opening of *Europeesche Lagere School* (ELS) to the Chinese, the admission of the HCS graduates to Dutch High School (HBS), the abolition of Zoning and Pass systems and *Politie-rol* (Police Court). Moreover, the Dutch authorities involved the peranakan Chinese in the newly-established *Volksraad* (People's Council) in 1918.

The Dutch policy succeeded in winning over some of the peranakan Chinese to their side. The Indies Chinese were then divided into two groups: the China-oriented and the Dutch Indies-oriented. However, the China-oriented group was still strong. This group reached its peak in 1917 when a Conference was held in Semarang to discuss participation of the Indies Chinese in the *Volksraad*. Thirty-nine Chinese organizations from all over Java sent their representatives and the majority voted against involvement in the *Volksraad*, although a few major organizations abstained.<sup>(12)</sup> Apparently, the Chinese distrusted the Dutch authority and did not see any advantage in participating in an advisory body like the *Volksraad*. In addition the Chinese wanted to remain aliens.

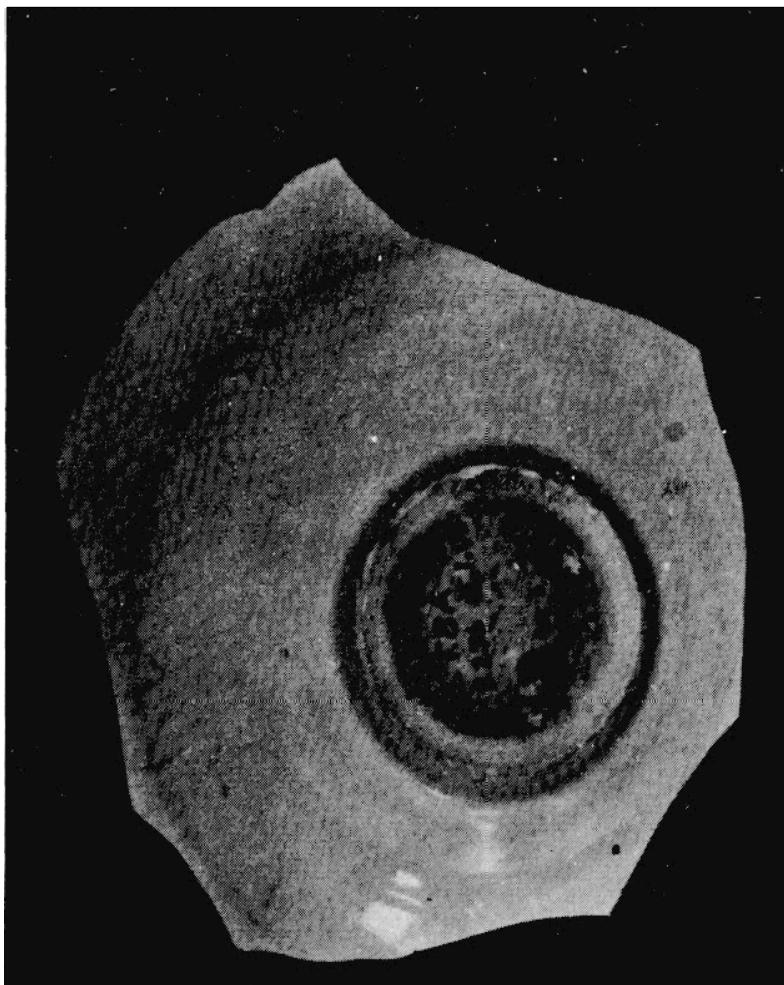
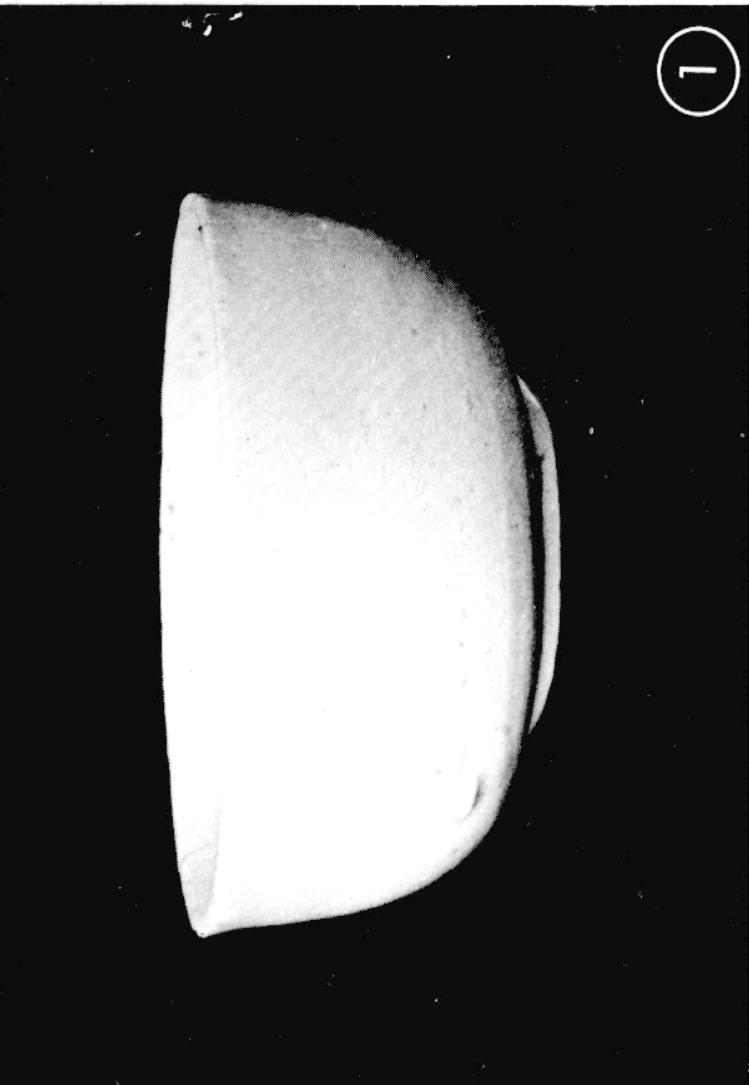
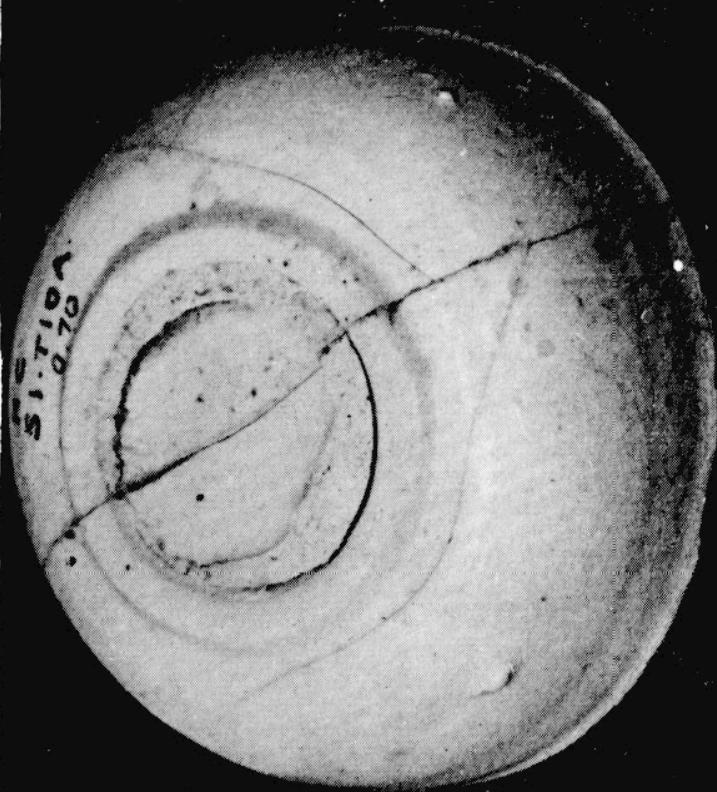
This non-cooperative movement with the colonial government was widely advertised by a Djakarta-based peranakan Chinese newspaper, *Sin Po*, which later became the champion of Chinese nationalism in the Indies. It was also this newspaper which launched the campaign against the Dutch Nationality Law early in 1919.<sup>(13)</sup>

Under the stimulus of the Pan-Chinese movement, the young and energetic Liem declared himself a Chinese nationalist. He later revealed that the humiliation and oppression he suffered in a Dutch school contributed to this nationalist sentiment.<sup>(14)</sup> As early as 1916, while he was still the editor of *Tjhoen Tjhioe* in Surabaja, Liem had published a few articles in the *Soerabaiasche Handelsblad* criticizing the bias and unfairness of the Dutch policy toward the Chinese. In addition, he attacked the Dutch Nationality Law which forced the peranakan Chinese to become Dutch subjects without giving them a repudiation right. He made it clear that he and his "people" did not

<sup>(12)</sup> A fuller treatment of the Conference of Semarang in 1917 is given in Leo Suryadinata, "Three Major Streams in Peranakan Chinese Politics in Java", Unpublished M.A. thesis, Monash University, 1970.

<sup>(13)</sup> *Sin Po*, January 28, 1919; April 15, 1919.

<sup>(14)</sup> "Haloean Kita V", *Sin Tit Po*, April 13, 1930.



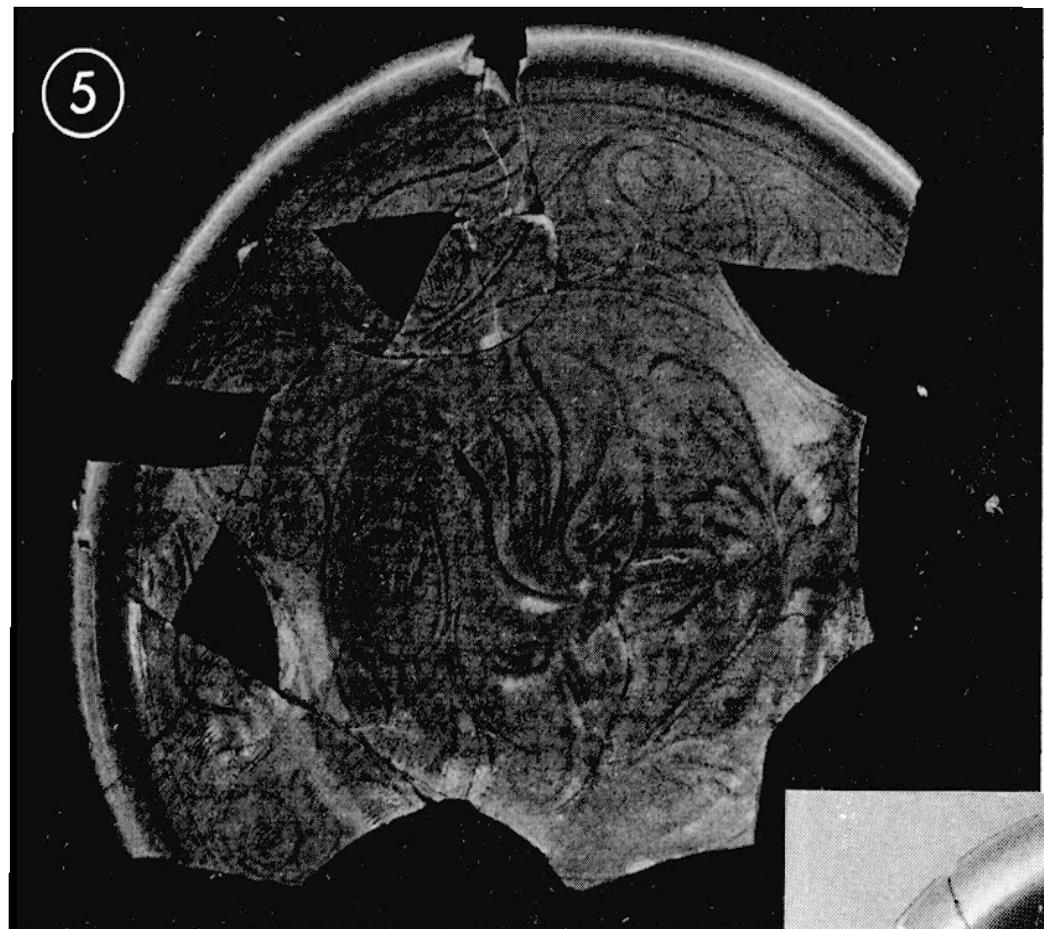
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wish to be Dutch subjects but wanted to remain Chinese citizens. (15)

Other Dutch newspapers, *De Locomotief* for instance, commented that Liem and his people were not satisfied because they were not given the rights in the case of the indigenous people of the Indies. Liem in an article replied that "... the view of *De Locomotief* was wrong. I have never and will never ask for the full rights of an Indies indigene for my people. My desire, and this is also that of my people, that we want the rights and obligations of aliens as enjoyed by the Japanese and other Europeans...That is all." (16)

Liem explained the reasons for the peranakan Chinese to become Chinese citizens. "I am a Chinese, I have a fatherland across the sea which is trying to enhance itself. In this attempt it urges help and assistance from its faithful sons, either those who are still in the country or overseas. Among its own sons overseas, it includes my people in the Indies, who, in turn, look to their fatherland to enhance their status. This is the duty of the peranakan Chinese that before we help other countries, we should help China first because we place all our hope on China. It is understandable that the improvement of our status overseas would come rather slowly but we will not lose our patience." (17)

He reiterated his nationalist view when *Sin Po* launched the campaign against the Dutch Nationality Law in 1919. The campaign, which originated as a campaign against the militia proposal for the Indies Chinese, drew substantial support from both totoks and peranakans.

The Chinese intended to get out of the militia by combating the Dutch Nationality Law. *Sin Po* succeeded in gathering 30,000 signatures of the Indies Chinese who wanted to maintain Chinese citizenship. Liem joined the *Sin Po* group and urged other organizations in Sumatra to launch their protest against the compulsory military service and the Dutch Nationality Law. Many people were doubtful that it would succeed, but he said that "success or failure is not important and this [consideration] should not stop us from taking action... If we fail this time, we will act again next time until we succeed. If we do not succeed, that is not our fault. However, the world would know

(15) Liem Koen Hian, "Oendang-Oendang Kerakjatan Olanda", *Sinar Sumatra*, February 5, 1919.

(16) *Ibid.*

(17) *Ibid.*

that the peranakan Chinese did not become Dutch subjects out of their free will." (18) Nevertheless, the campaign was not successful for lack of support from many peranakan leaders who had vested interest in the Indies, and the government of China renewed the 1911 Consular Treaty which acknowledged the jurisdiction of the Dutch over the Indies Chinese. (19)

Liem held the position of editor-in-chief of *Sinar Sumatra* until late 1921. He was later invited to Surabaja to edit *Pewarta Soerabaia*, a newspaper owned by The Kian Sing, a peranakan Chinese nationalist who was an outspoken leader at the Semarang Conference of 1917. Liem accepted the invitation and became the editor-in-chief of the newspaper in November 1921. He kept his Chinese nationalist view and was very critical of Dutch policy. When Hauw Tek Kong, the former leader of the campaign against the Dutch Nationality Law reversed his opinion and urged the peranakans to accept Dutch nationality and be loyal Dutch subject in the Indies, Liem accused him of day-dreaming. Liem said that assimilation of the Chinese with the Dutch would only be possible if 800,000 Chinese in the Indies were cooked together with a few thousand Dutch in a huge cooking pot from which the new human beings were created. (20) Liem's writings during this period were radical and anti-colonial in character.

### **Liem the Indonesian nationalist**

In March 1925, Liem resigned from *Pewarta Soerabaia*. It was said that his anti-colonial and Chinese nationalist views annoyed the Dutch and peranakan Chinese advertisers of *Pewarta Soerabaia*. They refused to put advertisements in the paper which led to a conflict between the Director and Liem. In May 1925, he joined *Soeara Publiek*, a peranakan newspaper which was also published in Surabaja, where he remained until early 1929. It was during this period that Liem began to develop a new orientation which was known as "Indisch Burgerschap" (Indies Citizenship). According to this concept, the Indies was the homeland of the peranakans. Therefore they had to have the same rights and obligations as indigenous Indonesians. He developed his concept of "Indisch Burgerschap" into "Indonesierschap" (Indonesian Citizenship) at the end of the twenties and the beginning of the thirties when he became the editor-in-chief of *Sin Tit Po*. (21)

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(18) Liem, "Oendang-Oendang", February 5, 1919.

(19) For a fuller discussion on the campaign, see Suryadinata, "Three Major Streams", pp. 25-48.

(20) H.T.K. [Hauw Tek Kong], "Jingoisme", *Keng Po*, January 29, 1925.

(21) "Ka-Indonesierschap", *Sin Tit Po*, April 2, 1930.

In his "Indisch Burgerschap" concept, he did not make it clear whether or not peranakans had to work with Indonesians for self-governing Indonesia, but he made it quite explicit in his "Indonesierschap".

This change of view resulted from several factors. First, the racial antagonism resulting from the Communist Uprisings of 1926-27 was increasing. Liem was convinced that the struggle between the Dutch and indigenous Indonesians would eventually lead to Indonesia's independence. Even before attaining independence, indigenous Indonesians had begun to prepare themselves in the economic field as shown by the activities of some Indonesian associations. This was a basic right of indigenous Indonesians. If the peranakan Chinese remained Chinese politically, they would be driven out of the commercial field. It was in the interests of the peranakan Chinese to support Indonesia's independence and win over the sympathy of indigenous Indonesians.

Second, Liem came across Dr. Tjipto Mangoenkoesoemo's writings and familiarized himself with Tjipto's ideas. He shared Dr. Tjipto's view about the gradual development of an "East Indies Nation" (read : Indonesia) made up of all people who considered the Dutch East Indies to be their motherland and who helped to develop the country actively. Peranakans (Dutch Eurasians, peranakan Chinese and peranakan Arabs) were one of the constituent groups of the nation. (22)

In Liem's opinion, peranakans should be separated from totoks because they had a different way of life. Peranakans were closer to indigenous Indonesians of the same region rather than to their totok counterparts. Whereas a peranakan would be quite accustomed to living among the indigenous Indonesians he woud feel uneasy among the totoks. China was still the homeland of totoks, but this was not the case for peranakans. To peranakans, China was a land of mystery. Therefore, the integration of the peranakan Chinese into indigenous communities would be much easier than for the totoks. Liem believed that "the peranakan Chinese cannot consider Indonesia as a foreign country or as a temporary residence. Their status, their interests... and their feelings are growing closer to the Indonesian Nation of which they form an integral part as time elapses." (23)

However, Liem did not argue that peranakans should be assimilated into the indigenous Indonesian communities in the sense that they should become Muslims, change their names and abandon their customs. He considered these things to be personal matters — the

(22) M. Balfas, *Dr. Tjipto Mangoenkoesoemo : Demokrat Sedjati*, Djakarta, 1952, p. 81-82, also "Haloean Kita V", *Sin Tit Po*, April 14, 1930.

(23) "Ka-Indonesierschap".

future Indonesian Nation would have room for cultural differences. (24) Nonetheless, he never detailed the composition of a future Indonesian Nation.

His orientation towards Indonesia and his identification with the goal of Indonesian nationalism brought him into conflict with the *Sin Po* Group which advocated Chinese nationalism among the peranakan Chinese. He argued that the *Sin Po* Group wanted the peranakan Chinese working only for their assimilation to European status. After they achieved that aim, they had to sit down and look at China, from where the protection would come, otherwise the peranakan Chinese would be kicked around like a ball. (25) He further argued that Chinese nationalism "at the present moment can be used as a weapon to drive away the enemy, but it can also be used to create trouble for those who are not enemies... In China, Chinese nationalism can be used to drive away the country's enemy. To the peranakan Chinese, the weapon is useless. Who is the enemy that the peranakan Chinese are going to drive away? They armed themselves with [Chinese] nationalism now and will bring harm to the people of Indonesia in the future when China is strong, just as the imperialists are doing to China now." (26)

If Liem disagreed with the *Sin Po* Group, he was also very critical about the leaders of the *Chung Hwa Hui* (CHH, the Chinese Association) who were accused by Liem of being pro-Dutch.

Before dealing with Liem's criticism of the CHH, it would be useful to touch briefly on the CHH and its ideas. The CHH was officially formed on April 4, 1928, and composed of many well-to-do peranakan businessmen and Dutch-educated Chinese intellectuals. It was supported by the largest Chinese company in Java, the Oei Tiong Ham Concern with its headquarters in Semarang. The aim of the CHH, as stated in its Constitution, was "to work for the betterment of the Chinese in the Dutch East Indies in a very wide sense through proper and legal means." (27) Participation in local politics was considered to be the means to achieve this end. (28) Convinced by the security given by the colonial government, the CHH leaders, at least the H.H. Kan group which dominated the party, showed a pro-Dutch

(24) "Menjesatken Pembatja", *Sin Tit Po*, April 7, 1930.

(25) "Haloean Kita", *Sin Tit Po*, April 9-16, 1930.

(26) "Haloean Kita II", *Sin Tit Po*, April 10, 1930.

(27) Bona Fide, "'Chung Hua Hui' dan Bangsa Tionghoa", *The National* (Fort de Kock) No. 1 (March 1928), p. 18.

(28) "Chinezen Bond", *The National*, No. 2 (April 1928), pp. 37-38.

attitude in the political struggle between the Dutch and the indigenous Indonesians.

Liem was briefly associated with the CHH. He was nominated as a candidate for executive member in 1928 but was not elected. (29) He became disillusioned with the top leaders of the CHH and began to criticise the CHH for putting their feet in two boats, i.e., Chinese and Dutch governments. (30) He was particularly resentful of the pro-Dutch colonialist attitude of some top leaders in the CHH. He was of the opinion that the CHH leaders "want the peranakan [Chinese] to see the peranakan's interests through glasses." (31) However, "they are not many peranakan Chinese whose interests are closely linked with the Dutch and who are more anxious than the Dutch-men to keep the Dutch rule forever... Probably only a small number of people like H.H. Kan who regards the end of the Dutch rule as the end of the world." (32)

Liem was criticized by his opponents for shifting his conviction from time to time. He defended himself by saying that men continue to develop and what was suitable for him at one period did not necessarily mean that it would suit him for the rest of his life. (33) He later claimed that he did not abandon his political conviction. He maintained that "Previously I called myself a Chinese nationalist... [now] I call myself an Indonesian nationalist. It does not mean that I have changed my political conviction [belief], I have merely changed its object. Because I live in Indonesia, I believe I can do more for Indonesia than for China. However, the content of my conviction has not changed, for the content of Chinese nationalism is identical to Indonesia nationalism. I genuinely believe that the change of object cannot be condemned." (34)

In Surabaja, Liem lived among Indonesian nationalists and his job as a journalist kept him in close touch with the Indonesian nationalist movement. In May of 1932, Liem succeeded in staging a soccer boycott among the Asians in Surabaja which led to his detention. Since the boycott was made as a political issue and was important in the future political career of Liem, more space has to be devoted to it.

In early May 1932, a soccer match sponsored by the Surabaja Soccer Association took place. The Association refused to give free

(29) *Sin Po*, April 12, 1928.

(30) "Chung Hwa Hui Java", *Sin Tit Po*, August 17, 1931.

(31) "Haloean Kita III", *Sin Tit Po*, April 11, 1930.

(32) "Haloean Kita IV", *Sin Tit Po*, April 12, 1930.

(33) "Haloean Kita V", *Sin Tit Po*, April 14, 1930.

(34) "Sekali Lagi Boeat Toeant Soedarjo Tjokrosisworo", *Sin Tit Po*, August 25, 1936.

tickets to the Peranakan Chinese Press in Surabaja which sparked off protest from the Peranakan Chinese Press in general. The Surabajan Peranakan Chinese Press threatened to withdraw future co-operation with the Association and to boycott the match. Touching on the incident, a Dutch officer, Bekker, published an article saying that co-operation from the colored people was not needed. The Peranakan Chinese Press made this into an issue on which they could mobilize an Anti-Dutch campaign. They argued that the whites had been too arrogant and had humiliated the colored people, therefore, the colored people should teach them a lesson. (35)

On the initiative of *Sin Tit Po* and with the full support of the Indonesian nationalist newspaper *Soeara Oemoem*, the official organ of the Persatoean Bangsa Indonesia (PBI, Indonesian National Union), a meeting was called in Surabaja on May 8, 1932. Forty organizations, including political parties and sport associations of the three races (the indigenous Indonesians, Peranakan Chinese and Peranakan Arabs) sent representatives to the meeting. (36) Liem was elected chairman. It was decided that a Colored People's Committee (*Comité Bangsa Berwarna*) called the *Comité van Actie Persatoean Bangsa Asia* be formed to organize boycotts of soccer matches. The meeting was used by the Indonesian nationalists as a forum to condemn Dutch colonialism. The boycott was used as a political issue. Several speakers were interrupted by the police because their speeches were regarded as anti-government in content and thus might endanger public security. Liem ignored the police and allowed the speakers to continue their speeches. He was detained soon after the formation of the Committee. This led to protests from the Indonesian nationalists, especially from the Central Committee of the PBI and M. Hoesni Thamrin as the president of the PPPKI in the *Volksraad* at that time. (37) Following the protest, Liem was released. He had the same support of the Indonesian nationalists when he eventually founded a new party in September 1932.

Racial prejudice against the Dutch was growing in the early thirties. The Indonesian members in the *Volksraad* who used to co-operate with the Dutch now departed from what they called "association politics". (38) The Peranakan political leaders were also aware of the situation. A younger group within the CHH, wanted to be neutral in the struggle between the Dutch and indigenous Indonesians.

(35) *Djawa Tengah*, May 11, 12, 1932.

(36) *Ibid.*

(37) *Djawa Tengah*, May 19, 1932.

(38) Suryadinata, "Three Major Streams". pp. 80-84.

The most prominent leader was Phoa Liang Gie, a Leyden-trained young lawyer who was also the director of *Siang Po* in Djakarta. Two Left-wing peranakan leaders, — Dr. Loe Ping Kian and Dr. Kwa Tjoan Sioe, — were known for their sympathetic attitude towards the *Sin Po* group and anti-Dutch, condemning the CHH for being pro-Dutch and doing nothing for poor Chinese.<sup>(39)</sup> The criticisms of these two peranakan intellectuals led to an open debate between the leftist peranakan Chinese intellectuals and the CHH leaders. Apparently, no compromise was achieved between the leaders of the *Sin Po* Group and those of the CHH.

### Liem the founder of the Indonesian Chinese Party.

On August 23, 1932, Liem delivered a public lecture in Surabaja on the three political streams in the peranakan Chinese community. He reiterated his criticism of the *Sin Po* Group and was particularly critical of the CHH. He was of the opinion that the leaders were pro-Dutch, as shown by H.H. Kan who was opposed to the proposal of "indigenous majority in the *Volksraad*" and Tan Tjiang Ling, a CHH representative in the Surabaja Municipal Council, who also opposed the increase of indigenous representatives in the council. Liem believed that the CHH created an impression that the Indies Chinese sided with the Dutch and its colonial government, thus, for the sake of the peranakan Chinese, a new peranakan party to confront the CHH was necessary. In this connection, he defended his "stream" which was known as the pro-*Indonesiër* stream.

Liem reintroduced the term "Indonesiër" (Dutch word for Indonesian) and argued that the peranakan Chinese had to be conscious of being "Indonesiërs." Liem explained his ideas as follows :

"The term Indonesier can mean an indigenous Indonesian which is an ethnological concept, but it can also mean citizens of this country, which is in a political sense. As to the term *Nederlander*, it can mean a totok Dutch, a totok German, a totok Englishman or [even] a totok Chinese... Therefore, it is not extraordinary if the term Indonesiers not only means indigenous Indonesians but also those who are citizens (*rakjat*) of Indonesia.

One might argue that as long as Indonesia is not yet independent, there will neither be Indonesian citizenship nor the *Indonesiër* in the political sense.

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<sup>(39)</sup> "Chung Hwa Hui Batavia", *Pewarta Soerabaia*, July 25-26, 1932.

This view, of course, is correct. If there is any fallacy in the stream [that I advocate], it is that it attaches a political concept to *Indonesiër* ahead of the development of this country.

However, it is better not to call it a fallacy, I think it is more appropriate to call it a prediction. We do not only look into the present but also the future.

... I believe that in the near future the political concept will emerge and Indonesian citizenship will be available for not only the indigenous Indonesians but also the peranakan Chinese, peranakan Dutch and peranakan Arabs.

.....

It is in this political sense that I use the term *Indonesiër* ... I neither talked nor intend to talk about whether or not it is possible that the peranakan Chinese be absorbed (*di-leboer*) into indigenous Indonesian community. I am of the opinion that the absorption is a process which must necessarily depend on the time and the situation without man's interference, i.e. to speed up or slow down the process will develop naturally and no one will be able to stop it.

What we can and must do is to instill the consciousness of being Indonesiers among the peranakan Chinese as soon as possible. The peranakan Chinese must have this consciousness for they are *peranakan* Chinese, i.e. they are more Indonesian than Chinese. Although they are the descendants of the two races, they continue to live in Indonesia, live and think as the indigenous Indonesians, speak *bahasa* Indonesia. They are dissimilar to the [native] Chinese.

Moreover, the peranakan Chinese must have this consciousness because they have lived and will live and make a living for many generations and will be buried here as well.

...Since we consider this country as our mother land, feel and think as Indonesiers and are prepared to take the responsibilities for this country with the indigenous people who are the race of our mother, therefore, we are already Indonesiers..." (40)

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(40) "Tiga Aliran Politiek Dalem Doenia Tionghoa Peranakan", *Sin Tit Po*, August 26, 1932.

Liem's argument for the peranakan Chinese to become *Indonesiers* received a warm response from the audience. The editor of *Pewarta Soerabaia*, however, disagreed with Liem's suggestion. He was of the opinion that by being *Indonesiers*, the peranakan Chinese would get involved in the political struggle and relegate themselves to an inferior status.

Liem argued that it was inevitable that the peranakan Chinese would get involved in the political struggle between the Dutch and the Indonesian whether or not they wanted to. As to relegation to an inferior status, Liem retorted that the position of the Chinese in the eyes of the Dutch in fact was not high at all. They were looked down upon by Dutch officials. As an example, he cited the behavior of a customs official towards the Chinese. (41)

Dr. Soetomo, the president of the PBI who attended the meeting, made a speech after Liem supporting his ideas of *Indonesierschap*. He too believed that peranakan Chinese should become *Indonesiers* and it was the only way for peranakan Chinese to live in Indonesia safely and prosperously.

One month after the talk, Liem and other peranakan Chinese who identified themselves with the goal of Indonesian nationalism formed a new peranakan Chinese party, the *Partai Tionghoa Indonesia* (PTI, the Indonesian Chinese Party).

The founding members of the new party included Kwee Thiam Tjing, a Dutch-educated journalist, and Ong Liang Kok a young lawyer and ex-CHH member. (42) The founding meeting was held on September 25, 1932, in Surabaja.

The aims of the PTI was "to help Indonesia to develop economically, socially and politically towards a state where the people enjoyed equal rights and equal obligation." (43) The party intended to achieve its aims by strengthening the economic status of the peranakan Chinese, participating in the political struggle in Indonesia and co-operating with the Indonesian political parties which had the same objectives. (44) Since the Dutch Law only allowed Dutch subjects to get involved in politics, therefore, only Indies-born Chinese were admitted as ordinary members of the PTI and alien Chinese could only become associate members without voting rights.

In the founding meeting Liem was chosen as the president, Kwee

(41) *Ibid.*

(42) Ong Liang Kok left the PTI in 1933.

(43) *Sin Tit Po*, September 26, 1932.

(44) *Ibid.*

Thiam Tjing secretary and Ong Liang Kok treasurer. One day after the formation Liem wrote in *Sin Tit Po* :

"With the birth of the PTI the [peranakan] Chinese in Indonesia have two political parties whose ideas contradict one another: One is the Chung Hwa Hui-Java which is extremely hostile to the Indonesian people and the other is the PTI which, from the day of its formation, stands on the side of the Indonesian nationalist parties and is recognized by these parties as a friend." (45)

Two peranakan Chinese lawyers in Semarang, Ko Kwat Tiong and Ko Tjay Sing, who were well-known for their pro-Indonesian nationalist attitude and close friends of Liem, arranged a public meeting to invite Liem in connection with the formation of the PTI Semarang branch. Liem came to Semarang and delivered a talk entitled "Indonesian Thinking and the peranakan Chinese" which reiterated the points that he made on August 23. (46) He also made two new points on the struggle for Indonesia's independence. He urged the Chinese nationalists to change their "object" from China to Indonesia and work for Indonesian independence. In addition, he clarified that to work for Indonesia's independence did not mean to create a revolution, but to work through constitutional means and support the Indonesian nationalists in various political institutions, such as the *Volksraad* and local councils. He believed in evolution, not revolution, in the struggle for independence.

The meeting was attended by many peranakan Chinese from various political streams, including supporters of the *Sin Po* Group and the CHH. After Liem finished his speech, a debate between Liem and the audience ensued. (47)

Pwa Khay Hien, a peranakan Chinese nationalist, disagreed with Liem's argument on changing the object of Chinese nationalist. He contended that a Chinese nationalist should regard the interests of China as paramount. Liem argued that a Chinese nationalist is anti-colonialist, and in Indonesia a Chinese nationalist should work for Indonesia's independence because it coincided with the anti-colonialist movement. China was too far away from Indonesia and it was unrealistic to work for a land which was a mystery for most of the peranakans.

(45) *Ibid.*

(46) "Causerie Pikiran Indonesia dan Peranakan Tionghoa", *Djawa Tengah*, October 11-12, 1932.

(47) *Ibid.*

Chan Thiam Hoo, another peranakan Chinese nationalist asked Liem: "Why does the PTI's constitution not mention anything about China?"

Liem answered: "because we continue to live in Indonesia, not in China."

"Being Indonesiers, what should we do if China and Indonesia were at war?" Asked Thio Ping Liep, another peranakan Chinese nationalist.

Liem's reply was: "war between China and Indonesia is very remote, but we shall still discuss it. If they were at war, we would have to probe the cause of the war first. If it was caused by Chinese imperialistic ideas I would definitely fight on the Indonesian side, because China by doing so has betrayed the ideas of Sun Yat-sen. I think the Chinese here would also side with the Indonesians and fight against China." Liem's answer received a warm response from the audience. (48)

After the discussion, Ko Kwat Tiong announced the formation of the PTI Semarang branch. However, he made it clear that the constitution of the PTI was now being revised. The membership was to be open both to Indies- and foreign-born Chinese. Therefore, the nature of the party became more social than political. Since the Dutch Law only allowed Dutch subjects to participate in local politics and foreign-born Chinese were not Dutch subjects, the latter were barred from political participation in the Indies. To solve this problem, the PTI established a special section which only allowed the Indies-born Chinese to join. This special section was called the "Election" (*Kies Afdeeling*) which specifically dealt with matters concerning politics, such as election for the *Volksraad* and local councils.

Liem, who wanted to separate peranakans (primarily Indies-born) from totoks (primarily foreign-born), clearly gave in for the solidarity of the newly-born PTI. However, his ideas of separating peranakans and totoks was still alive and manifested itself in the 1935 debate with Kwee Kek Beng, the editor-in-chief of *Sin Po*.

After the formation of the Semarang branch, Ko Kwat Tiong, the president, and Ko Tjay Sing, the secretary of the new branch, were active in establishing new branches in Central Java. By the end of 1932, the PTI had formed eleven branches, mainly in East and Central Java. The effort to set up a branch in Bandung failed because of the CHH's "sabotage". Nonetheless, PTI remained a small party, the total membership in 1933 was only 600. (49)

(48) *Ibid.*

(49) "Congres Pertama Dari P.T.I.", *Sin Tit Po*, June 6, 1933.

In February 1933, the PTI held a rally at which Liem was chosen as the president of the Central Committee. In June 1933, the PTI called its first Congress which again attracted the attention of the Indonesians as evidenced by the presence of delegates from various Indonesian secular nationalist parties.

Dr. Tjipto Mangoenkoesoemo, the man whom Liem admired, sent a letter from exile congratulating the PTI. Dr. Tjipto cheered the formation of the PTI. He urged the peranakan Chinese to work for "Indonesia mother" but not to forget "China father". The friendship of Liem and Dr. Tjipto was further manifested in a debate between Liem and Dr. Soetomo in later years.

The most impressive speech in the congress was made by Dr. Soetomo on the role and history of the peranakan Chinese in Indonesia. He surveyed the nature of Chinese activities in Indonesia from early centuries till the rise of the Pan-Chinese movement, arguing that the peranakan Chinese were important assets of Indonesia. He even claimed that the peranakan Chinese were the pillars of the future Indonesian nation which would gain their rewards in the future. (50)

Liem on behalf of the PTI warmly responded to Dr. Soetomo's speech. He made it explicit that the aims of the PTI were to work for Indonesia's independence and pursue racial equality with indigenous Indonesians.

### **Liem and the Indonesian nationalist**

Also in early 1933, Liem left *Sin Tit Po* for unknown reasons. One explanation was that he quarrelled with the director. Kwee Hing Tjiat, the ex-*Sin Po* man who became an advocate of the Assimilationist movement, invited him to join *Mata Hari*, a newspaper sponsored by the Oei Tiong Ham Concern in Semarang which had a close link with the CHH. Liem was jobless and accepted the invitation. He set up a branch of *Mata Hari* in Surabaja. The CHH men were unhappy with him, however, and forced him to leave *Mata Hari*. (51) Liem then moved to Djakarta and studied at the Law School (Recht Hogeschool). In the meantime he assisted in running *Siang Po*, a newspaper owned by Phoa Liong Gie, a young lawyer who left from the CHH in 1934. Liem was listed as a "regular Contributor" (*Pembantoe Tetap*) of *Siang Po* but many contemporary observers believed he was the actual editor-in-chief. (52)

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(50) *Ibid.*

(51) Liem Koen Hian, "Bikin Soesah Penghidoepan", *Sin Tit Po*, May 10, 1935.

(52) Tan, *Tionghoa Terkemoeka*, p. 199.

He wrote numerous articles for *Siang Po* which were reprinted in *Sin Tit Po*. It was obvious that his connection with the PTI in Surabaja was still close. When the PTI participated in the 1935 *Volksraad* election, Liem in Djakarta was running the campaign for the PTI's candidate, Ko Kwat Tiong. Ko Kwat Tiong was elected and broke the dominance of the CHH and Yo Heng Kam's group in the *Volksraad*.

Liem continued to attack the CHH, annoying many CHH leaders. In July 1935, soon after the *Volksraad* election, he was assaulted by an unidentified person. Several suspects, including one CHH leader in Djakarta, were held for attempted murder. Nonetheless, they were eventually released because of insufficient evidence.

If in Surabaja Liem co-operated with the moderate Indonesian nationalists, such as leaders of the PBI, in Djakarta he came into contact with more radical nationalists, such as Muh. Yamin, Sanoesi Pane and Amir Sjarifoeddin. Not surprisingly his writings became more radical than ever. He continued to propagate Indonesian nationalism among the peranakan Chinese and assisted Yamin, Sanoesi and Amir to publish *Kebangoenan*, a newspaper printed by the *Siang Po* Printing Press, and shared news items and articles with *Siang Po* as well, at least in the initial period.<sup>(53)</sup> Liem's leftist tendencies became more obvious in his writings during this period as shown in his debate with Dr. Soetomo. This was in 1936. Dr. Soetomo wrote a number of articles in *Soeara Oemoem* about his recent trip to Japan. He was impressed by Japan's achievement and expressed his admiration. He advocated a closer relationship between Indonesia and Japan for Indonesian's benefits.<sup>(54)</sup> Liem criticised Dr. Soetomo's articles of being superficial and further accused him as a "Propagandist of Japanese Imperialism". Liem's objection was that Dr. Soetomo did not describe Japan as an imperialistic country because he ignored to look into the imperialistic structure of Japan's economy and politics. In Liem's opinion, Japan was at the stage of mature capitalism and for this reason, Japan's policy towards Asia was aggressive.

Dr. Soetomo rejected the criticism. He said that Liem did not like Japan because he was of Chinese descent. Several indigenous newspapers also defended Dr. Soetomo by accusing Liem of being

<sup>(53)</sup> The author has compared the contents of the two newspapers which lead to this conclusion. He is indebted to Mr. Tjoa Tjie Liang who has drawn his attention to this point.

<sup>(54)</sup> For a fuller discussion on the debate between Dr. Soetomo and Liem Koen Hian, see Leo Suryadinata, "Pre-War Indonesian Nationalism and the Peranakan Chinese", *Indonesia* (Cornell modern Indonesia Project), No. 11 (April 1971) pp. 83-94.

non-Indonesian and attempting to split the Indonesian nationalist movement.<sup>(55)</sup> Leftist Indonesians such as Dr. Tjipto and Sanoesi Pane defended Liem and regarded him as an Indonesian (*Indonesiër*) because he was conscious of Indonesian interests and worked for Indonesia's independence. Dr. Tjipto even said that "no one has the right to make this debate a fight between Chinamen and *Inlanders* [natives]."<sup>(56)</sup> "Liem Koen Hian is an Indonesian, with or without a *pitji*, for Indonesian is a political concept."<sup>(57)</sup>

The debate was put down by Dr. Tjipto. It is interesting to note that though Liem engaged in a polemic with Dr. Soetomo, he still respected him and regarded him as a prominent nationalist leader. When Dr. Soetomo died in May 1938, Liem wrote an article entitled "Raden Soetomo"<sup>(58)</sup> in which he said that the Chinese of Java owed a great deal to Dr. Soetomo, because the latter fought for the membership of peranakan Chinese in the Parindra<sup>(59)</sup> even though he did not succeed. Liem also believed that the Parindra was not against Chinese openly because Dr. Soetomo acted as "a break on the conflict between Indonesians and Chinese." Liem and other PTI leaders attended the funeral service to pay their last respect.

In the late thirties the anti-Japanese feelings became stronger than ever among the Indies Chinese due to the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War. Liem was also active in anti-Japanese propaganda. In 1938, he even published a book on Japan entitled *Tiongkok dan Djepang* (China and Japan), which supposedly consisted of two volumes.<sup>(60)</sup> One might argue that he attacked Japan because Japan was at war with China and he was of Chinese descent; however, his leftist ideology certainly played significant role on this matter.

Liem left *Siang Po* and became the editor-in-chief of *Kong Hoa Po* in April 1937. The fact that this newspaper was also published by the *Siang Po* Printing Press in Djakarta, suggests that there was still a link between these two papers. Nonetheless, he eventually left *Kong Hoa Po* in November 1938 and was invited by Dr. Tjoa Sik Ien, the new president of PTI Surabaja branch and the proprietor of *Sin Tit Po*, to edit the newspaper. Liem took the position in January 1939 but

<sup>(55)</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>(56)</sup> *Kebangoenan*, September 21, 1936; *Sin Tit Po*, September 22, 1936.

<sup>(57)</sup> *Ibid.* *Pitji* is a black velvet hat worn by the indigenous Indonesians.

<sup>(58)</sup> *Sin Tit Po*, May 31, 1938.

<sup>(59)</sup> Parindra, an abbreviation of *Partai Indonesia Raya* which was developed from the Persatuan Bangsa Indonesia (PBI) and Budi Utomo in the mid-1930's. It was a major party in this period.

<sup>(60)</sup> The author has not come across the second volume. He suspects that it was never published.

was soon replaced by Tan Ling Djie, a PTI man and an "illegal PKI" member, because Liem did not want to give up his law study in Djakarta.

The year 1938 also saw a split in the PTI. This was on the eve of the *Volksraad* election. Liem was nominated by the PTI as the first candidate while Ko Kwat Tiong, the president of the PTI Central Bureau, was not nominated. Ko Kwat Tiong therefore participated in the *Volksraad* election as an independent candidate. Liem wanted the *Volksraad* seat for himself and he gained the full support of the PTI Surabaja branch. He began to attack Ko Kwat Tiong on the ground that Ko had "conspired" with the CHH leaders and attempted to ruin the PTI. He even revealed that Ko had asked him to leave the PTI and form a new party. (61) If in the 1925 *Volksraad* election the PTI cooperated with the Cigarette Merchants Association, this time it had to stand alone. In addition, it had to face an internal split. Not surprisingly, the PTI lost the election, but Ko Kwat Tiong was not elected either. This even resulted in the expulsion of Ko Kwat Tiong from the PTI.

In 1939, the Gerindo (*Gerakan Rakjat Indonesia*, Indonesian People's Movement) opened its membership to peranakan and Liem joined the party. Nevertheless, he maintained good relations with the PTI and continued to support the PTI until its dissolution after the Japanese came in 1942.

Most of the prominent Chinese, both totoks and peranakans, were put into concentration camps by the Japanese. Liem was also captured but was soon released. It was said that he was rescued by his Japanese friend, Mrs. Honda. (62) After his release, he was appointed assistant to Toyoshima, head of the Chinese Section in the Japanese Consulate in Djakarta. Liem then had the opportunity to travel widely in Java. The reasons for his co-operation with Japan remain mysterious. One source said that he used it as a tactic to save many Chinese from Japanese persecution. (63)

### **Liem, the Republik and Red China**

When the Japanese were under the pressure of the allies in March 1945, the Japanese set up the Preparatory Committee for

(61) L.K.H. [Liem Koen Hian], "Kenapa Mr. Ko Kwat Tiong Tidak dicandidaatken Lagi oleh PTI", *Sin Tit Po*, January 18-19 and 25, 1939.

(62) Interviews with Tio Ie Soei and Tjoa Tjie Liang. In Soe Hok Gie's article, "Liem Koen Hian", Koen Hian's activities in the early Japanese occupation was not mentioned.

(63) Interview with Tjoa Tjie Liang.

Indonesian Independence (*Badan Penjelidik Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia*) which was headed by Soekarno and Hatta. Liem was a member of that Committee. Unlike some Chinese members on the Committee, Liem advocated Indonesian citizenship for the Indonesian Chinese. (64) He said that "most of the peranakan Chinese never thought of politics. They did not dare to think of politics. Nowadays if they are asked whether or not they want to be Indonesians, they will be confused. For this reason, the Chinese leaders in Malang and Surabaja have requested me to convey their opinion to this Committee, namely when the Indonesian Constitution is made, that all Chinese should be citizens of Indonesia." (65)

The Japanese occupation marked a new period in the history of the Indonesian Chinese. Both peranakan and totok Chinese were put under the same administration and, most importantly Dutch schools for the Chinese were abolished. Many peranakan Chinese began to send their children to Chinese-medium schools the only kind of schools for the Indonesian Chinese. This stimulated the growth of Chinese communal feelings and provided the Chinese with an opportunity to be "re-sinified". However, peranakans and totoks still remained separated. The split took place after the Japanese capitulation in which peranakan leaders resented the dominant role of the totok Chinese in the existing Chinese organizations (e.g., the *Chung Hua Tsung Hui*) and set up new peranakan-dominated organizations (e.g., *Sin Ming Hui*).

Before Indonesia's independence was declared, Japan had already surrendered. Without the support of the Japanese, Soekarno and Hatta under the pressure of the *Pemudas* (Indonesian Revolutionary Youths), proclaimed Indonesia's independence on August 17, 1945. The Dutch tried to restore their rule in Indonesia and came into conflict with the Indonesians. The Chinese, as a minority group, were caught between the Dutch and Indonesians. Many who were in the Republican territory and were sympathetic to the Indonesian nationalist movement sided with the Republicans. Those who lived in the Dutch controlled

(64) The Chinese members who spoke on the Chinese and Indonesian citizenship were Liem Koen Hian, Oei Tiang Tjoei and Oei Tjong Hauw. Oei Tiang Tjoei suggested that though many Chinese wanted to be Indonesians, they should be given an opportunity to choose between Chinese citizenship and that of Indonesia; While Oei Tjong Hauw urged the Indonesian Chinese being regarded as Chinese citizens. Muh. Yamin (ed.) *Naskah Persiapan Undang-Undang Dasar 1945*, vol. 1, Djakarta, 1959. pp. 218-223, 242-246.

(65) Yamin, *Naskah Persiapan*, p. 223.



*LOUW LOO SOE (LOUW DJING TIE)*



TIO IE SOEI

1890 - 1974



LIEM KOEN HIAN

1896 - 1952

area, either remained neutral or sided with the Dutch. In several areas, which were not controlled either by the Dutch or Republican governments, many Chinese were killed and their possessions were looted by angry Indonesian youths who believed that the Chinese were "the lackeys of the Dutch." (66) The most well-known incidents were those of Tangerang and Kebumen where many Chinese lost their lives and property. Some Chinese, encouraged by right wing leaders, organized the *Pao An Tui* to defend themselves. They were armed by the Dutch and were regarded as a counter-revolutionary movement by both the Indonesian nationalist and leftist Chinese.

Ex-PTI men and younger peranakan in Republican areas, such as Siauw Giok Tjhan and Tjoa Sik Ien, blamed the Dutch for the massacre of the Chinese. Liem also sided with the Republicans. He worked with Rahman Tamin to smuggle drugs into the Republican territories. (67) In November 1947, Liem was appointed by the Indonesian government as a member of the Indonesian delegation to the Renville Conference. The head of the delegation, Amir Sjarifoeddin, was a Socialist, who later declared himself a Communist, and a personal friend of Liem's. Amir worked for *Kebangoenan* and was a leader of the *Gerindo*. Under the Renville Agreement, the Indonesian Republican Government agreed to the formation of the United States of Indonesia under the Dutch Queen. However, the signing of the agreement did not stop the fighting between the Indonesians and the Dutch. Apparently, the Indonesian nationalist wanted to be independent from the Netherlands.

The Indonesia Communists were active again in 1948 and an intensive propaganda was carried out by its leaders. Non-Communist Indonesian nationalists such as Hatta and Soekarno were aware of the possibility of a PKI take-over of the newly born Republic. They began to demobilize many Communist-led armed units. The Communist and pro-Communist civilians and army officers in Madiun paniced at the government plan and a pre-mature rebellion took place. (68) This event was known as "the Madiun Affair" and led to the arrest of the Communist and pro-Communist leaders. Many were killed on the spot.

Liem's activities shortly before and soon after the Madiun Affair were unknown. However, one thing was certain, his leftist

(66) For a brief account on the Chinese during the Japanese occupation, see Mary F. Somers, "Peranakan Chinese Politics in Indonesia", Ithaca, N.Y., unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Cornell, University, 1965.

(67) Interview with Tjoa Tjie Liang; Soe, "Liem Koen Hian", p. 8.

(68) George McTurnan Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia*, Ithaca, N.Y. 1952, pp. 299-300; Donald Hindley, *The Communist Party of Indonesia 1951-1963*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1964, p. 21.

leaning was more obvious towards the end of the 1940's. In June 1949, before the formation of the People's Republic of China, he published the translation of Gunther Stein's *The Challenge of Red China*. (69) In the preface of this translation, Liem expressed his admiration of the Communist achievements and denounced Chiang Kai Shek and his Kuomintang. He said that "Stein's book teaches us that those who want to struggle, must have a strong ideology, a set of thoughts, which are used as the basis of the struggle." (70) Only with an ideology, people could stand hardship just like the Communists in China. "However, a strong ideology alone is insufficient, it has to be supported by the people. Only the struggle which was supported by the people could achieve a victory as proved by the Chinese Communist Party [CCP]." He predicted that the CCP would win and China would become strong. He believed that "the Chinese people would not become real Communists in the sense of the Communist in Russia." (71) He gave many examples of things which changed after getting into China because they had been adapted to the Chinese situation. "I am convinced", he said, "that once Communism is practised in China, it will become Chinese Communism, which is different from that of Russia. I am also convinced that the leaders of the CCP, when they come to power in the future, will definitely not follow the Soviet Union bluntly." (72) He predicted that there will be co-operation between China, Russia, the United States and Britain. "The coming to power of the CCP will end the possibility of the outbreak of a Third World War in the near future." (73)

After the Communist take-over in China, the People's Republic of China was declared on October 1, 1949, and diplomatic relations between Indonesia and China were soon established. Liem wrote articles in *Sin Po* praising the new People's Republic. Many Indonesians and Chinese criticized him for being pro-Peking. He admitted bluntly that there was nothing wrong with being pro-Peking because "he agreed with the practise of the government of China now." (74) Naturally, it aroused the suspicion of many anti-Communist Indonesians.

Towards the end of 1949, the Round Table Conference Agreement

(69) The book was published in London by Pilot Press in 1945. The Indonesian translation was entitled *Chungking dan Yenan*.

(70) Gunther Stein (tr. by Liem Koen Hian), *Chungking dan Yenan*, Djakarta, [1949], p. iv.

(71) *Ibid.*, p.vi.

(72) *Ibid.*, p.vii.

(73) *Ibid.*

(74) G.P.A. [Goei Poo An], "Sekitar Alasan Tn. Liem Koen Hian Tolak WNI", *Trompet Masyarakat*, December 19, 1951.

was signed by the Dutch government and the Republic of Indonesia. The Dutch agreed to transfer the former Dutch East Indies except for West Irian, to the Republic of Indonesia. The agreement also stipulated that Indonesia-born Chinese were considered as citizens of the Republic of Indonesia unless they repudiated their citizenship before December 27, 1951. There were about 390,000 Indonesian Chinese who repudiated citizenship.

Despite Liem's Communist leanings, he still stuck to his pre-War stand — to propagate Indonesian nationalism among the peranakan Chinese. In March 1950, he and other Indonesians — including indigenous and non-indigenous Indonesians — formed a new political party, namely the *Persatuan Tenaga Indonesia* (The Union of Indonesian Forces). The Party was aimed at counter-balancing the *Persatuan Tionghoa* (Chinese Union) which was set up in 1948 in the Dutch occupied areas. He was of the opinion that the *Persatuan Tionghoa* was sponsored by pro-Dutch Chinese and therefore unpopular with the Indonesian nationalists. He formed the *Persatuan Tenaga Indonesia* to "promote friendship, deeper understanding and better co-operation between Indonesian citizens of Chinese descent and other citizens of the United States of Indonesia (RIS) in order to unify the existing forces in Indonesia and to realize the dream of one country, one nation and one language." (75)

However, the efforts of the *Persatuan Tenaga Indonesia* were fruitless since many peranakan Chinese were more attracted to the *Persatuan Tionghoa* which was communal and moderate in its program. The *Persatuan Tionghoa* gathered many peranakan Chinese intellectuals and was particularly strong in urban areas which were controlled by the Dutch.

It is also worth noting that Liem's physical condition was declining. He was unable to put as much effort into his work as he had done during the pre-World War II period.

In mid-1951, the Sukiman government was in power. Fearing the occurrence of a Second Madiun Affair, Sukiman launched a purge before Independence Day and many left wing and Communist leaders were arrested. In connection with this purge, Liem was detained on August 16. This was the first time that he was jailed by his fellow countrymen. It was said that treatment in the prison was bad and Liem, who was already sick, became very ill. As a result, he was released on October 29, 1951. (76) Liem underwent a kind of emotional shock in prison and

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(75) "Anggaran Dasar" in *Persatuan Tenaga Indonesia*, Djakarta, March 1950 (pamphlet).

(76) G.P.A., "Tolak WNI".

repudiated Indonesian citizenship when the option period had nearly ended. He then became a citizen of the People's Republic of China. (77)

This event drew the attention of the Indonesian press. Liem was interviewed by a reporter of *Indonesia Raya* and the result of the interview was (widely) discussed in both the Indonesian and peranakan Chinese press. (78)

Liem gave the following reasons to justify his repudiation of Indonesian citizenship. First, he was resentful of the detention, since he was innocent, and of the fact that the government refused to admit its error. Second, he was aggrieved by the practice of racial discrimination against persons of Chinese descent. He specifically mentioned the case of Dr. Tjoa Sik Ien, owner of a printing press. He said that Dr. Tjoa was not given credit by the Director of Bank Negara Indonesia simply because he was a Chinese. Third, he was disillusioned with Soekarno and Hatta who both began to show a racial bias. He mentioned the speech of Soekarno on Heroes Day (November 10, 1951) in which he advocated racial hatred (79) Hatta's speech in Bandung also annoyed Liem because Hatta stated that in case of war, Indonesia would stand with the anti-China block.

Leftist and Communist newspapers criticized Liem of taking a wrong step. They argued that it was his duty to continue his struggle to eradicate racial discrimination but by repudiating Indonesian citizenship, he would no longer be able to participate in political activities. (80) One peranakan newspaper also regretted Liem's decision. (81)

One writer argued that "although Liem's arrest clearly contributed to his decision to reject Indonesian citizenship, he was also increasingly interested in, and influenced by, political changes on the Chinese mainland." (82) However, viewing Liem's activities over the past

(77) *Ibid.*; Soe, "Liem Koen Hian", p. 11.

(78) "Keterangan Liem Koen Hian: Apa Sebab Saja Menolak Warga Negara", *Trompet Masyarakat*, December 19, 1951; "Penolakan tn. Liem Koen Hian", *Harian Rakjat*, December 17, 1951.

(79) The author could not find the speech by Soekarno delivered on the Heroes Day, but the speech delivered on November 17, 1951, has the same tones. Soekarno warned the Chinese not to "utilize the people's difficulties to get as much profit as possible...Government regulations have frequently been violated, outsmarted, avoided and sabotaged...these foreigners have aroused a hostile attitude...have sown the seeds of racial hatred...They forgot the history of Tangerang and Kebumen". Cited in Virginia Thomson and Richard Adolff, *Minority Problems in Southeast Asia*, New York, 1954, p. 7.

(80) "Penolakan tn. Liem Koen Hian".

(81) G.P.A., "Tolak WNI".

(82) Somers, "Peranakan Politics", p. 231.

twenty years, one can assert that Liem was constantly concerned with political change in China and his admiration of the Chinese Communists began long before they came to power. Nevertheless, he did not advocate Chinese nationality for the Indonesian Chinese. Even after the establishment of the People's Republic of China, he still preached Indonesian nationalism and set up the *Persatuan Tenaga Indonesia*. What made him abandon his political conviction that he had nurtured for the last twenty years ? It appears that the two and one half months detention not only led him to repudiate Indonesian citizenship but also destroyed his political belief ! He left the political arena and became a businessman. He ran a dispensary in Tanah Abang (Djakarta) and intended to open a branch in Medan. On a business trip to Medan, he suffered from a heart attack and died on November 5, 1952. (83) His remains, which were intended to be buried in Djakarta, were buried in Medan.

## CONCLUSION

Liem was a man of his time. He changed according to his life's experiences. He was first imbued with Chinese nationalism, but later was inspired by the development of the Indonesian nationalist movement and declared himself an Indonesian nationalist. He constantly fought for the goal of Indonesian nationalism for more than twenty years, but one year before his death, he experienced an emotional shock which led to the loss of his reasoning power. He then became very irrational in abandoning the conviction which he preached for more than two decades. He became a Chinese citizen !

The LPKB claimed that Liem and his PTI were advocating "assimilation". By assimilation it meant that the Indonesian citizens of Chinese descent should be absorbed into the Indonesian society as soon as possible by ways of intensive social involvement, changing their names, intermarriage and so on that they would disappear as a distinct group. (84)

It is difficult to speak of Liem's political thinking without mentioning a specific period. Liem changed a few times and his ideas changed accordingly. It is true, that at one time Liem claimed to be an Indonesian nationalist. He defined "Indonesian" in political terms, i.e. identification with the goal of Indonesian nationalism. He believed that an independent Indonesia would have room for cultural differen-

(83) "Liem Koen Hian", *Sin Po*, November 6, 1952.

(84) Somers, "Peranakan Politics", pp. 257-258.

ces. However, he implied that when the time was ripe — though he did not mention when — the absorption process would take place and no one would be able to stop it. His party, the PTI, was a peranakan Chinese party. He left the party and joined the Gerindo which was an indigenous Indonesian-dominated party. After Indonesia's independence, he formed the *Persatuan Tenaga Indonesia* which was a multi-ethnic party. However, this only indicates that he was advocating "political assimilation" rather than "assimilation" in the LPKB's sense.

In fact, Liem's ideas during his association with the PTI were closer to those of the Baperki. The Baperki advocated "integration" which meant that "Indonesian citizens of Chinese descent should be accepted as a group with their own special social and cultural institutions into Indonesian society." (85) The disappearance of the Chinese as a distinct group would only take place when Indonesia became a "Socialist society". Nonetheless, Baperki leaders claimed neither the PTI nor Liem as its progenitor for they were afraid that the Baperki be identified as a party or an "exclusively Chinese" organization.

Nevertheless, Liem's abandonment of Indonesian citizenship in 1951 made the argument as to whether or not he was the father of the "integration" or "assimilation" movement irrelevant.

Liem was a tragic figure. He was painfully in search of an identity, but attained little success.

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(85) *Ibid.*, p. 251.