

From Kongsi to Sakan

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From *Kongsi* to *Sakan*: Tracking the Transformation of Chinese Influence in the Worker Organization and Tin Production on Bangka Island

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Abstract. The history of Chinese ethnic migration to Bangka Island is inseparable from the history of economic expansion based on production from tin mining. Initially, the Chinese were brought as *coolie* to work in tin mines and then had a major influence on tin management in this area to date. This paper traces the transformation of Chinese influence in tin mining so that this paper will be focused on the organization and production process. This paper is obtained from the results of qualitative research that has an explorative pattern. This study found that the transformation of Chinese influence in tin mining occurred in at least two forms, namely transformation in worker organization, and transformation in the production process. In worker organizations, it was found that Chinese involvement in workers was organized by *tiko* in a *kongsi* form, in the form of a partnership. When the reforms began and open mining began to flourish, the ethnic Chinese were transformed into tin owners and traders, no longer as *coolie*. Transformation also occurs in the form of the use of *Sa Kan* technology in the production process that is used even more varied in the post-reform period of 1998. This study observed that the technology used since the early has contributed to the damage to the environment, although the rate of damage it is manual compared to newer and more masive technologies since the last of two decades.

1. Introduction

The history of the arrival of Chinese ethnicity in Indonesia is a history of economic expansion. Their existence is linked to the history of arrivals which are divided into four categories, namely as *huashang* (trader), *huagong* (worker/ labourer), *huaqiau* (Chinese crossing), and *huayi* (Chinese descent) [1,2]. On Bangka Belitung itself, the history of the arrival of ethnic Chinese is related to the history of tin mining [3]. It can be said that Chinese history in this area is a history of tin which places both of them as two entities that walk together in their existence and development.

The arrival of Chinese on Bangka Island was divided into two major waves of migration, namely in the 1700s and 1800s. During the first wave of migration, they came as *coolie* and were employed in trenches by the authorities and *tiko* at that time. The first history is history in the control of the Palembang Sultanate. In the second wave of their arrival, ethnic Chinese were in the occupation of the Dutch colonial who later hired them for the sake of exploration and exploitation of tin.



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On the next trip, tin management cannot be separated from the dynamics of Chinese existence, and automatically gives color to the history of exploration and exploitation of tin mining on this island until now. It is interesting to observe how the long process of tin mining relation to the process of environmental exploitation on this island. If the current condition of the environment on this island seem filled with the 'kolong-kolong' (which form the tin mining giant pond) in many places, it is important to see how the actual process of extracting the tin conducted.

This study will focus on the discussion of Chinese influence in the management organization and production process of tin mining in the area. The organization will be associated with the management, while the production process will be related to mining technology and its relation to the environment.

2. Method

This paper is processed from qualitative research with an explorative style, which traces the main focus of the discussion by not departing from a temporary guess or hypothesis. This study explores the influence of ethnic Chinese presence on Bangka Island in terms of worker organization and tin production processes. The influence is seen from the perspective of history and the development of its journey to date. The data collection techniques used are in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. Interviews were conducted with figures who were considered to have information regarding history, including Bangka historians, Chinese Village Chiefs, and Chinese historical practitioners. The observations were made by direct monitoring to locations related to tin mining, while documentation was carried out by searching documents, both written and in the form of photographs or videos. Data analysis is done through the stages of data collection, data display, data reduction, and conclusion drawing.

3. Discussion

3.1 The Influence to the Worker Organization

The tin workers came during the first migration period by being organized by bosses who at that time were called *tiko* or old brothers. These workers are called *coolie* or in Indonesian are referred to as *Kuli* [4-9]. Their arrival was employed in the *parit-parit* so that it was not surprising if the Chinese now lived in areas that were once tin mining areas [10]. The term *parit* itself refers to making longitudinal excavations as irrigation channels in the past. According to Peng [11], the Chinese called him *Shan-sha*. This technique is used as a mining production tool and usually they will live around the area [12].

The *tiko* brought in workers to help the Palembang Sultanate in exploiting tin in this area [13,4]. Since involving Chinese people, tin production during the Palembang Sultanate continued to increase [7,14] At that time, Chinese technology was considered advanced in the tin mining production process. The workers are placed in large *bangsal-bangsal* and will stay together for long periods of time. Generally the ties between Chinese owners and workers are referred to in *Kongsi* terms, namely the *coolie* live in one house with their boss [13,7]. *Kongsi* is understood as a fellowship of work built on the basis of brotherhood. They will stay in one big house and their needs will be managed by a salary deduction system. Coppel [15] predicts that the Chinese at first did not form part of a *Kongsi*, controlled by the Netherlands.

Because of their ability to manage tin, ethnic Chinese presence was also empowered during the Dutch colonial period. They were appointed administrative officials to oversee the tin mining process that benefited the Netherlands. The Dutch issued a *staatsblad* to authorize tin supervisors from the Chinese community with a *luitenant der chinezen* rank [16]. But along with the strengthening of colonialization, since 1819, tin mining in Bangka was indeed monopolized by the Dutch (Mentok Tin History Museum) and began to form *Banka Tin Winning Bedrijf* [17].

When there was a nationalization of tin mining during Indonesia's independence which was preceded by political developments in China through the Sun Yat Sen revolution, the existence of the Chinese population experienced a significant decline. The wave back to China took place when the PKI Rebellion Movement took place in 1965. Since then, the penetration of the tin mines by ethnic Chinese has faded on its own, along with the strict prohibition of producing tin. State through Law No. 11 of 1967 stated tin as a State strategic commodity. Practically at that time there was no tin mining done by Chinese *coolies* except those who might work formally at an official company that obtained a State management permit, in this case PT. Tin and PT. Kobatin.

History then underwent a drastic change when the New Order collapsed and Suharto stepped down. The Minister of Industry and Trade revoked the status of tin as a State strategic commodity and allowed it to become an open and free commodity. Since the revocation of the status in 1998, the stretching of tin mining has been rampant again and the existence of Chinese tin miners has undergone a change of function. If during the Palembang Sultanate and Dutch occupations of Chinese workers became *coolie* and *tiko*, then in open tin mining since the post-1998 reform era, Chinese ethnic influences transformed from *coolie* to *owner*. They develop business, both small and large scale and dominate the ownership and process of tin trading on Bangka Island.

Institutionally there has been a change in the form of tin management, from coolie to mine owners and tin traders. This transformation presents the absence of the influence of tin in a long time, but recently it has increased through a stronger process of ownership and trade [compare 18]. In terms of management and management organizations, thus the influence of Chinese ethnicity was very strong during the Palembang Sultanate and Dutch Colonial, weak in the Old Order and New Order periods, and strengthened again during the 1998 reform period until now.

If we view at a long run process of tin mining in the use of technology above, we can see that basically all the tools that are used to change the landscape. Digging technologies such as *Toboali* Technology and *Trench* Technology are sure to damage the environment by producing vacancies in some areas and piles of soil around them. While the *Trench* Technology also changes the landscape with the formation of new water flows and environmental damage as a result of the use of rivers as a place to drain and separate lead ore. However, the use that has not been as passive as the last 20 years seems to affect the environmental damage which has not been too severe even though it has been mined for hundreds of years with simple technology. The use of dredges, suction vessels, and spray and suction technology on land and at sea has accelerated environmental damage in the last two decades.

3.2 Influence to the Production Process

Known at least three tin production technologies in the early days of tin mining in the 1600s-1700s, namely *Toboali* Mining Technology, *Leather* Technology, and *Kolong* Technology. According to Elvian (interview 9/7/2019), *Toboali* Technology is a washing technology developed during the Palembang Sultanate. The technique used is by punching technique. The term *Toboali*, according to Elvian actually refers to mining technology in the past. The *Leather* Technology is a technique of tin mining by skinning the surface of the earth's land and flowing it through canals or rivers or *parit*. Then *Sa Kan* is used as a tool to separate tin and sand. The word *Sa Kan* means sand sieving. The third technology according to Elvian is *Kolong* Technology, which is by making large pools to take tin sand in the bowels of the earth. Before the bottom was made, a tool called *Ciam* made of iron was used to find out whether there was tin in the bowels of the earth which would be made into the *Kolong* [19]. Other equipment under the Chinese as they come according to Purnama [17] are *Cangkul*, *Chincia* (water pumps), and *Pengki* (bearer).

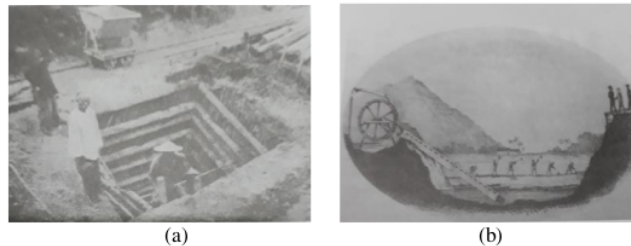


Figure 1. (a) *Toboali* Technology [7]; (b) *Kolong* Technology [13]



Figure 2. (a) Illustration of *Parit* Technology [7]; (b) *Parit* Technology (Source: *Tin Museum, Mentok*)

The three technologies above were basically used before the technology of the dredger developed by a Dutch company. With this simple technology, tin is transported and exported abroad in the span of hundreds of years. Simple technology that is practically not widely used during the late occupation of colonialism and then continued during the process of nationalizing tin mining in the Old Order and New Order periods.

Simple technology is developing again precisely when tin mining has been running since the reformation in 1998 when tin mining was opened and left to be mined illegally or legally by the wider community. In the last two decades, the most widely used technology is Assembled Mines made by miners with different variations. There are *Rajuk* Mines, *Apung* Mines, Landmines, and Suction Ships. *Sa Kan* itself is an integral part of the tin mining process with the techniques used during the past two decades. *Sa Kan* is a tool to separate tin from sand by making simple irrigation using a board. If you look at the developments, it cannot be denied that the Chinese influence in the history of tin mining and its utilization until now is inseparable. Simple technology used during the tin mining period at the time of the Palembang Sultanate and Dutch Colonial was actually reused during the reform period. Although the Chinese are no longer generally workers in the tin mining production process, the technology they have developed in the past is still relevant to the mining community in post-reform in 1998.

3.3 Transformation of Chinese Influence

Based on the findings of this study, if this is observed, then there are actual conditions that still occur the same thing and there are different conditions between the past and present. If during the Palembang and Colonial Sultanates, Chinese Ethnic moved in two domains, namely as bosses in *Kongsi* and as workers, then during the reformation they transformed as tin owners and traders. Both of them showed the influence of the exploitation of tin mining by the Chinese ethnic.

Another interesting thing is the production process which also experienced a strong influence in tin mining. If in the time of the Palembang Sultanate and the colonial era the *ala* Chinese technology of tin mining was used, then in the aftermath of the New Order it experienced an expansion of a simple technological process. This two-decade period was marked by the re-relevance of Chinese technology in the history of tin mining. This shows that in the production process, Chinese influence is very strong.

The transformation of Chinese influence in the organizational process and tin mining production process is described as follows:

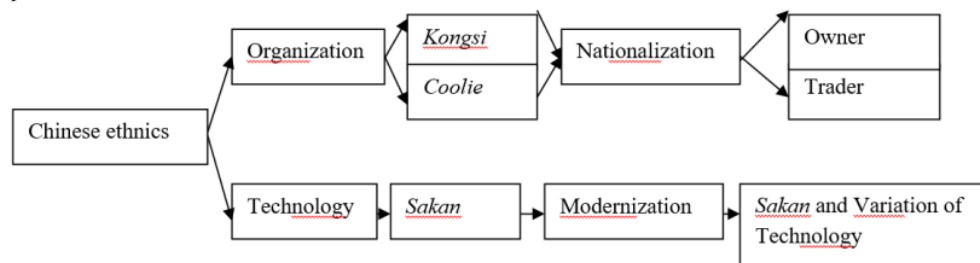


Figure 3. Illustration of Transformation of Chinese Influence in Management of Tin Mining

Based on the above scheme, it can be explained that the transformation of Chinese ethnic influences in tin mining in Bangka Belitung can be seen in two ways. First is the transformation of worker organizations. In this case the organization during the Palembang Sultanate and Colonialism, the Chinese worked as partners who brought in workers and as *coolie*. Then this influence experienced degradation during the nationalization period. During 1998 until now, the Chinese were transformed into owners and traders. Meanwhile, based on the influence on technology, the use of *Sa Kan* technology during the Palembang Sultanate and the early colonial period, *Sa Kan* was modernized with more modern tools. When mining is open to the public, then *Sa Kan* and its variations are used again.

4. Conclusion

The existence of Chinese on Bangka Island is part of the history of tin mining in this area. The arrival of the Chinese into this area was basically triggered by economic problems and in the end the influence of this ethnic group in tin mining underwent a transformation. At least there are two forms of transformation of Chinese ethnic influences. First, in organizations, both in terms of union and workers, the Chinese have a strong influence. At first the Chinese were brought through *kongsi* trade union and most of the workers brought in worked as tin mines *coolie*. Transformation occurred when the reforms gave opportunities for tin mining to be carried out openly by the public to become mine owners and tin companies as well as tin traders. Transformation thus occurs in the organizational dimension. Second, transformation occurs in the production process. If in the time of the Palembang Sultanate and the colonial government in the early half of the existence of *Sa Kan* technology became popular, then during the reform era when tin mining was opened, the presence of *Sa Kan* and its variations became popular again. This study views that in terms of technological term, environmental damage is inevitable in the production process, although manual technology has slowed the rate of environmental damage compared to the past two decades. Thus, this study concluded that the influence of ethnic Chinese in tin mining was transformed as a continuation of its influence in different forms.

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