Human Cargo

Human smuggling organizations are currently held responsible for the transport of refugees, bounty hunters, and other migrants to the West. The Dutch Public Prosecutor’s Office works on the assumption that the movement of asylum seekers to the Netherlands is to a large extent ‘regulated’ by the activities of human smugglers. Although the nationalities of both the smugglers and the people transported vary greatly, as do the methods used, it is generally assumed by both the public and criminalologists that the pursuit of profit is an important, and probably the most important, motive for human smuggling organizations. A turnover of billions of euros worldwide is attributed to these organizations.

By Melvin Soudijn

Within the spectrum of human smuggling, the smuggling of Chinese nationals provokes a lot of Chinese interest, not only among the media, but also in the world of international investigation. There are various possible reasons for this. In the first place, a series of well-publicized incidents have caused the commotion. There is virtually no study, investigation or publication concerning human smuggling from China which does not refer to the Golden Venture incident of 1993 and/or the Dover tragedy of 2002, two extremely dramatic events involving Chinese victims. Furthermore, human smuggling from China, whether right- or wrongly, is generally believed to present several unique characteristics. The sums of money involved are higher than those paid by any other nationality, abuses, such as slavery, exploitation, and prostitution are rife, the level of organization is extremely high and there (presumably) is associated crime involved (directed by Triada). Finally, in the West it generally is perceived to be a fascination for, and simultaneously a fear of, the exotic. To this one could add the enormity of China’s population, presenting a huge potential market for smuggling, and the many references in publications on Chinese communities to a ‘currency of secrecy’. All this leads to the impression that the authorities cannot seem to get a grip on the community. Human smuggling from China is not a recent phenomenon. In his study Chinese immigrants in Nederland (Chinese Immigrants in the Netherlands), published in 1996, F. van Heek describes how several smuggling operations to lawfully immigrate to China have been conducted. Van Heek would not state exactly how many people came into the Netherlands as such, but he suspected that the numbers were very large. Rotterdam, ‘an as important shipping centre […], and with its hundreds of Chinese inhabitants (would constitute) an ideal temporary refuge from which the Chinese immigrant could try to reach the place where he now wishes to live’ (p. 82) (translation: MS).

Van Heek also discusses the ways in which people enter the Netherlands. They may enter with a valid passport, by ship’s discharge, as a stowaway, as a deserter from a ship, or clandestinely over a land border. The method of stowing away was not, however, wholly without its dangers. For example, people hid in empty water-tanks or boilers, where the temperature could soar if the ship was sailing in the tropics. This sometimes led to fatalities (p. 82).

Furthermore, Van Heek notes that in the past, staff from the Dutch consulate sometimes issued visas too easily, without ascertaining whether the traveller had sufficient means of support. Several peddars from Zhejiang, for instance, had indeed entered the Netherlands with valid passports, but ones to which they were not actually entitled. The Dutch, the Chinese, happily make use of such consular benevolence. They let one another know where an “easy” consuls is stationed, and send their friends who live in the country in question to the consulate to apply for a visa. The consulate sometimes neglects carefully comparing the passport-photo with the applicant’s face, and the visa is issued. The applicant sends this back to his friend who wishes to travel to the Netherlands, and soon the friend appears in yellow brother to enter our country in a completely legal way’ (p. 90) (translation: MS).

In their research report Chinese ouderen in Amsterdam (Elderly Chinese people in Amsterdam), (1996) MSoudijn et al. discuss the case of a Chinese man, 83 years old in 1993, who recalls how he was persuaded by a former neighbour to come to Europe in 1956 (p. 12). He had to pay what was then the enormous sum of 100 Chinese guilders for his journey. He eventually set out with others from his village. His wife and young son remained behind. He travelled to Marseille on a German cargo ship and secretly went ashore. From there he travelled overland to Germany and then to the Netherlands.

Today, would we view the above cases as the result of criminal human smuggling organizations? That answer is probably ‘yes’. My doctoral research aims to clarify the structures underlying human smuggling. When should we view the question of what ‘smuggling’ or ‘illegal migration’ really is, and whether everything is as closely organized as is generally supposed. The inclusion of a historical perspective might provide us with a better understanding.

References
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Malay Contacts with Sri Lanka

The Malays have always been intrepid travellers, sailing westwards as far as Madagascar. Sailing westward from a port in the Malayan Peninsula or from Western Sumatra, one is likely to disembark on the eastern and southern coasts of Sri Lanka (Paranavitana, 1955); it is therefore not surprising that the Malays made contact with Sri Lanka. Evidence of early contact between Srilankans and Malay lies in Sinhala literary works from the Polonnaruwa Period (1097-1234) and the Dambadeniya Period (1220-1250).

By Shihan de Silva Jayasuriya

Historical evidence also confirms that there was a Malay presence in Sri Lanka in the thirteenth century. In 1247, Chandrabhanu, the Buddhist Malay King in the Malayan Peninsula, attempted to invade Sri Lanka. Sinhala literary works reports that Chandrabhanu’s mission was supported by Malay (Javaka or Malala) soldiers. He was determined to possess the Buddha’s remains, his kingdom was referred to as Javaka (Malala) and in the possession of the Sinhalese monarch. In contemporary Sri Lanka, there are about 46,000 Sri Lankan Malays. They form 0.3 per cent of the populatation. Their ancestry can be traced back to the Dutch Era (1655–1796) and the British Era (1796–1948). The Dutch referred to the Sri Lankan Malays as ‘Javaneses’ because they were recruited in Batavia (the Dutch appellation for Jakarta). The British referred to the Sri Lankan Malays as ‘Malays’ as they spoke Batavian Malay, known today as Betawi or Jakarta Malay. The British also transported Indonesian from the Malayan Peninsula (Penang, Malacca, Singapore, Pahang, Trenggum, Kelantan), Java, Malay, and North Borneo to Sri Lanka. The Indonesian sailors in Sri Lanka were recruited from Jakarta in Java and therefore had a common ‘geographical identity’. Though ethnic groups from various parts of the Indonesian Archipelago lived in distinct parts of Jakarta, they spoke a common lingua franca, either Batavian Malay (Omnig Jakarta, a cre- aint, British) or Low Malay/Trade Malay/Bazaar Malay (a pidgin). The Sinhalese have given the appellation Jaminuwa (people from Java) to all Sri Lankan Malays, regardless of whether they are from Indonesian or Malayan descent.

Some of the earliest Malay political exiles came to Sri Lanka from the Moluccas and the Lesser Sundas Islands. From 1708 onwards, Javanese princes were exiled to Sri Lanka. According to Dutch documents, these Indonesian aristocrats were mainly from Java, but others came from Bacan, Sumatra, Macassar, Tidore, and Timor. The Dutch also exiled the King of Java, Sultan Ahmad Syah to Sri Lanka in 1588 and together with his retinue: in 1734; he was followed by 44 Javanese princes and noblemen who had surrendered at the battle of Kotte in 1731. As a result of a statistical end of the social structure, there was a steady influx of Indonesian convicts, who came from all walks of life. However, no specific group of Javanese were more than the rest exiles. They became known as Javanese, because they were recruited in Batavia (the Dutch appellation for Jakarta). The Dutch referred to the Sri Lankan Malays as ‘Javaneses’, because they were recruited in Batavia (the Dutch appellation for Jakarta). The Dutch referred to the Sri Lankan Malays as ‘Javaneses’ and various ships were sent to Java. In the early British period and the early British period, the Malays formed most of the Sri Lankan army, enlisted in the Ceylon Rifles regiments. The last regiment in Malayan language community continued to inhabit the saltwells until the early British period. The Malays in Sri Lanka have been divided into multi-ethnic Sri Lankan but have retained their ‘Malay’ ethnic consciousness, they are known as the Sinhalese. The Sri Lankan Malays are a contact with people in Sinhalese language. They have concluded protracted contact with one another, a verbal means of communication becomes necessary, and contact lan-