Human Cargo

Human smuggling operations 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 criminologists that the number of profits of it is 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 (for which there is a strong Chinese interest, not only among the media, but also in the world of international investigations. 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 2000, 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 nationalities, abuses, such as slavery, exploitation, and prostitution is rife, the level of organization is extremely high and there (presumably) is associated crime involved (directed by Triad). Finally, in the West, the Chinese are considered a fascinating race, 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 ‘culture 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 Chinezen immigranten in Nederland (Chinese Immigrants in the Netherlands), published in 1936, F. van Heek notes that Chinese nationals have drawn up immigration laws to halt Chinese migration. As a result, attempts were made (and this till the case today) to circumvent these immigration laws, and human smuggling thriving. Van Heek would not state exactly how many people came into the Netherlands as smugglers, but he suspected that the numbers were very large. Rotterdam, ‘as an important shipping centre […], and with its hundreds of Chinese inhabitants (would constitute) an ideal temporary refuge from which the Chinese emigrant could try to reach the place where he now wishes to live’ (p. 82) (translation: MS).

Van Heek also discusses the ways in which these 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 staying 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 consulates sometimes issued visas too easily, without ascertaining whether the applicant sends it back to his friend in China. This, the applicant would then use to return to Europe in 1936 (p. 12). He had to pay what was then the enormous sum of 300 Chinese guilders for the journey. He eventually set out with four others from his village. His wife and young son remained behind. He travelled to Marseilles on a German cargo ship and secretly went ashore. From there he travelled overland to Germany and then to the Netherlands.

References

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Malay Contacts with Sri Lanka

The Malays have always been intrepid sailors, travelling westwards as far as Madagascar. Sailing westward from a port in the Malay Peninsula or from Western Sumatra, one is likely to disembark on the eastern and southern coasts of Sri Lanka (Paravainathan, 1995): it is therefore not surprising that the Malays made contact with Sri Lankans. Evidence of early contact between Sri Lankans and Malaya lies in Sinhala literary works from the Polonnaruwa Period (1099-1234) and the Dambadeniya Period (1220-1350).

By Shihan de Silva Jayasuriya

Historical evidence also confirms that there was a Malay presence in Sri Lanka in the thirteenth century. In 1247, Chandragupta, the Buddhist Malay King in the Malay Peninsula, attempted to invade Sri Lanka. Sinhala literary works record that Chandragupta’s mission was supported by Malay (Javaka or Malala) soldiers. He was determined to possess the Buddha’s tooth relic, which was sacred to the Sinhalese, and which were in the possession of the Sinhalese monarch. In contemporary Sri Lanka, there are about 45,000 Sri Lankan Malays. They form 0.3% of the population. Their ancestry can be traced back to the Dutch Era (1656–1796) and the British Era (1796–1948). It is under the latter period that they are referred to as the Sri Lankan Malays as ‘Javanees’ 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 Indonesia immigrants from the Malayan Peninsula (Penang, Malacca, Singapore, Pahang, Trengganu, Kelantan), Java, and North Borneo to Sri Lanka. The Indonesian soldiers 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, both Batavian Malay (Onong Jakarta, a cre- olized form of Low Malay/Trade Malay/Bazaar Malay) and Javanese Malay (a pidgin). The Sinhalese have given the appellation Javaninci (people from Jav) to all Sri Lankan Malays, regardless of whether they are of Indonesian or Malayan descent.

Some of the earliest Malay political exiles came to Sri Lanka from the Moluccas and the Lesser Sunda 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 Mansur at the end of the 18th century. As a result, attempts were made to halt Chinese immigration to a ‘cul- ""
judging by reports in the Chinese media and by general studies on the illicit antiques trade, there is large-scale looting and trafficking in antiques taking place in China. According to He Shuzhong, the director of Cultural Heritage Watch (CHW), a non-governmental Chinote organization for the protection of cultural heritage, the illicit excavation and trade have reached dramatic proportions. Government sources suggest that, in the past, the bulk of illicit antiques resurfaced in foreign museums, while these days much of it ends up in foreign markets. According to Chinese experts, there are at least one million items of Chinese art that should be returned to 200 foreign museums spanning 47 countries. Yet, most Western museums are unwilling to return their collections. A major reason being the idea that most acquisitions were legal at the time they were made, for example under colonial rule. Nonetheless, China has experienced some success in reclaiming stolen artefacts. Furthermore, the policies of the Chinese government are weakened by the ineffective registration of cultural heritage. The fact that the government lacks a database on stolen art and antiques inhibits an effective policy against illicit trade and can lead to awkward situations. In the Miho Case, Cultural Heritage Watch and the Chinese authorities argued that the Miho should return the statue and should have been informed of it being stolen because it belonged to a Chinese museum and was published as such. However, the fact that the theft was not properly registered seemed to escape both their attention. The lack of effective registration also hinders all fruitful cooperation with international agencies like Interpol and the International Council of Museums (ICOM), rendering the aforementioned treaties inapplicable (see note). With ineffective registration, the real scale of the problem can hardly be reliably represented by statistics on the number of items intercepted by Chinese customs officials. Any attempt to quantify the problem of illicit excavations and trade by looking up statistics and figures from a number of different sources only reveals how incomplete they are: records only exist for 1986, 1991–1995, 1997; the first five months of 1998, and the period from 1999 to September 2001. Additionally, the numbers cannot be compared because they measure different things and usually only refer to tourists. For example, according to figures from Chinese customs, 110,000 items were seized, from tourists, between 1991 and 1999.

Although much can be said about China’s shortcomings with regard to its anti-trafficking of antiques policy, there are other factors to consider. Wherever people are prepared to pay a profit (as is the case in the Chinese government itself), there are those prepared to buy. Many independent buyers are individual travelers interested in Asia and the like, in contrast to large retailers or auction houses, most likely to purchase large items. Of course, one also needs to consider the quality of the items they acquire. All the experts we spoke to highlighted the fact that most material coming from China seems to be of sub-majority grade, apart from a huge number of fakes. Nevertheless, many among the IAS Newsletter readers will have some sort of Chinese artefact at home. Call it an argument from a Chinese perspective. It does not make it any less valid.

For more information, also see: www.culturalheritagewatch.org/indexem.html

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Sri Lankan Malay Creole Constructions

Saladin (1996) states that some SLMC constructions are amusing to Indonesians and Malaya. I have added in the Sinhala ([SIN]) equivalents of these sentences:

**SLMC** | **SIN**
---|---
Se buk baca baca kapan deduk tek | Mama pohat bala bala run mana kana
dan pati 
a | yang
dan

Saladin (1996) states that some SLMC constructions are amusing to Indonesians and Malaya.