

**Medan;
A plantation city on the east coast of Sumatra 1870-1942
(Planters, the Sultan, Chinese and the Indian)**

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In seventy-five years Medan has grown into the richest and most productive area of the Dutch East Indies and is unconditionally the wealthiest region of the whole Dutch Indies outside Java... a rapidly growing city with nearly a hundred thousand inhabitants. ...

(Guide for the east coast of Sumatra, 1939). (1)

Introduction

The city of Medan was the result of the large scale plantation industry on the east coast of Sumatra from the eighteen sixties on. It was the Deli company who made the start of Medan's development by choosing this kampung for building her first head office. Hereafter the city developed in high tempo. For work on the plantations workers were recruited from China and Java which resulted in a new social structure on Sumatra's east coast. At the same time an infrastructure was built with roads, railroads, telephone and telegraph connections. All kind of companies settled in the city. Although Medan seemed to be a European- dominated plantation town, the commercial elite proved to be, besides Dutch trading houses, a limited number of Chinese businessmen as well as some Indian entrepreneurs. The most well known person of them became the Mandarin capitalist Tjong A Fie, even called the informal king of Medan. In this paper we will take a look at the different ethnic groups and their contribution to Medan. The three most important groups in Medan's development were the European planters, the Indonesian Sultan and the Chinese entrepreneurs. Further on there was a small Indian minority who settled in the city. The planters started the plantations, the Chinese were active in trade and the Sultan was in possession of the grounds. The paper will end with a conclusion.

A. Development of Sumatra's east coast.

Contrary to Java and the Moluccans, Sumatra was not before the second half of the nineteenth century put under Dutch governance. Until then there were only here and there trading posts as strongholds at the coast. Not before 1850 more attention was paid to the interior. In 1862 Sumatra's east coast came directly under Dutch governance and in 1864 the first Dutch government officials settled in Laboehan on the mouth of the Deli river. (2) In 1870 the Dutch abolished the culture system, in which the local population was forced to produce certain crops for the government. When this system had ended, the agriculture in the Indies became open for big agricultural enterprise. In the same year the law of de Waal gave European private entrepreneurs the possibility to achieve agricultural land in long lease. As a result many Europeans did start to invest in plantations on the east coast of Sumatra. (3) The reason for the fast development of the Deli district was tobacco, later on rubber and palm oil. Jacob Nienhuys, son of an Amsterdam tobacco trader, came in 1863 to Sumatra. The Arab Said Abdullah Bilsagih who tried to interest Dutch investors on Java, informed him about Deli. He told Nienhuys that the local population produced pepper and tobacco, besides that investors also could grow tobacco themselves. (4) Nienhuys got permission

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from Sultan Mahmood Perkasa Alam Shah of Deli, to start a tobacco plantation, just south of Laboehan at the mouth of the Deli river. The first harvest showed to be after arrival in the Netherlands as very promising high quality tobacco. As a result Nienhuys got the green light for further investments. The tobacco plant grew so well and was such a great success that in a short time many plantations were started up. Deli tobacco showed to be excellent as cigar wrapper, and was known as being the best in the world. Why the tobacco flourished so well was due to several factors, like temperature, height above sea level, soil structure, rainfall, cloudiness, humidity and sunshine. Large quantities were exported to Europe and the United States. For work on the plantations Nienhuys hired Chinese coolies (workers) from Penang and Singapore. Later on the recruitment took place directly from China. Local labour was in short supply on the east coast of Sumatra and, as the native Malay and Batak population was not interested in plantation work, the solution was to import the labour force. As a result a huge Chinese and Javanese population settled on Sumatra's east coast. At this time both China and Java were suffering from high unemployment, with its concomitant poverty and hunger, so workers from these places were easily contracted to work in Sumatra. Eventually three hundred thousand of Chinese were shipped from China to Sumatra between 1870 and 1930. Coolies started to arrive from Java circa 1900. Also from the Indian coast of Coromandel were plantation workers recruited. Most of them never returned to their homeland and their offspring stayed living on Sumatra. The plantation companies in Deli were fully export orientated, firstly tobacco, after that rubber and palm oil. Also tea, coffee, cacao and other products were exported. Not only Dutch companies invested, many nationalities settled as investors as there were American, British, German, Swiss, French, Polish, Tsjech and Belgian who started a plantation in Deli. In fact everyone in the plantation industry was a newcomer, the European investors, the planters and the coolies. In short we can state that the fast development of Sumatra's east coast was the direct result of the plantation industry. Hereafter a complete new social structure was established with Chinese and Javanese plantation workers and foreign investors.

B. The Sultans

From the beginning the Malay Sultanates were very cooperative. Sultan Mahmood Al Rasjid Perkasa Alam Sjah was the first one to give concessions to Nienhuys in 1863. From then on the Malay sultanates received yearly large sums from the tobacco planters for their concessions. The three sultanates where the first plantations were established were Deli, Langkat and Serdang. From 1910 on many rubber and palm oil plantations were established in the Asahan district. In 1870 there were no hospitals, no medicines, no police, no court of justice. Because of the economic expansion the Dutch send in the 1870's new assistant residents to Deli to represent the government. The system was the same as in the former VOC (Vereenigde Oost Indische Compagnie or Dutch East India Company) structure whereby the sultan de facto ruled and the Dutch only represented the Batavia government. The planters dealt directly with the sultan. Land contracts between the sultan and Europeans had to be approved by the resident. (5) So it was a combination of local rule of the sultan and of the colonial government.

C. Wild East

Around 1880 the situation on Deli is best comparable to the American wild west. As soon as one left the domesticated centres - Medan, Tanjung Balei, hundred fifty kilometre south of Medan and Binjai, twenty five kilometre west of Medan - there was only scarce populated area with here and there a settlement. Rows of elephants were walking in the plantations. When people caught crocodiles it was only reported in the papers if the crocodile had eaten more than two people. (6)

Tigers were a normal topic in the papers. Besides tigers the country was in 1880 far from safe. There was a war going on with Aceh and Acehnese attacked European settlements on land as well as on sea. Further on there were the Batak from the highlands, who attacked the plantations in the lowlands. (7) Outside the domesticated centre every European walked around with a revolver or rifle. Like in the American wild west, there was heavy drinking. In America whiskey, on Deli it was jenever, and like the Indians used Mescaline, (8) the imported Chinese used opium. In the early years of the plantation industry Deli was characterised by pure free enterprise without much regulations or control. The centre was the new town of Medan. After the turn of the century the city developed fast.

D. Medan

The city of Medan got its first layout around 1870 when the Malay kampongs 'Medan Poetri' - Land of the Princess - and kampong Kesawan were joined together. The place Labuan at the mouth of the Deli river, where the sultan of Deli resided and the first tobacco was planted, was a swamp area with malaria and less suited as administrative centre for the plantations. Therefore the planters chose the settlement Medan more inland. (9) In 1869 the Deli Company was established by G.C. Clemen, P.W. Janssen and J. Nienhuys. Main shareholder was the Netherlands Trading Company. (10) In 1871 Jacob Theodoor Cremer from the Netherlands Trading Company succeeded Nienhuys who repatriated to Europe. The new head office of the Deli Company was built in the small kampong Medan at the junction of the Babura and the Deli River. This was the start of Medan's development. The rise of tobacco plantations was reflected in prestigious buildings in the city centre and many trading firms were established in town. In the eighteen eighties the sultan of Deli chose Medan as residence and built his new Maimoon palace on the southern border of the city. In the same period Chinese traders settled in Medan. The city center was the central square, the Esplanade. On the west side of the Esplanade resided most of the European population. Later on the villa quarter Polonia was established here. On the south side of the Esplanade around the Kesawan, the oldest street of the city, developed a Chinatown. An Indonesian village was in the area of the sultan's palace, further south. There was a quarter for the Indian community named Kampong Kling or Kampong Madras. The Deli Railroad company had her own area as they built their head office and houses for their personnel along the railroad east of the Esplanade. A new industrial area since 1915 was established in Gloegoer, in the northern part. In the nineteen thirties social housing was realised in Medan Baru and new Polonia. The start of the development of Medan was the building of the head office of the Deli company, followed by a Chinese quarter and a sultan's kampong around the Maimoon palace. It was a well planned and structured city, this was also caused by the so-called quarter system.

E. Quarter system

The city was from the beginning set out as a modern town with parks, a villa quarter for the Europeans and separate areas for the indigenous, Chinese and Indian population. This was the result of the quarter system, whereby each population group had to reside in their own quarter. This system was abolished in 1918. (11) If for instance a Chinese wanted to leave his area a pass was required which he had to ask from his headman like the Chinese captain. The segregation was an automatic process. In general people from the same country settled together in the same area, later on they also were obliged to live in this specific area. So segregation was spontaneous but at the same time obligatory. The quarter system made the city clearly structured. Medan expanded fast from 1880 on with an Indonesian, Chinese, Indian and European quarter. Because of the large European villa area

the town became a sort of garden city, with nickname "Paris of Sumatra". The city was characterised by multi ethnic interactions as the different population groups lived side by side. The Indonesian and European bought from the Chinese shops and the Chinese from the European importers. There was a small Indian population of whom most were working as ox drivers or keeping cows and selling milk. As Medan was a new city the quarter system was directly put into practice.

F. Connections and transportation

From the original capital Laboean the Deli Company had built a road to Medan. If the roads were accessible the Deli company used ox cars. The other plantations used sampans (small boats) on the rivers for transportation. The Europeans mostly travelled on horseback. In 1881 Cremer initiated the establishment of the Deli Spoorweg Maatschappij (Deli Railroad Company) or DSM for transportation of the tobacco from the plantations to the harbour. In October 1883 construction was started, in July 1886 the first line Laboean - Medan was opened and in February 1888 the line Laboean - Belawan, the new harbour. Building the railroad experienced great difficulties. Workers and material all had to be transported from elsewhere. Twice there was a cholera epidemic during construction and all the time malaria asked many victims. During the building was decided to extend the lines from Medan far into the districts of Serdang and Langkat. In the years after gauge railways (narrow railroad) for locomotives were constructed to connect plantations in Deli, Langkat and Serdang. (12) Today you can still see the gauge railroads around Medan but no rail is in use any more. Even kampong houses have been built over the railroads. In 1916 the DSM had finished the line Tebing Tinggi - Pematang Siantar whereby the tea from the plantations around Siantar could be transported to Belawan. (13) The extension of the railroad from Kisaran to Rantau Prapat would be finished in 1929. With construction of the railroad the DSM had directly installed telephone lines along the railway. In 1887 a government telegraph line was finished from Medan to the west coast. The post office in Medan became post- and telegraph office and on three other places post- and telegraph offices were opened. As the telegraph lines for long distances went through the jungle, where lived many elephants who liked to draw telegraph poles, many times there were disturbances in the telegraph connection. In 1891 a telegraph connection was established from Medan to Penang, which connected Medan with the world telegraph traffic. (14) Before there was a railroad, oxen were used for transportation of the tobacco. The oxen were imported from British India wherefore Indian ox drivers were hired. The first automobile appeared in 1900, a steam car of the Tengkoek Besar of Deli. (15) In 1907 J.T. Cremer made with two Spyker cars for the first time the climb to Brastagi in the Batak highlands over a road then still under construction. (16) For shipping the tobacco the harbours had to be improved. The first harbour was Laboean but after a few years the planters choose a new harbour near the island of Belawan a few kilometres north. In 1923 Belawan got its ocean harbour after which ocean steamers could directly enter the harbour. (17) To resume: the entire infrastructure was a result of the plantation industry. To transport the tobacco a railroad was needed which was constructed in the eighteen eighties, in combination with telegraph and telephone connections. For shipping the tobacco a new harbour was made so that the valuable tobacco could be transported directly from Deli to Europe.

G. Plantations around Medan

Medan was surrounded by plantations which nowadays form integral parts of the city. The names clearly show the origin of the nationality of the investors who started the plantation. In the north along the Sunggal river several plantations were founded, as there were Arendsburg, named after one of the first Dutch planters, and a plantation with the French name of Persévérance, which

means persistence. There was the plantation Rotterdam, named after the Dutch harbour town of Rotterdam, and a plantation with the English name of Enterprise. Also to the north was the estate Sempali, an Indonesian local name, opened in 1889 by the Deli company on the grounds of the former estate Petersburg, named after the Russian town of Saint Petersburg, established by a Russian planter, and Annidale, a British name. Besides Sempali were the plantations Germania, which means Germany, Saëntis, a local name, Maryland, which was a British name and Mabar, a local name, all north of the city. In 1865 the German planter von Mach together with the Swiss planters Mots and Breker settled in Deli. The last two established the tobacco plantation Konigsgrätz, later called Helvetia, the Latin name for Switzerland. (18) The name Helvetia in the northern part of the city is still in use in Medan today. South of the city centre between the Deli and the Babura river was the plantation Polonia of the Polishman Michalsky. In 1919 this concession was handed over to the municipality by the sultan of Deli and a villaparc for the European community was built on these fields, named Polonia. In the nineteen twenties beside the villaparc the airfield was built with the present name of Polonia Airport. Southeast of the city the Dutch Leyssius had opened a plantation Gedong Djohore. This was a local name. The plantation is since the nineteen fifties no longer existent and several housing complexes have been built in this area. In the same area were the plantations Rudolphsburg, named after the German emperor Rudolph, Padang Boelan and Amplas, both local names, in former days all owned by the Amsterdam Deli Company. East of Medan on the other side of the Babura river, was the plantation Padang Boelan opened by the Dutch van der Sluis. In the nineteen sixties the University of North Sumatra was established on these fields. More to the north two other plantations, Sipoet and Rudolphsburg of the German Pechul, became part of Padang Boelan. Further east of the city was the estate Arnhemia, owned by the Rotterdam Deli Company. Arnhemia was named after the city of Arnhem in the Netherlands. Nowadays the place is called Pancar Batu, located around 15 kilometres outside Medan on the road to Brastagi. West of Medan at the Pertjoet river the estate Amplas was opened by the Dutch Huber and Tandjong Morawa by the Germans Nacher and Grob, which became the head office of the Senembah Company. Tandjong Morawa, a mix of the local name of Tandjong and Morawa or Moravia in the former Chechoslowakia, was the first tobacco plantation in Serdang. Tandjong (Tanjung) Morawa today is still the head office of PTP II, one of the present Indonesian national plantation companies. In 1872 the plantation Mariëndal, also west of the city, was established. (19) The name Mariëndal, after an estate near Arnhem, the Netherlands, is still in use. In the year 1872 there were established 13 plantations in Deli, 1 in Langkat and 1 in Serdang. In 1890 there were over 170 plantations all over Sumatra's east coast. (20) As showed above the names of many plantations around Medan reflected the nationality of the entrepreneur who had started the estate.

H. Ground

The grounds of Medan were in the hands of the sultan who 'granted' the right of use to the planters. This 'grant' system was unique in the Netherlands Indies. Later the sultans of Sumatra's east coast offered the land on which Medan was built to the city. The agrarian law of 1870 did not allow Europeans or Foreign Orientals (Chinese, Indian) to obtain landed property. Only indigenous (Indonesian) could buy land. Exceptions were small parcels of land destined for villages or for the public interest, later on the local owner could give his 'grant' to the government. This was in 1909. The government on her turn could sell this grant land to private persons, like Europeans or Chinese. Grants are *adatrecht* (local law), introduced by the self-governing sultanates. It were documents that gave a right (to grant) mostly for housing construction. Grants are a typical local right, they don't give ownership but make a kind of law *sui generis*, for a certain period, like 50, 75, or 100 years. There were *controleurs grants* (given out by the *controleur* or Dutch government official) and

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sultans grants. These grants were registered in the public registers, later on by the sultan or the local court of justice. There were also so called sub grants by the Deli Maatschappij (Deli Company). Deli Maatschappij grants were originally given out by the sultan but these grants could not handed over to a third party. As it was officially not possible for foreign orientals or European to buy grants, a conversion was made in 1916. Hereafter the grant could be obtained via a right of 'opstal' (building and planting rights) or 'erfpacht' (long lease). The ground of Medan was in principle owned by the 'Zelfbestuurders' (Self-governed) like the Sultan of Deli. The grounds as given out by the sultan were in the form of concessions in long lease while the land remained the property of the sultan. In 1918 the municipality Medan received a gift of ground free of charge from the kings of Deli and Serdang and the indigenous selfgovernment of Deli. (21) Herewith the grounds of Medan became formally in hands of the Medan municipality. (22) Hereafter village improvement was started as the town now got hold of the grounds herself. Also the Polonia quarter now expanded as well an industrial area in Gloegoer. The grant system was unique in the Netherlands Indies and still exists till today.

Queen City

Medan is the queen city of the island of Sumatra, and is, moreover, the chief trading centre on the east coast, which is the most important and progressive quarter of the island. Until about 48 years ago the site was wild, virgin jungle. Today there exists a charming city, brisk and bustling in its business quarters, surrounded by pretty suburbs, with a sanitary system equal to that of any English town. It has two fine hotels, a railway station of handsome architecture, a racecourse, a palatial club, sports ground for football and lawn tennis, a cinema theatre, and all the modern attributes of an upto date centre. ...The place in its earlier days was known as Medan Poetri, which means, in the Malay tongue, the Square of the Princesses. the territory on which Medan now stands was private garden for the use of the daughters of the Sultans of Deli and the recreation ground upon which they played. The square now has its beauties heightened by the fashionable costumes of the ladies of Medan; in the morning equestrians and equestriennes trot or canter round it; at night a band plays cheerful music, and altogether, Medan is very pleasant place, a joy for ever. (23)

So far Feldwick in 1917. The same source also mentions that the name Medan has relation to the Hindustani word *Maidan*, which means an open space or park. (24) The backbone of Medan's city structure was established in the eighteen eighties, which is still visible today. (25) In the year 1880 the open plain near the Deli head office was made a central square, surrounded by roads and named 'Esplanade'. This was the centre of the town after which other areas developed around this square. After the Indonesian independence the square was named into Lapangan Merdeka or Independence Square.

I. Modern town

Around the turn of the twentieth century Medan had become modern city. Since 1905 there was the Ajer Bersih water company and since 1897 an electricity company. There were telephone and telegraph connections and a railroad connected Medan to the coast and to the inland. The centre of the city was the Esplanade. Besides this central square there was the European Polonia quarter, a Chinese quarter around the Kesawan and an Indonesian quarter in the Kota Matsoem around the Sultan's palace. From 1880 on many new buildings were constructed. Already in 1885 the railroad station on the Esplanade was built and in 1887 a clubhouse the white Club. In the years after many more buildings followed like Hotel De Boer, the townhall and the Java Bank. Modernisation was to be seen in all aspects, like in the luxurious hotel De Boer. The construction of the Hotel De Boer began in 1898, and very quickly became famous in the Dutch East Indies. (26) Madelon Szekely-Lulofs, wife of the Hungarian author Lazlo Szekely, published her strongly autobiographical novel '*Rubber*' in 1935 about plantation life in the nineteen twenties. In it she describes the Hotel De Boer: "*The principal hotel of Medan, hotel De Boer, was situated at a wide grass field round which went a broad asphalt*

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promenade. The main building had two stories. Downstairs were the dance hall and the dining room, with a large terrace. Upstairs were bedrooms. On either side of the main building stood a pavilion, two long rows of bedrooms each with its veranda and its bathroom. The annexes were joined to the main building by a roofed cement path. Between the main building and the pavilions lay a strip of garden, a path, and a strip of grass."(27) The Hotel De Boer also introduced the 'mosquito-free room', with wire gauze windows which replaced mosquito netting around the beds. This was even mentioned in Wright's *Twentieth Century Impressions of the Netherlands Indies* published in 1909 in Singapore: "*These bedrooms are a novelty in Eastern hotel life, quite unlike anything to be found either at Batavia, Singapore or Colombo. The old fashioned mosquito curtains give place a wire gauze frame, which is perfectly insect proof, and makes sleep the comfort it ought to be.*" (28) However Hotel De Boer was not the first hotel in Medan. This was the Grand Hotel Medan, established in 1887 and located at the opposite side of the Esplanade. Hotel De Boer and the Grand Hotel Medan were also the setting for festivities with heavy drinking during the Hari Besar (day off) twice a month when the European planters came to town. The Grand Hotel Medan appeared in literature in Ladiszlaz Szekely's novel *'Van Oerwoud tot Plantage'*:

: ... With a swing we turn into the garden of a strange building, this is the hotel. Since a month I am not surprised about anything anymore. If in this area the calves would have seven legs and the cows nine heads, I even wouldn't be surprised about that. ... At the front a big hall, no, in fact it is not a hall, just an on wooden pillars build roof; walls, doors, windows this space does not have. Right and left another just like unfinished hall. One is the billiard room, the other the dining hall. In between these two halls two half round counters. One of them is the bar. Behind the serving counter sits, in the middle of uncountable bottles, a Chinese with a Buddha face and waits in silence seriously orders. Behind the other counter a Chinese, exactly looking as the first one, writes the names of the arriving guests in a big book. This building is on both sides connected with a sink covered roof, long corridor connected with a long, low building, containing a number of hotel rooms. In front of every room is a small veranda and behind each room a bathroom. The Chinese writes our names in the big book and than says something to a white dressed native waiter. I am also no more surprised this waiter walks bare feet and wearing a head-shawl.... There we stand in a weird room. The furniture is a table, two chairs, a cupboard and two very strange, a bit scary things: two giant, white cotton things on four legs, a metre wide, two metre long and one a half metre high. What would that be? Coffins? ... Carefull, on our toes we walk to the weird white things and open it. We pull the white textile from each other. In the weird thing is a sheet covered mattress, two hard small pillows and a third round, long pillow, just like a weird big sausage. A bed, we conclude. This white cover is a mosquitonet, but for what is this idiot big white sausage?... (29) Szekely's novel *'Van Oerwoud tot Plantage'* was set around 1913. Then many of the buildings surrounding the Esplanade which give the centre its present character, were already build. The townhall was finished in 1909, the Java Bank also in 1909, the new head office of the Deli Company in 1910 and the under fine architecture build post office in 1911. This building was the first large project undertaken by Snuff, the architect who had, in 1909, become the head of Civil Public Works for the Netherlands Indies. Due to the rapid growth of the Dutch East Indies' government there was a need for many new buildings for the divers government services such as schools, jails and post offices. Besides the post office was the building of the White Club, demolished in the nineteen seventies. On the west side of the Esplanade was the Java Bank, designed and built by the Architectural and Engineering Firm Hulswit, Fermont and Cuypers in 1910. One of the finest buildings on the Esplanade was the office of the British plantation company Harrisons & Crosfield, from 1909, on the corner of the Kesawan and the Esplanade. The Harrisons & Crosfield office was named the Juliana building, after the Dutch princess Juliana, born in 1909. It was the first building on Sumatra with a lift. The main buildings like the station, the postoffice, the Java Bank, the Juliana building, the Medan Hotel and De Boer Hotel were all located at the Esplanade. This was the prestigious centre of the modern town of Medan reflecting the success of the plantation industry.

J. The Tjong brothers

For Medan's economy the Chinese were important for the intermediate trade. The Chinese started retail trade and functioned as middlemen between the European wholesalers and the indigenous population. This was more or less the classic structure all over the Netherlands Indies. Some of the Chinese in Medan were former plantation workers, the majority however came directly from China. In due time their family members came over and settled in Medan. The most famous Chinese of Medan were the Tjong brothers. As mentioned above a huge labour force was needed for the plantations. For this reason Chinese from China were recruited to work as plantation workers or coolies. Between 1870 and 1933 about 300.000 Chinese moved to Deli. In this coolie recruitment the brothers Tjong A Fie, (1860-1921) and Tjong Yong Hian (1850-1911) from Mei Hsien, Guangdong, China, had a hand. (30) Although the Dutch dominated the plantation industry, the influence of especially Tjong A Fie can hardly be overestimated. Around the turn of the century he owned, according several sources, about 75% of the real estate of the fast growing city of Medan and practically the whole newly build city of Tebing Tinggi. (31) He had interests in the Parapat and Medan hotels and from 1906 was the first Chinese on Sumatra who owned plantations. The distinctive businesses were put in the Chong Lee Company. (32) The Tjong brothers both served as Chinese officers, official representatives of the Chinese in Deli. The Dutch government appointed officers, from the rank of lieutenant to major, selected from successful individuals who enjoyed respect and status in their community. Thanks to the facilities provided by the government and their business acumen the Tjong brothers managed to build an immense fortune in real estate, hotels, banks, plantations, palm oil and sugar factories and even their own railroad line in South China. After Tjong Yong Hian died in 1911, Tjong A Fie succeeded his brother as major and thus became the leading representative of the Chinese on Sumatra's east coast. (33) Together with appointment as Chinese officers came commercial privileges. They were involved in supplying plantations and mediated in the recruitment of coolies from China. It was not long before they became the official suppliers of crucial products as sugar and opium. Until 1918, the Dutch government sold monopolies to the highest bidder, mostly to rich Chinese traders. Tjong A Fie acquired the opium monopoly and made a fortune. As Chinese officers the brothers knew in advance the city planning of Medan, bought the adjacent land and built rows of houses in Chinese-European style. (34) In 1886 they built a meat market, a year later in 1887 a fish market and in 1906 a vegetable market. The profit of the markets went to the foundation Tjie On Djie Jan. From this foundation they financed the Chinese hospital Tjie On Djie Jan in Medan. (35) In most of their business undertakings like revenue farming (monopolies), shipping and banking they cooperated with uncle Tio Tiauw Siat and wherefore they had intense contacts with Singapore and Penang. The biggest undertaking with uncle Tio Tiauw Siat had been the Swatow railway in South China. Long before the revenue farm system on Sumatra's east coast was abolished in 1918 Tjong A Fie had already acquired plantations. In 1908 Tjong A Fie bought his first plantation, in 1919 he owned almost twenty estates. For the administration of his estates Tjong A Fie employed the Dutch Dolf Kamerlingh Onnes. (36) After Tio Tiauw Siat's death in 1916 Tjong A Fie established the Batavia Bank together with Batavia Major Khouw Kim An. Tjong A Fie also distinguished himself as philanthropist. He financed schools, bridges, Chinese temples, mosques and hospitals on Sumatra, in Malaysia and China. (37) With his enormous wealth and philanthropic activities Tjong A Fie had become a legend during his lifetime. No other person in Medan's history ever has contributed so much for social projects as Tjong A Fie. Therefore he was highly appreciated by all ethnic groups, Indonesian, Indian, Dutch and Chinese alike. On the occasion of Tjong A Fie's thirty years jubilee as Chinese officer there were three days festivities in town with fireworks, processions and feasts. All population groups were involved. It was a multi ethnic event on the occasion of the jubilee of the Chinese major and reflected the

harmonious relationship between the different ethnic groups. Tjong A Fie herewith fulfilled a kind of spill function in Medan, not only in economic aspect because of his enormous wealth, but also because he was a community figure who cooperated closely with the other population groups.

K. Khoe Tjin Tek and the Singh brothers

A second important entrepreneur in real estate was Tjong A Fie's successor as Chinese major, Khoe Tjin Tek. Although he was not so high profile as Tjong A Fie, at the time he became major, he already had made a fortune with his wood trading and housing constructing firms, in cooperation with his cousin in Singapore. Khoe Tjin Tek's Chung Hwa Shang Yeh bank became one of the leading banks in the city. (38) Just like the Tjong brothers and other leading Chinese entrepreneurs Khoe Tjin Tek invested in monopolies like the gambling farm. Khoe Tjin Tek was the last major, the function ended with the Japanese invasion in 1942. It were not only Chinese who became big in real estate, also some Indian entrepreneurs became very succesful. The best example were the brothers Hakkam and Gurdit Singh, who started real estate projects with help of the Sultan of Deli in the Chinese quarter. Later on they cooperated with Tjong A Fie in housing projects. Hakkam and Gurdit Singh were also active in promoting Medan for their fellow Indian countrymen. They invited Indian families from Punjab to Deli to settle in Medan, gave them land and some cows and herewith stimulated settlement of an Indian community in Medan. (39) So besides Chinese entrepreneurs like Tjong A Fie and Khoe Tjin Tek, also Indian businessmen like the Singh brothers were important for building Medan.

L. Companies

If we take a look at Medan's companies we see a wide range of enterprises of different nationalities. This reflected the international character of the town. In 1890 the Netherlands Trading Company, the most important Dutch trading company, opened a sub agency in the city. The German firm Hüttenbach & Co. the first tradinghouse in Medan, established in 1875, was the oldest European business organisation on Sumatra's east coast. The firm owned plantations and was active in a wide range of products like insurance, textiles, food and beverages. Hüttenbach & Co. also operated the retail store Medan's Warenhuis. (40) The building of the Medan Warenhuis still exists but is unfortunately neglected. There were the Dutch companies Nolte & Haas, later changed into the Deli - Atjeh company; W. Cornfield, a British firm; Goldenberg & Zeitlin (German); S. Katz & Co.; B.H. Kerkhoff (Dutch), Soei Tek Bie of the Chinese trader Wee Swee Bee (Oei Soei Boe) and Chong Lee & Co. of the Tjong brothers. The Dutch company Van Nie & Co., established in 1885, was agent of the shipping firm the KPM or Royal Dutch Package Company, the German F. Kehding was agent of the Ocean Steamship Company and Güntzel & Schumacher was agent of the Norddeutsche Lloyd (41) From 1915 on there was an office of the commercial and industrial firm of Lindeteves Stokvis. This was a Dutch trading firm. The Medan office was opened in 1915 on the Kesawan. Soon afterwards the branch bought a large piece of ground on the Paleisweg, the present Jalan Katamso, with an area of about 14.000 square meters, on which large premises and extensive godowns were finished in 1921. Sadly enough this building has been torn down in 2002. Lindeteves-Stovkis was agent for several large factories from Europe and the United States. The firm even built complete plantation factories. (42) The Chinese trading company "Banlian" was established in 1915 for import and export businesses. (43) The best known Chinese warehouse was Seng Hap of Tan Tang Ho in the Kesawan. (44) The first Chinese pharmacy was Hiu Ngi Fen's Moon Pharmacy, also in the Kesawan. (45) In 1912 was the establishment of the Medan Chamber of Commerce and in the same year also the Chinese chamber of commerce was founded. In the beginning of the twentieth

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century there were some European trading houses, before that only Chinese trade. (46) One of the first British plantation companies on Sumatra was Harrisons & Crosfield. Further on there was the Belgian Société Financière des Caoutchoucs (Socfin) that owned many rubber and oil palm enterprises on Sumatra and Atjeh. The brothers Karl and Julius Schadt of Société Financière des Caoutchoucs started the palm oil culture at Sumatra, and probably in the whole of the Netherlands Indies.

A well-known American rubber company was the firm Goodyear who started rubber plantations around 1915. As shown above Medan was characterised by an international atmosphere with American, Dutch, Chinese, British, French, Belgian and German companies.

M. Banks

In the year 1889 the British Chartered bank had opened branches in Medan. Not before 1907 the Java Bank had opened her new branch office. As in 1907 the valuta purification had been effectuated on Sumatra's East Coast whereby the British Straits dollars was replaced by the Netherlands Indies guilder a bank office of the central bank was needed. This was the Java Bank.

Before the form of payment was via pilaar dollars (Spanish mat), as used in the British Straits Settlements. (47) In the same year 1907 was the founding of the Deli Bank of the Tjong brothers. (48) In 1913 a second Chinese bank was established, the Chung Hwa Shang Yeh bank of Khoe Tjin Tek, who would later succeed Tjong A Fie as major of the Chinese. (49) The Medan branch of the Nederlandsch-Indische Handelsbank (Dutch Indian Trading Bank) was established in 1914, and occupied offices in the Juliana building. (50)

N. Towncouncil

The Medan towncouncil was seated in the beautiful townhall on the Esplanade. In 1912 limited democracy started in Medan as only the European male had the right to vote. But in 1917 limited voting right came for the rest of the male population. In 1917 male Indonesian and Chinese and Indian had the right to vote if they had an income of minimal sixhundred guilders a year and spoke Dutch. The European had to have an income of at least nine hundred guilders. In the same period the feminist movement achieved the voting right for women. The Medan towncouncil counted at the start in 1909 of the municipality fifteen members, among them twelve European, two Indonesian and one Chinese. The Europeans were elected and the Indonesian and Chinese appointed. For the Chinese major Tjong A Fie was appointed in the council. In 1918 Baron Mackay became Medan's first mayor. In the same year were direct elections of Indonesian and Chinese members for the towncouncil. For the Indonesian Radja Goenoeng and Moehamad Sjaaf were elected and for the Chinese Tan Boen An. (51) In 1918 the town council was extended to seventeen members, consisting of ten Europeans, five Indonesian and two Chinese. This remained till the Japanese invasion in 1942.

O. Economic hausse fuels Medan's economy

The three most important plantation products on Sumatra's east coast were first tobacco, later on rubber and palm oil. After the end of the first world war there was a short dip in the prices but in the nineteen twenties the economic hausse continued till 19130. The economic welfare contributed to the expansion and wealth of Medan. The original tobacco area was between the two rivers sungei Ular and sungei Wampu, which showed to have the optimal conditions for tobacco growing. (52) From circa 1915 on new plantations were established in Langkat, Serdang, Simalungun

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and Asahan, with vast areas of especially rubber, coffee, sisal, palm oil and tea plantations. New plantation cities were established like Pematang Siantar, Tebing Tinggi, Tanjung Balei and Rantau Prapat. But it was in the first place Medan that profited from this new economic hausse as the new headoffices were built in Medan with all the secondary facilities caused by the new economic welfare. Medan got new fancy stores, warehouses, restaurants and cinema's and became a modern city. Rubber was the main product from 1920 on at Sumatra's east coast. The new automobile industry needed rubber tyres, which was an important factor for the start of the rubber plantations by companies like the American Goodyear Company. Around 1910 was in England a rubberboom related to rubber enterprises and automobile industry. Speculations in England together with the fear for the coming war made many invest into the rubber culture. On Sumatra's east coast the first rubber plantations were established around 1910. A spectacular rise in rubber areas followed. In 1909 were 21.926 hectares and in 1924 173.000 hectares cultivated into rubber plantations. Especially in Asahan was many ground occupied by the Hollandsch Amerikaansche Plantage Maatschappij (Dutch American Plantation Company). (53) Further on there were the German Marihat Plantagen Company G.M.B.H. and the Belgian Soci t  Financiere de Caoutchouc (Socfin). Several big plantation companies were established. They all had their head offices in Medan. The British firm Harrisons & Crosfield had already in 1911 opened its office in Medan on the corner of the Esplanade with the Kesawan. The economic hausse of the plantation industry was reflected in the welfare of Medan city.

P. Kota Matsum with the Maimoen palace

Sultan Mahmoed Al Rasjid Perkasa of Deli became rich as he sold concessions to the plantation companies. In short time he obtained a huge fortune and his new Istana (palace) Maimoen in Medan was finished in 1887, built by the Dutch architect van Erp. The sultan choose Medan for his new residence, following the head office of the Deli Company. Close to the palace the sultan had his private residence in the kota Matsoem or sultans village. The official ceremonial palace was Istana Maimoon or Maimoon Palace. The palace was a gift from the tobacco companies to the sultan and was used for official receptions and festivities. In 1906 the Mesjid Raja (Big Mosque) near the sultan's palace was finished, also built by a Dutch architect, Dingemans. The mosque was financed by three parties, the Deli Company, the sultan of Deli and Tjong A Fie. Opposite the great mosque was the Derikanpark. This was a complex of villas and bungalows constructed in the nineteen twenties and early thirties. On the other side of the Jalan Raya, nowadays Jalan Sisinga mangaraja, stood the wooden palace of the sultan in the Kotta Matsoem. Also on the Jalan Raya was the Medansche Zwembad (Medan swimmingpool) one of the biggest and most beautiful swim facilities in the nineteen thirties in the Netherlands Indies. (54) In the Kota Matsum historically many Malay settled as well as many Minangkabau from West Sumatra who migrated to Medan. Many of the Minangkabau were small traders. Till today these two population groups forms the majority in this area. In colonial times there were only few Batak living in Medan, most of them came after 1950 to the city where they settled in the Padang Boelan area. Of the Javanese population group the majority lived on the estates around the city.

The area around the Sultan's palace was called the Kota Matsoem. It was the Indonesian quarter in town.

Avros

..They say that at the empty ground in front of the Roman Catholic Church, the capitalists intend to build an enormous office that competes with the Harrison & Crosfield building. If this all will be realised, we will see from one end to the other of the Kesawan giant beautiful buildings, the people of Medan will appreciate this... (55) The

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building of the AVROS (Algemeene Vereeniging van Rubber Planters ter Oostkust van Sumatra), (General Association of Rubber Planters at Sumatra's Eastcoast) by architect Mulder was completed in 1919. The building is located on the corner of the Paleisweg (Jalan Katamso), the Soekamulia (Jalan Palang Merah), Kesawan (Jl. A. Yani) and Kerkstraat (Jl. Hariono M.T.) The AVROS, established in 1910, was the organisation where in fact all plantation companies were associated except the tobacco companies. (56) It was an influential institution with over three hundred member plantations. The green roofed building held a dactyloscopic institute where over five hundred thousand fingerprints of contract labourers were registered. Besides this office the Avros had build in 1917 a new research laboratory for the rubber- and palm oil culture at Kampung Baru. Behind the Avros building in the Soekamulia was the Nillmij (Nederlandsch Indische Levensverzekering Maatschappij) (Netherlands Indies Life Insurance Company) nowadays the Jiwas Raya building. Opposite the Nillmij building were the building and storages of Rathkamp & Co. On the Paleisweg, nowadays Jalan Katamso, between the Sultansweg (Jalan Mesjid Raya) and the Kerkstraat (Jalan Hariono M.T.) were the premises of the import company Jacobson van den Berg and the shop and ateliers of the firm van de Pol. On the corner were the St. Josephschool, the Roman Catholic School for European boys and finally the Roman Catholic Church with parsonage on the corner of the Kerkstraat. Behind the parsonage at the Kerkstraat was the establishment of the Catholic Sisters Franciscanessen while opposite on the other side of the street was the restaurant of Ter Meulen. (57) Till today many buildings mentioned above like that of the Sisters Franciscanessen, the Roman Catholic school and church, the AVROS and Nillmij buildings still exist. Opposite the AVROS building begins the Kesawan.

Kesawan

...Chinese with a long tail walk in speed over the broad straight streets. The houses are close besides each other, connected to each other, in straight rows. One storey, exactly similar, wooden houses: below the shop or atelier, above the house. The Chinese, with big entwined bamboo hats, bustling noisy and rumourous through each other. Like ants in an ant heap swarm here the yellow - by the silent, innocent and good natured Malay deeply hated - sons of the Heavenly Empire. Here everything breathes life. Feverish, hasty life... (58)

The Kesawan is the oldest street of Medan and during colonial times the commercial centre with all kinds of firms, banks and offices. The kampong Kesawan was originally a Malay kampong, but since 1880 many Chinese from Malacca and later on from China made this street a real China town. In 1889 a big fire destroyed 67 wooden houses and shops in the Kesawan. (59) Hereafter a fast development of brick Chinese 'ruko' (rumah toko) were build in rows with a gallery below. It were mostly two storeys houses, below the shop or atelier, upstairs the living compartments. Big tablets with Chinese characters told the name of the firm and what they sold. Till the nineteen sixties the Chinese tablets were still to be seen in front of the shops, after then these tablets had to be removed due to the Indonesian policy whereby Chinese language was no longer allowed. In the Chinese quarter were also the markets spread out over several locations. The Tjong family operated all the markets. First there was 'De oude Markt' (The old Market) from 1886, nowadays Jalan Sutoyo, in 1888 the fishmarket was opened in the Spoorstraat, (Jalan Kereta Api), while in 1906 at the 'Nieuwe Markt' (the New Market) (Jalan Perniagaan) the vegetables and fruit market was established. Because of hygienic reasons the municipality wanted to bring all the markets under one roof and therefore plans were made for construction of a new big central market on the former racecourse. (60) This was delayed due to the economic crisis of 1920 and not before the nineteen thirties Medan got its central market. On the other side of the railroad a second Chinese area was constructed with Chinese street names like Hong Kong street, Hakka Street, Peking Street, Amoy Street, Shanghai and Swatow street. Rows after rows of Chinese shop houses had been constructed from 1910 on by Chinese investors like the Tjong brothers and Khoe Tjin Tek. Also the Indian Singh brothers did

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build in this area. In 1934 the Dutch Chinese school was established in the Hakkastreet (Jalan Nusantara) by the Catholic mission. Besides the school was in 1937 the Catholic Chinese church finished in Amsterdam school of architecture by architect Han Groenewegen. An interesting landmark of architecture from the nineteen twenties was the office of the Nederlandsch Indische Escompto Maatschappij. (Dutch Indian Escompto Company)

In the hall is a stone with inscription: *The first stone of this building for the Ned. Ind. Escompto Mij. Medan, designed by Architect bureau Fermont-Cuypers-Weltevreden Amsterdam was laid on 27th August 1927 by Alex van Cuyck, aged 4, son of W.A. van Cuyck, director of the company in Batavia.* Besides the Escompto building was the office of the firm Varekamp & Co., publishers of the Sumatra Post and next to Varekamp the house of Tjong A Fie. Further was in the street all kind of shops like Gerzon's, clothing store, the fashion house 'de Zon' or toko Dusson and the import -export firm of Geo Wehry. One of the most remarkable buildings still existent in the Kesawan was the warehouse and trading company Seng Hap, established by Tan Tang Ho in the eighteen eighties. Tan Tang Ho was one of the leading Chinese businessmen in town. His son Tan Boen An was the first Chinese member in the town council. The lunchroom Tip Top, established in 1934, is still in use as such. Also in the Kesawan were the lunchroom Epperlein, the Chartered Bank of India, China and Australia, the oldest bank in town, the furniture shop of Hwa Nam and the import firm of S.D. Kaper who among else provided "His Master's Voice" gramophones. (61) The Kesawan was the oldest street in town and the financial and economic center. A wide range of companies was established here. Around the Kesawan was the Chinese quarter.

Q. Polonia

After the groundgift of 1918 the municipality of Medan got the possession of a huge former tobacco field named 'Polonia' between the Deli and Babura river. This area became the new villa quarter where most of the European, if they could afford the expensive ground, settled. In this area the new Elizabeth Hospital from 1930, the Princess Beatrix school (nowadays Immanuelschool) both in the style of the Amsterdam school of architecture, as well as many private houses, were built by architect Han Groenewegen. The Princess Beatrixschool was finished in 1938, which was the birthyear of the Dutch Princess Beatrix of the Netherlands. Nearby on the borders of the Deli River was already in 1924 finished the impressive office of the Handels Vereeniging Amsterdam (Amsterdam Trading Company) or HVA. The HVA owned dozens of plantations, including tobacco, sugar cane and tea and part of the substantial profits went into creating this monumental office on Jalan Soeprapto. Designed by Fermont and Cuypers it was completed in 1924. Another landmark in Polonia was the fine Deli Proefstation (research station for the tobacco) from 1913 in the Manggalaan, nowadays Jalan Diponegoro. Later on this small building became the office of the governor of North Sumatra. Nearby were the excercition fields with the court of justice. (62) The Polonia quarter was traditionally the European quarter in town. From 1918 on the area expanded rapidly with many fine buildings when the city received these grounds from the Sultans of Deli and Serdang.

Kampong Madras

All manner of races mingle at Medan. Japanese, Chinese, Cingalese and the various Sumatra types - among which are Battas and a few Mingang - Kabauers - are easily distinguished. The first two form a small shopkeepers' class, and among the Hindus -the so called 'Klings'- you will notice in particular the usurers, the money - lenders, is the Orang Chetti, whose guild - if I may use this word - is old as Time (for Ptolemaeus mentions Chettis in his writings). They are pre - Indian merchants, who arrived on battleships to do business and to lend money to the Malay rulers. These Chettis or userers honour

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their traditions and antique Hindu religion, and have in Medan a separate temple among the three or four other temples which one finds there... (63)

The Dutch writer Louis Couperus wrote this impression in 1923 when he visited the Indian quarter. Nowadays not many Indian reside in this quarter, however there is still an Indian temple, but not the one Couperus wrote about. As mentioned the brothers Hakkam and Gurdit Singh played an important role in the Indian (Sikh) community. In Kampong Kling or kampong Madras is the most beautiful bridge of Medan located. This is the Tjong Yong Hian bridge over the Babura river connecting Padang Bulan with the Indian quarter where many Indians had settled in streets like the Bombaystreet and Calcuttastreet. This bridge was donated in 1917 to the city by the Tjong family in memory of Tjong Yong Hian, the elder brother of Tjong A Fie. (64) The bridge has been restaured in 2002 whereby the text on the marble columns in Chinese and the Latin script became visible again. The Indian quarter was an isolated section in town. After construction of the Tjong Yong Hian bridge the quarter became connected with the rest of the city. Till today the quarter is still called Kampong Kling or Kampong Madras.

R. Medan in the twenties and thirties

From around 1920 Medan made a fast second development caused by the plantations, which had been established the previous years. In the twenties the amount of villas gradually increased in the Polonia quarter. Another newly built area was the Deli Spoorweg Maatschappij (DSM) or Deli Railroad Company housing quarter along the Serdang road for the middle and higher DSM personnel. South of the Chinese quarter was the so called 'Oranje buurt' . This was the Orange quarter with streetnames of the Dutch royal family of Orange, with names like Julianastreet, Wilhelminastreet, Emmastreet and Amaliastreet. In the eastern part of the city several new housing quarters were opened. In 1930 a new municipality hospital was finished in the Serdangroad. In the same year the Roman Catholic Elisabeth Hospital was completed. The Hogere Burger School (HBS) (Higher Secondary School) was established in 1928 and in 1930 two mixed public schools were opened. In 1927 was opened the Su Tung school, Medan's first secondary Chinese school. (65) After the first world war social housing projects were started, like the village Sido Dadi. Other housing projects were in the villages Sekip, Djatie Oeloe and Padang Loemba. In 1927 the municipality started with construction of new city areas like Medan Baru for the lower income groups. Here many Indo (Eurasian) and lower income European employees lived. In 1920 the rubber prices sharply turned down which was directly felt in Medan's economy. As a result new plantation products were tried out on Sumatra's east coast after which the economy rose again in 1924. In the nineteen twenties Medan experienced her second boom period whereby the city expanded considerably. This was all possible because of the rise of plantation products. The high prices remained till 1930 when the world crisis also hit Sumatra's eastcoast. (66) The economy was extra vulnerable as the plantations were fully export orientated. Although financially weak, Medan's greatest public work was started in 1930 and finished in 1933, during the height of the economic crisis. It was the construction of the new Central Market at the location of the former racing course at the Wilhelminastreet. After many negotiations an agreement between the town council Medan and the market exploiters, in this case the Tjong family, was reached whereby the old markets were closed the day the new central market by architect van der Valk was opened in 1933. (67) In the years after in the nineteen thirties the Medan municipality had to cut expenses which remained so till the Japanese invasion in 1942.

Conclusion

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The basis for Medan's development was the plantation industry, firstly tobacco, later on rubber- and palm oil. As a result of the huge profits the plantation companies build impressive offices in the city centre and Medan became a planters town. During colonial times each ethnic population group had to reside in separate quarters which caused a clearly cut out division into a European, a Chinese, Malay and Indian quarter. The sultan had his palace in the Kota Matsum or sultans village. Here still live many Malay as well as many Minangkabau. Further on there was the Indian area, or 'Kampong Madras', where till today still people of Indian descent reside. From the start Medan's economic development attracted many Chinese which resulted into a lively Chinatown. This Chinatown exists till today as the majority of Chinese shops remained in this part of the city. Remarkable was that a limited number of Chinese businessmen controlled a considerable part of the town's economy. The main example was Tjong A Fie who owned over half of all the houses in town. The different ethnic groups, the Indonesian, the Chinese, European and Indian all contributed to the development of Medan. After independence the city expanded explosively, nowadays the city is home to over two million people. In spite of the growth you can still see many colonial houses, offices and villas that stayed behind. Although Medan is no more a planter's town the builded heritage which gave the town her unique character is still visible today.

Appendix

Tabel 1. Population in Medan 1905 and 1912

	1912	1905
European	1408	954
Chinese	10997	6397
Other Foreign orientals, Arab, Indian	1318	3708
Indigenous	13257	2191
Total	26980	13250

Source; (*Verslag Handelsvereniging Medan, 1912, p. 9*)

Tabel 2. Population Medan 1930

	1930
European	4292
Chinese	27180
Other foreign orientals, Arab, Indian	3408
Indigenous	40096
Total	74976

Source: (*Volkstelling, 1930*)

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