

The KPM's Original Thirteen and the Long Afterlives in China and Japan of *Van Diemen*, *Speelman* and *Swaerdecroon*

Howard Dick & Stephen Kentwell

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h.dick@unimelb.edu.au
skentwell@hotmail.com

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Ships built for tropical waters have seldom ended up in northeast Asia. Remarkable exceptions were 'Speelman' (March 1890), 'Van Diemen' (October 1890) and 'Swaerdecroon' (April 1891), three small interisland steamers that comprised part of the famous KPM original interisland fleet in Indonesia. In the previous view of this post we provided evidence to hypothesize that 'Speelman' survived in PRC service into the 1970s, thereby becoming the longest surviving unit of the original KPM fleet. We have since become aware of the salvage and re-introduction of a vessel which better fits the Talbot-Booth sketch of the unidentified 'Hung Yu' (see 'Gong Nong Bing 21' in our "Shanghai Maritime Bureau Passenger Ships List Part 1"). We have also discovered that the hanzi for the unidentified postwar 'Hai Cheng' 海盛, later 'Min Chu 2', differs from that in use by 'Hai Chang' 海昌 ex-'Speelman'. Accordingly, we have written this revised version which we have made as accurate as possible.

Detailed coverage of the pre-1949 North China fleets can be found on this site under the Little Pohai list and subsequent PRC shipping under the Shanghai Bureau series and Dalian Bureau lists. We are grateful to Martin Lindenborn, Peter Cundall and Shigetoshi Kizu for their advice and also to Martin's marhisdata.nl for the use of the photos as acknowledged below.

Introduction

On 1 January 1891 the recently formed Koninklijke Paketvaart Maatschappij (Royal Packet Company) took over the mail contract for the Netherlands East Indies, now Indonesia. Until the 1950s this company, best known simply as the K.P.M., would be as vital an institution there as B.I. (British India Steam Navigation Company) was in India. As it happened the KPM's predecessor, the Nederlandsch Indies S.N. Co. (NISN), which held the mail contract from 1866 to 1890, was a Dutch-registered B.I. affiliate. When the new contract for the period from 1891 was put out to tender in 1886, principals of the two Dutch homeward lines, the Stoomvaart Maatschappij Nederland (SMN) and Rotterdamsche Lloyd (RL) lobbied strenuously against the British firm, arguing that it was a Trojan horse for British interests in Singapore. Notwithstanding that they submitted the higher tender, in mid-1888 they won the contract and shortly afterwards formed the KPM. It would grow into a massive and well-run enterprise that not only monopolised shipping within the Indonesian archipelago but in due time would open deepsea lines to ports as far afield as Australia, Africa and South America.

Although the KPM's fleet and operations have been well documented, almost nothing has been written about the original fleet of thirteen ships and the origins of their design. This article begins with the configuration of this fleet and its pedigree before reviewing the fates and disposal of the

ships and, in many cases, their remarkable longevity. It also records the fate of *Speelman*, the only unit of the original fleet not accounted for in any fleet history.

Origins of the KPM Fleet

According to Joop à Campo's magisterial work on the early period of the KPM to 1914, in 1888 under the draft agreement with the Dutch government it was intended that 14 new steamers would be built: four A-type of 1200 gross tons, six B-type of 900 tons, three C-type of 500 tons and one composite steamer of 500 tons, all designed to carry both passengers and cargo. Agreement to take over most of the NISN fleet allowed one fewer vessel to be built, thus in non-nautical parlance a baker's dozen, and the configuration was adjusted to allow four types. All tenders were let to Dutch yards and construction began early in 1889 to a deadline that all ships should be delivered before the end of the following year to be ready for service in the archipelago by 1 January 1891.

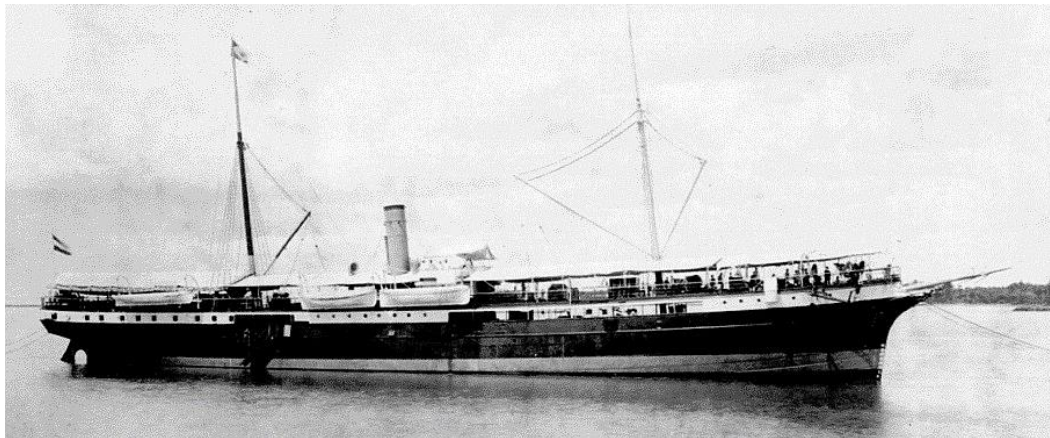
The accompanying Table sets out the ships by class in the order by which they were delivered. As originally intended, there were four 'A'-type of 1300-1400 grt (990 dwt) with a speed of 12 knots, all built by 'de Schelde' at Vlissingen (Flushing); they were rated to carry about 30 cabin passengers in two classes plus around 800 deck passengers. From the Nederlandsche Stoomboot Mij at Rotterdam came two slightly smaller 'A' steamers of 1280 grt (830 dwt) but with an extra half knot in speed for the Batavia-Singapore mail line; this pair had more cabin accommodation (56) and less deck space (560). The Koninklijke Fabriek voor Stoomwezen (Royal Factory for Steam Machinery) in Amsterdam delivered three 1085 grt (700 dwt) 'B' steamers (39 cabin, 628 deck) of only 10 knot speed. Smallest were three two-hatch 'C' steamers of only around 650 grt (450 dwt, 19 cabin), one from the yard of J.& K. Smit at Kinderdijk and two from 'De Maas' at Rotterdam. The other ship and first to be delivered was the composite iron-framed steamer *Camphuys*, a pretty, clipper-bowed yacht designed as the official flagship for use by the Director as required for inspection cruises. In total the 13 ships had a deadweight of 9,070 tons.

Table 1. The Original KPM Fleet: Builders, dimensions and disposal

Ship	Year	Builder	Hull	Grt	Length (b.p.)	Disposal	
Both	1890	De Schelde	iron	1383	259	1931 hulked	
Reael	1890	De Schelde	iron	1383	258.5	1932 scrap	
Maetsuijcker	1890	De Schelde	iron (steel (M))	1390	258.5	1920 hulked, 1931 scrap	
Coen	1890	De Schelde	iron	1386	258.4	1933 scrap	
De Carpentier	1890	NSM	steel	1283	234.5	1924 hulked, 1932 scrap	
Van Diemen	1890	NSM	steel (& iron M)	1284	234.5	1924 sold; 1945 mined	
Reijnst	1890	Kon. Fabriek	steel	1085	220.8	1891 wrecked	
Van Goens	1890	Kon. Fabriek	iron	1085	220.1	1923 sold; 1936 scrap	
Speelman	1890	Kon. Fabriek	steel (iron M)	1083	219.8	1923 sold; 1944 wrecked	
Camphuys	1890	Huygens	composite	723	174.8	1902 wrecked	
Van Riebeeck	1890	Smit	steel (iron (M))	664	166.8	1901 sold; 1927/8 scrap	
Reijniersz	1890	De Maas	steel	642	169.3	1907 CTL, scrap	
Swaerdecroon	1891	De Maas	steel	661	169.2	1906 sold; 1945 mined	

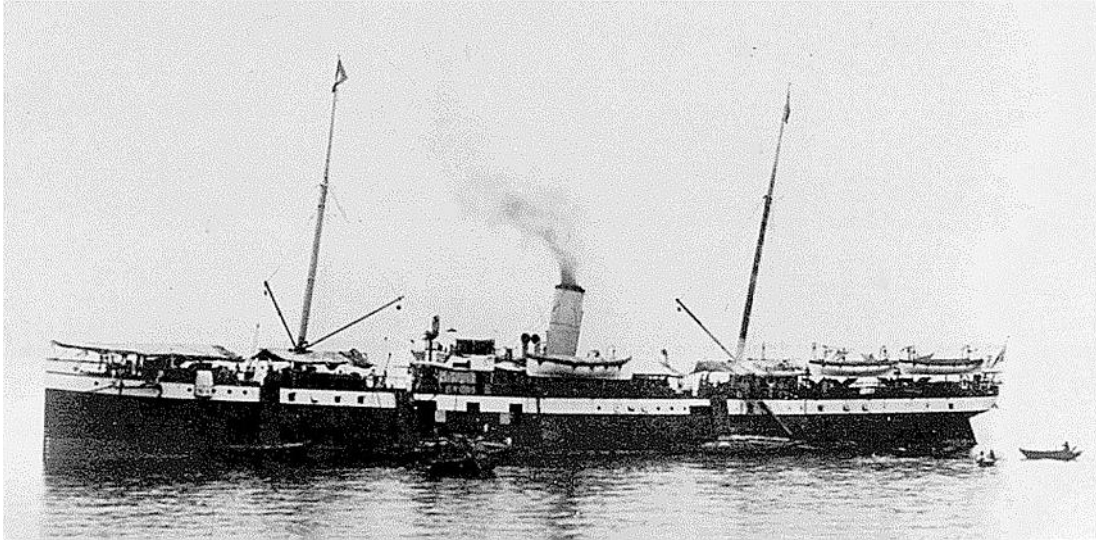
Note: In some cases Marhisdata.nl (M) reports differently from Lloyd's regarding hull material.

Except for the graceful *Camphuys*, the new ships were not new KPM designs but modifications of tried and proven designs of the NISN and its Scottish builders. When the NISN won the monopoly of the interisland mail routes in 1863, in somewhat similar circumstances to the KPM in 1888, its initial fleet was cobbled together from hastily acquired second-hand ships combined with still serviceable vessels from the former mail fleet of Willem Cores de Vries. The first ships to be designed and built for NISN and, perhaps surprisingly, not after any B.I. model, were *Gouverneur Generaal Mijer* (960/1871), *Prins Alexander* (1099/1872), the short-lived *Willem Kronprins der Nederlanden* (959/1873) and *Amboina* (917/1874). All four were built in Glasgow, the first and third by Charles Connell and the second and fourth by Blackwood & Gordon. Despite small variations in dimensions, they were similar vessels. A light awning deck connected forecastle, the midships housing above the engine room and saloon cabins aft to create well-ventilated spaces for deck passengers around the hatches. Above this there was no superstructure apart from flying bridge, skylights and boats but temporary canvas awnings could be rigged the full length of the ship to give protection from the tropical sun. With clipper bows and a good rake to the two masts and funnel, they were stylish as well as practical.



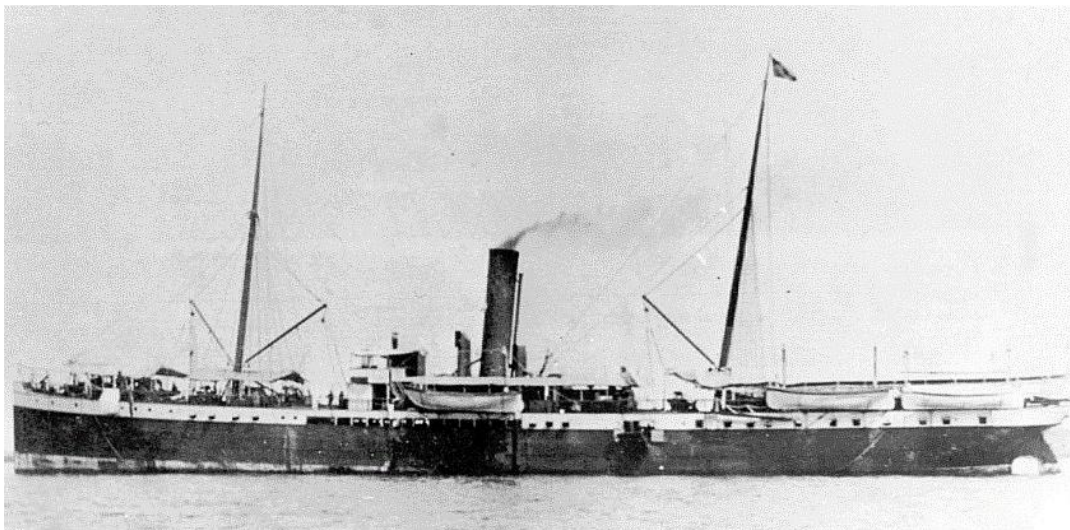
NISN's Scottish-built and clipper-bowed *Prins Alexander* (1872) (M. Lindenborn collection).

After the NISN had gained a 15-year extension of contract in 1873, it went to Clyde builders Caird & Co. of Greenock for a large batch of new ships. *Sindoro* (1134/1875) and *Salak* (1095/1875) were slightly larger versions of the two original pairs. Another five ships followed of similar dimensions: Yard Number 197 was *Bromo* (1213/1875), #198 *Gouverneur Generaal Loudon* (1206/1875), #203 *Japara* (1248/1876), #204 *Graaf van Bylandt* (1208/1876) and #206 *Tambora* (1266/1877). *Generaal Pel* (1310/1876) from William Denny on the other side of the Clyde made up a fine sextet. Yard numbers #193 and #194 were completed for B.I. as *Umballa* (840/1875) and *Puttialla* (839/1875) for the East African coast but in 1880-81 were transferred back to NISN as *Sumbawa* and *Gouverneur Generaal van Lansberge* respectively. Caird delivered a several smaller vessels but those mentioned here have valid claim to be the prototype of the KPM ships that would follow through to the 'Ka'-booten of 1948.

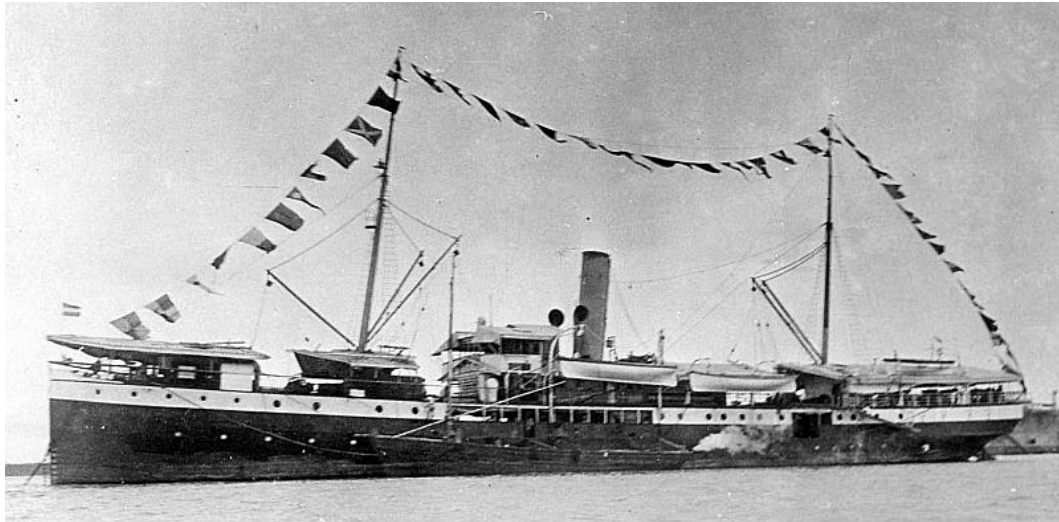


NISN's Caird-built *Japara* (1876) in KPM colours (M. Lindenborn collection).

The KPM ships were not identical to the NISN ones. Although the layout was very similar, even to the extent of the now almost outmoded iron hulls, the engines were not. The heavy compound engines of the Caird steamer were replaced by the more efficient triple-expansion engines that had been widely adopted since the mid-1880s. This allowed a similar speed with slightly higher horsepower for much less coal consumption, which in turn increased cargo capacity. *General Pel* had a deadweight of 800 tons with a bunker capacity of 300 tons, so that along with water and stores perhaps only 450 tons of freight could be loaded. More efficient engines increased the deadweight on the KPM's A-class to 990 tons, meaning that cargo capacity was probably about 75 per cent more or close to the nominal deadweight of the NISN equivalents. The last of the original KPM ships to be laid down, including *Swaerdecroon*, had steel hulls.



NISN's *General Pel* (1876) with heightened funnel (M. Lindenborn collection).



Speelman (1890), with plated tween-deck. Comparison with NISN's *Japara* and *General Pel* (above) reveals their similarities (M. Lindenborn collection).

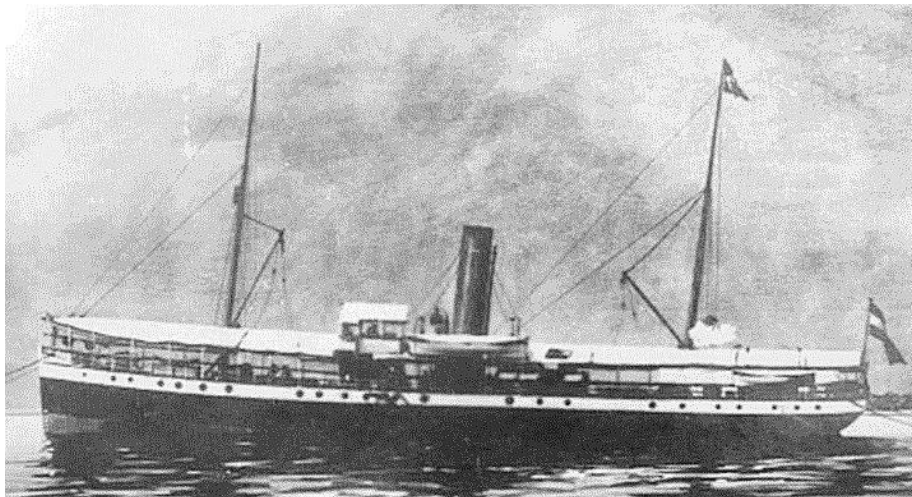
Like other ships in the original KPM fleet, *Speelman* was named after a former governor-general of the Netherlands Indies, in this case Cornelis Janzoon Speelman (1628-84, GG 1681-84), an infamous figure in Indonesian history because of his territorial conquests on behalf of the Dutch East India Company (VOC). According to marhsidata.nl (kronieken), the ship (and engines) were built in Amsterdam as the last of a trio by the Koninklijke Fabriek van Stoom- en andere Werktuigen (later better known as Werkspoor), launched on 25 May 1890, ran trials on 10 October (11.6 knots) and sailed on 25 October 1890 with just enough time to reach Batavia for the inauguration of KPM services at the beginning of January 1891. On 10 January 1891 she sailed from Singapore for Surabaya, Bawean Island (Java Sea), Banjarmasin (South Borneo/Kalimantan), Pulau Laut, Pasir and Cottei (Kutei), the last three ports on the East Coast of Kalimantan. This contractual Line 8/8a (fortnightly as far as Pulau Laut, monthly on to Kutei) was almost the same route as plied by Joseph Conrad as Master of the small Arab-owned trading steamer *Vidar* just a few years earlier in 1887-88, an experience that became a source for several of his novels. Subsequently *Speelman* served reliably many other routes across the KPM's archipelago-wide network without attracting any attention, with one notable exception. On voyage from Singapore to Batavia (Jakarta), at 0100 hours on 29 July 1897 with the Third Officer on watch, the ship was steaming out of Bangka Strait when struck below the bridge on the starboard quarter by the 1,554-ton French barque *Duguesclin* that had cleared Sunda Strait on voyage from Cardiff (2/5) to Hong Kong. The impact smashed the bridge and destroyed the chartroom, killing the sleeping master, Capt. Scherpbier, and also two crew (SFPMA, 24/8/97). Despite the damage, *Speelman* was able to reach Batavia, where repairs were estimated to cost f30,000. In May 1921 *Speelman* was switched from a weekly Singapore-Palembang run to a weekly/fortnightly run from Singapore to the outlying Anambas-Natuna Islands off NW Borneo in the southernmost part of the South China Sea. This would be the final phase of her KPM career.

Disposal

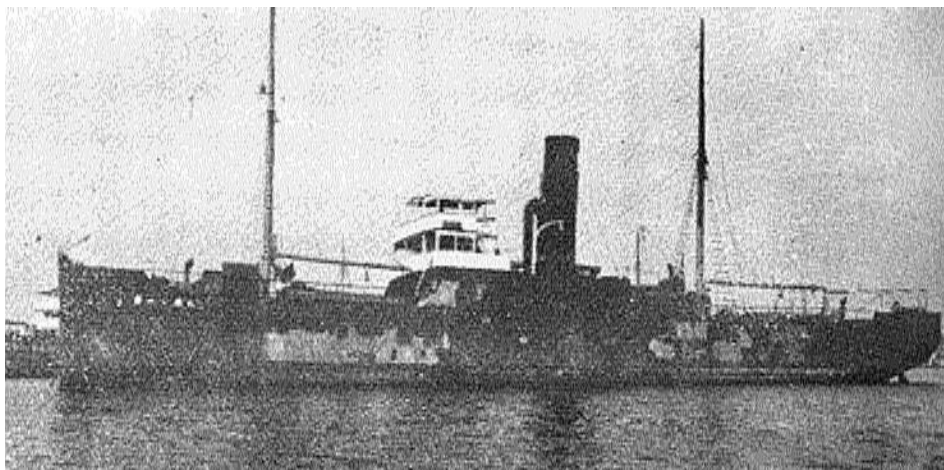
With robust hulls and reliable triple-expansion engines, the original KPM ships were designed to withstand the rigours of difficult operating conditions. Although the waters of the Indonesian

archipelago are for the most part fairly calm and without the seasonal typhoons that plague the Philippines and Chinese waters, there are other hazards. Coral reefs abound and as early as January 1891 were to claim *Reijnst* off the southwest Celebes on her first outward commercial voyage. In Sumatra and Kalimantan (Borneo), river entrances could be tricky and muddy channels untrustworthy, both during the monsoons and with the reduced flows of the dry season. In the early years passengers and cargo were mostly handled either in anchorages or at jetties. Yet apart from the ill-fated *Reijnst*, no other of these ships was lost to faulty navigation. The other two marine casualties were by fire: *Camphuys* off Ceram in October 1902, *Reijniersz* at Singapore in January 1907. The 'A' class all remained under the KPM flag for over forty years before being sold for scrap in the early 1930s, including *Maetsuijcker*, which after being gutted by fire in 1920 served another eleven years as a company hulk at Singapore. The somewhat smaller *De Carpentier* likewise served at Singapore as a quarantine hulk from 1924 until sold for breaking up in 1932.

The two surviving small 'C'-type ships saw the least time under the KPM flag but rendered long service elsewhere. *Van Riebeeck* was delivered to Compania Maritima of Manila at a good price in January 1901 before in 1918 being resold to Japanese owners and rebuilt as a freighter: as *Nissei Maru No. 1* she is recorded as broken up during 1927 or early 1928 (the 1927 Japanese register is lost so nothing more exact is known).



Sketch of KPM's little *Van Riebeeck* (Mulder, KPM).

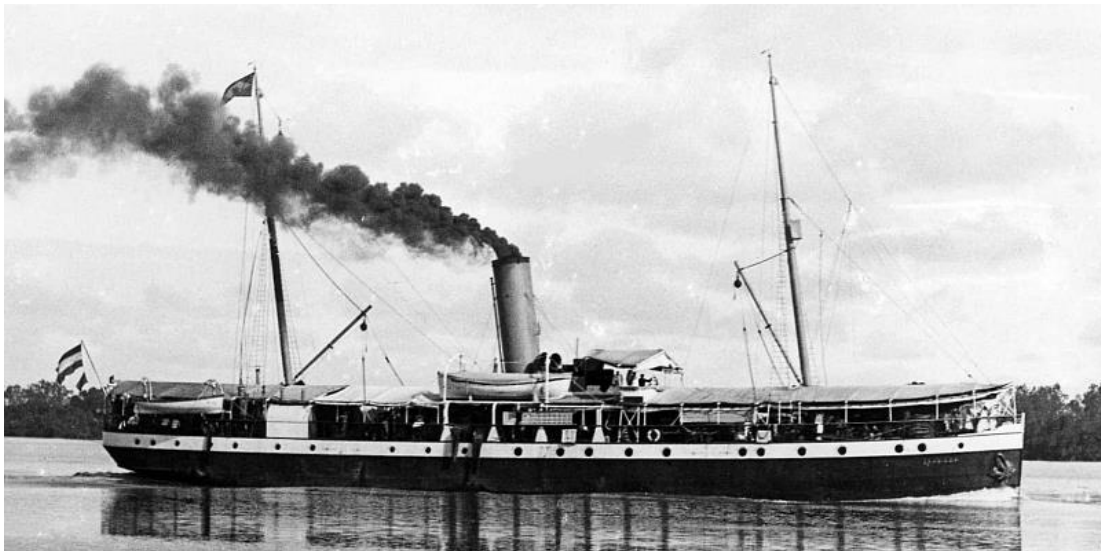


Nissei Maru No. 1. Masts have been re-stepped. Removal of the awning deck now gives a 3-island appearance (Japan Steamship Register 1924).

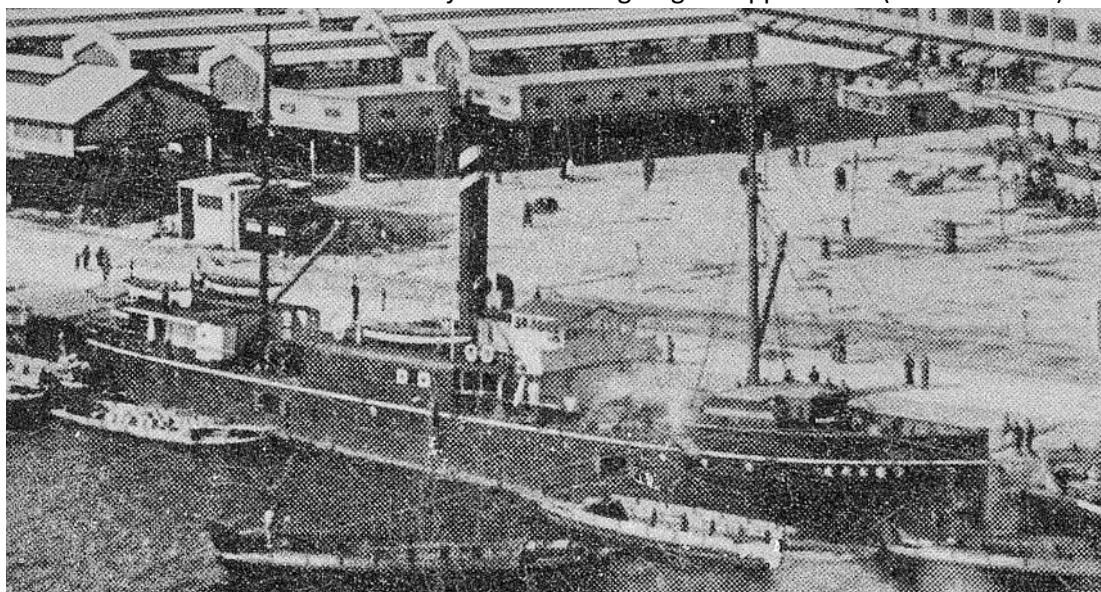
The other three surviving KPM steamers were sold out of the fleet in the mid-1920s after more than thirty years under the KPM flag. *Van Goens* was sold in October 1923 through Straits Steamship to Société des Affréteurs Maritimes Indochinois, Saigon, French Indochina and renamed *Governor-General Paul Beau*. She was sold for scrap in Singapore in February 1936 and subsequently reported demolished in China in March of that year.

Swaerdecroon

The small *Swaerdecroon* was sold in the second half of 1906 to Osaka shipowner Isaburo Amagasaki (Amagasaki Kisen-bu), who two years earlier had bought from KPM the older *Gouverneur General van Lansberge* (renamed *Jindai Maru*) and obviously been well pleased. She was renamed *Kimigayo Maru*, a rather patriotic name as *Kimigayo* 君が代 (meaning "His Imperial Majesty's Reign") is the name of the Japanese national anthem and its opening phrase.



Swaerdecroon's identical sister *Reijniersz* showing original appearance (Marhisdata.nl).



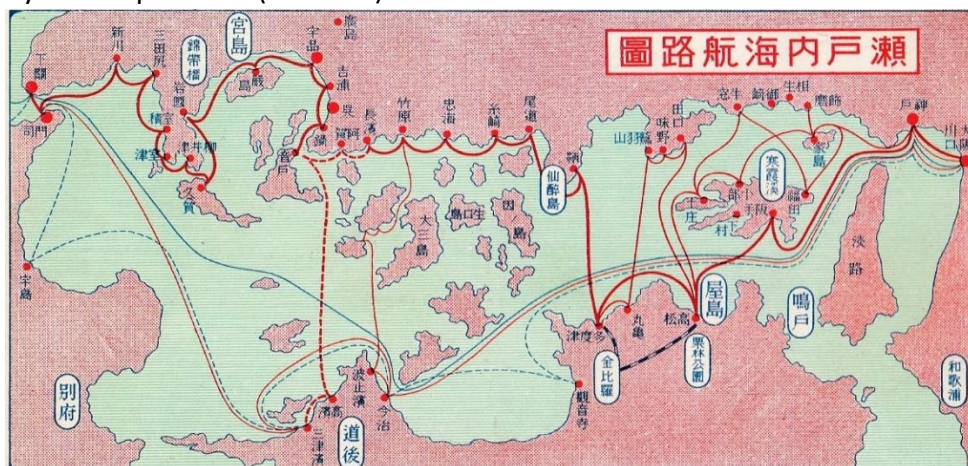
Swaerdecroon (1891) rebuilt as Amagasaki's steamer *Kimigayo Maru*, seen here berthed at the Central Market in Osaka (segment from a postcard, SK collection).

In March 1904 Amagasaki had opened a new shortsea line between Osaka and the Korean port of Inchon via Kobe, Shimonoseki and Pusan and it is likely that the two ex-KPM ships were intended for this trade. Much of the traffic was labour migration to the booming economy of Osaka-Kobe from the colonised Korean Peninsula, including from the offshore volcanic island of Jeju (Cheju, also once known as Quelpart). Migrants from Jeju used to have to travel via the ports of Inchon or Pusan, until in 1924 *Kimigayo Maru* was transferred to a direct route. Known by Koreans as 'Kundaewan', the ship used to depart in the morning from the market wharf in Osaka, arriving at Jeju the following evening. Over the next two days, no fewer than 11 calls were made around the island, where the absence of wharfs meant anchoring and transferring passengers and cargo by boat. In September 1925 when the ship was in danger of being overwhelmed by a typhoon at Jeju island, the master beached her; eventually refloated, she returned to service.



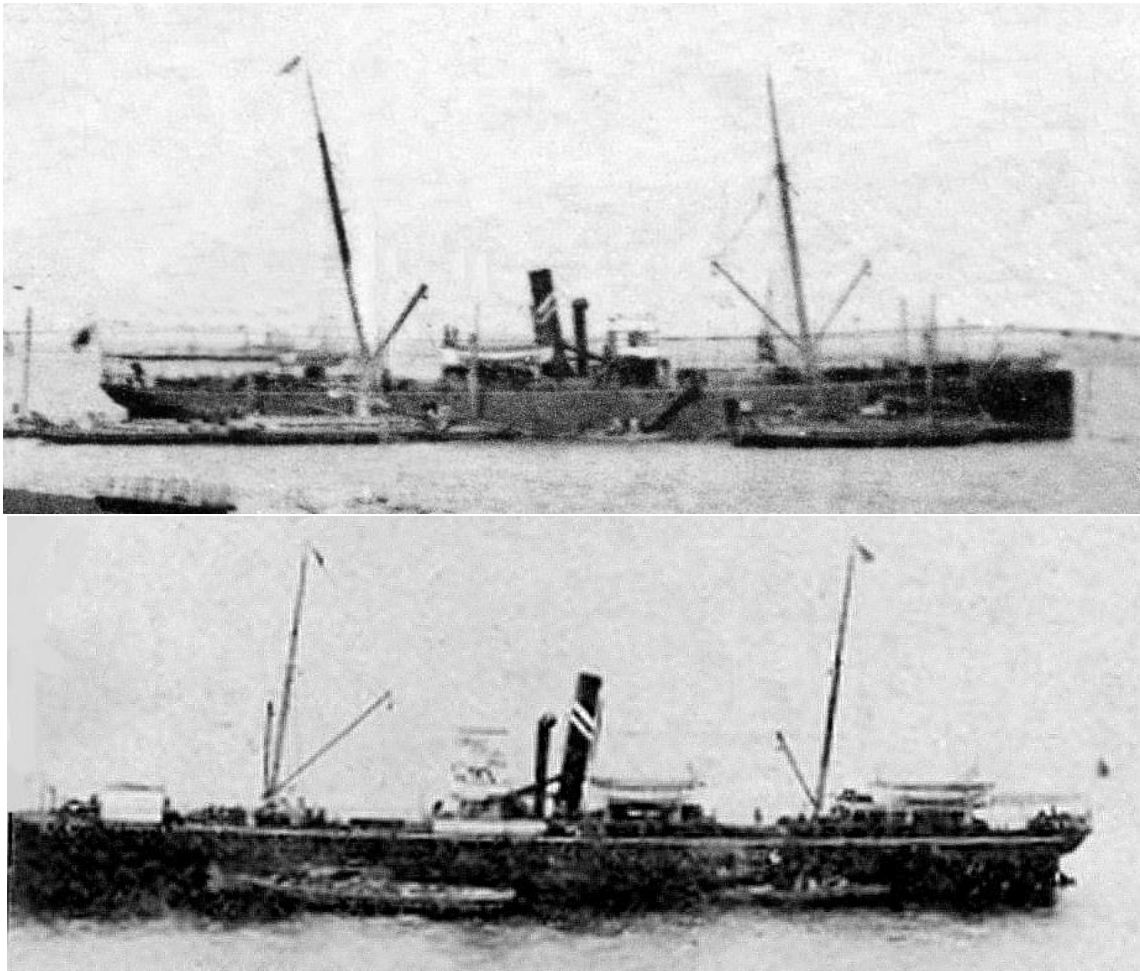
Kimigayo Maru survived a September 1925 beaching at Jeju (Nanamaru).

Amagasaki developed their own shipyard at Osaka where they undertook maintenance and often surprising conversions and updates of their large fleet of generally small, often passenger-carrying vessels of great age. Included were several conversions of warships to merchant ships including in 1926 a Russian gunboat which was converted to become *Kimigayo Maru No.2*, a 900 grt running mate to the ex-*Swaerdecroon*. Amagasaki Kisen's extensive Japan Inland Sea routes are shown below, taken from a company-issued postcard (coll. SK*).



The owners must have been impressed by *Kimigayo Maru's* sturdy hull because in 1937 they installed more powerful machinery from the Imai Iron Works, in 2024 still headquartered at Amagasaki City in Osaka. After being transferred in May 1942 to the new entity Kansai Kisen for Inland Sea service, she was sunk by a mine on 23 March 1945 off Himeshima (Oita, Northeast Kyushu), aged an impressive 53 years and 11 months.

Zindai Maru/Jindai Maru survived until May before striking a mine and sinking off Shimonoseki. Laxon & Perry note that her 70 years afloat, still with her original Caird compound engine, set an age record for a unit of the B.I. fleet. Running mate *Kimigayo Maru No.2* was bombed and sunk on 1 June 1945 at the entrance to Osaka Bay.



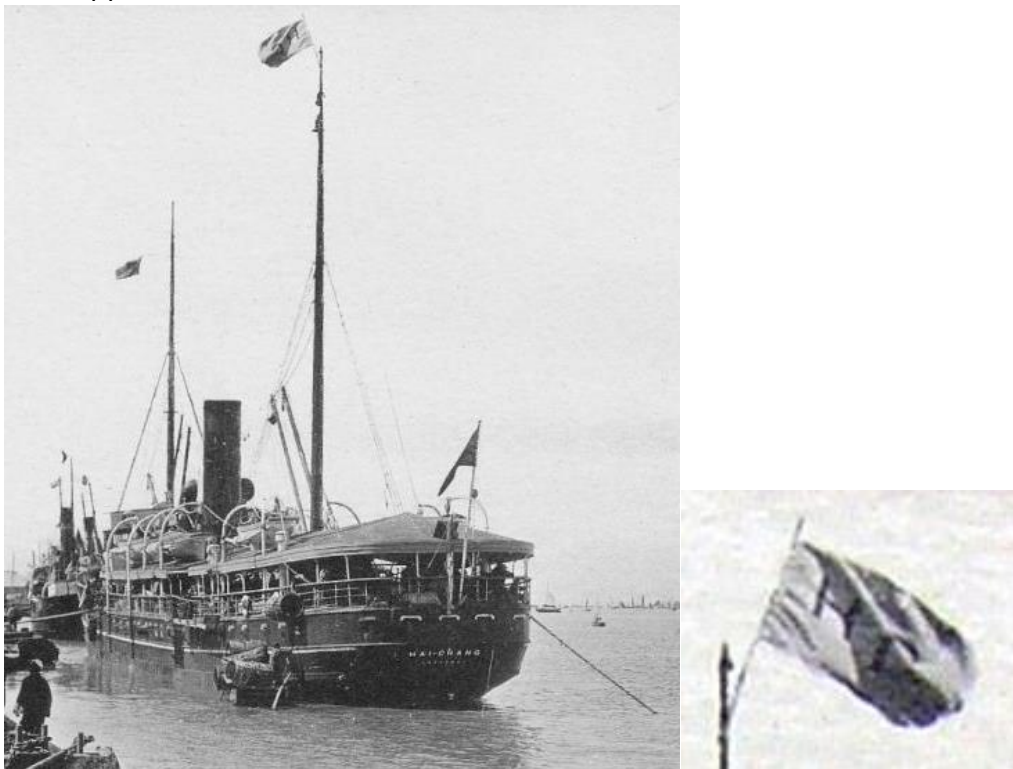
Two successive views of the earlier *Gouverneur General van Lansberge* (ex-B.I. *Puttialla*) as Amagasaki Kisen's Inland Sea steamer *Jindai Maru* (Nanamaru).

Speelman

Speelman was first sold in July 1923. The sale must have occurred suddenly because the ship had been advertised to sail from Singapore to the Anambas-Natuna Islands on 5 July 1923. Instead, on 7 July at Singapore she was handed over with some ceremony to French owners (SFPMA, 9/7/23). It transpired that she had been sold for £4,500 to Société des Affréteurs Indo-Chinois of Saigon, a recently formed subsidiary of Messageries Maritimes that operated coastal services from Saigon to Haiphong, also to Bangkok and Singapore. *Speelman* had been acquired to inaugurate a new contractual line between

Saigon and Bangkok. Renamed *Bokor* after a recently opened hill resort near the small port of Kampot in southeast Cambodia, she sailed three days later for Saigon. There, after some further consideration, her name was changed to *Gouverneur-Général Maurice Long* to honour the former governor general (1866-1923, GG 1920-22) who had resigned in April 1922 on grounds of ill health and died at Colombo en route to France in January 1923. In effect, the ship swapped governors general – the name *Bokor* was not elsewhere recorded. The French buyers were obviously pleased with the ship because in October they paid \$34,000 to buy the sistership *Van Goens* and in September 1924 another \$35,000 the somewhat larger *Van Diemen*, then in December 1925 the newer and larger *Van Outhoorn* (1571/1896). *Gouverneur-Général Maurice Long* (ex *Speelman*) thereby became surplus and was sold on, this time to Chinese owners.

Gouverneur-Général Maurice Long is generally reported as sold in 1926 to the Hai Chang Steamship Company of Newchwang, the North China treaty port at the entrance of the Liao River and renamed *Hai Chang* (海昌), also reported as *Haichang*. The China Press of 21 October 1925 (not 1926) records a *Gov. Gen. Maurice Long* as having arrived at Shanghai the previous day, which was almost certainly the delivery voyage from Indo-China. At Shanghai the 35-year-old vessel would have been given a thorough and competent refit before taking up service in spring of the following year. Through a stroke of good fortune, we have acquired a postcard identified as ‘The lovely view of Yingkow Pier, Yingkow’ that shows a steamer about to leave a wharf. At the stern is clearly legible the name *HAI-CHANG* [vide hyphen] and the port of registry, Shanghai with what seems to be a British ensign. The stern angle is rather compressed but without doubt the ship is ex *Speelman* after more than forty years and transition from the Dutch to French to Republican Chinese flag. A major change is that the typical K.P.M. awning deck plating has been removed and replaced by open railing, giving the ship a flush main deck appearance.



Cropped view of *Hai-Chang* ex *Speelman* at Yingkou (Newchwang) in 1930s
‘HC’ on the houseflag denotes Hai Chang S.S. Co. (postcard, SK colln).

Yinkow or Yingkou (in the modern Pingyin spelling that we quote hereafter in parentheses), is in effect the Chinese name for the treaty port formerly known officially as Newchwang (Niuzhuang). Although Newchang was opened in 1858 on the Liaohe River as the first Treaty Port in North China, it was found to silt up quickly and present depth difficulties, so in 1861 the port facilities were moved to Yingkow township nearer the mouth of the river, although somewhat confusingly non-Chinese subsequently referred to this location as “Newchwang”, consistent with the treaty wording. The Newchwang municipal authorities began to refer to their township as “Niuzhuang City” (城庄牛) to distinguish from the “Newchwang” that referred to Yingkow port.

Since the ship’s registry was reportedly transferred to Shanghai in 1934, that detail also fits, though the date may in fact have been a year or two earlier. Japan invaded Manchuria in September 1931 and the Chinese flag would thereafter have become inconvenient. The final detail is the owners. Initially the owners were identified by Lloyds Register as Nei Hong Hing trading as the Hai Chang Steam Navigation Company under the agency of the nominally British firm of F.D. Farmer & Company of Yingkow. Nei Hong Hing was probably a syndicate. Shanghai newspapers refer variously to Hai Chang Company (agents c.1930), Hai Chang S.S. Co. (agents 1931 onwards) and also Hai Chang S.N. Co. (legal case, June 1931).

In 1931 and 1932 first entries appear in the privately published China Yearbook citing data from a year or so previously, and spelling ship names as a single word without the hyphen, giving the operator of *Hai-Chang* as Haichong (sic) S.S. Co. Ltd of Yingkow and another ship, *Hai-Ping* (2,036/1897) as operated by Haichang S.S. Co. The latter had been built on the Clyde for Mitsui Bussan as *Fujisan Maru* and remained with that firm until sold to Nei Hong Hing at the end of 1928. From the 1934 edition Hai Chang S.S. Co. is listed as operator of both ships and a third vessel, *Hai-Shun* (1696/1897). *Hai-Shun* had been built by the Neptun yard at the North German port of Rostock for the Chinese coast as *Tai-Yick* but in 1901 via Russian owners passed to NYK and later its shortsea/Japan-China subsidiary Kinkai Yusen as *Takasago Maru* with a passenger capacity for 9 First Class and 20 Third Class. In 1927 she was acquired by Nei Hong Hing, and during the 1930s these three ships plied between Yingkow or sometimes Dairen (Dalian) and Shanghai. *Hai-Ping* was lost by collision in the river at Yingkow in October 1934 and was not replaced. As below, the 1935 and 1936 Yearbooks mention Hai Chang S.S. Co., address Shanghai, as having a capital of \$250,000 an operating 3 ships (the tonnage of *Hai-Ping* is still included).

1931:

<i>Haichang</i>	..	..	..	..	1890	954.60	Haichong S.S. Co.
<i>Haichang</i>	..	..	..	..	1929	849.00	Fu Kuan Tung
<i>Haicheng</i>	..	..	..	..	1913	1,307.00	North Eastern S.S. Enterprise
<i>Haichow</i>	..	..	..	..	1906	1,471.25	China United Navigation Co.
<i>Haiping</i> ..	..	..	..	..	1897	2,035.73	Haichang S.S. Co.
<i>Haitan</i> ..	..	..	..	..	—	1,183.00*	Chang Yin

1932:

<i>Haichang</i>	..	..	..	..	1890	954.60	Haichong S.S. Co.
<i>Haichang</i>	..	..	..	..	1929	849.00	Fu Kuan Tung
<i>Haicheng</i>	..	..	..	..	1913	1,307.00	North Eastern S.S. Enterprise
<i>Haichow</i>	..	..	..	..	1906	1,471.25	China United Navigation Co.
<i>Haiping</i> ..	..	..	..	..	1897	2,035.73	Haichang S.S. Co.

1934 and 1935 Yearbooks:

HAI CHANG S.S. CO.	} Shanghai-Yinkow
<i>Hai Shun</i> 1,743.69	
<i>Hai Ping</i> 2,035.73	
<i>Hai Chang</i> 954.60	

1936 Yearbook:

HAI CHANG S.S. CO.	
<i>Hai Chang</i>	955
<i>Hai Ping</i>	2,036
<i>Hai Shun</i>	1,744

1935-36 Yearbook:

Hai Chang S. S. Co.	79 Rue Du Consulat, Shanghai	1925	250,000.00	3	4,730
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The staple trade of Yinkow and the Liao River was soybean products and especially pressed beancake, the residue of the milling that was valued as fertiliser for the ricefields of central and southern China. For centuries this trade had been carried by junk. John Swire, whose China Navigation Company had in 1873 pushed into the Yangtse river trade between Shanghai and Hankou (Hankow, now part of Wuhan), saw an opportunity to break into the beancake trade as well and the following year bought two coasters for the purpose and registered them to a separate Coast Boat Ownery. The Ownery was an immediate success and was duly absorbed into the rapidly expanding fleet of China Navigation, a company that still trades today. Jardines followed with the Indo-China Steam Navigation Company and both companies developed a specific type of 3-hatch (later 4-hatch) coaster known as a 'beancaker'. In due course syndicates of Chinese merchants who controlled the various beancake trades also invested in their own ships, one such being Nei Hong Hing.

F.D. Farmer first appeared in the early 1900s as Manager at Yinkow of Bandinel & Company, agents for Hamburg-Amerika Line, Norddeutscher Lloyd and Japanese-flag Nippon Yusen Kaisha. In 1907 the firm became F.D. Farmer & Co. Agencies for the two German lines lapsed in 1914 after the outbreak of World War I. By the time of The North China Hong List 1919 the firm was being managed by George F. and P. Farmer, probably sons, with steamship agencies besides NYK for Dodwell, Java-China-Japan Line plus eight insurance companies. Farmer & Co. were also wharf owners, having both the 375' Eastern (NYK) Wharf and the shorter 230' Western/Town Wharf. Under the Hong listing they were described as 'Steamship Owners and General Merchants', though no owned vessel can be identified between sale of the old beancaker *Chefoo* in 1914 and acquisition of *Hai-Chang* in 1925. The address of the Hai Chang S.S. Co. is given as c/- F.D. Farmer & Co. Given that the latter traded as 旗昌 'Ch'i Chang' [= 'Banner Light of Sun'] which for an unknown reason was exactly the same hong name as the former Russell & Co. which closed in 1891, a link is apparent with 海昌 'Hai Chang' [= 'Sea Light of Sun'].

As of 1919, Farmer & Co. also had branches at Lungkow (Lungkou) and Teng-chow-foo on the north coast of Shantung (Shandong) province. It may therefore be inferred that *Hai-Chang* also served to carry seasonal migrants and workers across the Gulf of Pohai (Bohai), probably as the similarly sized *Chefoo* had done previously and since 1922 the former British India Company's passenger steamer *Vita* (890/22), now *Lung Shun* of the Ta Tung Co. of Yinkow. The larger *Hai Shun* and *Hai Ping* with no substantial passenger capacities are listed separately in Lloyd's Register to Hai Chang S.N. Co. under the syndicate Nei Hong Hing of Custom Street (presumably The Bund), Newchwang but their agency at Shanghai was Hai Chang Steamship. It may therefore be presumed that all three ships were part of the same operation, that is being owned and operated by Chinese principals and

registered at Newchwang (or later Shanghai) under the Chinese flag but taking advantage of the Farmer connection to enjoy wharfage and other facilities in the foreign concession. This interpretation is consistent with background on the longstanding importance of the merchant guilds in Yingkow.

It may be assumed by the early 1930s Hai Chang's smallest steamer *Hai-Chang* was plying within the sheltered waters of the Gulf of Bohai (Bohai). The China Yearbook gives the route as between Lungkow (Lungkou), Dairen (Dalian), Tientsin (Tianjin) Shanghai and Yingkou. but these ports would presumably have been alternative crossings, that is Yingkow-Dairen for Tientsin-Lungkow. Tientsin (or downstream Tangku) had rail connections to Peking (Beijing) and central China and, for beancake, by barge along the Grand Canal; Lungkow was a small, isolated port at the northwestern end of the mountainous Shantung (Shandong) Peninsula but important for the busy seasonal labour migration to and from Manchuria. *Hai-Chang* would have been well suited to this local passenger trade and almost certainly was purchased with an eye to this specific purpose. Speed hardly mattered over the short distances around the Gulf so a gentle 8 knots would have been sufficient. She had ample space for deck passengers (and/or livestock) in the sheltered main deck – more above deck in good weather –and a solid hull to withstand ice at the onset and end of winter – from December through to March the Gulf usually iced up and most vessels had to be laid up. In February 1936 after heavy winds, Gulf ports were closed by pack ice ten feet thick, trapping vessels that had tried to remain at sea. *Hai-Chang* only ever appeared in the Shanghai Press in May 1936, two weeks after seizure off Tangku by Chinese Customs on grounds of smuggling. The ship was held for almost a month until negotiations were concluded for payment of a fine of Tls 5,000. Curiously the ship was said to be sailing on both Chinese and Manchukuo papers. Japanese authorities pressed for the ship's release and succeeded in reducing the fine from Tls10,000 to Tls 5,000 (NCH, 6/5 and 16/6/36).

The Japanese connection is hardly surprising. After Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05) and the cession of Port Arthur, Dairen (Dalian) and the South Manchurian Railway, the foreign concession at Yingkow also became predominantly Japanese, including by 1919 control of all the utilities. In 1923 a reorganisation of Japanese shipping saw NYK's Manchurian interest transferred to an affiliated shortsea operator Kinkai Yusen while Dairen Kisen (DKK) was established to operate services between Japan, Manchuria and North China, initially from Osaka/Kobe to Yingkow and also Yingkow-Tientsin. In July 1929 DKK established an impressive Branch Office at Yingkow. After the Japanese occupation of Manchuria in 1931, DKK's Yinkow traffic grew rapidly, not only to and from Japan but also to and from Taiwan and other ports in China. By 1935 the Yinkow office employed thirteen staff and by 1937 nine DKK ships were regularly calling there. Besides DKK, Okazaki Kisen offered 3-4 sailings per month between Yingkow and Japanese ports while a Kinkai Yusen/NYK cargo vessel served Yokohama-Yingkow twice a monthly. Hai Chang with just two ships was now very much a niche operation and would have needed to comply with the demands of the Japanese authorities.

After a series of encroachments from Manchuria into North China, in July 1937 Japan launched a full-scale invasion of North and Central China and within weeks had occupied the port cities of Tianjin, Qingdao (Tsingtao) and Shanghai. The Gulf of Bohai now virtually became a Japanese lake. From 25 August a blockade was imposed upon all ports between Qinhuangdao (Chinwangtao) and

Shantou (Swatow) such that any ship under the Republican Chinese flag became liable to seizure. Most Shanghai shipowners promptly transferred their ships to foreign nominees but those serving Shantung (Shandong), Tientsin and other ports around the Gulf faced a difficult choice. If they wanted to maintain operations to non-treaty ports, such as Lungkow, their best option was to hoist the flag of the Japanese vassal state of Manchukuo, but thereby would become collaborators and risk sanctions from the Nationalist Government of Chiang Kai-shek, albeit now in retreat up the Yangtse. The biggest of the Pohai companies, Ching Kee, split its fleet: five ships took refuge in Hong Kong, where they remained under blockade until December 1941, while the majority of the fleet transferred to Manchukuo registry.

Fleetmate *Hai-Shun*, recorded as operating under the Japanese reading of the name *Kaijun Go* 海順号 was mined and sunk within the the port of Rashin (Rajin) at the northeast tip of Korea on 10 August, just days before the surrender on 14 August. 号 'Go' is a suffix used in China and Japan to denote the name of a ship and is usually not shown on the ship itself.

By 1940 *Speelman* as *Hai-Chang* 海昌 was trading under the Japanese reading of her name characters *Kaisho* 海昌. While PSIS-100-1 *A List of Japanese Merchant Ships Second Edition* and Hayashi's *Senji Nippon Senmeiroku*) show the ship under Manshu Flag as *Kaisho Go*, the Japanese war loss list lists her as the 954 grt *Kaisho Maru*, under private operation. As such, she is reported to have run aground without casualties off the Laotie Mountain Lighthouse on the southwestern tip of the Liaotung Peninsula on 18 February 1944.

19/02/18 C 海昌丸 954 滿州海運 座礁 大連老鉄山燈台沖

Peter Cundall, a respected source on Japanese merchant ship operations during World War II, states

"Kaisho Maru 90 954 Manshu Kaiun

18/2/44 ran aground and sank off Laotieh Shan Lighthouse (Rotestsusan Lighthouse), W of Dairen, Kwangtung Chow, China. The ship finally sank 5/3/44."

So alas, *ex-Speelman* suffered an obscure wartime fate in 1944, sinking 16 days after running aground, aged 53 years and 6 months.

Or did she? We cannot rule out the possibility of an unreported salvage of the sunken but solidly built *Hai-Chang*. Lloyd's Register did not delete her postwar as a verified war loss and, though lacking up to date information, kept her in the register until 1960. Nevertheless, a similar case was the same company's other ship, *Hai-Shun*, sunk 10 August 1945 in the harbour of Raishin, Korea but also not removed from Lloyd's Register until 1960.



Google Earth images showing position of the lighthouse at the southern tip of Laotieshan Xijiao. The Laohuwei famed narrow entrance to the naval port of Ryojun (Port Arthur/Lushun) can be seen in the left image about 8 nautical miles to the northeast. Right image closeup of lighthouse with its concrete base (top right-centre) and the shore with fishing vessels. Only a few rocks in the shallow water (Illustrations from *Google Earth*).

Given the favourable shoreline, evident absence of deep reefs and proximity of high-grade naval resources, it may be the case that *Hai-Chang* was considered salvageable. All that can be surmised in the case of *Hai-Chang* was if the ship was still existing postwar, in 1949 she would have passed under the control of the People's Republic of China. Miramar without stated evidence records the ship as broken up in China "about 1952". But again we quote Peter Cundall who states

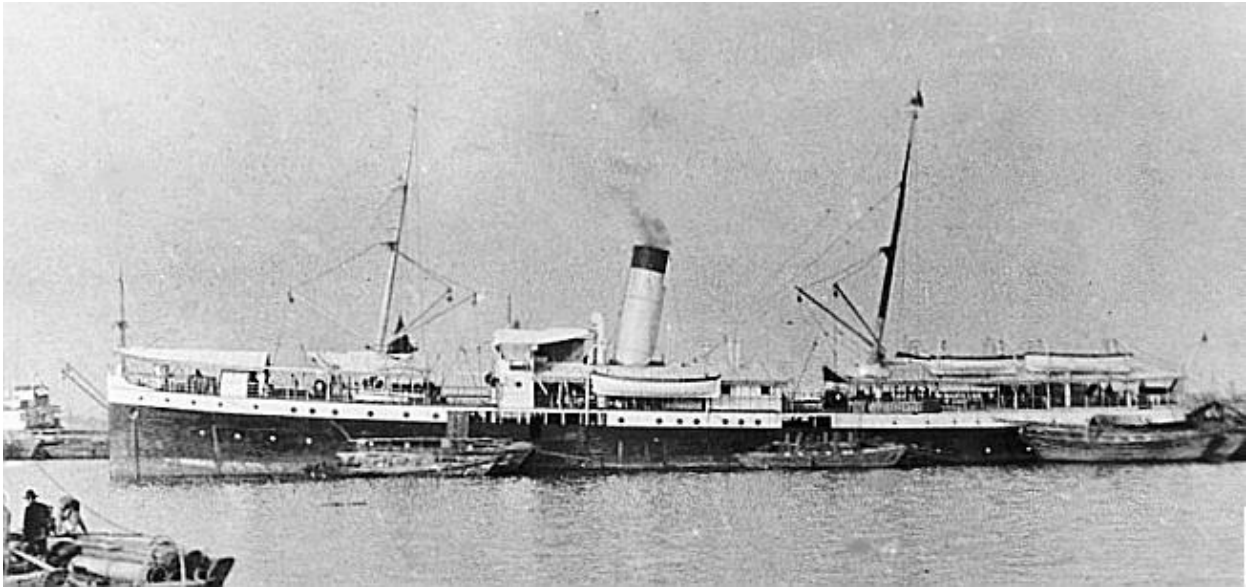
" It would not surprise me if the ship was salvaged later in the war given the acute tonnage shortage at that time.

"Against (the possibility of) salvage is the fact I have fairly good listings of ships surrendered in the North China area and the ship does not feature."

Could the ship have been renamed from 海昌 *Hai-Chang* 'Sea Light of Sun' to 海盛 *Hai Cheng* ('Sea Abundance')? The latter vessel, origins unidentified but subsequently renamed *Min Chu 2*, was carrying passengers around the Pohai from 1950 for the Dalian Steamship company. Such a half-renaming on being recommissioned after the 1944 grounding/sinking, or on being nationalised by the new government is plausible but needs further evidence.

Van Diemen

Van Diemen was sold in September 1924 to the French company Soc. des Affrêteurs Maritimes Indochinois (SAI), Saigon and renamed *Ream*.



Ream ex Van Diemen at Singapore, October 1924 (coll. J.G. Nierop/<https://www.marhisdata.nl/schip&id=6877>).

In 1926 she was resold to Cie des Grand Lacs de l'Indochine, Saigon and renamed *Saint Pierre des Lacs*. In 1929 she reverted to SAI and became *Gouverneur-Général Maurice Long II*, and into the Great Depression in December 1931 was sold without renaming to S.A. Mang, Haiphong, nine months later passing to possibly associated Chinese owners at Canton (Guangzhou) and Hong Kong.

From 1893 a weekly Haiphong-Hong Kong line had been opened under the French flag and given a boost by the French occupation from 1899 of what became the treaty port of Kwang Chow Wan (Fr. Kouang Tchéou-Wan, Pinyin Guangzhouwan and its town of Fort Bayard, present day Zhanjiang). Chinese steamers owned by a number of individual kongsi (syndicates) owned and registered in Hong Kong, Canton or Macao also developed a busy trade carrying general cargo (especially Chinese goods) southbound from Hong Kong and returning with rice and cattle from way-ports on Hainan. Discharge in Hong Kong was at wharves around Kennedy Town where the abattoirs were located along with rice godowns.

At the end of September 1932 the former *Van Diemen* was registered, still as *Gouverneur-Général Maurice Long II* by An Beng Kuen at Hong Kong. This was just a transitional step, as three months later she was transferred to the doubtless newly formed Nam Lee Co. ('Southern Profit') syndicate at 69 Connaught Road West in Hong Kong, Hong Kong and registered in Canton as *Tin Seng*, 天成 ('Heaven' and 'Success') an aspirational name for syndicate owners and for passengers hopeful of building their fortune in the south as the vessel was placed in the Hong Kong-Kwang Chow Wan trade. From February 1934 the agents were listed as Tai Fung Co., Hong Kong which since the early 1920s had been the main Chinese kongsi in this trade. By the 1938/39 edition of Loyd's Register, Tai Fung Co. was also the contact address for the owners.

After the commencement of Japanese hostilities against China in 1937 the vessel was reported as sailing under the French flag but on 13 February 1938 she was detained by the Tsuki ('Moon class') Japanese destroyer *Mikazuki* ('Crescent Moon', written in kanji as 'three day moon') at Wanshan Island, between Macao and Hong Kong. What ensued is not recorded in detail, but in 1941 the vessel was registered for the Japanese Government as *Mikazuki Maru* 三日月丸 and on 24 October

chartered to the main Japanese shipping line in Chinese waters, Toa Kaiun, for civilian use. She survived another three years, until 17 May 1945 when she touched a mine and sank without human casualty on 17 May 1945 in the Grand Canal, 6 miles downstream from Woosung. So the last of the original "Baker's Dozen" had finally gone, aged 54 years and 7 months, which also would have made her the longest lived. The durability of these three fine ships, whose careers were cut short by hostilities, can be attributed to careful navigation, the strength of their hulls and the careful maintenance that they received throughout their careers.

Detailed coverage of the Hong Kong-Kwang Chow Wan-Haiphong fleets can be found on this site in the Pre-WWII Chinese owned/chartered shipping, Shun Cheong S.N. Co. Ltd and Wo Fat Sing lists accessible on the "Chinese" page and the Marty & d'Abbadie list on the "Foreign" page.

Postscript

In December 1947 Koninklijke Java-China Paketvaart Lijnen (Royal Interocean Lines, RIL) came into being to operate the deepsea lines of the KPM and the associated Java-China-Japan Line. This arrangement confined the KPM's operational sphere to what would soon become the new nation of Indonesia. When the KPM's local assets were seized by the Indonesian Government in December 1957 and its Dutch staff ordered to leave the country, the KPM all but lost its rationale. Over the next two years, most of the older ships were either broken up or sold to local owners. Three ships carried on a line from Singapore to Dutch New Guinea (now known as West Papua) until 1963, when the Dutch were obliged by international pressure to cede control, which left only the little *Musi* (987/1950) plying between Singapore and Dili (Portuguese Timor). Despite the deployment of a few other ships on non-RIL routes, the KPM's role was contracting to that of a passive shipowner. In view of this situation, from 1 January 1967 the KPM was absorbed into RIL, which ten years later disappeared into the great shipping combine Nedlloyd Lines.

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