

# Villa Mei Ling in Bandung: a historical building for the Dutch East Indies

## Introduction

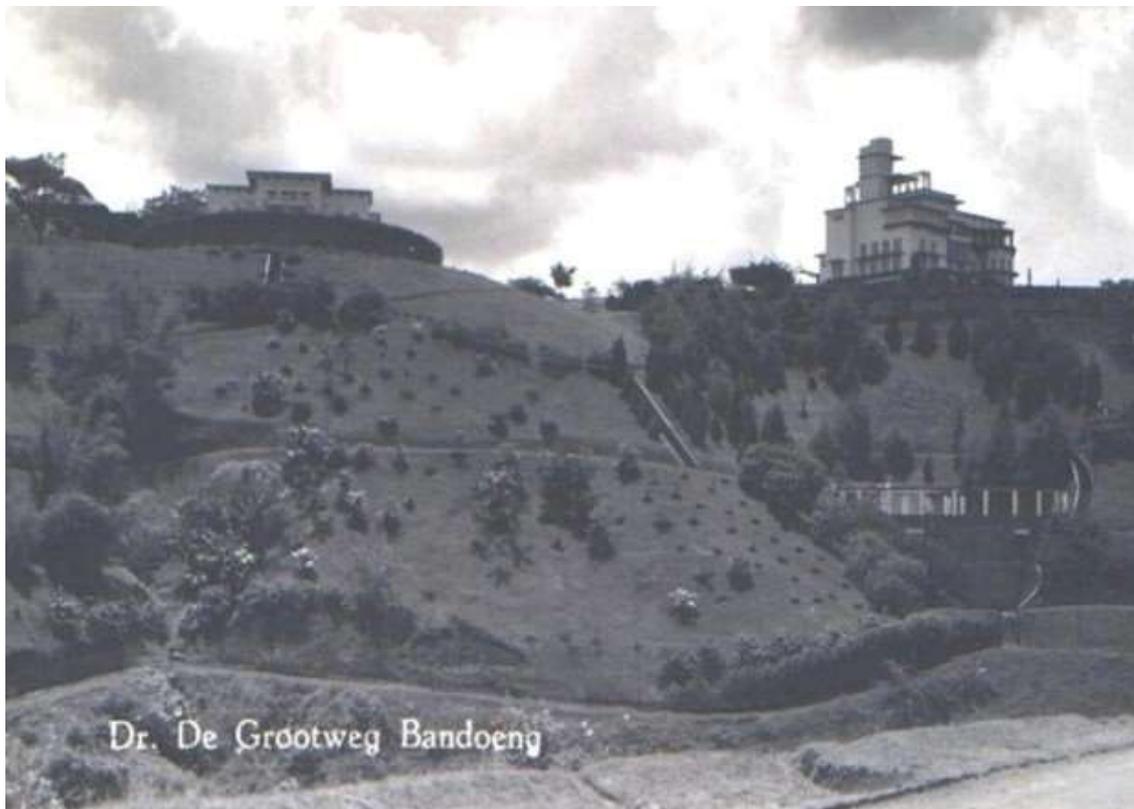
On 22-7-1930 the paper "Het nieuws van den dag voor Nederlandsch Indie" published an article called "A millionaires boulevard! New palaces in Bandung" great plans.

It states among others

- That Bandung will have a brand new suburb on the North, near the Dr. de Grootweg, the new connection road between the Dagoweg and the road to Lembang.
- That Mr. K.B. Han of Parapattan, Batavia, the well-known landlord of Bekasi, acquired a premises of 30.000 square meters there, after Mr. Hoogland – a connoisseur as few others of Bandung and surroundings - personally had shown him the attractions of this terrain in view of his intention to build a large estate . The view - one could say a panorama – surely is very magnificent.
- That engineer Voorhoeve from Bandung has visited the ss Baloeran to precisely study the decorations on the wall and the staircases of this beautiful ship, this on instruction of Mr. Han and with permission of the Lloyd. In the future palace the study of Mr. Voorhoeve will be used and every effort will be made to make the external architecture and the interior as modern and beautiful as possible. It will be a fairylike building!

At the moment that this article was published the building of the villa which would later be called Villa Mei Ling was in full swing. According to this article

- Already thousands of koelies are engaged in the construction of a connection with the Dr.de Groot road and soon the construction of the new building will start. A true palace with a beautiful deer park, tennis lawns, lotus ponds etc. and a complete village of annexes and pavilions will make the place complete.



On this postcard one can see how the hills north of Bandung since the years 30 of last century is dominated by two buildings namely Villa Mei Ling (on the right) designed by F.W. Brinkman and Villa Isola (on the left) designed by Charles P. Wolff Schoemaker. Villa Isola is well known, but even the historical role of Villa Mei Ling is unknown.

This story is written to nullify this omission and to make this villa more known to the general public.

About the architect F.W. Brinkman we could find the following article:

**Algemeen Indisch dagblad : de Preangerbode**

01-04-1931

**ALGEMEEN NED.-IND. ARCHITECTEN- & INGENIEURS-  
KANTOOR F. W. BRINKMAN, ARCHITECT ;  
G. H. VOORHOEVE, BOUWK. INGENIEUR.**

De architect F. W. Brinkman vestigde zich in 1912 hier ter stede. Een zijner eerste werken was het bouwen van het schitterende heerenhuis aan de Sumatrastraat „Bella Vista”, welk bouwwerk onmiddellijk werd gevolgd door een soortgelijk huis, eveneens gelegen aan de Sumatrastraat „de Hort” geheeten.

Verder ontwierp de Heer Brinkman de pasars hier ter stede, benevens vele woonhuizen. Als op den voorgrond tredende bouwwerken gedurende den laatsten tijd noemen wij de Kweekschool voor het Leger des Heils, de Oosterkerk, de Christelijke M.U.L.O., de Elita en Oriëntal bioscoopgebouwen, benevens een aantal scholen te Tjiandjoer, Cheribon en Tasikmalaja.

Als allerlaatste bouwwerk möge gememoreerd worden het nieuwe gebouw van O. A. B., hiernevens afgebeeld, terwijl de fraaie villa van de Heeren Han en Kan aan den Dr. de Grootweg in aanbouw is en ongetwijfeld zal behooren tot een der schitterendste woonhuizen hier te lande.

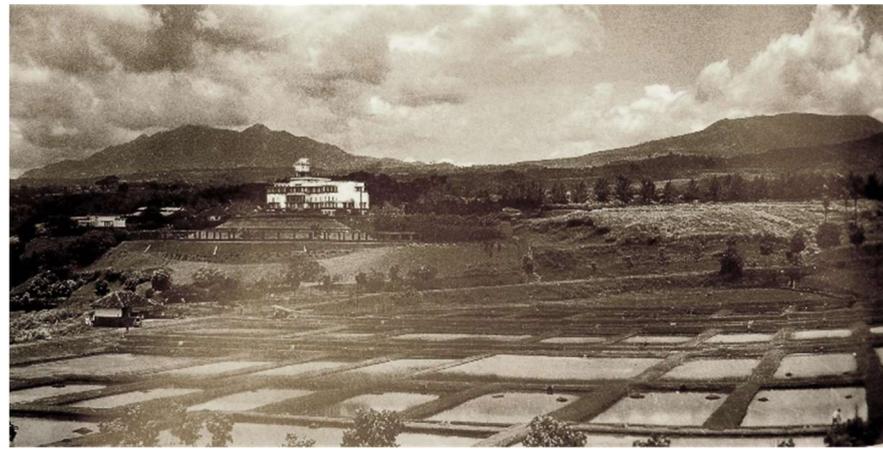
Sedert 1 Juli 1929 associeerde de Heer F.W. Brinkman zich met den Heer G. H. Voorhoeve, waardoor het Architectenkantoor onder bovengenoemden naam ontstond, dat gevestigd is aan den Ouden Hospitaalweg 27, Telefoon 2115.



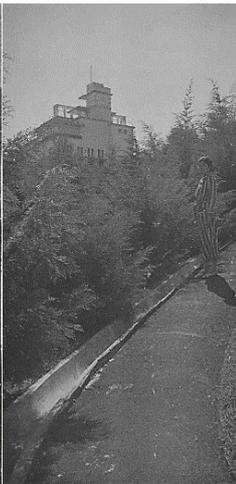
In the “Commemorative album to the period 1918-1930” by the Algemeen Ingenieurs- en Architectenbureau (AIA) it is stated:

“The Algemeen Ingenieurs- en Architectenbureau (AIA bureau) was regarded as a large and well-known architect company in the Dutch East Indies with its own construction company. It was established around 1916 in Batavia (Jakarta) by the former BOW architects F.J.L. Ghijssels (1822-1947) and H. von Essen (1) ?? together with the contractor F. Stoltz. The company extended in 1927 with an establishment in Surabaya. In 1932 followed an office in Bandoeng, under the supervision of architects F.W. Brinkman and G.H. Voorhoeve whom architectural firm AIA entered into an association.

Below you can see Villa Mei Ling, just after the completion of the building in 1932 from various points of view (Photos from the photo album of Lucy Kan the eldest daughter of my grandfather H.H.Kan).



Also some photos were taken by my parents in 1935.

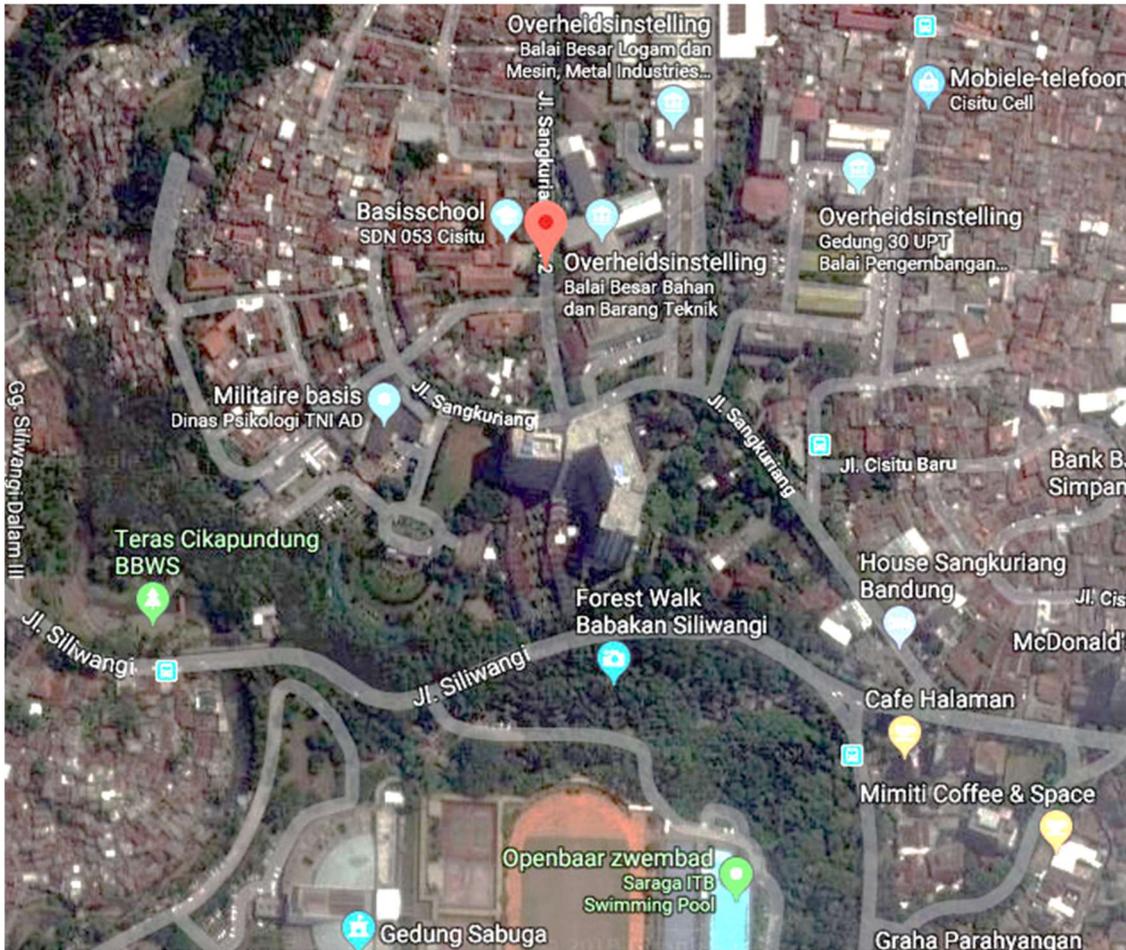


On the first and last photo my parents are on a terrace or balcony of Villa Mei Ling. In the background of the first and fourth photo is the pavilion where aunt Hilda, third daughter of H.H. Kan lived.

This villa is named after the wife of the at that moment president of the Republic of China, General Chiang Kai Shek namely Mei Ling Soong (Sung).



Villa Mei Ling is situated between the Lammingaweg presently Jalan Sangkuriang and the Dr. de Groot weg, presently Jalan Siliwangi.



## Exterior and Interior of Villa Mei Ling

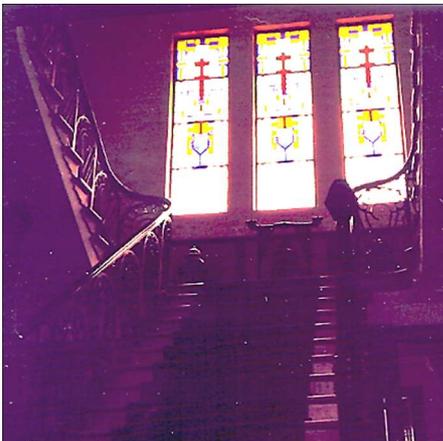
My grandfather Hok Hwei Kan (H.H. Kan) and his brother Han Khing Bie (K.B. Han) could not have suspected that the building by architect F.W. Brinkman would play such a historical role.

Their purpose was a beautiful villa with splendid view on a cool spot away from warm Batavia.

The Art Deco architect Brinkman designed not only the building but also together with his partner engineer Voorhoeve the interior, the furniture and the stained glass windows. Examples of these designs are presented in the photos taken by my father Louis Kan of my mother Desiree Tan around 1935. Unfortunately the photo albums with more interior samples of Villa Mei Ling were lost during World War II.



What is left of the interior nowadays was photographed by my brother during his visit together with my sister to Villa Mei Ling in 2001.







To accentuate the Chinese character of Villa Mei Ling some Chinese panels were integrated in the walls.

After the marriage of Princess Juliana and Bernard Villa Mei Ling was inspected by several governments departments, their purpose was to use it as a place to stay when the

married couple would visit the Dutch East Indies. Because of the increasing threats of war this visit was cancelled.

In time Villa Mei Ling was continuously embellished and all antique and art objects of the two brothers Kan and Han were concentrated in this villa. The idea was to make Villa Mei Ling a Kan-Han museum. Under supervision of Lucy Kan and my father Louis Kan new art and antique objects were acquired. Of the antiques objects in the villas of H.H. Kan and his brother are only few photo's left.

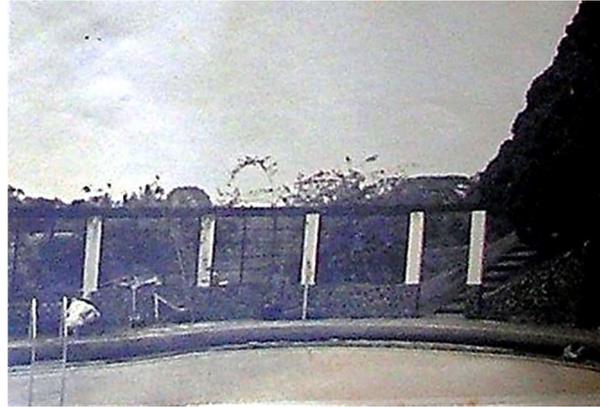


One of the Ming vases with Cicilia Kan, second daughter of H.H. Kan



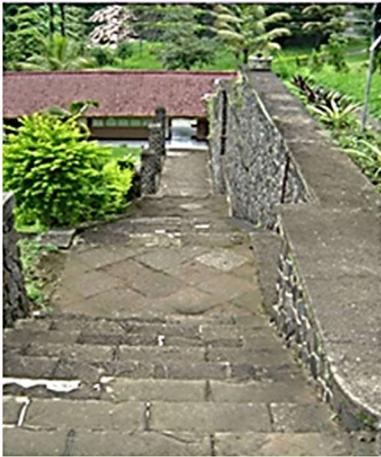
The wall screen in eight parts on the occasion of the wedding of Hilda Kan, third daughters' of H.H. Kan with Jesse Sung, son of the Chinese Consul in the Netherlands Indies. Their daughter from this marriage was also called Mei Ling. Behind the table on the 3<sup>rd</sup> photo more wall screens.





Also it was said that there was a cinema in the cellar and a swimming pool (according to Tan Eng Swie) In the photo album of Lucy Kan there are

indeed photos of a swimming pool. According to her daughter Tan Bie Giok you could reach the swimming pool via a large stairway.



There were also photos of my father *in* and my brother Sioe Lee *near* the swimming pool.

In the garden of Villa Mei Ling is very prominent a large pergola in the form of half a circle. This pergola can still be seen on Google Earth.



On this photo is aunt Hilda, her daughter Mei Ling and my brother Sioe Lee near the pergola.

## History of Villa Mei Ling

Villa Mei Ling was built during the years 1930-1931.

In 1942 the Japanese troops landed on Java. Batavia was declared open town on 5<sup>th</sup> March 1942, which meant that all high officials left Batavia and the Stadswacht (civil defense) had to submit to the Japanese who conquered Batavia without one gunshot. And because lieutenant general H. ter Poorten had declared Bandung a "not to be conquered fort" the high officials and military withdrew to Bandung. Also Governor General A.W.L. Tjarda van Starkenborgh Stachouwer (7-3-1888 – 16-8-1978) and his

adjutant H.J. van Mook went to Bandung.

My grandfather H.H. Kan being a loyal citizen offered Villa Mei Ling as their residence.

On 7<sup>th</sup> of March Mr Van Mook flew to Australia, however Mr Tjarda stayed. On 8<sup>th</sup> of March Tjarda and Ter Poorten left after an ultimatum to Kalidjati. Here Ter Poorten assigned the military command of the Dutch East Indies to lieutenant general Imamura. This was the end of 350 years of Dutch domination in Indonesia.

As from 8<sup>th</sup> of March 1942 Villa Mei Ling was a sort of concentration camp for high officials.

<b>ACHTERGROND</b> Over deze regio	<b>Uw zoekacties: Villa Mei Ling in Bandoeng</b> Villa Mei Ling in Bandoeng
<b>BEELD</b> Kampinformatie Regiokaart Stadskaart	<b>Plaats:</b> Bandoeng <b>Residentie:</b> West-Java <b>Regio:</b> Java <b>Ligging:</b> Bandoeng ligt op West-Java. Villa Mei Ling stond aan de Dr. De Grootweg, in het noorden van de stad.
<b>BEWAREN</b> Pagina printen of opslaan	<b>In de periode 08 maart 1942 - 06 april 1942 was dit een burgerkamp &gt;&gt;</b> <b>Geïnterneerden:</b> mannen <b>Informatie:</b> Ten tijde van de capitulatie op 8 maart 1942 bevonden de gouverneur-generaal, een groot aantal hoge bestuursambtenaren en vrijwel de gehele legerleiding zich in Bandoeng. De gouverneur-generaal en zijn kabinet kregen in eerste instantie huisarrest opgelegd. Tot 6 april verbleven zij in de villa Mei Ling van het Chinese Volksraadlid H.H. Kan. Op 16 april werden de gouverneur-generaal, de legercommandant en een aantal medewerkers overgebracht naar het 10de Bat. in Batavia.

After the capitulation of the Japanese my grandfather and his brother did not retrieve Villa Mei Ling, but instead the Supreme Commander of the English forces took residence. When this English staff left Villa Mei Ling, they took 34 lorries full of art and antique objects from Villa Mei Ling as being “war booty”, even the Art Deco door handles were taken. Protest with the Dutch East Indies government did not yield anything, because the English were “the liberators”.

Also now my grandfather and his brother did not retrieve Villa Mei Ling. Namely general Spoor of the KNIL with staff settled in this building. Clearly the Dutch flag in top of the roof can be seen.



After the transfer of Sovereignty in 1949 again Villa Mei Ling was not transferred to my grandfather and his brother but to the Indonesian Military Forces.

In 1958 we visited Villa Mei Ling together with family Soetedjo (family in law to be). Apparently they made a large renovation, so we were not allowed inside.



This building nowadays is used by the psychological service of the Military Force of Republic Indonesia (Dinas Psikologi AD) <http://www.dispsiad.mil.id/index.php/en/2013-02-18-13-54-04> .

The outside of Villa Mei Ling was photographed by a friend of my sister in 1988. Since he was allowed by the military to enter the building.





In 2001 the outside of Villa Mei Ling was also photographed by my brother. Today with street view of Google Earth one can get an impression of the present day look of the outside of Villa Mei Ling. Interesting to see, that in 1988 there were no conifers at all, and how much the conifers in front of the building have grown between 2001 and 2018.



In 2001



In 2018

## Conclusions

Villa Mei Ling was witness of several historical events. If walls could speak!

Some questions remain unanswered such as what is known about architect F.W. Brinkman?

Was there a cooperation with Charles P. Wolff Schoemaker or were they competitors?

Could there be some of the designs and drawings left of Villa Mei Ling?

Why is Villa Mei Ling known in Indonesia by the name Villa Ang Eng Kan?

a family relation between Ang Eng Kan and Hok Hoek Kan is not known to us, or is it simply a confusion of "Han and Kan"?

Thanks to all family members who have provided information and the Dinas Psikologi A.D. (Dispiad) for their permission to photograph the interior.

Berkel, February 2018

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