Translating China : Henri Borel (1869-1933)

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PART II: IN SEARCH OF ‘THE REAL CHINA’ (1894–1916)

Chapter 3: Orientalism

After arriving in the Dutch East Indies in autumn 1894, Borel is appointed Chinese interpreter at Riau. Soon he feels disappointed and dissatisfied with the expatriate community, where he witnesses corruption and injustice. In addition to that, he realizes that the Chinese people in the Indies are different from the Chinese in China. In his capacity of Chinese Interpreter, he introduces Chinese culture to inform Dutch readers, in particular his local colleagues. From the way Borel writes it appears that he develops an Orientalist perspective, in the words of Edward Said:

> Yet the Orientalist makes it his work to be always converting the Orient from something into something else: he does this for himself, for the sake of his culture, in some cases for what he believes is the sake of the Oriental.[1]

To a great extent Borel's translation of Chinese culture is determined by his own personality. Without questioning his own being, and his 'cultural and discursive identity', Borel wishes to think 'from a Chinese perspective'. In the process he is 'converting' China into something else, but it is not clear if—in Said's words—he is doing this for himself or for his Dutch readers (to gain a better understanding of China), or if he is doing it for the sake of the Chinese (who will as a result be better understood). There are two types of writing in which Borel informs his readers about the Chinese people in the Dutch East Indies and about Chinese culture. The first type are articles which Borel publishes about the Chinese in the Dutch East Indies which contain his observations based on experience and (legal) documents and comments on a new law design. The second type are literary translations from the Chinese, some combined with his own prose. In these texts, there is a very subjective view: Borel is presenting China/ the Chinese, how he sees 'them', claiming that he is looking at things 'from Chinese perspectives', but does not let 'them' speak for themselves.

What we will see here is that Borel is taking on a role of 'negotiator', in the capacity of ethnographer and translator. As Sturge points out, both the ethnographer as well as the translator have 'to reconcile respect for the specificity of the "native point of view" with the desire to create a text comprehensible to the target readership.' Depending on the goals and the target reader, writes Sturge, there are:

> dangers of, on the one hand, an orientalizing translation style associated with hierarchical representations of other cultures as primitive and inferior to a normative "western" civilization, and, on the other, an "appropriative" style that downplays the distinctiveness of other world views and claims universal validity for what may in fact be domestic categories of thought.[2]

[1] Said 1995, p. 67.
[2] Sturge 2009, pp. 67-68.

As examples below will show Borel is leaning toward an orientalizing translation style and as and in spite of his admiration and passion for Chinese culture, he writes about the Chinese as naive and backwards.

3.1 'A Degeneration of the Chinese'

An analysis of the first type of writing concerns: the complexity of relationships among the Chinese in the Dutch East Indies, because of their identity and their differences from the Chinese in China; suspicious trade and exchange between the Chinese and Borel's Dutch superior; and criticism of his colleagues for failing to draft law proposals from 'Chinese perspectives'. Between the lines of his writing, there is an urgent request to the readers to look further, deeper into the thoughts and the culture of the Chinese. This shows through in his explanation about Chinese identities in the essay 'Chinese Officers' (Chinese Officieren), about Chinese culture in 'Just a Chinese…' (Maar een Chinees…), and in his quotes from Chinese sources in his article with comments about the proposal on 'New Regulations of Private Law for Chinese'. But, in the words of Said, was he doing this for himself, because he wanted justice, or was it for the sake of the Dutch, as a nation who ruled over the Chinese in Dutch East Indies, or perhaps for the Chinese, to be better understood and hopefully receive an equal treatment – or several or all of the above?

The reason why Borel writes about all these matters is because of his position as a Chinese Interpreter and his dislike of the expatriate community in the Dutch East Indies. Borel was appointed Chinese Interpreter in October 1894 at Tanjung Pinang in the Riau Archipelago, located south of Singapore. Duties at the time consisted of the written translation of various documents, including accounts, new regulations, announcements, and of interpreting in court. Later in 1895, when the post of Chinese Interpreter was renamed 'Official for Chinese Affairs', duties were expanded to offering advice on a range of issues involving the Chinese population, e.g. secret societies, prostitution, gambling, and the appointment of Chinese Officers. Later, from 1911 onwards, some Officials for Chinese Affairs would get the personal title of 'Advisor for Chinese Affairs' (Adviseur voor Chineesche Zaken).[3] Sometimes they were also required to travel inland on short trips to inspect Chinese-populated areas. In one of his essays, for example, Borel writes about his visit to a District Officer in the jungle of Borneo, when he was stationed in Pontianak from August 1908 till August 1909.[4] He was there to meet with the District Officer because 'something was brewing' among the Chinese in his district.[5] In general, the workload was not too heavy. Borel claims that they had less to do than their British colleagues in the Straits Civil Service:

[3] As seen in the *Government Almanac for the Dutch East Indies* (Regeeringsalmanak voor Nederlandsch-Indië).
[4] Borel 1921b, p. 206.
[5] Ibid. This is probably part of the disturbances that The Siauw Giap writes about in his article 'Rural Unrest in West Kalimantan'. The also refers to Borel's reports on resentment and discontent among the Chinese. See The 1981.

> The English are busy all day (but never as *jurubahasa* [interpreter], for which they hire Chinese people). They work hard from 9 till 4, either as magistrate, or at the protectorate, or elsewhere, whereas Dutch interpreters of Chinese have hardly a thing to do, if they are not working for themselves and without any official stimulus. They must wonder sometimes why they remain without work after such a truly splendid, generous training, save the occasional translation of a decree or a part of the Statutes. Among them, some have not spoken a word of Chinese for months, simply because they are not given the opportunity.[6]

In a later article, Borel even goes so far as to claim that many of the Chinese Interpreters preferred to speak in Malay with Chinese people, because they were not competent enough in the Chinese language.[7] It appears that knowledge of Malay was generally expected of Chinese interpreters (I have not found any references to this in the materials pertaining to their training). Borel often includes Malay words in his essays and for example from his remark on the language ability of the lawyer in his essay 'A Legal Case of Opium Lease' (Een opium-pachtperkara) 'in perfect Malay a stream of eloquence began to flow',[8] it appears that Borel is familiar with the Malay language.[9]

Borel's dislike of the expatriate society is rooted in the lifestyle of many of the Dutch in the Dutch East Indies, as described in his review of the book *Facts and Fancies about Java* by Augusta de Wit (1864-1939), which she wrote in English.

> Upon arrival, the entire set up of society, both private and official, repulsed me and annoyed me so much that it obstructed me to see the beauty of the Indies. And yet it is truly there, even though I never expected it. It was not the lack of good will. I would love to find wisdom and beauty in the Indies, just like I found them in China, that lovely wonderland. But it was the surroundings, the society with its suffocating stuffy breath of bureaucracy and materialism, which scared and numbed me, so that I was dead to beauty for a while. (...) The cancer of the bureaucratic official gnaws off the freshness and purity of the community. Officials are not only working and being official during office hours but also when they are sleeping, when they are having tea, when they are kissing their children, yes right up to the most intimate things in life.[10]

This feeling of oppression is in great contrast to the freedom of his previous lifestyle in Xiamen. His description of the expatriate society of the Dutch East Indies must have been rather fierce, for in a reply letter of 3 November 1895 to Borel, van Eeden retorts his view. Van Eeden had just returned from a trip to England and wrote that to him it was like 'a refreshing bath'.[11] But he writes it was enough and he was glad to be back among the Dutch and 'this serves as an offset for your curses against our dear compatriots'.[12]

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[6] Borel 1900a, p. 43.
[7] Borel 19 August 1915.
[8] Borel 1900a, pages 11-12.
[9] As discussed with Koos Kuiper (in February 2014), neither of us has seen mention of the study of Malay. It is possible that the interpreters were expected to pick it up easily, because one of the qualities they were selected for was their talent for languages.
[10] Borel 1898d, p. 83.
[11] Van Eeden 1933, p. 54.
[12] Ibid, p. 55.

Besides his disappointment with the expat community, Borel writes about the identity of Chinese, which he invokes to explain their corruption. A reflection of his experience is his probe into the identity of the Chinese in the Dutch East Indies and the comparison with the 'real Chinese' in China. It seems Borel had a similar sentiment to that described by Rey Chow when she writes about melancholic disorder:

> In the case of the sinologist's relationship with his beloved object, 'China', melancholia is complicated by the presence of a third party—the living members of the Chinese culture, who provide the sinologist with a means of externalizing his loss and directing his blame. What Freud sees as 'self'-directed denigration now finds a concrete realization in the denigration of others.[13]

For Borel, the Chinese in Dutch East Indies are 'a degeneration of the Chinese' in China, and he becomes sentimental of his time in Xiamen and the Chinese people there. This results in a continuous longing for the 'real China'.

Borel explains about this so-called degeneration of the Chinese in the preface to *The Chinese in the Dutch East Indies* (De Chineezen in Nederlandsch-Indië), a collection of nine articles aimed to inform the reader about the Chinese in the Dutch East Indies of whom he thought so little was generally known. The issue of identity is explained in detail in his piece entitled 'Chinese Officers', in which he expresses agreement with the idea that the post of Chinese Officer is redundant. Borel sets out the difference between Peranakan Chinese who are born in the Dutch East Indies, as opposed to the Singkeh (新客 *xinke*, 'new guest') migrants who are born and raised in China and come to the Dutch East Indies later in life. Borel claims that actually neither is qualified to be appointed Chinese Officer, with few exceptions.[14] The Chinese born in the East Indies are not real Chinese because they lack knowledge of Chinese culture and customs, while those who come from China are uneducated and illiterate. According to Borel, the problem was that the governing board (bestuurshoofden), who were the Resident and Controller on district level, preferred to consult the Chinese Officers, in spite of the fact that *Statute Book* (Staatsblad) of 1897, No. 97 stipulates that in 'all matters concerning the Chinese the governing board should seek advice from the Officials for Chinese affairs.'[15]

This brings us to the conflict between Borel and his superior Arend Ludolf van Hasselt (1848-1909), Resident of Riau, whom Borel suspects of taking bribes. Van Hasselt had been in the Dutch East Indies since October 1868 when he started in military service, and switched the following year to administrative posts in the colonial administration of Batavia. In 1871, he went on leave to take the Higher Civil Service Entrance Examination

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[13] Chow 1993, p. 4.

[14] An example of an exception is Chinese Lieutenant Jo Hoae Giok, who died in 1899. In a letter to the *Java Post* Borel remembers and praises Jo Hoae Giok for being a literatus and gentleman. Quoted in *The Telegraph* of 3 May 1899: 'A well-known Chinese' (Een bekend Chinees). Accessed on Delpher on 03-11-2015, http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:110553294:mpeg21:a0091

[15] Borel 1900a, p. 41.

(grootambtenaars-examen), which was the exam required for those who wished to obtain higher ranks in the Dutch East Indies.[16] Van Hasselt was back in the Indies by 1873, where he was eventually promoted in 1888 to Resident of Tapanuli, an administrative division on the Western coast of North Sumatra, and to Resident of Riau in June 1893.

The earliest mention of suspicion van Hasselt taking bribes can be found in Borel's letter to van Eeden of 15 December 1895. In this letter Borel describes his concerns about rampant bribery that causes injustice and murder, which he thought van Hasselt was involved in. In his response, van Eeden urges Borel in his letter of 25 January 1896 to be patient. He advises Borel to collect evidence because he had the impression that Borel's sources, which were mostly Chinese, were not trustworthy,[17] which in itself is a racist assumption. Van Eeden further tells Borel to 'be active and at the same time discreet and tactful'. Borel in turn writes in his letter of 29 February 1896 that if his suspicions were merely based on information from the Chinese it would not be as bad, and that he has evidence of the fact that van Hasselt received money from the Captain to prevent murder charges be brought against him. This case which according to Borel's letter to van Eeden was made public in his essay 'The Final Verdict' (Het Eindvonnis) in 1896, was reprinted as 'Just a Chinese…' in *The Last Incarnation* (De laatste incarnatie), published in 1901.

This story narrated by Borel is not a translation from an original Chinese printed text, but a story which Borel tells from what he imagines to be the view of a Chinese interpreter in the Dutch East Indies, and based on official documents about the case.[18] This brings to mind what Sturge writes about anthropological translation, where the fieldworker's experiences are also translations between cultural contexts (as quoted in the introduction). The story 'Just a Chinese...' is such a reworking of Borel's experiences: Borel is translating between Dutch and Chinese contexts, which is complicated by the fact that it is set in the Dutch East Indies. It starts with a recount of what happened before Borel takes over the case. The protagonist Kang Soei is a poor man from China, who goes to the Dutch East Indies with the purpose of making money and returning to China, as so many did. Kang Soei successfully rises from sampan rower to owner of a gambier and pepper plantation. One day Kang Soei is sued by the powerful Captain, who is 'feared' as Borel notes repeatedly. The Captain claims that Kang Soei owes him money (in fact as Borel explains, the Captain, as trader of gambier, was after the plantation). Friends advise Kang Soei to settle the fictive debt because they know he will not stand a chance in court. Yet, Kang Soei stubbornly denies the charges and seeks help from a lawyer (procureur). The Captain confiscates his property while Kang Soei

[16] For more on the training of officials for civil service in the Dutch East Indies, see 'Leiden and Empire: University and Colonial Office 1825-1925' by C. Fasseur in *Leiden Oriental Connections: 1850-1940*, edited by W. Otterspeer. Leiden: Brill. 1989, pp. 187-203.

[17] Van Eeden 1933, p. 60.

[18] In the footnote on the first page Borel states: Author guarantees the historical accuracy of the facts related in this story which are based on official documents. Only the names have been modified. Borel 1901a, p. 173.

continues to fight for his rights. Half-way through the case, Borel arrives and tries to help Kang Soei to seek justice. When it looks like Kang Soei is gaining the upper hand, he is suddenly found fatally wounded in the bushes. The story ends with the description of how Borel buys paper money and burns it for Kang Soei to support him in afterlife and how Borel declines an invitation to an extravagant party hosted by the Captain to celebrate the marriage of his youngest daughter to an influential opium farmer of Singapore.

This account is representative of Borel's role in colonial society and his vision of other people. There is a kind of stereotyping of characters. Borel claims that 'everyone in the Indies looks down on the Chinese' for their smell, lack of hygiene and bribery.[19] Borel disapproves of Dutch appreciation for the Chinese Officers and opium farmers, who throw parties for high ranked Dutch officials to enjoy together with their wives. He thinks that the worst is that these rich Chinese have a history of suspicious cases of fraud or bankruptcies, yet to Dutch officials this does not seem to make the champagne taste less good.[20] The portrayal of the Captain as cunning and powerful is in sharp contrast with Kang Soei who is described as 'fat, stupid, and naive'. The Arabic lawyer (procureur) is a con man and flees to Singapore after pocketing money from Kang Soei. The story gives the impression that Borel is the only one who listens to Kang Soei and makes an attempt to seek justice for him. Ironically, the success of the case results in the death of Kang Soei.

Meanwhile, there is Borel the narrator who provides information about Chinese culture and writes in a colloquial way that is easy to understand, in an attempt to gain sympathy and understanding from the readers. For example, where Borel explains about the prayers of Kang Soei, that even though he had faith in winning the case:

> still he started burning extra incense for the house gods, and begged Thi Kong (God of Heaven) every night to save him from disaster. Of course it helped. For the Gods are surely there for a purpose![21]

These explanations of Chinese culture come with a tone of sarcasm, as if Borel is mocking the Chinese and trying to amuse his Dutch readers. Yet, it is beyond doubt that Borel does have respect for the Chinese, for towards the end of the story, Borel explains that he burns paper money in the Chinese way:

> so that they can reach his spirit and provide him with some pocket money. For who knows! In Chinese hell all is the same as on earth, there are hell Mandarins with an entourage of judiciaries and executioners, who knows! A Chinese is a Chinese, even in hell—it might help him in his difficult perkara, it might soothe the Yama King and his mates!

In the explanation about Chinese hells, Borel is on the side of the 'real Chinese' from China,

[19] Borel 1901a, p. 173.
[20] Ibid, p. 174.
[21] Ibid, p. 197.

even though Kang Soei is portrayed as 'uneducated, simple and stupid'. But Kang Soei's naive views and valuable gestures please Borel, so much so that he asks Kang Soei to tell him parts of the case more than once.

Taking bribes is 'adat' (derived from Arabic but used in Malay for 'custom') according to Borel, and he is regarded as odd to go against it. He accuses van Hasselt of taking bribes and letting the old leaseholders renew the lease. Borel publishes some of his findings and opinions in the local newspapers of the Dutch East Indies and this makes him prone to criticism. As a result, the Resident complains about Borel's insubordination and the Director of Justice demands an explanation from Borel. In his letter to van Eeden of 29 February 1896, he writes:

> Brazenly I accused the resident of being a liar, someone who broke promises and conducted dishonest practices. I expected to be dismissed, but I could not help it, it was too much to me.[22]

This shows his determination to make public the wrongdoings of van Hasselt. Borel admits van Hasselt is 'a very charming person', but 'everyone knows he is a scoundrel.'[23] Apparently the situation becomes unbearable for van Hasselt, for he applies for sick leave. Among the documents that I found in the National Archives, there is no evidence of a conflict between the two, or a 'Van Hasselt vs Borel' case. There are documents from the period March-May 1896, that discuss van Hasselt's application for sick leave. A report by the Indies Council of 29 March 1896 makes comments on a list of tasks compiled by van Hasselt and questions the ability of van Hasselt as a Resident. The Council snubs van Hasselt for listing routine tasks that any Resident is expected to take care of. Furthermore, the Council thinks van Hasselt has accomplished little in terms of governing, and accuses him for failing to put an end to undesirable practices, including that 'the local chiefs still do as they like, such as levying unauthorized taxes.'[24] Hence, the advice by the Indies Council is to reject the application for sick leave by van Hasselt and to release him on the grounds of the malperformance and dereliction of duties.[25] Yet, eventually the advice is not taken, van Hasselt's application for sick leave is granted and he returns to the Netherlands in April 1896. There is no evidence that the departure of van Hasselt has any connection with Borel. However, in hindsight it was found that 'the allegation [about van Hasselt being corrupt] was unfounded, Borel had been hoodwinked by his Chinese informant,' according to Kuiper.[26] This is based on a document dating from 1914 about Borel's career in the Dutch East Indies. Yet, the question

[22] UVA. Henri Borel aan Frederik van Eeden Brief, Bijzondere Collecties, Universiteit van Amsterdam, XXIV C93.
[23] Same letter of Borel to van Eeden of 29 February 1896.
[24] NA. Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Ministerie van Koloniën, nummer toegang 2.10.02, inventarisnummer 6238
[25] NA. Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Ministerie van Koloniën, nummer toegang 2.10.02, inventarisnummers 6238 and 9129.
[26] Kuiper 2016, p. 834.

of whether or not the allegation was correct, does not change the idea of Borel's drive to be involved with the Chinese people and the urge to write about his findings in the newspaper.

Van Eeden praises Borel:

> Not long ago you would have had to pack your bags and not van Hasselt, because you dared to stir up dirt. But times truly progress. Public opinion becomes more powerful. And even though the moral level is not high compared with the best individuals, it is rising. Otherwise you would not have gained this success.[27]

Nevertheless, Borel is transferred to Makassar on 1 October 1896 on the grounds of 'the serious dissatisfaction of the Government about the improper conduct engaged last year, for his contribution to a newspaper article directed against Mr. A. L. van Hasselt, Resident of Riau and dependencies at the time.'[28] But that does not stop Borel from continuing to speak his mind in search of justice.

3.2 Private Law from a Chinese Perspective

In his new post in Makassar, and later in Surabaya where he is located per 3 April 1898, Borel continues to write articles to offer his knowledge and view of the Chinese in the Dutch East Indies. An example is his article in *The Indies Guide* (De Indische Gids) as feedback on Leiden Professor de Groot's comments on the proposal of the 'New Regulations of Private Law for the Chinese' (Nieuwe regeling van de privaatrechtelijke toestand der Chinezen) drafted by a ministry official by the name of Pieter Hendrik Fromberg (1857-1924). Fromberg submitted his proposal to the Governor-General on 26 December 1896.[29] A draft of the proposal was published to seek comments. The Minister of Colonies also sent a copy to de Groot to solicit his view. A summary of the main issues that de Groot raised were published in Volume I of *The Indies Guide* in 1898. In his article, de Groot sympathizes with the idea of Fromberg to give Chinese women more rights, in particular inheritance and guardianship, yet he believes that these points go against the aim of Fromberg that the new regulation would continue to 'follow the spirit of Chinese rites and habits.'[30] With quotes from Chinese source texts, including the *Book of Rites* and *Chinese Legal Code*, de Groot shows that what Fromberg proposes goes against views prevalent in China. Also, he says Fromberg is inconsistent, when it comes to the rights of guardianship for wives and concubines.

In the following issue of the same journal, Borel criticizes de Groot for claiming that a Chinese woman shares the 'patria potestas' with her husband, meaning that after the

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[27] UVA. Letter dated 21 July 1896. Van Eeden 1933, p. 68.

[28] LM. Extract from the Register of Decrees of the Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies (Register der Besluiten van den Gouverneur-Generaal van Nederlandsch-Indië), No. 14 (16 August 1896). Van Hasselt himself applied for sick leave, which was granted per 4 April 1896.

[29] Tjook-Liem 2009, p. 209.

[30] De Groot 1898, p. 134.

husband's death the widow inherits everything.[31] According to Borel, this claim that a woman can inherit is incorrect and goes against the view of well-known sinologists including B. Hoetink (1854-1927), de Grijs, J. W. Young (1855-1898), H. N. Stuart (1855-1917) and Pieter Meeter (1844-1901), who have had longer practical experience than de Groot in the Dutch East Indies. Borel mentions the names of these sinologists to justify his arguments in anticipation of the reaction of de Groot.[32] Borel also notes that the interpretation of an idiom in the Chinese text, saying that *(zeng) fumu* (曾)父母 means (grand) parents and not 'one of the (grand) parents', as de Groot translates.[33] Borel goes on with an explanation about the position of women in China and also quotes from Chinese sources, such as the *Mencius*, *The Book of Changes*, *The Great Qing Legal Code*, and concludes that only '[w]hen Chinese women receive decent education and have reached a development that the European women have, or ought to have, will she be mature enough to have such civil rights.'[34] This is a racist and sexist argument, even if Borel may have had the best of intentions in trying to explain that more effort should be made to understand Chinese culture, where women were expected to obey men and were deprived of education. Accordingly, he feared that if Chinese women were given the right to inherit, male relatives would doubtless take advantage of them or they themselves would seek help from male relatives.

The discussion shows that Borel criticizes de Groot for ignorance of the actual practice in the Dutch East Indies. By then twenty years had passed since de Groot served as Chinese Interpreter (April 1878-March 1883) in the Dutch East Indies. It was not uncommon for sinologists in the Netherlands and those among the Chinese in China/ Dutch East Indies to disagree along these lines: de Groot held a more theoretical view which effectively means that he may not be aware of (changes in) the local circumstances, whereas sinologists in the Dutch East Indies had a more practice- and experience-based approach.[35] In retrospect, this is the start of Borel's criticizing de Groot, a habit that he cultivates over the years, as will be explained more in detail in Chapter 6. A summary of the discussion in the *Surabaya Commerce Paper* of 12 January 1899 puts it in another perspective:

> In the Chinese newspaper *Thien Nan Shin Pao* [*Tiannan xinbao* 天南新報 (The New Tiannan News)] of 29 December, that is published in Singapore, there is an article about the polemics between sinologists Henri Borel and prof. de Groot recently published in *The Indies Guide* and *Law Weekly* about inheritance of the Chinese woman in China. The editors state that the claim by de Groot that women shall inherit should not be included in the proposed new rule. About the statements of Borel the editors say: 'Mr.

[31] Borel 1898e, p. 780.

[32] De Groot is nevertheless greatly offended and indignantly writes 'Reply to Mr. Henri Borel' (Repliek aan den heer Henri Borel) in the next issue of *The Indies Guide* (II), 1898, pp. 987-989, upon which the editor decides to close the discussion.

[33] See de Groot 1898, p. 136, and Borel 1898e, p. 795.

[34] Borel 1898e, p. 785.

[35] Conflicting views of China recur in other periods, the Dutch writer Jan van der Putten is an example of present-day claimant of practical knowledge of China.

> Borel's words are quite right, we have nothing to add to them.' But perhaps professors in Leiden know even better than the Chinese…[36]

The newspaper questions the validity of sinologist knowledge over knowledge of ethnic Chinese but also the difference between the knowledge of a sinologist in Leiden and that of one in the East Indies. What is implied here also, is that Dutch experts know better than the Chinese people themselves. Yet, it appears there is some improvement in the sense that the Dutch government did consider a Chinese view of the matter. This is explained, in for example Patricia Tjiook-Liem's *The Legal Position of the Chinese in the Dutch East Indies* (De rechtspositie der Chinezen in Nederlands-Indië), who notes that for Fromberg's proposal,

> once again European law was the starting point, while taking into account Chinese views to a far greater extent. Fromberg had in his own words 'attempted to couch the Chinese mind in a Western form at crucial points.'[37]

The difference here is that while Fromberg suggests the Chinese mold their thinking in a Western way, Borel in his article remarks that Fromberg 'reasons with Western logic whereas Eastern logic is called for.'[38] There Borel echoes Schlegel's view in his dictionary: 'the actual Chinese law does not contain exact, definitive clauses, like ours does.'[39] So Borel asks the Dutch to look at things from a Chinese point of view, and let the Chinese keep their own values. But to achieve this, knowledge about (and the appreciation of) Chinese culture is needed.

Hence, Borel presents Dutch translations of Chinese literary works. This is the second type of writing that Borel employs to introduce Chinese culture, which I mentioned above. Most important are his translations of the Chinese classics, but his essays on Chinese hell and Guanyin also help the readers better understand Chinese culture. Borel had already begun his translations back in Leiden and Xiamen, which at the time was purely out of interest and dissatisfaction with existing (European) translations. The fact that there were misunderstandings or there was a lack of knowledge of Chinese culture in the Dutch East Indies confirmed his belief that there was a true need for such works.

3.3 Chinese Philosophy

Characteristic of Borel's translations of the Chinese classics is that he stays close to the source text, retaining Chinese concepts in romanization, reference to and comparisons with existing translations in English and German, and his objection to translations by missionaries. Some of these aspects help make the translation 'deliberately obscure', which Susan

[36] Anonymous 12 January 1899.
[37] Tjiook-Liem 2009, p. 210.
[38] Borel 1898e, p. 781.
[39] Ibid.

Bassnett writes of translations by William Morris (1834-1896) in connection with Romanticism:

> [n]o concessions are made to the reader, who is expected to deal with the work on its own terms, meeting head-on, through the strangeness of the TL [Target Language], the foreignness of the society that originally produced the text.[40]

During his two years in China and early years in the Dutch East Indies,[41] Borel started translating the Chinese classics. They were published when Borel was working as Chinese interpreter in the Dutch East Indies, except for the third volume of the *Mencius* which was published much later. As he explains in the introduction, the reasoning behind his series *Chinese Philosophy Explained to Non-Sinologists* (De Chineesche Filosofie Toegelicht voor Niet-sinologen) was that if Greek philosophy can be made accessible to the Dutch public in the Dutch language then why not Chinese philosophy. In this series a total of three volumes would eventually appear:

I. *Confucius* (Kh'oeng Foe Tsz'), in 1896, which includes the Confucian classics of *The Doctrine of the Mean*, *The Great Learning* and part of *The Analects*;
II. *Laozi* (Lao Tsz'), in 1897, which is the complete *Daodejing*;
III. *Mencius* (Mêng Tsz'), in 1931, which is the near-complete *Mencius*.[42]

Volumes I and III constitute the *Four Books*, while Volume II is a Daoist text. Discussed below are the first two titles, as the third was done at a much later phase in his life. Borel explains that, until his later years, he lacked the time and opportunity to work on that third volume of *Mencius*. It is probably also because the *Mencius* is the longest of the works in question.

Borel felt that he should undertake the task of educating the Dutch public in Chinese philosophy. He aimed primarily at the Dutch reader in general, but also at the Dutch officials in particular, as they dealt with Chinese people on a daily basis in the colonies, ruling over them and administering justice. So he had a dual readership in mind.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Borel noted in his diary that one of the reasons he was translating an English work on Buddhism was that it would help Prikker, who had an interest in Buddhism but had trouble reading English. This must have also been one of the reasons why Borel embarked on this project: there was an interest in Dutch translations of works from Asia in the Netherlands. Another reason he noted in his diary on 29 February 1892, when still a fourth year student at Leiden University:

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[40] Bassnett 2014, p. 76.
[41] In *Daybreak in the East* Borel notes that he was translating Chinese philosophy while he was in the Dutch East Indies (see Chapter 5).
[42] The *Mencius* was also published in *The Guide* in 1931.

> This afternoon I resumed work on my translation of Plato in the library, as well as my study of Confucius and the Chinese classics. I start to discover real gems in them although it is ever so difficult. I have to find everything myself because those translators—mostly English missionaries or professors—translate word by word but they don't catch the meaning. Their translation is therefore usually nonsense. And the most bizarre of all is that they write in footnotes that they don't understand and complain that 'the Chinese text is so obscure.' Yet the text is much less obscure than their soul. Now I am trying to understand the books although I don't know enough Chinese yet. In about five years' time I will do translations—good ones—which will be a great Fine work.[43]

This shows that while Borel was still studying Chinese, he was reading translations of the Chinese classics which he thought were no good. Apparently Borel already had a different interpretation of the texts, and therefore had the intention of doing his own translations.

In the introduction to the first volume *Confucius*, Borel also argues that although translations into other European languages could be ordered from the bookshop, a Dutch reader would much rather purchase a Dutch version if this was readily available in the bookshop because:

> There are people who do not read a foreign language as fluently as their own and do not have the time to dedicate themselves to the study of another language due to other busy activities.[44]

As Borel explains there was a fellow sinologist who had asked him reproachfully how he dare embark on such translation after the eminent Professor James Legge, who had studied Chinese for more than twenty years, had published his. Although Borel could conveniently translate via Legge's English version, he believed that he should not take the easy way out. While in great awe of Legge's knowledge and linguistic talent, Borel disagreed on certain points with Legge, which included both interpretation and translation approach. In his translation, Borel offers comparisons with translations in other European languages and indicates where he agrees or disagrees in case he has doubts about his own interpretation of a certain word or phrase. The introduction, notes and comments constitute the paratext, which as Gérard Genette writes:

> [is] what enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers and, more generally, to the public. More than a boundary or a sealed border, the paratext is, rather, a threshold. (…) It constitutes 'a zone between text and off-text, a zone not only of transition but also of *transaction*: a privileged place of a pragmatics and a strategy, of an influence on the public, an influence that (…) is at the service of a better reception for the text and a more pertinent reading of it.' [45]

Paratextual elements tend to shed light on divergent concepts and historical implications of the translation in a given period within a given culture. Hence they are valuable for learning more about the socio-cultural context in which the translation(s) were produced and

[43] LM. Diary of Borel in Borel Archives.
[44] Borel 1896a, p. 2.
[45] Genette 1997, p. 1-2.

received but also the position and views of the translator on historical, social and linguistic aspects of their time.

At the time when Borel was doing the first volume on Confucius he was not aware of an existing Dutch translation of Confucian works. He admits later in the foreword of the volume on Laozi that he had come across an earlier translation of the Confucian classics only after his own came out, but that the earlier one was not a direct translation from Chinese into Dutch. Although Borel does not mention the title, he was most likely referring to Salomo Keyzer's relay translation of *The Holy Books of the Chinese, or the Four Classics of Confucius and Mencius* (De Heilige Boeken der Chinezen, of de klassieke boeken van Confucius en Mencius), published in 1862. This book, as the note to the subtitle explains, has 'an introductory biography of Confucius and Mencius and is provided with explanatory remarks and historical notes, adapted from the best European translations by the compiler of the Low German publication of the Koran.' (voorafgegaan door een inleidend levensberigt van Confucius en Mencius; en voorzien van ophelderende aanmerkingen en historische aanteekeningen, naar de beste Europesche vertalingen door den bewerker van den Nederduitsche uitgaaf van den Koran.)

As Borel indicates, the few works written by Dutch authors on China and Chinese topics including literature, philosophy, ethnography, etc had mainly been published in foreign languages, mostly in English or French, to reach an international readership. Examples are articles in *T'oung Pao* in English or French, such as the ones mentioned above, the Chinese novella 'The Oil Vendor' translated into French by Schlegel and *The Religious System of China* in English by de Groot. The general Dutch reader had limited or no exposure to these. Hence Borel's starting point was that his reader had little or no knowledge of the Chinese language and culture. His foreword, introduction and historical background in the first two titles explain in detail what the lay person would need to know to appreciate the work and gain a better understanding of Chinese culture. These paratexts show Borel's concern for his readers but they also represent his approach and interpretation of the texts.

In his translation in the most literal-conventional sense, it is clear that Borel opts to stay close to the original; he frequently gives romanizations of Chinese concepts. His many explanations about Chinese history and culture make the texts understandable for the general public. Borel brings the readers of the target language closer to the source culture but at the same time also frames certain passages in Western thinking, to enable the reader to better construct an image of China and the Chinese.

As Lawrence Venuti argues, translations have far-reaching social effects in forming cultural identities:

> To limit the ethnocentric movement inherent in translation, a project must take into account the interests of more than just those of a cultural constituency that occupies a dominant position in the domestic

> culture. A translation project must consider the culture where the foreign text originated and address various domestic constituencies.[46]

As will be shown below in specific examples, Borel tries to limit the ethnocentric movement in his translation. He takes into account both the position in the source culture as well as that in the target culture. It seems that according to Borel, it was important to understand the intention of the source text in the source culture, which is why he gave extensive notes and explanations. Venuti further writes, 'non-ethnocentric translation promises a greater openness to cultural differences' and this may well be worth the risk of a certain degree of unintelligibility. In what follows here, I will present an examination of the first two titles, *Confucius* and *Laozi*, probing into the translation strategy and the paratextual elements. A discussion of Borel's translation of the *Mencius* will follow in Chapter 7.

3.3.1 Untranslatability

The idea that literal translation was not possible is one of Borel's principles as set out in his second volume on Laozi. He quotes Legge as follows:

> The written characters of Chinese are not representations of words but symbols of ideas, and the combination of them in composition is not a representation of what the writer would say, but of what he thinks. It is in vain, therefore, for a translator to attempt a literal version.[47]

Borel agrees with Legge and takes this approach as a strategy for his own translation. Then Borel goes on quoting Jowett, who claims in his preface to *The Dialogues of Plato* that a translation should not be a literal rendering of the work but 'to him [the translator] the feeling should be more important than the exact word.'[48] So the translator should be able to sense the thoughts and feelings of the writer and the text. But what does that mean for his translation? Does it mean that Borel can sense the thoughts and feelings of the writing by interpreting the symbols of ideas of Chinese characters? Take the following example of a literal rendering from *The Doctrine of the Mean*, Ch. IV, no. 2:

> 人莫不飲食也，鮮能知味也。*Ren mo bu yinshi ye, xian neng zhi wei ye*. (No people do not eat or drink, but few can know the flavor.)
>
> *Er zijn geen mensen, die niet eten en drinken. (Maar) weinigen kennen (den) waren smaak!* (There are no people, who do not eat or drink. (But) few know (its) real taste!) [49]

Borel puts in brackets words which are not in the source text but that are needed in Dutch to

[46] Venuti 1995, p. 23.
[47] Borel 1897a, p. 1.
[48] Ibid. See Jowett's preface to the third edition of *The Dialogues of Plato, vol. 1*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1892, p. xiv. Accessed on Online Library of Liberty on 24-01-2016. http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/111#Plato_0131-01_20
[49] Borel 1896a, p. 86.

make a sentence. He retains the double negation in translation, but in his note to this paragraph, he explains that this concerns many things in life and comes up with a much smoother Dutch version: 'Iedereen drinkt en eet, maar weinigen kennen den smaak.' (Everyone drinks and eats but few know the taste.)[50]

A certain degree of 'foreignization' occurs with the romanization of Chinese concepts for which Borel explains there are no suitable equivalents in Dutch. The most essential are 君子 *junzi* 'gentleman', 禮 *li* 'decorum', *dao* 'way', and *wu wei* 'non action', but also include 孝 *xiao* 'filial piety', and 誠 *cheng* 'sincerity'. Borel argues that:

> It is not possible to sense the meaning of those typically Chinese concepts such as Cheng and Dao exactly and express them in a single European word.[51]

From this we can see again, the emphasis by Borel on this contrast between Chinese and European. It is his belief that Chinese concepts are unique. If he had given plain Dutch equivalents, then the impression of the text on the reader would have been less 'foreignizing'. Therefore, Borel also rejects various renditions by other translators and explains that he would much rather introduce the Chinese term in Romanization, and encourage the reader to take these in as new ideas. Borel offers detailed explanations to digest in order to obtain an understanding in the process of reading the rest of the text in which the concepts recur. Furthermore, he also explains that certain concepts in Chinese have more than one meaning, which no single Dutch word could possibly cover. An example of the untranslatable word 'Dao' from the *The Doctrine of the Mean*, Chapter XXVI, no 7:

> 天地之道，可一言而盡也：「其為物不貳，則其生物不測。」 *Tiandi zhi dao, ke yi yan er jin ye: 'qi wei wu bu er, ze qi shengwu bu ce'.* (The Way of Heaven and Earth can be exhausted in one sentence: it is without double, and creates things in an unfathomable manner.)
>
> *De Tao van Hemel en Aarde kan met één zin gezegd worden: hij is één-in-zich-zelf, en baart de dingen op een ondoorgrondelijke wijze.* (The Dao of Heaven and Earth can be said in one sentence: he is one-in-itself, and creates things in an inscrutable manner.) [52]

Borel indicates in his footnote: 'Here again we see that the meaning of Dao in some cases is more than just Way, it is more in the sense of "the principle of action", if at all translatable. Zhu Xi notes that *cheng* itself brings the one-in-itself of Dao. It does not literally say "one-in-itself" but "without a second", "without double".'[53] Borel adds the comments of Zhu Xi, because as he says 'these are included in almost all Chinese editions of the text.' Zhu Xi's commentaries on the *Four Books* have been the most influential.

Until today the interpretation and translation of some Chinese concepts remain

[50] Ibid, p. 87.
[51] Ibid, p. 128.
[52] Borel 1896a, p. 128.
[53] Ibid, p. 128.

debated issues, such as the concept of '*cheng*' 誠, as Kent Guy points out in his review of *Translating Chinese Classics in a Colonial Context: James Legge and His Two Versions of the Zhongyong* by Wang Hui:

> the translation of *cheng* as 'sincerity' is well within the range of permissible renderings; in fact Wing-tsit Chan also uses 'sincerity' to render *cheng*, although Daniel Gardner chooses 'truthfulness.' Tu Wei-ming opts to leave the word in its original Chinese, but tells us that Lao Ssu-kuang of The Chinese University of Hong Kong prefers 'full realization'.[54]

Throughout his translation work, Borel wanted his reader to know that different interpretations are possible, which he does mostly in footnotes.

Another example of a notion Borel considers untranslatable, from *The Analects*, Book XIII, chapter 4:

> 樊遲出。子曰：「小人哉，樊須也！上好禮，則民莫敢不敬…」 *Fan Chi chu. Zi yue: 'Xiaoren zai, Fan Xu ye! Shang hao li, ze min mo gan bu jing...'* (When Fan Chi left, the Master said: "How petty Fan Xu is! When those above love the rites, none of the common people will dare be irreverent.)

> *Toen Fan Ch'i uitgegaan was, zeide de Meester: "Wat een klein mensch, die Fan Sü!*[55] Als die van boven de Lí (het Decorum) liefheeft, dan zal het volk niet oneerbiedig durven zijn.* (When Fan Chi had left, the Master said: "What a little man, that Fan Xu! When those above love the Lí (the Decorum), the people will not dare to be irreverent.) [56]

Here Borel retains the original term *li* in romanization, with 'decorum' in brackets, but stresses in his footnote: 'I again point out that those who translate Li into Decorum, Yi into duty (or as Legge renders it, righteousness), and Xin into sincerity and loyalty, do come close to the Chinese concept but do not capture the entire meaning.'[57]

By giving comparisons and explanations, there is room for the reader to appreciate different interpretations and, if he/she wants, develop his/her own ideas. This too is very representative of ancient Chinese texts which at different periods in history were interpreted differently by Chinese and Western readers alike. As with most texts and translations, there is not just one possible or correct translation.

3.3.2 Criticizing the Missionary Approach

Especially noteworthy and influential is Borel's strong objection to translations which were done by missionaries as they were permeated with Christian ideas. He argues:

> That most sinologists were missionaries is a great disadvantage to the correct interpretation of Chinese philosophy, as they were prejudiced in the idea that when it deviated from the Christian teachings, it

[54] Guy 2001, p. 305.
[55] Borel's footnote here is *Anderen naam van Fan Ch'i (Other name of Fan Ch'i).
[56] Borel 1896a, pp. 240-241.
[57] Ibid, p. 241.

intrinsically contained false notions.[58]

The problem of prejudice has also been discussed by scholars, although it appears that Borel was one of the first to point it out in 1895. In the study *Translating Chinese Classics in a Colonial Context: James Legge and His Two Versions of the Zhongyong*, Wang Hui explains how Legge had his share of criticism, and quotes Eugene Eoyang in 1993 who considered Legge's Confucian translations

> masterly but misguided, because he failed to see [China and the Chinese] on their own terms and the bias inherent in a fundamentally Christian outlook which he could not escape, nor see objectively, that infuses his intemperate and inconsistent critiques of the Confucian canon, while Girardot in 2002 claims that Legge was too naively reverent and simplistically uncritical of the Chinese classics and their commentarial mode of scholarship.[59]

Someone from Borel's own era was Ku Hung Ming 辜鴻銘 (Gu Hongming) (1857-1928), who declared Legge to be a mere 'pundit with a very learned but dead knowledge of Chinese books,' but Ku did not put the blame on Legge's missionary background as Borel did.

An example where Borel criticizes Legge is the following from *The Analects*, book VI, chapter 15:

> 子曰：「孟之反不伐，奔而殿，將入門，策其馬，曰：非敢後也，馬不進也。」 *Zi yue: 'Meng zhi fan bu fa, ben er dian, jiang ru men, ce qi ma, yue: fei gan hou ye, ma bu jin ye*.' (The Master said: "Meng Zhifan does not boast. When the army was routed, he was in the rear. When entering the gate, he urged his horse and said, "It is not that I dare to lag behind, but my horse refused to advance.")
>
> *De Meester zeide: "Měng Chi Fan roemt niet (op zijn deugd). Op een vlucht, in de achterhoede zijnde, toen men aan 't binnengaan van de poort was, zweepte hij zijn paard aan, en zeide: "Niet dat ik de laatste durf zijn, (maar) mijn paard wilde niet vooruit."* (The Master said: "Meng Zhifan does not boast (about his virtue). When fleeing, he was in the rear and when entering the gate he urged his horse and said, "It is not that I dare to be last (but) my horse would not advance.") [60]

Borel feels very strongly about this case:

> It is annoying to see that Prof. Legge, although an excellent scholar, tries to run down Confucius at all costs everywhere in his translation, in order to exalt Christianity. Thus he says, in relation to this: "But where was his virtue in deviating from the truth?" In this way all modesty is naturally made impossible.

Borel argues that Legge's Christian view was an obstruction to his appreciation of the Chinese way of modesty. Legge's translation reads:

> The Master said: Meng Chih-fan does not boast of his merit. Being in the rear on an occasion of flight, when they were about to enter the gate, he whipped up his horse, saying, 'It is not that I dare to be last.

[58] Borel 1897a, p. 3.
[59] Wang Hui 2008, pp. 54-56.
[60] Borel 1896a, p. 205.

My horse would not advance.'[61]

In the footnote to this chapter, Legge explains that Meng was blaming the horse for being in the rear which was the place of honor.[62] In other words, Meng was not being modest, but just making up an excuse and hoped that he could get away with it. To Borel, Legge was downplaying Confucian modesty.

Even more annoying and confusing for Borel was the fact that the missionaries had chosen to translate their God with the Chinese term 'Shangdi' 上帝, which as Borel explains was originally one of the most ancient deities of China, the supreme ruler in heaven, long before Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism came into existence. He therefore decides to leave Shangdi untranslated. See for instance chapter X, no. 5 of *The Great Learning*:

> 《詩經》云:「殷之未喪師,克配上帝。(……)」 *Shijing yun: 'Yin zhi wei sang shi, ke pei shangdi.* (...) (The *Shijing* says: before the emperors of the Yin Dynasty had lost the love of the people, they were equal to the Supreme God.)
>
> *De* Shi King *zegt: Toen de keizers der Yin dynastie nog niet (de liefde van) het volk hadden verloren, waren zij de gelijken van Shang Ti.* (The *Shijing* says: When the emperors of the Yin Dynasty had not yet lost (the love of) the people, they were equal to Shangdi). [63]

With his note on Shang Ti or Shangdi, Borel eliminates possible association with Western religion. While rejecting the Christian approach in appreciation of Confucian philosophy, Borel does compare some entries in the *Daodejing* with phrases from *The Imitation of Christ* (De Imitatione Christi). This book originally written in Latin by Thomas à Kempis (1380–1471) is a Christian devotional book. Borel regards Kempis just like Plato as a scholar who brings wisdom to the people and is therefore of the opinion that the reader should

> feel his simple words with a pure heart, read them in silent solitude away from the rumors of the world, empty of earthly thoughts, just like one should read the book of worldly wisdom with which it is worth comparing: *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis.

A comparison occurs in chapter XXXIV of the *Daodejing*:

> 以其終不自為大，故能成其大。 *Yi qi zhong bu zi wei da, gu neng cheng qi da*. (All his life he never attempts to be great, therefore he can succeed in becoming great.)
>
> *Daarom doet de Wijze zijn geheele leven lang niet groot, en daardoor juist volmaakt hij zijn grootheid.* (That is why the Sage does not presume greatness throughout his life, and thereby he makes his greatness perfect.)

Borel here refers to Book I, Chapter 3 of Kempis, quoting in French: 'Vraiment grand est celui

[61] Legge 1971, p. 189.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Borel 1896a, p. xx.

qui en soi-même est petit et tient pour néant tout faîte d'honneur.' According to the English translation of *The Imitation of Christ* by Richard Whitford: 'He is truly great who has great charity. And he is great who is little in his own sight and who sets naught all worldly honor.'[64] There is a contradiction in refuting the missionary approach and referring to Kempis in some instances. Although there is no influence of Kempis directly on the translation and the comparison is only used to explain these passages, it shows that Borel too uses Western works in his approach to translation. Yet the purpose is not to worship Western works, but rather to compare and explain Chinese literature. It helps the reader to understand the meaning of the relevant passages.

3.3.3 Achievement/Reception

With his translation approach (staying close to the source text and giving romanizations of Chinese concepts) and the paratexts (explanations on Chinese history and culture), Borel brings the readers of the target language closer to the source culture but at the same time also associates certain passages with Western thinking.

As for the purpose of the works, as Borel wrote in the introduction to volume I *Confucius*:

> If I succeed in conveying the essence [of Confucian thinking] to the general public so that it may understand the morals, habits and customs of the Chinese in our colonies then I have achieved my goal.[65]

Hence, the translation of Confucian works was for both his general reader and those in the Dutch East Indies. For the second title *Laozi*, he had similar objectives, albeit less in the educational sense and more in the sense of spiritual inspiration. Borel very passionately expressed his hope that the reader would become as inspired by Laozi as he had been and that the *Daodejing* would become his/her companion in life. So we see a shift in target reader. Although it is difficult to determine whether Borel did achieve these goals, he does mention in the third volume of *Mencius* which came out much later in 1931, that his first two titles saw second and third editions which indicates public interest.

If we look at the reception of the translations of *Confucius* and *Laozi* by Borel, e.g. in the review 'Two Books' (Twee boeken) published in the newspaper *General Commerce Paper* of 25 October 1896, the anonymous reviewer introduces Borel's *Confucius* and H. Mazel's French work *The Social Synergy* (La Synergie sociale). The reviewer first introduces Borel's book and compares Confucian teaching with the Christian. In spite of some similarities such as brotherly love, filial piety and humans being good by nature, the reviewer says there are also major discrepancies in for instance the idea of sinners and the almighty God above in contrast to the more earthly view of Confucius about government

[64] Kempis 1955, p. 36.
[65] Borel 1896a, p. 5.

and rules of Li. The reviewer also says that the Dutch reader is indebted to Borel, despite some modern terms which seem out of place, and emphasizes:

> It appears right in a time where interest in the East in general and China and Japan in particular is roused, more than before. The Far East is being pulled to us in a way that we ask ourselves: What is it that we expect? What is coming from the East?
> The book by Borel does not give the answer to this question even though it is an excellent introduction to it. Another recently published [French] work, *The Social Synergy* by H. Mazel, however, does bring us closer to the answer.[66]

For the reception of the works it shows that the reviewer detects a link between the two works. The reviewer describes how Mazel denounces the French Revolution and thinks it is high time to end the fake glory of that era. The reviewer thinks that the essential collaboration of the elements of all nations disturbed the much needed social synergy, and concludes:

> The book summarizes the entire history of Christian civilization but also that of our ancestors, Antiquity and the East, which is where it touches upon the book of Borel.
> (…)
> The two books also give a vision of a future in which Europe, led by Russia, reaches out to Asia, led by the Yellow Race, and a fusion will develop between the practical Confucianism and ideal Christianity, so that maybe for once society will be built on satisfaction due to wise resignation and reverent belief. For Western society until now was built on discontent or rather unfulfilment.[67]

Here again the reviewer sees a sharp contrast between East and West, but the curious thing is that he/she predicts a fusion between Confucianism and Christianity. Surely, this could not have been the intention of Borel.

In 'A Voice from Afar' (Eene stem van verre) in the *Sunday Post of News of the Day* (Zondagsblad van Het Nieuws van den Dag) of 23 October 1898, the reviewer Ypsilon, the pen name of Carel van Nievelt (1843-1913), starts:

> After Confucius, Borel now brings us Laozi and his wisdom, and all of us non-sinologists are grateful to him. Now we can discover the mystery of the *Daodejing* in an original and reliable Dutch translation. Anything that is difficult to understand is explained in notes by the translator. It will be a new sensation to many readers: a revelation, a surprise, like being able to see the dark side of the moon. Is it possible that this could come from China? Many will wonder.[68]

It appears from this review, that Borel has made the unknown accessible, and the reviewer thinks this book is an eye-opener, but finds it hard to believe that such a thing could come from China. This is a racist remark showing how the Dutch looked down upon the Chinese. After further explaining the contents of the *Daodejing*, Ypsilon also notes another effect of the work:

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[66] Anonymous 25 October 1896.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ypsilon 23 October 1898.

> After reading this book many will gain a more positive view of the Chinese race and the prospects of China.[69]

This confirms the idea that reports on China and the image of the Chinese in that period in the Netherlands are still rather negative, e.g. in the *General Commerce Paper* of 28 February 1895 there is an article 'State of Affairs in China' (De Toestanden in China). It is based on reports from Sir Andrew Clarke who had heard William A. Pickering (1840-1907), a well-respected China expert fluent in several Chinese regional languages, criticize the moral behavior of Chinese soldiers and officials. Although some are loyal and reliable, he says, many are corrupt and cruel and always aiming at profit and promotion at any cost. In conclusion he says:

> If China was a Christian nation and governed by officials like those serving under British authority it would be one of the happiest countries of the world... provided that the Chinese shed at least some of their quite indecent and very unacceptable bad habits.[70]

These kinds of racist reports in national Dutch newspapers, although reflecting the view of non-Dutch nationals, must have had an impact on the image of the Chinese among Dutch readers too. This is seen for instance in the reaction of Prikker on Borel's article on friendship, where Prikker cast doubt on whether the Chinese could uphold such lofty ideas about friendship. Prikker expressed his ideas on this article in his letter of 20 March 1894:

> It is a nice idea though that the Chinese promise each other eternal friendship. Do you think they would keep it that way? The Chinese are so shabby and shrewd.[71]

Borel's description of Chinese customs of friendship goes against the image that Prikker has of the Chinese. Another example of racism is the instance where Borel's poetry submission is rejected and he is thinking of funding a private publication. When Prikker reads about this idea, he is very concerned, so he writes to van Eeden for advice:

> Borel wrote to me that if necessary he could fund part of it himself but I had rather he didn't. You know that he usually needs a lot of money to get by and it is sheer misery if he runs out. And he had better not borrow from the Chinese because they are smart little thieves.[72]

Here again, Prikker discriminates against the Chinese: he advises against any close contact with the Chinese because they cannot be trusted, whether it involves friendship or money.

Hence, there is a need for and interest in books on China. The publication of a third

[69] Ypsilon 23 October 1898.
[70] Anonymous 28 February 1895.
[71] Joosten 1980, p. 175.
[72] Ibid, p. 184.

print of both the Confucius and Laozi volumes, is evidence of the popularity of Borel's books among Dutch readers as noted by an anonymous reviewer in *The Fatherland* of 30 November 1922. Even in 1933, R. H. van Gulik is still praising Borel. In his negative review of *Dao, Universal Consciousness* (Tao, Universeel Bewustzijn) translated by C. van Dijk, which van Gulik criticizes as blatantly wrong, he refers to

> the very successful translation by Henri Borel which has an outstanding introduction to Daoism and the problems of translating and adapting Daoist texts.[73]

In van Gulik's view Borel's version remains the one to read.

Influence of Borel's work can also be found in Dutch literature, e.g. the novel *Metamorphosis* (Metamorfoze) by Louis Couperus (1863-1923) published in *The Guide* of 1897. In this novel, the protagonist has Borel's work put on a special place on the shelves, claiming that his art is pure and that he himself is 'similar to a Chinese landscape, which he can describe so beautifully.'[74] Borel and Couperus were friends, although as Borel admits they did not meet often. In his 'Memories of Louis Couperus' (Herinneringen aan Louis Couperus) Borel recalls their walks through The Hague and their shared topics of conversation, including travels in Asia.[75]

It appears Borel's work also stirred an interest in Chinese culture. An example is Josephus Carel Franciscus Last, aka Jef Last (1898-1972), a writer, socialist, communist and sinologist, who claims it was work by Borel that inspired him to study Chinese. According to the article 'Jef Last is in love, really in love with the East' (Jef Last is verliefd, echt verliefd op 't Oosten) in the *News of the North* (Nieuwsblad van het Noorden) of 19 January 1960, Last explains:

> I went to the mines in Limburg. It was quite a long journey from Amsterdam so at the platform I bought a book with a bit of a mysterious title. I am fond of horror stories, so I thought 'ha, a nice Chinese horror story!'
> But it was not. It was a book about Chinese philosophy by Henri Borel. When I finished reading the book, I had the feeling that Confucius had an answer to all the questions. That really struck me and never let go.[76]

This shows that Borel's work stimulated and inspired readers who did not know Chinese. Although I have not been to able verify the year, Last probably went to Limburg in 1917, and went to study Chinese in Leiden in 1918.[77]

Borel was a pioneer in his field by publishing the first Dutch translation directly from the original Chinese classics, when relay translation was more common. Although it did not

[73] Van Gulik 1933c.
[74] Couperus 1897, p. 464.
[75] Borel 1933. For more on their relationship, see 'Louis Couperus and Henri Borel: impression of a friendship' (Louis Couperus en Henri Borel: impressie van een vriendschap) by José Buschman in *Vlaanderen* (52), 2003, pp. 190-196.
[76] Anonymous 19 January 1960.
[77] Wester 2001.

immediately set a trend, the number of direct translations did gradually increase in the course of the first half of the twentieth century.[78]

Besides literary translations of Chinese philosophy, Borel also further explored Chinese themes of culture that helped explain some of the customs and behavior of the Chinese in the Dutch East Indies. In the next section, I will show how Borel introduces aspects of Chinese culture by translating excerpts of Chinese fiction and in telling a story in which he is directly addressing the reader. So Borel is the narrator and tells his story based on his experience and knowledge, combined with his translations of excerpts of Chinese fiction. As such, he is a negotiator between Chinese sources and Dutch target readers.

3.4 Negotiating between Cultures

From the way Borel introduces topics on Chinese culture, it seems that he was trying to bring Chinese culture closer to his Dutch readers. It shows his continued passion for China and things Chinese and his devotion to introducing China and Chinese culture to Dutch readers. Most important then is the collection *Kwan Yin: A Book of the Gods and the Hell* (Kwan Yin: een boek van de goden en de hel) published in 1897, although the essay 'Kwan Yin' was earlier published in *The Guide*. Besides the ethnographical writing in essays, such as 'A Bride' (Een bruid) and 'A Funeral' (Een begrafenis) in a style similar to some of his essays collected in *Wisdom and Beauty from China*, Borel now presents a new combination of literary and ethnographical translation. Two examples of this are 'Kwan Yin: The Goddess of Mercy: About Chinese Buddhism and Chinese art' (Kwan Yin. De Godin der Genade. Over Chineesch boeddhisme en Chineesche kunst) (hereinafter 'Kwan Yin') and 'The Chinese Hell' (The Chineesche hel). With the change of position and change of environment, Borel is no longer introducing China as a sinologist as he did previously in his essays collected in *Wisdom and Beauty from China,* which he wrote for his readers in the Netherlands. Since his move to the Dutch East Indies and in his capacity as a Dutch official for the colonial government, his position and purpose of writing had changed. From these essays, it shows he is not only targeting his Dutch readers at home but also those in the Dutch East Indies. The essays show how he had to deal with Chinese people on a daily basis but he also had to work with Dutch colleagues who he felt lacked an understanding of some Chinese customs, and therefore he had to have an understanding of both Dutch and Chinese cultures.

The way Borel writes about Guanyin and Chinese hell in the essays, it appears that Borel is a visible and present translator with a message. He is informative in the way that he writes about first-hand experience from visits to temples and antique stores in China and combines this with excerpts from primary source texts and references to scholarly studies. Both 'Kwan Yin' and 'The Chinese Hell' draw on the seventeenth-century Buddhist work *The True Scripture of Guanyin's Original Vow of Salvation* (*Guanyin jidu benyuan zhenjing* 觀音

[78] Heijns 2003, p. 248.

濟度本願真經) (hereinafter referred to as *The True Scripture)*, and the novel *Journey to the West* (*Xiyouji* 西遊記).

The True Scripture is a text which Borel was already studying while he was in China, as he wrote to van Eeden.[79] The text is one of the reinterpretations of the Miaoshan story which relates how Guanyin decides to go to the world below and be reborn as Princess Miaoshan to King Zhuang. When Miaoshan is old enough to be given away in marriage, she objects to her parents and retreats to the Daoist chamber in the White Sparrow nunnery. King Zhuang orders the nunnery to be burnt down which leaves all but Miaoshan dead. In his rage, the king has Miaoshan strangled and Miaoshan goes to visit the courts of hell only to come back to cure the king who has fallen ill. The story contains a combination of Buddhist (Guanyin), Daoist (nunnery) and Confucianist (filial piety) elements.[80]

According to Western frames of analysis *Journey to the West* is of a completely different nature. This is a novel attributed to Wu Cheng'en 吳承恩 (d. 1582) although the author's name does not appear on pre-modern editions. Research conducted by Hu Shi 胡適 (1891-1962) in the early 1920s argues that Wu Cheng'en was the author, but some scholars contest the claim. While ostensibly based on the true story of Chinese monk Xuanzang's quest to India to collect sutras, it is a fantastical novel with supernatural elements.[81] Consisting of 100 chapters, the story starts with the birth of the monkey Sun Wukong and continues with Xuanzang's birth and pilgrimage. Together with other companions, their adventure is dangerous and treacherous. As Idema and Haft write, 'In his description of the perils and monsters, the author gives free reign to his humor and fantasy.'[82]

In his essays, Borel does at times refer to scholarly literature, but he explains that his own work was never intended as scholarship itself. As he indicates in the preface to *Kwan Yin: A Book of the Gods and the Hell*, without emotion China would be a dead country to him.[83] This seems to imply mutual exclusion of 'emotion' and 'scholarship'.[84] From his criticism on contemporaries it appears that to him those who engaged in scholarship lack 'emotion'. In Borel's point of view 'scholarship' is a means to understand China, but he wouldn't have written about it if it didn't stir any 'emotion'. He also emphasizes this in the introduction to

[79] UVA. Letter of 26 February 1893. Henri Borel aan Frederik van Eeden, Bijzondere Collecties, Universiteit van Amsterdam, XXIV C93. There are also notebooks in the Borel Archives at LM, which contain Chinese characters with translation of *The True Scripture of Guanyin's Original Vow of Salvation*.

[80] For more details, see Yu Chun-fang, *Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokitesvara*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

[81] Hoffmann wrote about Xuanzang as early as 1853. See his article 'The Chinese pelgrim Xuanzang and his travels in India from 629-645' (De Chinesche pelgrim Hioeên Ts'áng en zijne reizen in Indië van 629-645) in *The Guide* of 1853.

[82] Idema and Haft 1997, p. 208.

[83] Borel 1896c, p. VII.

[84] Van Eeden has a similar idea of scholarship and emotion, as can be seen in the preface (dated July 1904) to the second edition of his novel *The Deeps of Deliverance* (Van de koele meren des doods) where he claims that the novel was 'not about scientific research but rather about admiration for the beauty of being'. Amsterdam: Querido. 1997, p. 5.

the essay 'Kwan Yin' where he refers briefly to Buddhist sources and quotes from studies by de Groot and Monier Monier-Williams (1819-1899), Professor of Sanskrit at Oxford University, for the background and origin of Guanyin, without mentioning the title or page number. But he refrains from going too deep into the matter, because:

> my appreciation of the Guanyin idea has little to do with the question of whether she comes from India or China, I prefer to convey the beauty and the emotions of the Chinese people for Guanyin that I felt, as well as [to convey] the religions and things, much rather than scholarship which is merely a tool to me.[85]

This is revealing of Borel's ideas on the interpretation of Chinese culture and how it should be taken from the source to the target culture. His professed aim was to bring more than facts and theories, and he hoped he could let the reader feel 'the emotions of the Chinese people'. It appears that by indicating different perspectives of Guanyin, Borel claims some kind of an 'authority' in the appreciation of Guanyin. By going beyond a factual introduction, Borel gives an experience and observation of the Goddess within Chinese culture. This is also reflected in his selection of topics, texts and translation strategy.

3.4.1 Topics and Texts

Borel's choice of topics and texts was undoubtedly primarily out of his own interest, but also because he thought it would help his reader to better understand the Chinese. It is telling of Borel that he chose Chinese texts that were not regarded as essential literary texts by Chinese and Western scholars in his time, and Borel was aware of this. It is possible that not until changes in Dutch sinology in the 1920s, Dutch sinologists by virtue of their training in Xiamen and their predominant exposure to local Chinese in the Dutch East Indies were not so much influenced by the ideas and prejudices of the educated elite. Borel chose *The True Scripture* but acknowledges in a footnote that many use *The Complete Biography of Guanyin of the South Sea* (*Nanhai Guanyin quanzhuan* 南海觀音全傳). Borel prefers *The True Scripture*, because he thinks it is 'much better written and of much more serious character'.[86] Neither book would have been seen by Chinese literati as literary texts. Moreover, Borel thought that *The True Scripture* conveyed best the things he wished to explain to his readers:

> It is a wonderful book in which the teachings of Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism appear together like brothers, and which leaves the reader wondering about several important issues, precisely when it matters most, while at the same time it is revealing of very typical Chinese folk beliefs about religion.[87]

The importance of the book according to Borel lies in the sense that it gives an insight in

[85] Borel 1896c, pp. 5-6
[86] Ibid, p. 16.
[87] Ibid, p. 16.

Chinese thought. Here a kind of essentialism can be detected in Borel in the way he regards the contents of the book as 'very Chinese'. Eventually he says 'Numerous other stories and legends about Guanyin are in circulation.'[88] So he makes it clear that he read and selected from among a wide range of material. The fact that many used *The Complete Biography of Guanyin of the South Sea* is also confirmed by Glen Dudbridge who writes:

> its importance is remarkable and undeniable. In China its pervasive influence can be felt in popular local renderings of the Miaoshan story down to modern times. In the West, largely through the agency of de Groot, it decisively shaped much thinking and writing about the later cult of Guanyin.[89]

Dudbridge attributes the preference for *The Complete Biography of Guanyin of the South Sea* to de Groot, whose Dutch study *Annual Festivals and Customs of the Chinese in Xiamen* was published in an expanded and authorized French translation entitled *Les fêtes annuellement célébrées à Emoui (Amoy): étude concernant la religion populaire de chinois* in 1886. Subsequently, scholars after de Groot accepted *The Complete Biography of Guanyin of the South Sea* as authoritative. Dudbridge also mentions *The True Scripture* and refers to Borel for a summary of the contents in Dutch. Dudbridge acknowledges that Arthur Waley (1889-1966) found *The True Scripture* 'long and tedious', and adds:

> if judged solely on aesthetic merits, it would remain unprinted and unread. Yet it survives to claim a value of another kind: a document which we can relate to fictional sources, to sectarian doctrine, and to a specific readership. It therefore adds usefully to our knowledge of the 'uncertain boundaries between religion, literature and entertainment' which we have recognized as the home territory of the Miaoshan legend.[90]

The choice of texts shows that Borel ignores prevalent views. He knows that scholars look down upon *Journey to the West*, yet he appreciates the book for its power of imagination.[91] In Chinese literary tradition, fiction was not recognized as a literary genre because literature 'intended to be useful, exert an influence on readers that was simultaneously intellectual, moral and aesthetic.'[92] Hence, *Journey to the West* fell outside the scope of literature 'proper' of China until the early twentieth century, when canonical views of literature began to change. But as explained by Alexander Wyllie (1815-1887) in his *Notes on Chinese Literature* written in 1867:

> Those who imbibed European ideas on the subject, however, will feel that the novels and romances are too important as a class to be overlooked. The insight they give into the national manners and customs of various ages, the specimens which they furnish of an everchanging language, the fact of this being the only channel through which a large portion of the people gain their knowledge of history, and the

[88] Ibid, p. 50
[89] Dudbridge 2004, p. 67.
[90] Ibid, p. 87.
[91] Borel 1896c, p. 111.
[92] Ibid, p. 9.

> influence which they must consequently exercise in the formation of character, are reasons too weighty to be left out of account, notwithstanding the prejudices of scholars on the subject.[93]

Among the novels listed by Wyllie is also *Journey to the West*. In fact, quite a number of other popular vernacular novels were read by early Dutch sinologists. Besides *Wonders Old and New*, they were also reading the historical novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguozhi yanyi* 三國誌演義): in the collection of de Grijs there are 'Selections from the history of the three states' and the collection of Maurits Schaalje (1840-1899) contains a partial Dutch translation of this novel.[94] Moreover other titles of Chinese literature in the KNAG (Koninklijk Nederlands Aardrijkskundig Genootschap) collection, now stored in the East Asian library of Leiden University show that Dutch sinologists had purchased literary texts.[95] Clearly, the Dutch interpreters were very much aware of Chinese fiction.

The fact that Borel is translating fragments from the novel, makes it clear that he too looked at it from a Western point of view. This has to do with use and intention: Borel only selected relevant parts for his purpose, and did not leave the source text 'intact'. So the perception of Borel's Dutch readers *Journey to the West* will be completely different compared to how Chinese readers read it, also because Dutch readers lacked religious worship for Guanyin.

Later *Journey to the West* came to be regarded as one of China's major classical novels, when the need arose to create an indigenous vernacular literature that could be constructed as the ancestor to a new 'spoken language' standard for literature of the 1920s. The text has been popular in the West especially since the publication of Waley's abbreviated translation *Monkey: A Folk-Tale of China* in 1942. Still, Hu Shi in his introduction to Waley's translation, thinks the novel 'is simply a book of good humor, profound nonsense, good-natured satire and delightful entertainment.' Since Waley's, there have been other translations in English by William J. F. Jenner and Anthony Yu, and studies on the novel by Andrew Plaks, Paul S. Ropp, and Dudbridge among others, which is an indication of the increased recognition of the novel. In hindsight, one can say that Borel was right in recognizing the novel's potential before it was widely accepted.

3.4.2 Ever-presence as Translator

In the essays on these two topics of Guanyin and Chinese hell, Borel combined literary translation with ethnographical writing and illustrations. It is difficult to categorize the constituent parts precisely, but from the 72 pages of 'Guanyin', roughly 26 are translation, two pages consist of illustrations and 44 pages are Borel's own writing, while for the 67 pages of 'The Chinese Hell', five pages are taken up by illustrations, the translated text and

[93] Wyllie 1964, pp. 201-202.
[94] Kuiper 2005, p. 106, 138.
[95] For more details, see Kuiper 2010.

Borel's own writing and footnotes roughly divide into 45 and 15 pages respectively. As mentioned above, Borel is a visible translator, and also or even in the rendering of the source texts he uses various devices to keep his own voice in. As I will explain below, Borel is ever-present as a mediator, commentator and negotiator with editorial interventions, directly addressing the reader and commenting on the text. Borel also uses romanization for certain Chinese concepts and analogies to facilitate understanding.

From the text, it appears that Borel's aim was to make his readers appreciate the text, while retaining the foreignness of aspects of Guanyin and Chinese hell. The essays only contain relevant, selected passages from the Chinese texts that would help the reader better understand the concepts. As mentioned before, we know that Borel was reading and translating Buddhist texts when he was in China, so he was familiar with the contents of the texts. Giving examples of a word for word translation in a letter of 26 February 1893 to van Eeden, Borel shows how difficult it was to grasp the meaning.[96] Within the selected passages in the essays, Borel mostly remains faithful to the original unless it involves repetition, then he omits lines or abbreviates. Borel also leaves out characters from the source text that he considers irrelevant to his idea of the story and he changes literally quoted speech into indirect discourse. Characteristic are the interventions in the translation with comments addressed to the reader directly and the use of colloquial speech of which the style is different from the original. An example from *The True Scripture* is the point in the story, where Princess Miaoshan is talking with the Mandarin at the gate to Chinese hell. Borel's translation of 'Mandarin' for 'faguan' 法官' should have been rendered as '(Daoist) Priest' as it traditionally refers to Daoist ritual specialists. Borel comments that the government in hell works the same as on earth. This Mandarin explains how people are sent to different courts of hell depending on their sins and merits when they were alive and he answers any questions the princess has:

> 公主曰："此一關口可算煩闕，想你等亦有升降否?"法官曰："如查考分明，辦事勤勞有功者，上帝依功升賞;如善惡有錯，亦要降職問罪!"公主曰："我聞陰府有孽鏡台，照人陽間所作之事，善惡一一照出，可是真否?"法官曰："果有此事，原非虛語。" *Gongzhu yue: 'Ci yi guankou ke suan fanque, xiang ni deng yi you sheng jiang fou?' Faguan yue: 'Ru cha kao fenming, banshi qinlao you gongzhe, shangdi yi gong sheng shang; ru shan'e you cuo, yi yao jiang zhi wen zui!' Gongzhu yue: 'Wo wen yinfu you niejingtai, zhao ren yang jian suo zuo zhi shi, shan'e yi yi zhaochu, ke shi zhen fou?' Faguan yue: 'Guo you ci shi, yuan fei xu yu.*' (The princess said: 'This (post at the) gate is troublesome. Do you have rewards and punishments?' The Priest said: 'If the investigation is distinct, outstanding work will be rewarded, Shangdi will offer promotion according to achievements, but will also punish those who make mistakes, he will interrogate crimes and call for demotion!' The princess said: 'I hear that there is a Mirror of Sins, which reflects all the things people do, it gives a reflection of all good and evil, is that true?' The Priest said: 'There is truly such a thing, this is no empty talk.')
>
> *De prinses zeide hierop: "Deze betrekking van U lijkt mij nogal ellendig toe. Kunt U ook promotie maken?" De mandarijn antwoordde hierop bevestigend, daar Shang Ti, de opperste God, wel het kwaad strafte,*

[96] UVA. Letter to van Eeden of 26 February 1893. Henri Borel aan Frederik van Eeden Brief, Bijzondere Collecties, Universiteit van Amsterdam, XXIV C93.

maar ook het goede beloonde. Als hij dus maar goed oppaste kon hij hoogerop komen. Toen vroeg de prinses: "Ik heb gehoord, dat hier een Spiegel der Zonde is, waarin de dingen, die de menschen gedaan hebben, worden weerspiegeld, en die goed en kwaad weêrkaatst. Is dat werkelijk zoo?" "—Óf het," antwoordde de mandarijn. "Dat zijn heusch geen leêge praatjes!" (The princess then said: 'This job of yours seems rather miserable to me. Is there any chance of promotion?' The Mandarin affirmed, for Shangdi, the Supreme God, although he punished evil, also rewarded good. As long as he took good care, he could climb higher up. Then the princess asked: 'I heard that there is a Mirror of Sins which shows the things that people have done, it reflects good and bad. Is it really true?' 'Sure,' the Mandarin replied. 'This is no empty talk!')[97]

The reply by the Mandarin to the first question of the princess is changed by Borel into indirect speech. Borel retains Shangdi 上帝 in romanization with an explanation right behind it 'the supreme God' (de opperste God), who is the Jade Emperor here. As we saw earlier in 3.2.2., in the translation of philosophical texts, Borel retains Shangdi in romanization, to avoid confusion or conflation with the Western God. What is also characteristic of the translation here, is the colloquial use of 'Sure' (Óf het) for 'guo you ci shi' 果有此事' (indeed there is such a thing), and then he sticks close to the original in 'yuan fei xu yu' 原非虛語 with 'this is no empty talk' (dat zijn heusch geen lege praatjes), which works fine in Dutch.

More colloquial expressions can be found in Borel's translation of excerpts from *Journey to the West,* a text which was written in vernacular Chinese. Borel also notes, that the language of the text is not in the classical style, but as colloquial as 'the people talk at home and the storytellers on the corner of the street.'[98] For his purpose of writing about Chinese hell, Borel only took some parts from three chapters in *Journey to the West*. Borel does not say which edition he used or which chapters the excerpts are taken from.[99]

The following passage shows how Borel's translation follows the Chinese original, and where Borel intervenes.

龍王曰："請卜天上陰晴事如何。"先生即袖傳一課，斷曰："雲迷山頂，霧罩林梢。若占雨澤，準在明朝。"龍王曰："明日甚時下雨？雨有多少尺寸？"先生道："明日辰時布雲，巳時發雷，午時下雨，未時雨足，共得水三尺三寸零四十八點"。 龍王笑曰："此言不可作戲。如是明日有雨，依你斷的時辰數目，我送課金五十兩奉謝。若無雨，或不按時辰數目，我與你實說，定要打壞你的門面，扯碎你的招牌，即時赶出長安，不許在此惑眾！"先生欣然而答："這個一定任你。請了，請了，明朝雨后來會。 *Long Wang yue: 'Qing bu tian shang yinqing shi ruhe.' Xiansheng ji xiu chuan yi ke, duan yue: 'Yun mi shan ding, wu zhao lin shao. Ruo zhan yu ze, zhun zai mingzhao.' Long Wang yue: 'Mingri*

[97] Borel 1896c, p. 88.
[98] Ibid, p. 111.
[99] In the Chinese version of *Journey to the West* that I used, the excerpts are from chapters 9, 10 and 11, but in the complete English translation by Yu it is chapters 10, 11 and 12. The discrepancy is caused by a controversy over the authenticity of chapter 9. As this lies outside the scope of this study, I refer to Antony Yu's translation *The Journey to the West*, where he notes in the introduction to his translation 'As the present translation is intended to be a complete reproduction of the modern edition, I have not followed Dudbridge's advice to exclude chapter 9. For reasons stated elsewhere, I am persuaded that the "Ch'ên Kuang-jui story" is essential to the plot of the Hsi-yu chi as a whole, even though it lacks the best form of textual support.' 1977, pp. 15-16. The article Yu refers to is 'Narrative Structure and the Problem of Chapter Nine in the Hsi-yu Chi,' JAS (34), 1975, pp. 295-311.

shen shi xia yu? Yu you duoshao chicun?' Xiansheng dao: 'Mingri chen shi bu yun, yi shi fa lei, wu shi xia yu, wei shi yu zu, gong de shui san chi san cun ling sishiba dian.' Long Wang xiao yue: 'Ci yan bu ke zuoxi. Ru shi mingri you yu, yi ni duan de shichen shumu, wo song ke jin wushi liang feng xie. Ruo wu yu, huo bu an shi chen shumu, wo yu ni shi shuo, ding yao dahuai nide menmian, chesui nide zhaopai, jishi ganchu Chang'an, bu xu zai ci huo zhong!' Xiansheng xin ran er da: 'Zhege yiding ren ni. Qingle, qingle, mingzhao yu hou lai hui.' (The Dragon King said: 'Please tell me the weather forecast.' The soothsayer worked the sticks and recited 'The clouds drift above the mountains, haze cover the trees and the grain; if I soothsay when rain will fall, the answer is tomorrow.' Then the Dragon King asked: At what time tomorrow will it rain and how much rain will fall?' The soothsayer replied: Tomorrow at Chen hour clouds will gather, at Si hour there will be thunder, at Wu hour it will start raining, and at Wei hour it will stop. In total there will be three feet three inch of rain with forty-eight after-drops.' The Dragon King smiled: 'You shouldn't joke about this. If it does rain tomorrow at the time you indicated, exactly the amount you say, I will grant you fifty ounce of gold as reward. But if it doesn't rain or not at the time that you said it would and not the same amount, then I will come back and demolish your front door, tear down your signboard and banish you from Chang'an, and allow you no longer to deceive the people here.' The soothsayer said unruffled: As you wish. Please come back tomorrow, after the rain.')

'Zoudt u mij ook kunnen zeggen,' vroeg de koning, 'wanneer er regen zal vallen?' Daarop begon de wichelaar met zijn wichelstokjes te werken en zeide het volgende versje op: "De wolken dwalen boven de bergen, Mistdampen bedekken het woud en het graan; Als ik wichel wanneer de regen zal neerzegenen, Is het antwoord: 'morgen.'" Toen vroeg de Zee-Draken-Koning: 'Op welk uur dan morgen, en hoeveel regen zal er zoowat vallen?' De wichelaar antwoordde: 'Morgen op het uur Ch'an zullen de wolken bijeenkomen, op het uur Sz' zal de donder komen opzetten, op het uur Wu zal de regen neervallen, en op het uur Wei zal die ophouden. Er zal in 't geheel vallen drie voet en drie duim regen, en laatste na-droppels acht en veertig.' De Zee-Draken-Koning zeide lachende: 'Zulke woorden mag je niet uit gekheid uitspreken, mannetje! Als morgen juist op de tijden, die gij bepaald hebt, precies zooveel regen valt, zal ik u vijftig ons goud geven tot belooning. Maar als er geen regen komt, òf niet op den bepaalden tijd en in de bepaalde hoeveelheid, dan zal ik uw voordeur kapot trappen, uw uithangbord vernielen, u uit Ch'ang Ngan jagen, en u niet meer toestaan, hier de menschen te bedriegen.' 'Zoals u wilt,' zeide de wichelaar kalmpjes. ('Could you tell me,' the king asked, 'when it will rain?' Thereupon the soothsayer started working the sticks and recited the following verse: 'The clouds drift above the mountains, haze cover the trees and the grain; if I soothsay when rain will fall, the answer is tomorrow.' Then the Sea-Dragon-King asked: At what time tomorrow will it rain and how much will fall?' The soothsayer replied: Tomorrow at Chen hour clouds will gather, at Si hour there will be thunder, at Wu hour it will start raining, and at Wei hour it will stop. In total there will be three feet three inch of rain with forty-eight after-drops.' The Sea-Dragon-King smiled: 'You shouldn't joke about this, little fellow.' If it does rain tomorrow at the time you indicated, exactly the amount you say, I will grant you fifty ounce of gold as reward. But if it doesn't rain or not at the time that you said it would and not the same amount, then I will come back and demolish your front door, tear down your signboard and banish you from Chang'an, and allow you no longer to deceive the people here.' 'As you wish, the soothsayer said unruffled.)[100]

From this passage, we can see that there are foreignizing elements in the translation, such as the romanization of names of the hours. Borel gives an explanation in the footnote, which reads 'The Chinese have twelve hours in a day. The hour 'chen' corresponds with our 7-9 am, the hour 'si' to our 9-11 am, the hour 'wu' is 11am-1 pm and the hour 'wei' is our 1-3pm.'[101] At the same time the use of colloquial language and some abbreviation makes the text easy to read. The initial request of 'Please forecast the weather,' was changed by Borel simply into 'when will it rain?' Then in the King's answer to the prediction of the soothsayer, Borel adds 'little fellow' in 'You shouldn't joke about this, little fellow!' (Zulke woorden mag je niet uit

[100] Borel 1896c, pp. 115-116.
[101] Ibid, p. 115.

gekheid uitspreken, mannetje!) This adds a bit of arrogance on the part of the king which is not there in the source text. The final answer of the soothsayer in this passage is abbreviated by Borel to 'As you wish' (Zoals u wilt), while in fact he says 'come back tomorrow after the rain' as he is positively certain that it will rain.

In previous writing, Borel tends to opt for analogies to help his reader understand or imagine what he means. Here I also found some occasional reference to similar notions in the West, e.g. at the start of 'Kwan Yin', where he reminisces on Buddhist figurines which he saw in the window of an antique shop in The Hague four years ago: 'I thought this woman resembled figurines of the Holy Virgin, so much so that I imagined her to be a Mary of the East.'[102] Another example is the title of *Journey to the West*, which Borel translates as *Roamings in the West—fairy tales of a Chinese Grimm* (Zwerftochten in het Westen—een fabelenboek van een chineeschen Grimm).

To draw the readers' attention Borel uses the device of addressing the reader directly. It is here that we can see that Borel has changed his attitude: he displays a tone of superiority over the Chinese people not detected before. In addressing the reader, he tries to convince them that there is truth in the Chinese way of thinking, even though people may laugh at their superstition. An example is the intervention in the translated text from 'the Chinese Hell' where Guanyin transforms the courts of hell:

> Nowadays the Chinese can no longer meet such high expectations. It is indeed a bit too much to rescue all souls from the hells for good. *But don't laugh, dear reader,* for their naivete is truly adorable, to allow the poor fellows a month vacation from the flames of hell. It is reasonable and it is done![103]

Again, it seems Borel is mocking the Chinese, in an attempt to reach out to the readers. At the same time, he makes a great effort to explain Chinese customs which is evidence of his understanding and appreciation of Chinese culture. He further clarifies that on the last day of the sixth month, the gates of hell are opened and ghosts are allowed to wander around on earth for a month, and therefore the Chinese light candles and burn paper outside the house. The purpose of his explanation is:

> I hope that these very serious ideas will compensate the reader for the somewhat childish and creepy horrors of those hells, and in particular the reader in the Indies who has to pass through the Chinese camps during the festival, when there are pigs, sheep, goats and all kinds of suspicious Chinese snacks on long racks that lie there stinking among the awful smoke of smoldering oil lamps and burning paper offerings.
> It is, however, perfectly understandable of the Chinese, who believe in above related horrors, to offer the poor, ravished ghosts some delicacies. After all, the truth of the matter is that after *they* savored them invisibly then the delicacies will disappear into their own stomach![104]

It appears from this description about a Chinese festival, that Borel uses his knowledge of

[102] Ibid, pp. 1-2
[103] Ibid, p. 106. My emphasis.
[104] Ibid, p. 110.

Chinese customs to explain the cultural elements, while at the same time showing consideration for his readers, in particular those in the Indies, who encounter this personally when they move among the Chinese during festivals. It is possible that Borel may have heard complaints by colleagues, for those who lacked the knowledge of Chinese customs will fail to understand the meaning of offering food and burning paper offerings. Ultimately, it seems likely that Borel in his quest to seek justice, he also did it for 'the sake of the Oriental' (in the words of Said), because if the Dutch better understood Chinese customs, it would benefit the Chinese in the Dutch East Indies.

One of the Dutch reviewers of *Kwan Yin: A Book of the Gods and the Hell* also notes that the book is highly subjective and that Borel writes about the Chinese in a different way than authors before him. But in spite of its subjectivity in for instance the piece on Guanyin, the anonymous reviewer points out it is based on

> the history and the meaning of the goddess, taken from various, original Chinese sources many of which are unknown to the outside world. The same goes for his statements about the representation of Chinese hell that he makes. The five studies and descriptions united in this collection are of a strong personal character in which suggestive imagination plays a major role, yet they convey a lot of interesting and important information about a nation that we are accustomed to think differently about. That is why this book by Mr. Borel is worth reading for anyone who is not living in unchanging, petrified reverence of the ancient tradition.[105]

So it appears that the fact that Borel is using hitherto untranslated texts makes him worth reading and compensates for his subjective writing. Moreover, as the reviewer notes, Borel makes his readers see China in a different light, different to what readers were used to.

3.5 Return to the Netherlands

Borel's efforts toward a better understanding of the Chinese people had hardly any effect on people working in the Dutch East Indies, and it appears that his reports on corruption and suggestions for new policies were neglected by his superiors, which must have frustrated him.

As noted above Borel dislikes the expatriate society and lifestyle in the Dutch East Indies and over the years he seeks alternative posts. In his letter to van Eeden of 25 November 1896, Borel writes that the Governor-General proposed to him an appointment at the consulate in Hong Kong. Borel hopes he will get it, but doubts that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will approve.[106] Letters in 1897 by van Eeden to Borel also inquire about a possible transfer to China, but apparently it was never realized.[107] Over time Borel is

[105] Anonymous 1898.

[106] UVA. Letter by Borel to van Eeden of 25 November 1896. Henri Borel aan Frederik van Eeden. Bijzondere Collecties, Universiteit van Amsterdam, XXIV C93.

[107] Van Eeden is asking about the position of consul in China, expressing his hope that Borel will be appointed. See letters of 19 March 1897, 8 August 1897, and 30 September 1897. Van Eeden 1933, pp. 77-87.

complaining of heart and nerve problems, and he goes to Tosari for convalescence. Eventually, Borel is granted paid sick leave on 23 June 1899 to return to the Netherlands.

Soon after his return, Borel becomes embroiled in a controversy about the book *Life in the Dutch East Indies* (Het leven in Nederlandsch-Indië) by Bas Veth, whose full name is Bastiaan Veth (1860-1922), published in 1900. According to E. M. Beekman in his 'Bas Veth: A Colonial Muckraker', Veth was a businessman in the Dutch East Indies for twelve years.[108] He went to the Dutch East Indies in 1878 and returned to the Netherlands in 1891. Borel became acquainted with Veth in the Dutch East Indies and he cherishes their friendship.[109]

In this book, Veth 'attacked just about every aspect of colonial existence, from dogs to sanitary habits.'[110] Beekman notes the book was a kind of best seller as it was reprinted four times, but it also 'unleashed a stream of letters to the editor, [as well as] articles, brochures, and pamphlets.'[111] Some commentaries on the book refer to Borel to give a different perspective on life in the Dutch East Indies. In a letter to the editor which was printed in the *General Commerce Paper* of 19 August 1900, Borel complains that people are using his work to set off against Veth's work. Borel vehemently defends his point of view, stressing that he agrees with the contents of Veth's book and adds that his praise of the beautiful mountains of Java does not mean that he likes the colonial society of the Dutch East Indies, for he suffered too much there.[112] His strong reaction is further evidence of his dislike of the Dutch East Indies, and he does not want readers to be mistaken.

It seems that Borel originally intended to remain in the Netherlands and not return to the East Indies anymore. His sick leave is extended and he signs a contract with his publishers to publish novels on a regular basis, possibly as a result of his relatively successful novel *The Young Boy* (Het Jongetje) in 1898 which was reprinted four times.[113] Still

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[108] Beekman 1986, p. 102. There is no evidence of a direct relation between Bas Veth and the renowned Dutch indologist Professor Dr. Pieter Johannes Veth (1814-1895). According to genealogical information, Bas Veth was the eldest of five sons of shipowner Jan Veth (1833-1899) and Neeltje von Lindern (1837-1892). (www.genealogieonline.nl)

[109] In the diary entry of 29 October 1897 Borel mentions that he met and became friends with Bas Veth in the East Indies.

[110] Beekman 1986, p. 101.

[111] Ibid, p. 102.

[112] Borel 1900c. Later in a reply letter to a certain 'Bles D.' who apparently asked for advice about the Dutch East Indies, Borel refers to Veth's book. He explains that going to the Indies is 'a moral demise for 9 out of 10 people' and recommends reading Veth's book. Letter can be found in the Borel Archives at LM.

[113] A reprint of *The Young Boy* appeared in 1899, a third print in 1902, a fourth print in 1912 and a fifth print in 1920. This indicates readers' interest in the novel, even though many of the reviews were negative. According to M. G. Kemperink in his article 'An image of a Woman' (Een beeld van een vrouw) in *The New Language Guide* (De Nieuwe Taalgids) of 1992 (pp. 479-494), Frederik van Eeden identified with the contents of the novel (which made him cry as he noted in his diary of 4 February 1898), but he was not impressed by the literary quality. (p. 492) See DBNL. Another contemporary writer Lodewijk van Deyssel, however, condemns Borel for his sentimental writing in general and denounces *The Young Boy* as 'complete rubbish' (volslagen prul). (See essay written on 26 March 1899 included in *Literary Scolding* (De Scheldkritieken) (1979), pp. 258-260. See DBNL.) For an evaluation of Borel's early work, see chapter 14 of *Dutch Literature in the Fin de Siècle: reception-historical overview of prose from 1885 to 1900* (Nederlandse Literatuur in het Fin de Siècle: een receptie-historisch overzicht van het proza tussen 1885 en 1900) by Jacqueline Bel. See also Otto Knaap's *Henri*

struggling with health problems, Borel is unable to deliver on time, and to make matters worse his novels receive negative reviews. Further extension of leave is granted by the Minister of Colonies, but changed to unpaid leave after June 1902.

Given the pressure, critics and an unstable income, Borel accepts a new appointment as 'Official for Chinese Affairs' in the Dutch East Indies in 1903. It was a new opportunity, even though all previous effort he had put into his role as translator and negotiator in his work in the Dutch East Indies, as well as in his writings, seemed to have had little effect. Yet through his works as discussed above, it may have raised in Borel an awareness of nationality, of belonging, of a feeling of conflict between East vs West. This approach in life and work, inner struggles, and choosing sides, makes it hard to sustain life in colonial society. So it's not so surprising that when Borel travels again to the Dutch East Indies in 1903, it turns out to be a very short period as we will see in Chapter 4.

Borel (Amsterdam: Veen, 1900), who seeks to explain the reasons why some praise and others criticize the works of Borel.