Translating China : Henri Borel (1869-1933)

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Chapter 5: A Poetic Vision

Aware of the importance of Mandarin Chinese and of momentous change going on in China, Borel is anxious to travel to Beijing to obtain firsthand experience. In order to practice the language he requests study leave, which is granted in August 1909, and he travels to China in early September.[1] During the four months' trip to Beijing, Borel takes lessons in Mandarin Chinese, visits historical sights, and obtains news from local people and newspapers.

Borel publishes an account of his trip as *Daybreak in the East* (Het Daghet in den Oosten) in 1910. Besides travel writing, the book also contains reflections on how to improve mutual understanding between China and the West. In his translation of China, Borel goes beyond the visual, and attaches great importance to the spiritual, which he thinks other authors fail to perceive. He engages with palpably visible aspects of culture, and at the same time with what he perceives or projects as the thinking and feeling behind it. As for the ongoing socio-political reforms in China, changes in education, campaigns against opium and footbinding and so on, he describes not only the outside of things, e.g. in the construction of schools and education for women. These reforms eventually lead up to the revolution and the fall of the last imperial dynasty in 1911. Borel further elaborates on what he sees as the idea of 'the East for the East', which he thinks is essentially spiritual, and indeed mystical. In Borel's view an inward strengthening of China is taking place through wisdom and philosophy, which cannot be exterminated by the material weapons of the West.[2] As a result, he writes, 'China with her four hundred millions is now moving upward in the world's course, because in future she will work mightily towards the spiritual and intellectual progress of all humanity.'[3]

In *Daybreak in the East* the reader is offered not only an image of China, but also one of the identity of Borel and his self-portrayal. This offers another useful entry point for exploring how he undertakes cultural translation, and specifically how he represents cultural Otherness. Examples will show how Borel tries to make sense of the foreign. As Crapanzano writes, the ethnographer, like the translator:

> (...) must also communicate the very foreignness that his interpretations (the translator's translations) deny in their claim to universality. He must render the foreign familiar and preserve its very foreignness at one and the same time. The translator accomplishes this through style, the ethnographer through the coupling of a presentation that asserts the foreign and an interpretation that makes it all familiar.[4]

Such a style or presentation can be personal and subjective. In the case of Borel, this is clear

[1] LM. His departure date from Surabaya must have been on 9 September 1909, according to a first class, open return ticket to Singapore stored in the Borel Archives.
[2] Borel 1910, p. 4; English translation 1912, pp. 14-15. As discussed in Chapter 4, Borel had earlier juxtaposed weapons against the Chinese notion of *li*.
[3] Borel 1910, p. 5; English translation 1912, p. 16.
[4] Crapanzano 1986, p. 52.

in what I have identified as different levels of depth of observation, i.e the visible and what lies behind it. He also uses so-called 'persuasive devices' which as Crapanzano writes, the ethnographer must make use of 'to convince his readers of *the* truth of his message.'[5] Borel gives (partial) translations of Chinese words and texts, coupled with explanations about his own poetical vision, seemingly in anticipation of criticism by readers.

Receptions of the book are mixed, as it is praised for its account of the current situation in the Chinese capital, but criticized for its exuberant writing style and the questionable accuracy of Borel's interpretations. Nevertheless, the book is soon translated into English as *The New China: A Traveller's Impressions* by C. Thieme, whose full name is Frederik Carl David Thieme (1854-1925)[6] and published by T. F. Unwin in London in 1912, while the Dutch edition is reprinted in 1926, which indicates some degree of success.

Borel takes his ideas and attitude resulting from the China experience and the book back to his life in the Dutch East Indies, and expects recognition of his (updated) China knowledge when it comes to issues that involve the Chinese. But his arrogance and patronizing attitude eventually lead to the end of his colonial career, while his further writing on the study of Chinese causes conflicts with academics at Leiden University. His visions of China, and his disagreement with the views of others, be they tourists or professionals – including sinologists – contribute to reflection among the general public on what constitutes a China expert. Among general readers, to some extent, Borel's experience and understanding of Chinese culture elevate him to being regarded as the expert. At work and in academic circles, his attitude and ideas rub some people the wrong way, and he encounters opposition to, if not dismissal of, his views. As a result, his ongoing quest for justice and understanding of the Chinese in the Dutch East Indies fails at that time, although it may have had an effect in the long run as I will explain later.

5.1 The Visual and the Spiritual

Although *Daybreak in the East* introduces a fairly standard rostrum of historical sights where all tourists visiting the Chinese capital go, the descriptions go beyond their physical appearance. By permeating life at local level, flaunting knowledge about culture and history, translating signs and texts, reflecting on China's future and offering views on how to establish mutual understanding between East and West, the book aims to be more than a

[5] Ibid, p. 53. Italics in original.

[6] Thieme lived and worked in London. The textbook *Dutch Self Taught* by Thieme, published in 1910, notes that he was 'Examiner in Dutch for the London Chamber of Commerce'. In 1917, Thieme translated *The German Fury in Belgium: experiences of a Netherland [sic] journalist during four months with the German army in Belgium* (De overweldiging van België: ervaringen, als Nederlandsch journalist opgedaan, tijdens een viermaandelijksch verblijf bij de Duitsche troepen in België) by Dutch reporter Lambertus Emanuel Mokveld (1890-1968), which notes that Thieme worked as a foreign correspondent for *The New Newspaper* (De Nieuwe Courant) in London. Thieme explains in a footnote that he used the words 'The Netherlands, Netherlander and Netherland' and not 'Dutch' to avoid confusion with Deutsch, Duits, Duts which means 'German' (p. 15).

travel report.

The overall impression left by the book is that Borel has a tendency to exoticize China– even though he makes a great effort at learning about realities of local life, by learning the language and talking to local people. It seems that Borel was intent on observing what was going on in the city, unlike the many foreigners who—and Borel stresses this—had no idea what went on outside the walls of the Legation Quarter, the area in Beijing where foreign embassies were located at the time, and made little effort to find out. Of course, not all foreigners in Beijing at the time were ignorant, and members of the legations would meet to discuss issues relating to political developments in China and the administration of the Quarter.[7] While Borel writes about his attempt at involvement in local life, he also constantly reminds the reader about China's Otherness or uniqueness, its differences in comparison with Dutch/Western culture and its spiritual side. His emphasis on his own understanding of China vs the ignorance of other visitors may give the reader the impression that China is 'distant and simply alien', in Kerr and Kuehn's words.[8]

Borel applies various devices to explain and introduce Chinese cultural phenomena, which enable the reader to better understand Chinese culture and construct an image of China. Of the sixteen chapters in *Daybreak in the East*,[9] twelve are about Borel's travel experience when visiting historical sights in Beijing such as the Forbidden City, the Lama Temple, the Yellow Temple, the Temple of Confucius, the Imperial College, the Temple of the Five Pagodas, the Summer Palace, and the Temple of Heaven. His descriptions primarily contain details of these places, the people, transportation, the weather, and his personal impressions, but often also touch upon matters that relate to the ongoing reforms and stress the contrast between old and new. The other four chapters focus on the reforms, the study of the Chinese language and the need for mutual understanding between China and the West. The many footnotes further explain historical and cultural background. Black and white photographs of temples, streets, vehicles, and people also help the reader to better visualize the sights.[10] In the following sections I will illustrate this, frequently using direct quotations and referring to some of the pictures. The English translations are from the above mentioned English version by Thieme in *The New China: A Traveller's Impressions*, with occasional slight modifications.

5.1.1 Perception of Otherness

The overall impression of the book seems to be 'a quest for the Other,' in the words of Gisli

[7] Moser and Moser 1993, p. 120.

[8] Kerr and Kuehn 2007, p. 7. As quoted more extensively in Chapter 2.

[9] Some of the essays were published before in magazines, including 'The Temple of Heaven' (De Tempel des Hemels) in *The Guide* (74), 1910, pp. 302-314, and 'The Summer Palace in Peking' (Het zomerpaleis te Peking) in *The Indies Weekly* (Weekblad voor Indië) of 1910.

[10] According to the information on the title page in my copy of the book, it is supposed to have fifty illustrations but by my count there are only forty-six.

Pálsson.[11] As Pálsson explains, the essence of human nature is the persistent tendency to separate 'us' from 'them'.[12] This distinction can further be seen, writes Pálsson 'in the desire to experience both difference and the crossing of boundaries, [which] became institutionalized in the literary genre of the travel account.'[13] In the present case of *Daybreak in the East*, I found that the perception of the difference and crossing of boundaries is experienced on multiple levels. I have identified three levels of depth of observation by Borel: the first is the visible, meaning the Chinese people and surroundings. The second is the inner substance, which, according to Borel, is semi-visible if you look beyond the outer layer: if on the surface something looks ugly and dirty, what lies beneath may actually be beautiful. The third is the mysterious and mystical: the truly invisible that can only be perceived by people who are sensitive to spiritual values – such as Borel.

An example of the first level is Borel's experience of a ride in a modern train from Tianjin to Beijing. He enjoys the modern 'train-de-luxe', and writes how it feels 'as if travelling in Europe',[14] but then reassures the reader:

> And yet this was surely no dream, for in the compartment behind me two mandarins, in spacious garments were seated, talking in the deep, throaty sounds of Pekingnese, and gesticulating regally with their graceful hands. Many Chinese were in the other compartment, smoking and sipping tea. And there spread the landscape, full of Chinese quaintness; the clay houses where plump Chinese babies were already wrapped in their autumn clothes, with here and there the droll writhing dragons over buildings where floated the yellow Chinese flag.[15]

He sets off this contrast between a modern European train and the local surroundings such as the sounds, the clothes and the manners of Chinese people, as well as the landscape 'full of Chinese quaintness'. There is an Otherness that any visitor can see, hear, and smell. The use of the word 'Chinese' four times in this short paragraph embodies the presence of 'Chineseness'.

The next, semi-visible level can be found where there are descriptions of places which are at first sight ugly. Yet, in Borel's words there is more beyond the first impression of dirt. An example of this where shapes and colors are used to hide ugliness and filth, can be found in the Ha-ta Men Street in chapter VI, 'The Lama Temple' (De Lama-Tempel), also known as the Yonghe Temple:

> It is all old and weather-beaten, moldering and frail; here and there it is on the verge of collapse; it is dirty and sordid and yet it is splendid. It is an anthem, a flame of fire, a triumphal hymn of light and color, neither smothered nor extinguished by the ages, because its material is imperishable, its essence unassailable. Amidst this wealth of fiery color Rembrandt would have been intoxicated with happiness. How deeply did I feel, during my many walks through this street and through so many streets of Beijing,

[11] Pálsson 1993, p. 4.
[12] Ibid, p. 5.
[13] Ibid, p. 6.
[14] Borel 1910, p. 11; English translation 1912a, p. 25.
[15] Borel 1910, p. 13; English translation 1912a, pp. 27-28.

> that the Chinese must love this city with a lofty and a jealous love. How hateful it is to go back from all this ancient, almost sacred, splendor of bygone ages into the vulgar, dead, featureless streets of the Legation Quarter![16]

It is an image of light and colors, which Borel enhances by referring to the great Dutch painter, to play to the imagination of his readers. Beyond the outward appearance of ugliness, the houses are still beautiful because of their material and essence, like a metaphor for inner substance and beauty. Then there are the strong contrasts as in Chinese streets vs the streets of the Legation Quarter, and the sacred vs the vulgar. In these comparisons, Borel shows his admiration for things Chinese and denounces the bleakness of the West.

Finally, I have identified a third level of observation, of mystery and mysticism that the uninitiated (mind's) eye cannot perceive. These are the instances where Borel uses the words 'mystery / mysterious' and 'mysticism / mystical'. He uses these many times throughout the book, although most occur in the chapter on the Lama Temple. In general 'mystery / mysterious' applies to the strange or difficult to understand, such as the 'mystery of life and death,'[17] while 'mysticism / mystical' inspires a sense of spiritual fascination, such as 'mystical symbolism.' However, sometimes there is no distinct difference in meaning, for example in 'like a mysterious white flower'[18] and 'like a mystical flower.'[19] An example of 'mystery'[20] can be found in chapter X, 'The Veiled Beauty' (De verborgen schoonheid), where Borel delves deeper into the symbolism of the Forbidden City:

> How often have I felt a hitherto unknown strength, an inexpressible joy, standing before those red walls, the sun shining on the splendid yellow tiles, all light and glory, thinking that all might be destroyed if only the Forbidden City kept its mystery inviolate. I believe this symbol to be the most beautiful I found in Beijing, more exalted even than the beauty of architecture, temple and monument. But all these things are only revealed to those who can feel their subtle vibrations and can respond.[21]

From descriptions such as these, it appears that besides the perception of physical appearance, Borel attaches great importance to spiritual values. Based on his knowledge of China, Borel interprets and projects these huge walls as breathing imperial power. In his view, both physical and spiritual perception are necessary for true appreciation of Beijing and to feel 'the soul' as he puts it, and he thinks only few visitors / foreigners / travelers are receptive to the mysticism and symbolism of Beijing. However, in 1923 writing by Borel was

[16] Borel 1910, p. 74; English translation 1912a, p. 97.
[17] Borel 1910, p. 78; English translation 1912a, p. 101.
[18] Borel 1910, p. 144; English translation 1912a, p. 180.
[19] Borel 1910, p. 146; English translation 1912a, p. 182.
[20] In comparison I found that in the English translation there are some cases of the use of 'mystery / mysterious' which cannot be found in the Dutch version. Examples are 'China's mysterious capital' (p. 32), which in Dutch reads 'China's wondere hoofdstad' (p. 18) and 'with a strange mysterious clink' (p. 87) for 'geheimzinnigen, vreemde klank.' (p. 65)
[21] Borel 1910, pp. 141-142; English translation 1912a, p. 174.

the cause for author and literary criticus Dirk Coster (1887-1956) to warn of misuse of the concept of mysticism.[22] In his article 'Russian Poison and Western Rationalism' (Russisch Gif en Westersch Rationalisme), Coster warns that (the abuse of) mysticism is a dangerous element, which can result in 'great self-deception'. Coster begs of contemporaries to be careful and respectful when using the concept of 'mysticism.'[23]

The frequently invoked contrast of East vs West and of mysticism vs rationality portrays Borel as understanding the mysticism of the East. Here, it is helpful to regard him, in the words of Said, as one of the '(...) European traveler[s] in the Orient [who] felt himself to be a representative westerner who had gotten beneath the films of obscurity.'[24] Borel's repeated emphasis on what others fail to see and do not know, also serves to boost his self-assigned authority, and to set him apart from other foreign visitors, professionals and tourists alike.

5.1.2 Self-Identity

There are several different ways in which the author Borel establishes an image of his own identity. This is a common feature in travel writing, as we have seen earlier in Chapter 2, where I quoted Kerr and Kuehn on how travel writing can be revealing of the authors themselves, with the places traveled serving as the background. In *Daybreak in the East*, Borel sets himself apart by exploring off-track places, preferably on his own, and experiencing local life, as he writes:

> I, a foreigner, visited neighborhoods, alone, where tourists never come on foot and very rarely in rickshaws. I walked across markets and bazaars and attended theaters—the only European present.[25]

There is a strong emphasis on Borel's being *different,* in the words 'I, a foreigner', 'alone', and 'the only European'. Borel wants the reader to know that he is not an average tourist. An example of off-track exploring is his visit to the Summer Palace, which is described in chapter XIV, 'The Summer Palace' (Het Zomer-paleis). The Summer Palace, known in Chinese as Yihe Yuan 頤和園 should not be confused with the Old Summer Palace, known in Chinese as Yuan Ming Yuan 圓明園. Work on the old imperial gardens and buildings was originally commissioned by the Qianlong Emperor 乾隆帝 (1711-1799) between 1750 and 1764, and named the Garden of Clear Ripples, Qingyi Yuan 清漪園 at the time. The destruction of the Garden (along with the Old Summer Palace) happened at the end of the Second Opium War in 1860, when the British and the French were seeking renegotiation of the treaties to expand trade with China. China rejected their demands which led to attacks by the allied

[22] See announcement of the December issue of *The Voice* (De Stem) under 'Magazines' (Tijdschriften) in *General Commerce Paper.* Amsterdam, 13-12-1923. Accessed on Delpher on 03-11-2015, http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010658571:mpeg21:a0190

[23] Ibid.

[24] Said 1979, p. 222.

[25] Borel 1910, p. 47; English translation 1912a, p. 66.

forces. Proceeding north, Anglo-French troops in Beijing looted and destroyed many sites including the Garden of Clear Ripples, as a vengeance for the torture and killing of European prisoners and to reaffirm the terms of the 1858 Tianjin treaty to allow foreign ambassadors to live in Beijing.[26] The Garden was reconstructed by the Guangxu Emperor 光緒帝 and the Empress Dowager Cixi 慈喜太后 between 1886 and 1895, and was renamed the Summer Palace. In 1900, the Summer Palace was damaged again during the Boxer Uprising. As Jonathan Spence writes, this uprising was one of the signals of growing nationalism in China. Anti-foreign Chinese grouped themselves as 'Boxers United in Righteousness' to respond to provocations of Western missionaries and their Chinese converts. They became a growing force who moved from Shandong to the capital and killed foreigners at several locations. In Beijing, they joined with the Qing court's military forces in the attack on foreigners, but because of a lack of unified leadership, they were eventually defeated by foreign allied forces in 1900.[27]

When Borel was in Beijing, the Summer Palace was open only on two Wednesdays of each month and all visitors had to be accompanied by a Chinese official of the Foreign Affairs Office, whom Borel calls a 'mandarin'. The purpose of official guidance was to prevent foreign tourists from damaging or stealing objects. Initially a stout mandarin guides Borel, but when they chance upon a group of noisy tourists, the mandarin urges him to join them. Annoyed, Borel decides to 'risk everything' and walks away briskly. The mandarin runs after him and asks where he is going. Borel replies that he wants to walk along the lake, where it is quiet and still. He asks him for the location of 'the famous bronze ox' and the mandarin explains it is too far to walk and they will not go there today. Then Borel says he will go there alone, and he writes:

> After the usual '*Daren liubu*'(Mighty Lord, stop your steps!) I marched off at such a pace that he could not possibly keep up with me.[28]

By including the Chinese words that he spoke to the official, Borel is showing the reader his knowledge of the language. According to Borel, the Chinese expression is one of the ceremonious phrases that he learned during his language lessons. Borel portrays himself as different by violating the rules in order to explore on his own, instead of joining a group or staying with his guide. As he writes, he was aware of his own rudeness and disrespect, but 'happen what might, I wanted to wander about the Summer Palace without being disturbed.' It appears that the irritation caused by the (foreign) tourists has a negative influence on him, as he writes that 'the delicate aura of my thoughts at the silent lake was torn to pieces like a cobweb' by the noisy tourists. Of course, it must have also been his self-confidence based on

[26] Spence 1990, p. 181.
[27] Ibid, pp. 231-235.
[28] Borel 1910, p. 193; English translation 1912a, p. 235.

his knowledge of Chinese language and culture that encouraged him to venture alone. Yet, one observes that the fact that he is a sinologist does not entitle him to do as he pleases, and his behavior is in fact offensive.

The descriptions of particular sights or objects show that Borel knows what he wants to see. He notes that he had read about the bronze ox in Alicia Little's (née Alicia Ellen Neve (also spelled Neva) Bewicke 1845-1926) *Round About my Peking Garden,* which she published in 1905 under the name 'Mrs. Archibald Little'. While Borel writes that he wandered alone, in the photograph of the ox there are two Chinese men in the background. If it is Borel who took the picture, he was clearly not alone, and neither man fit the description of the guide.

Another instance of Borel venturing beyond tourist venues and showing off his knowledge, is in chapter XI, 'The Yellow Temple' (De Gele Tempel):

> All at once I remembered something I had read in some book which spoke of the dead lamas in the temples and their ashes. Would I be allowed to see the dead priests and the hall where their ashes were kept? (…) The lama smiled in astonishment. 'Most visitors do not ask that; it is not nice to look at,' he said. 'It is better not.' But although I knew not why, I felt impelled to see this hall of ashes.[29]

Again Borel goes where others do not go, and again his action is based on what he had read. He goes on to describe in detail how the lama shows him the cabinets where the dead priests were placed and the stone fireplaces where they were later cremated. In the description, Borel emphasizes that to the lamas, the corpses are 'only the bodies in which [the priests] had dwelt during one incarnation'.[30] By showing off his knowledge about Buddhist practices, Borel distinguishes himself from ordinary tourists.

An example of Borel's experience of local life can be found in chapter V, 'Street of Eternal Repose' (De straat van altijddurende rust). There he writes about his decision to move out of the luxurious Grand Hotel des Wagon-lits in the Foreign Legation Quarter into what he calls 'a miserable hotel', Hotel de Pekin in the Outer City, where he claims he 'learned to understand Beijing.'[31] He enjoys the serenity, the view of Chang'an Boulevard, talking with hotel staff and easy access to wandering outside in Chinese streets. And when he goes out on the street, he likes to travel in local cars:

> One might order a more luxurious rickshaw on rubber tyres, but as a rule I thought it better to drive as the Chinese do. So I was bumped and thumped along the Ch'ang-an Boulevard, through the beautiful Ch'ang-an Gate, towards the big artery of the Tartar City, that extremely wide boulevard running north from the Ha-ta Men through the so-called Eastern City (the Tung Ch'eng).[32]

In the descriptions, there is an emphasis on the appreciation of local life, which means

[29] Borel 1910, p. 150; English translation 1912a, pp. 185-186.
[30] Borel 1910, p. 151; English translation 1912a, p. 186.
[31] Borel 1910, p. 61; English translation 1912a, p. 83.
[32] Borel 1910, p. 73; English translation 1912a, p. 96.

serenity and beauty, but also misery in the lack of luxury. In the same vein in chapter VIII 'The Funeral of the Dowager Empress' (De begrafenis der Keizerin-weduwe), Borel also prefers to stand among the local people during the state funeral of the Empress Dowager Cixi in November 1909.

Cixi was the imperial concubine of the Xianfeng Emperor 咸豐帝. When the Emperor died in 1861, Cixi started gaining power in her capacity as regent for her then five-year old son, the Tongzhi Emperor 同治帝. When Tongzhi died in 1875, three year old Guangxu, a nephew of Cixi, was appointed to the throne and Cixi continued exerting her powers. Even when Guangxu was old enough to take up duties, Cixi did not step back. Eventually Guangxu died on 14 November 1908, one day before Cixi died on 15 November 1908. For Guangxu the funeral procession was held in May 1909,[33] while Cixi's took place six months later in November 1909. In Qing times, the period between death and interment in the palace cemetery varied and could be very long.[34] This had to do with the preparations of the many aspects of an imperial funeral, from the official announcement and the issuance of mourning regulations, to the supply of sacrificial offerings and the writing of ritual texts.[35] Of course, the event of two imperial deaths so close together was unprecedented. In the case of Cixi, another complicating factor is that in her honor and to consolidate the powers of successors, funeral regulations were altered to make her funeral equal to that of an emperor.[36]

Indeed, as Borel explains, Cixi's funeral was elaborate and preparations had been going on for months. Even though Borel is entitled to stand among media staff within the city gates, in his capacity as correspondent of the Dutch newspaper *The Telegraph* (De Telegraaf), he prefers to stand among the local people because:

> I considered that the sight of the funeral procession outside the gates would be more interesting and more characteristic, although in this case I should not see the foreign representatives walking with it, nor the Prince regent, for they would not proceed farther than the vicinity of the pavilion near the Tung-Chih Men.[37]

So he weighs the pros and cons, which he shares with his readers. These contrasts between local and foreign appear to be on his mind all the time, and from his reflection we can see that he opts for the local experience most of the time – or minimally, that he wants his readers to conclude so.

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[33] According Griessler, Guangxu was buried in a temporary resting place, to be finally entombed in 1913.
[34] Griessler 1991, p. 11.
[35] For more details, see 'The Imperial Way of Death: Ming and Ch'ing Emperors and Death Ritual' by Evelyn S. Rawski, in *Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China*, edited by James L. Watson and Evelyn S. Rawski. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1988, pp. 228-253.
[36] Griessler 1991, p. 29.
[37] Borel 1910, p. 116; English translation 1912a, p. 145.

An example of Borel's vision of other Westerners as ignorant can be seen in his portrayal of other visitors' lack of understanding of ancient texts when he visits the Temple of Confucius. This visit turns out to be a kind of pilgrimage for Borel, for he is carrying his own publication of the Dutch translation of the Confucian classics, saying:

> Most tourists and even most sinologists pass through this Hall of Classics, admire its architecture and pore over the texts, without the faintest idea of its great importance.[38]

This goes back to Borel's idea that sinologists have wrongly interpreted the classics, and that they have sought more meaning in these texts than there is. And as I discussed in Chapter 3, it was also one of the reasons that he did his own translation. As a result, he must be referring to the spiritual power exuding from the texts, rather than only their importance as literary classics. According to Borel, they contain the wisdom of the past but also that of the future.[39] This gives the strong indication that he reads these texts as going beyond ideas. To him, the contents of the texts are a way of living that is so ingrained in Chinese society that they are more important than just educational material, a literary canon, or mere philosophy.

In Borel's eyes, many of the foreigners are not only ignorant, some also tarnish the image of Western people in China. In chapter XIII, 'Temple of the Five Pagodas' (De Tempel der Vijf Pagodas), Borel complains about this when he goes to an antique store:

> Most, sometimes all, of the objects exhibited in the gloomy, insignificant little shops are either modern or imitations. The objectionable thing to the expert is that each Pekingese dealer thinks it a matter of course that any European or American who calls at his shop is an ignorant fool.[40]

Apparently, antique shops will frequently put fake antique in the shop windows, which dealers expect foreign visitors to buy. This implies that so-called experts fall victim to this practice. As such, Borel portrays himself as different from them, as not being just 'any European or American' who is the easy victim of deceit. At the same time, Borel stereotypes the Chinese dealers, who take advantage of tourists.

But for all his attempts at understanding the local people, it is clear from his writing that the sense of being the white man who is trespassing remains an important component of his overall experience. An example from chapter VI, 'The Lama Temple':

> There I stand by myself, a pale Westerner, strange and detached, gazing at it all, standing by a bronze praying-wheel. They must feel me to be something hostile. I have no business to be there; I am an intruder, a white barbarian; but they do not seem to notice me; and they quietly go their mysterious way.[41]

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[38] Borel 1910, p. 164; English translation 1912a, p. 201.
[39] Borel 1910, p. 165; English translation 1912a, p. 201
[40] Borel 1910, p. 176; English translation 1912a, p. 214.
[41] Borel 1910, p. 87; English translation 1912a, pp. 109-110.

This strong awareness that Borel writes about is but an inner feeling. It is Borel who feels strange and detached and hostile. There is no indication that the people around him feel the same way: the monks continue unperturbedly what they are doing, which he calls 'their mysterious way', reinforcing the picture of their Otherness. There is this conflict again between 'not belonging' (because he is white) but at the same time emphasizing that he is not like one of those 'globe trotters' or tourists, as he says his 'numerous travels have made my soul incurably cosmopolitan.'[42]

But in the end, Borel yields to his own Westerness, because after a month in the Hotel de Pekin, he confesses that he can no longer endure the 'shabby furniture and vile food,' and he moves back to the Grand Hotel des Wagons-lits in the Foreign Legation Quarter, explaining that 'we Westerners are, after all, too much in need of modern comfort (…).'[43]

In the above examples of his forays into local Chinese life, Borel represents himself as an expert, someone from the West who has access to authentic Chinese culture. For his image as writer, however, he maintains that he is writing as an artist, as a poet, in which capacity he is able to perceive what others cannot see. This idea is similar to what Pálsson calls 'an emotive-cognitive capacity that allows ethnographers to understand other people, to go "beyond words",' but which she acknowledges at the same time 'may not satisfy the public demands of the scientific community.'[44] It is clear that Borel is aware of this: he knows that the diplomats and sinologists among his readers will not appreciate his emotive-cognitive capacity, which he claims enables him to understand Chinese people beyond words. Therefore, in anticipation of the critical views by some readers, Borel takes a defensive stance in the last paragraph of chapter X, 'The Veiled Beauty':

> Therefore this book on Beijing is a lie, a pose, a dream, an affectation, a fancy that learned diplomats and sinologists will laugh at; but it is, at the same time, a revelation that Beijing bestowed upon me. Not a word in it is fiction, no view a delusion, but all is luminous clearness to those who can see by the spirit in which shines the light of truth.[45]

Borel is defending the way he translates China, and it is through this declaration that he aims to convince the reader of the validity of his writing. It is his belief that his vision is the right one, even though others will express doubt. He further justifies his writing as being the truth in chapter XVI, 'The Mutual Understanding' (Het wederzijdsch begrijpen), saying that:

> (…) the poetic vision is the only reality, that there is higher reality in the beautiful dream of one poet than in a hundred scientific researches by a hundred 'scholars'. The splendors of Beijing—the Lama Temple, the Yellow Temple, the Temple of Confucius, the Hall of the Classics, the Summer Palace, the Temple of

[42] Borel 1910, p. 25; English translation 1912a, p. 42.
[43] Borel 1910, p. 134; English translation 1912a, p. 167.
[44] Pálsson 1993, p. 24.
[45] Borel 1910, p. 142; English translation 1912a, p. 175.

> Heaven and so many others—were not built by mere scholars but by artists. These artists were at the same time philosophers: and the mysticism symbolized in these splendors escapes most sinologists. But it speaks in intimate terms to the poet, who understands it as the simple language of his Father.[46]

This use of 'Father' seems to be similar to how Borel uses this figure in 'Wu Wei: a fantasy based on Laozi's Philosophy', in the sense of a teacher. It could also be the father figure in his essay 'The Firstborn', about his teacher in Xiamen, whom he claims had become his 'spiritual father'. Either way, it appears to stand for a teacher. The justification here, according to Borel, is that in order to understand something that is created by an artist, one should write about it in the capacity of an artist. This appears to be a romantic notion if we read the words of William Blake in *Vision*: 'Vision or Imagination is a Representation of what Eternally Exists, Really & Unchangeably,'[47] with the truth of poetry referring to a transcendental reality. We can also find this phenomenon in Shelley's *Defence of Poetry*:

> Poetry turns all things to loveliness, it exalts the beauty of that which is most beautiful, and it adds beauty to that which is most deformed (…) All things exist as they are perceived, at least in relation to the percipient.'[48]

In other words, in Borel's view, without being the poet that he is, he could not have given this image of China, which he believes is the 'real China' – and the same thing holds for being knowledgeable about China. Here, he presents two conjoined perspectives—poet and academically trained expert—as giving him a unique access to China, with these identities mutually complementing, and overlapping without clashing.

5.1.3 Cultural and Linguistic Knowledge and Expertise

Borel flaunts his knowledge of Chinese history and culture by offering translations of place names, street names, and passages from Chinese texts. He balances domestication, by giving translations into Dutch and making comparisons and analogies, with foreignization, by giving romanizations of words he calls untranslatable. At the domesticating end of the scale, he provides more or less literal translations of proper names that the reader can understand, such as 'The Street of Eternal Repose' (De Straat van Altijddurende Rust) for Chang'an Street (長安街), 'Coal Hill' (Kolenheuvel) for Mei Shan (煤山), 'Bell Tower' (Klokke-toren) for Zhonglou (鐘樓). Borel also provides references from Western tradition that the reader is familiar with, like the aforementioned reference to Rembrandt and the bridge in chapter XIV, 'The Summer Palace': 'It is not like a bridge for human beings, rather for the Elysian Fields, to be trodden by none but shining angels and beautified souls.'[49] By using a term from Greek mythology, the image is interpreted as a Western cultural element, to help the reader.

[46] Borel 1910, p. 219; English translation 1912a, p. 263.
[47] As quoted in Doorman 2012, p. 104.
[48] Shelley 1840, pp. 81-82.
[49] Borel 1910, p. 195-196; English translation 1912a, p. 237.

At the same time, Borel does a great deal of foreignizing. He retains Chinese terms of concepts and objects in romanization, which he explains at first occurrence in the text and for some of which he adds a footnote or a photo. When traveling through the city for instance, the word *pailou* 牌樓 for a particular kind of arch-shaped gate[50] appears several times, and he provides a photo. In his explanation of the various means of transport in the city, Borel mentions the word *yangche* 洋車 'foreign carts' for a vehicle imported from Japan.[51] In his description of visiting temples, he mentions terms such as *menqian* 門錢 'gate money' for admission fee and *maoqian* 毛錢 for a silver ten cent coin,[52] which visitors must pay if they wish to enter the gate. Borel also explains the Chinese civil examination system and mentions the Chinese terms of the exams on local, provincial and imperial level (*xiucai*, *juren*, *jinshi*).[53] He adds that students had to memorize the *Four Books* and *Five Classics*.[54]

A few longish literary Chinese-Dutch translations also appear in the book. One example are the stone tables in the Hall of Classics, where Borel says he had 'one of the strangest and most profound literary emotions in [his] life,' which was to read 'in the midst of Beijing, in the Hall of Sublime Harmony, the texts that I had translated by lamplight in my room in far-away Java.'[55] Here he provides the translation of the first part of *The Great Learning,* which he reads on one of the stone tables. Although he does not make a specific reference, the translation that follows is a literal quotation from the first volume *Confucius* (pp. 82-83) in the series *Chinese Philosophy Annotated for Non-Sinologists*, albeit without the explanatory notes. Other examples of translation appear in chapter XV, 'The Temple of Heaven' (De Tempel des Hemels), which starts with a passage from the *Book of History* and another of the Jiaqing Emperor's prayer for rain. Through this, Borel claims to present an idea of the emotions that the emperors, or the 'Sons of Heaven', would have had when they visited the Temple of Heaven. He also notes that

> One has to go back to primeval times, to the profoundest esoteric mysticism, if one wishes to understand the symbolism of the original service on the *Tiantan* (the Altar of Heaven).[56]

By giving literary translations, Borel adds another dimension to his travel account, for which, in his view, his qualifications uniquely qualify him. An example is the description of the Bronze Ox as described above, where Borel provides the gist of the poem by the Qianlong Emperor:

[50] Borel 1910, p. 69; English translation 1912a, p. 90.
[51] Borel 1910, p. 72; English translation 1912a, p. 95.
[52] Borel 1910, p. 75; English translation 1912a, p. 98.
[53] Borel 1910, p. 162; English translation 1912a, p. 199.
[54] Borel 1910, p. 163; curiously, this line is omitted in the English translation.
[55] Borel 1910, p. 170; English translation 1912a, p. 206.
[56] Borel 1910, p. 202-203; English translation 1912a, p. 245.

> Then I saw at the back an inscription in delicate Chinese characters, 'Imperial stanzas by the inspired Artist-Emperor Qianlong.' And once more I thought how great an artist was Qianlong. With a god-like gesture he bestowed supreme art on splendid Beijing. Reverentially I read the stanzas. They relate how this bronze ox was cast after the model of Yu of Xia, centuries and centuries old. After he had curbed the giant stream by colossal irrigation works, thereby bringing agriculture to full prosperity, the emperor wrote a hymn of praise to the bronze ox, the sacred animal that protects agriculture, vanquishes dragons and monsters, and shines in the heavenly zodiac.[57]

This adds not only historical information about the Bronze Ox but also the symbolism behind it – which is, for instance, not found in *Round about My Peking Garden*. Little mentions the ox three times in her book,[58] mainly in praise of its life-like image and it being a piece of art. Again, Borel goes beyond the visible. However, in a review of *Daybreak in the East*, fellow sinologist A. G. de Bruin (1874-1947)[59] casts doubt on the accuracy of Borel's rendering of the Chinese poem. According to de Bruin:

> Most of those inscriptions and especially the verses written by the Son of Heaven personally are so obscure, so lofty and so interspersed with historical allusions that even the most eminent scholars including the late Legge, Chavannes, Giles, de Groot could not comprehend them at a glance. (…) No, truly, it seems strange that Mr. Borel can read these inscriptions so fast as if they were ads on the walls of a station. Mr Borel has a quick mind and has many years of experience, but that he could … no, c'est trop fort [it's too much].[60]

It is possible that de Bruin just does not believe that Borel understood everything while he was standing there, even though Borel could have copied the poem and interpreted it later. Yet the fact that de Bruin refers here to a study published in *T'oung Pao* shows that he is of the opinion that translation requires annotation. The article that de Bruin refers to is a study by the British scholar Edward Harper Parker (1849-1926) about a text on a Chinese vase of 538 Chinese characters, which covers 48 pages of annotated translation in *T'oung Pao*.[61] Parker was Professor of Chinese at Victoria University of Manchester at the time.

If we look at the Chinese poem written by the Qianlong Emperor, it appears that there is no mistake in Borel's description: it does indeed refer to Yu the Great and how the ox has been a symbol of taming floods. Whether a Chinese poem is comprehensible 'at a glance' depends on the poem in question. However, the purpose of de Bruin's criticism may lie deeper, in the sense that he says that Borel can never compete with 'the most eminent scholars', and implies that he is not qualified for a then vacant position at Leiden University, to which we turn below. Given Borel's experience in translation, however, it may well have

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[57] Borel 1910, p. 195; English translation 1912a, pp. 236-237.
[58] Little 1905, pp. 21, 25, and 172.
[59] De Bruin published *Introduction to Modern Chinese,* Leiden: Brill, 1914-1917 and had served as Official for Chinese Affairs in the Dutch East Indies.
[60] De Bruin 4 February 1911. Original is in Dutch with a French phrase.
[61] See 'The Ancient Chinese Bowl in the South Kensington Museum' by E. H. Parker, published in *T'oung Pao* (10:4), 1909, pp. 445-494.

been possible for him to give a quick rendering of the gist of a poem without accompanying notes. After all, the original purpose of *Daybreak in the East* is to offer an accessible text for general readers, who would not need an in-depth analysis of ancient texts.

5.1.4 References to Books and Other Experts

Another method in which Borel tries to make his work more convincing is citing works about China to support his arguments. Among the many authors that he cites, it appears that not all had knowledge of the Chinese language or had published academic writing about China. Borel quotes from first-hand reports by authors, including William Alexander Parsons Martin (1827-1916) and Putnam Weale (Pseudo of Bertram Lenox Simpson, 1877-1930). But he also quotes from works for the style of writing that conveys the same vision that he has of China, e.g. in a footnote to the last chapter 'Mutual Understanding', Borel praises the French novelist and naval officer Pierre Loti (Pseudo of Julian Viaud, 1850-1923) for his 'beautiful and poetic description of the invasion of the Forbidden City and the looting of Beijing.' Borel notes that in spite of grave errors in descriptions because of a lack of knowledge of Chinese, Loti's 'rendering of the desecration of the mysterious city is very striking.'[62]

Borel appears to invoke the references as support, but there is no evidence that he is influenced by what he reads. I found no direct traces in his representations of China, even though a title such as *The Awakening of China* by Martin seems to indicate similarities with *Daybreak in the East*. Yet the set-up of the work is completely different. The work by Martin starts with a geographical overview of China, which is an imaginary journey through all the provinces, followed by an historical overview from the very beginning of Chinese civilization to finally his view on the ongoing reforms in China. Most of Borel's descriptions are about sights in the Chinese capital, although his writing about the reforms is not limited to Beijing but also covers the rest of China. Of course Martin's vision is also shaped by his being a missionary, and he was looking forward 'with confidence to a time when China shall be found in the brotherhood of Christian nations.'[63] Martin was in Beijing during the Boxer Uprising, and must have personally experienced the anti-foreign sentiments on the part of the Chinese. He also writes about China as being a semi-civilized or uncivilized nation, an idea which Borel rejects, as I will discuss below. An effect of Martin's work on Borel, if any, could be that Borel attempts to give his own view of China, to set himself apart from Martin. For example, although not directed at Martin personally, Borel makes a point of accusing Western nations of barbarian behavior: 'I use the words 'barbarians' and 'vandals' because,

[62] Borel 1910, p. 223; English translation 1912, p. 267. Earlier Borel was dubbed 'Loti of the North' (ce Loti du Nord), in an announcement of the *Bibliothèque Universelle* under 'Arts and Sciences' (Kunst en wetenschappen) of the *General Commerce Newspaper*. Amsterdam, 02-09-1908. Accessed on Delpher on 03-11-2015, http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010997295:mpeg21:a0134

[63] Martin 1907, p. x. For more on W. A. P. Martin, see 'Martin and Fryer: Trimming the Lamps' in *Western Advisers in China: To Change China, 1620-1960* by Jonathan D. Spence. Harmondsworth, Eng.; New York: Penguin Books. 1980, pp. 129-160.

as a servant of holy art, I cannot characterize with any other word the scandalous destruction of the Yuan Ming Yuan palace by Lord Elgin in 1860 and the looting of Beijing in 1900.'[64] From this, it appears that Borel calls for Western nations to look at their own atrocious acts before condemning China for being uncivilized.

To return to Borel's citation of other people's works: one of his purposes was to make his descriptions more accurate, based on first-hand reports by writers who had personal experience in China. For example when he explains how isolated foreigners live behind the walls of the Legation Quarter:

> Within these walls, behind these walls, on all sides surrounded by walls, with soldiers and guns between them, one finds invisible, concealed, the European, American, and Japanese ambassadors. Yes, exactly as Putnam Weale expressed it so typically in "*The Reshaping of the Far East"* and "*Indiscreet Letters from Peking",* &c., "in their Ghetto-like fortresses." No other word is so appropriate or defines the situation so correctly and concisely.[65]

Borel reinforces this concept of isolation by repeating the word 'walls' and by adding Weale's term 'ghetto'. He stresses that because of this isolation, foreigners in the capital are not aware of what is going on, at the time but also in the past.

Since Borel was not in Beijing in 1900, he can only write about the events based on witness accounts:

> (...) if one reads reliable books about it by people who went through the siege of the Legation (such as for instance Martin's *The Siege of Peking* or especially Putnam Weale's "*Indiscreet Letters from Peking*"), one is amazed that the European Legations at that time knew so little of what was going on in their immediate neighborhood, in and about the city (…),[66]

This indicates that the purpose of citing these works is to convince the reader of the ignorance of foreigners in the European Legations in Beijing, and of the fact that they made no attempt to understand local life. All throughout *Daybreak in the East* one finds mention of books that Borel read or people that he spoke to, but mostly in chapters VII, 'Reform in China' (De hervorming in China), and XVI 'Mutual Understanding'. By writing about the progress that is seen in education and building schools, the government's campaigns against opium and footbinding, and the status of women and at the same time noting that there are major problems that concern finance (tax) and corruption, Borel shows knowledge of what is going on in China. In this way, he hopes the reader will better understand the Chinese people and social progress in China. Based on this, Borel explains that the Chinese are human, selfless and patriotic - as long as you treat them as equals, without contempt.

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[64] Borel 1910, p. 224; English translation 1912a, p. 268.

[65] Borel 1910, p. 24; English translation 1912a, p. 41. Other referrals to Putnam Weale are on pp. 49, 52, and 53.

[66] Borel 1910, p. 49; English translation 1912a, p. 68. Borel mentions Martin once more on p. 110.

> What so many European merchants and even consuls and diplomats in China contend, that a Chinese is incapable of unselfish feelings from which he cannot derive any material profit, is absolutely false. Those who say this, probably in good faith, have never spoken intimately to an educated modern Chinese, as man to man, discarding all prejudice about differences in faith and race. It is very difficult indeed, and it takes a long time—sometimes years and years, before a European and a Chinese converse without suspicion or restraint.[67]

Again, Borel opposes the views of other foreigners. He tries to change the idea that many Europeans have of Chinese people, although he admits it is difficult to remove the existing barriers. Hence, it appears as if Borel presents himself as an intermediary between two cultures, because he understands both sides.

5.1.5 Reception

Reviews show that Borel's book garnered both positive and negative receptions. It is received favorably in particular for the insight into contemporary events in China; it is criticized by some readers for the writing style. Reviewer Joh. G. R. for *Elsevier Monthly* (Elsevier Maandschrift) expresses irritation over the (over)enthusiasm that emanates from the book. Although it is good to be enthusiastic, he warns of the danger of exaggeration: 'That which the writer observed in careful attention loses much of its value when it lacks a simple style and fails to give the reader a chance for digestion.'[68] However, further down, he also notes that it is good that Borel tries

> to encourage readers to develop an interest in Beijing and the Chinese people, strange as they may seem. For those who are open to his ideas, this book shall offer a pleasant and interesting reading. It proved so for the writer of this essay too, albeit for a different reason because he lived in Beijing for a long time and learned to love the place and developed an interest in what has been happening in China recently.'[69]

Moreover, the reviewer confirms that he agrees with the contents of the last chapter, in particular the idea of an 'internal power', found in Chinese wisdom and philosophy that sustained China through the ages, and he quotes an entire paragraph from it. According to this view, China is the only one that remains of all the great empires of antiquity.

An English book review by American ethnologist William Churchill (1859-1920), published in the *Bulletin of the American Geographical Society* in 1915, starts favorably: 'This work is of deeper value than the mere travel record which is its first attraction.' Although Churchill provides the Dutch publication details of *Het Daghet in den Oosten,* he must have read the English translation. Churchill considers the theme of 'the East for the Oriental' and writes that 'Truly competent observers of the life of Asia are agreed that Asia must ever remain Oriental, its culture must continue a thing apart.' This indicates agreement with Borel who believed in the inward strengthening of China through wisdom and philosophy, a

[67] Borel 1910, p. 107; English translation 1912a, pp. 132-133.
[68] G. R. 1911, p. 388.
[69] Ibid, p. 389.

phenomenon that he calls 'The East for the East'. This implies that ultimately 'The East' will remain 'the East' without intrusion by 'the West'. What Churchill adds here is his own observation of the development of Japan and 'its unconcealed zeal for the hegemony of the Far East.' Eventually Churchill concludes his review by noting that Borel sees 'the strong groundwork of the ancestral morality of the Chinese peoples and he sees that it has endured through many superficial changes to a continuance of its ultimate triumph.'[70]

Besides the positive reception of *Daybreak in the East*, Borel is also criticized for his complacency with regard to his knowledge on China. In the period that Borel is in the Chinese capital, he sends letters to newspapers in the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies for publication. Some of the letters are about his journeys by ship and train, and contain descriptions of other places such as Shanghai, Nanjing and Hankou.[71] But there are also letters which are reprinted in *Daybreak in the East*, including the one about the funeral of Cixi.[72] An anonymous reaction to one such letter appears in *The News of the Day for the Dutch East Indies* of 22 Nov 1909:

> "Me! I knew the China of fifteen years ago and I knew it well, if I may say so." Henri Borel is very modest in a letter from China. To know China, that vast nation with hundreds of millions of people, the China that in many aspects is still so obscure. He not only knew it but he knew it well! Didn't Socrates say: the only thing I know is that I know nothing? But Socrates was a sage.[73]

Besides sarcasm about Borel's smugness, there is also doubt about whether it is possible to really know China. The same type of irritation is displayed by a reporter who signs 'Carlo', but whose identity I have not been able to determine. After attending a talk by Borel on 'Chinese Painting' (Chineesche Schilderkunst) in December 1910, Carlo reports on how disappointing it was, because he found Borel's 'pedantic, patronizing tone irritating.' Carlo is not receptive to the symbolism of the paintings that Borel introduced:

> The legends about painters which Mr. Borel spoke about, their works that looked so real that they had to omit the eyes of the animals in the image lest the painting walked away, seem to us the argument for our view: Oriental artists tried primarily to achieve likeness just like their western counterparts. The fact that they succeeded only partially and only with some themes is a lack of knowledge on their part and their

[70] Churchill 1915, p. 710.

[71] See for example the letter dated Nanjing 21 December 1909 'From Beijing to Shanghai (overland) II. Jiujiang-Nanjing' (Van Peking naar Shanghai (Over land) II. Kiukiang-Nanking.) in *Batavian Newspaper* of 12 January 1910. Accessed on Delpher on 03-11-2015, http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:011035486:mpeg21:a0058 See also 'From Beijing to Shanghai (overland) III. (end)' (Van Peking naar Shanghai (Over land) III. (Slot.)) in *Batavian Newspaper* of 27 January 1910. Accessed on Delpher on 03-11-2015, http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:011035499:mpeg21:a0070

[72] See 'The Funeral of the Empress Dowager' (De uitvaart der keizerin-moeder) in *The Telegraph* of 26 November 1909, which contains the first part of the letter about the funeral of Cixi. Accessed on Delpher on 03-11-2015, http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:110559166:mpeg21:a0103

[73] Anonymous 22 November 1909. It must have been the article 'From Surabaya to Beijing' (Van Soerabaia naar Peking) published in the *Batavian Newspaper* of 9 November 1909 where Borel boasts of knowing China. Accessed on Delpher on 03-11-2015, http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:011035382:mpeg21:a0072

backwardness as an inferior race.[74]

The report shows that there were expectations of Borel in terms of his knowledge of Chinese art, but the way he conveys Chinese culture was pedantic, and so his audience fails to show appreciation. Whether or not provocative on purpose, Carlo is straightforward in his ideas about Asia, for he adds that it was fashionable to think that all were equal, so he was skeptical about Chinese art, or art in Asia in general. The remarks by Carlo are extremely racist, he puts the 'Oriental' squarely opposite Western artists and the talk by Borel clearly did not help to change his view: Carlo persists in regarding them as inferior.

Based on the above, it shows in the translation of China, Borel has his own style of 'rendering the foreign familiar and at the same time preserving its very foreignness', in the words of Crapanzano. This can be found in what I call the several layers of description, from the obvious to the invisible. This together with the various 'persuasive devices', in particular the attempt to become closer involved into the local scene and inclusion of his own partial translations, Borel delved deep into the source culture. The same in-depth knowledge should in Borel's view also be expected of those who are sent to work in China: they should know the Chinese language and culture. But this is not (yet) the case, and so he thinks it is wrong that 'Europe regarded each diplomat or consul who has visited China an expert.'[75] Eventually, the trip to Beijing and the overall positive response to his book results in an over-confident attitude posing as a 'connoisseur of the Orient', and leads to an inclination to engage in conflict with others, both in Surabaya and at Leiden University, which will be discussed in the next sections. I will examine how this newly found sense of being an expert led him to criticize his superiors in the Dutch East Indies, while at the same time he condemns Leiden University's sinological tradition and proposes new directions for the study of Chinese at Leiden.

5.2 Over-Confidence

The revolution in China and the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911 confirm Borel's expectations of change in China. Among the many factors that led up to the fall of the Qing, Borel is mostly concerned with education and the efforts to teach Mandarin Chinese at schools. In connection with this, Borel tells an anecdote of a young pupil in the Dutch East Indies to stress the need for education of the Chinese people. This young pupil explains in his essay that 'small Japan could have defeated big China' because the Japanese are educated.[76] Japanese victory refers to the result of the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895, which broke out following a conflict between China and Japan over supremacy in Korea. China regarded Korea as a tributary for many centuries and Korea accepted this role. Yet, when Japan tried

[74] Carlo 14 December 1910.
[75] Borel 1913, p. 15.
[76] Borel 1910, pp. 5-6; English translation 1912a, p. 16.

to gain a foothold there, China feared that Korea would become 'independent'. Finally the conflict was resolved in the 'Treaty of Shimonoseki' in April 1895, which had China recognize independence of Korea, cede the Liaodong Peninsula and Taiwan to Japan and pay war indemnity to Japan.[77]

To return to Borel's concern with changes in China, besides the importance of education, he stresses the teaching of Mandarin Chinese 'which has become the greatest good of modern China, because of all means it is the only one, the saving measure by which unity of State and nation can be accomplished.'[78] Previously, he had observed nationalist views among Chinese in Surabaya, where he resumes his post as Official for Chinese Affairs upon his return from Beijing early 1910.

As Borel notes in the introduction of *Daybreak in the East*, the aim of the book is 'besides giving artistic impressions of Beijing, [also] to convey a foreboding of the significance for China and for the whole world of the reform caused by the Pan-Chinese movement.'[79] For Borel, it is through the understanding of Eastern wisdom and intuition, that the idea of 'the East for the East'[80] emerges. In the period prior to his departure for China, Borel had noticed an increasing interest in Chinese politics among the Chinese in the Dutch East Indies and Singapore, which he thought was a cause for vigilance:

> Europe is not yet immediately threatened by the Yellow Peril of bayonets, airships, and armored cruisers; but there is the much greater, much stronger—because spiritual and mystical—danger of the Yellow idea; indestructible and irresistible like all spiritual forces in the history of the universe, mightier than the thickest armor-plates, more far-reaching than the monsters of [cannon manufacturers] Krupp and Creusot. One can level to the ground by heavy artillery any armored fort, destroy *Dreadnoughts* by mines and torpedoes, but the spiritual idea fermenting among hundreds of millions cannot be exterminated by material weapons.[81]

According to Borel, China represents a danger to Europe, but not in the military sense. Rather a spiritual and mystical danger, because China's philosophy and ethics will render it stronger than the West. He sees what he calls 'the complete mental revolution' and refers to the meaningful symbol of rebuilding temples into schools: 'Idols are removed from the temples: modern science walks in.'[82] This mental revolution (not a material revolution) is also referred to in chapter XII, 'The Temple of Confucius and the Hall of the Classics' (De Tempel van Confucius en de Hal der Klassieken), where he claims for instance, that the wisdom of Confucius:

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[77] Spence 1990, pp. 222-223.
[78] Borel 1910, pp. 7-8; English translation 1912a, p. 18.
[79] Borel 1910, p. 4; English translation 1912a, p. 15.
[80] Borel 1910, pp. 4-5; English translation 1912a, p. 14.
[81] Borel 1910, p. 4; English translation 1912a, pp. 14-15.
[82] Borel 1910, pp. 7-8; English translation 1912a, p. 19.

> in its essence, divested of what is temporal and perishable, will be treasured by the Chinese people as its indestructible and highest good. Such will also be the case with the sublime literature, the fair form in which this wisdom is cast. This will remain the highest good for modern reformed China, not the power given by money, battleships and guns. In the ages that will dawn China will be able to take the lead of the great civilised world-powers by spiritual, but not by physical, force.[83]

Hence in order to understand the future of China, the reader should know about Chinese philosophy and wisdom. Borel claims that Europeans are ignorant of this, but that what is happening in China 'is merely the outward symptom of a single inward idea arising in Eastern Asia', and that 'any appreciation of the Young Chinese movement must start from the point of view that the idea "the East for the East" is essentially spiritual, even mystical, and will not at all carry with it only the material movements of economical and trading interests.'[84]

This identification of a failure to interpret what lay behind the external signs, coupled with a conviction that the West should understand the East 'from within,' Borel proceeded to apply to his work as an Official for Chinese Affairs in Surabaya. He was involved in and aware of what was going on within the Chinese community, in particular education. As Ming Govaars writes

> Borel found himself in a unique position because of his (government-approved) patronage of the Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan. Through his knowledge of both Mandarin and the southern Chinese dialects he could mingle freely with the Chinese and was well-informed on the issues of importance to them. His memoranda and missives are of great interest and include many suggestions for government policy during the decisive years of the Chinese movement.[85]

Among Borel's suggestions for government policy is teaching Mandarin Chinese to Chinese people in the Dutch East Indies. The reason for this is, as he explains in his introduction to *Daybreak in the East*:

> Because—and here lies the central importance of the Chinese education question, wherever there are Chinese settlements—because the awakened national sentiment has discerned that unity of language is indispensable to national unity.'[86]

But as Govaars writes, 'Borel's idea of Dutch schools established for the Chinese at which several hours of instruction were dedicated to Mandarin was not even given serious consideration.'[87] In sum, based on his understanding of what is going on among the Chinese, Borel made suggestions to Dutch authorities, but these were ignored.

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[83] Borel 1910, p. 161; English translation 1912a, p. 198.
[84] Borel 1910, p. 4; English translation 1912a, p. 15.
[85] Govaars 2005, p. 78.
[86] Borel 1910, p. 7. English translation 1912a, p. 18. The English version is slightly different from the Dutch, which actually reads 'and here lies the central importance of the Chinese education question *in our colonies*.' (my italics)
[87] Govaars 2005, p. 80.

Then, in February 1912, over Chinese New Year, riots among Chinese in Batavia and Surabaya broke out. In Batavia this appeared to be because of the prohibition of flying the Republican flag, while in Surabaya it was because of the prohibition of fireworks to celebrate Chinese New Year. While the situation in Batavia soon returned to normal, the chaos in Surabaya continued for much longer. Many Chinese were arrested and a government investigation was started.[88] According to reports, police repressed the rebels with force and violence and entered the homes of Chinese people without warrant. A group of coolies avenged themselves by storming the home of a Chinese officer, while others locked up the chief superintendent. In protest, Chinese trade houses shut down for many days. Borel opined that the root of the problem was the ignorance of the Dutch authorities of what was going on in the Chinese community, and that although he tried to inform them, his advice was not taken into consideration.

In the aftermath, Johan Einthoven (1862-1913) in his capacity of Resident of Surabaya, went to Buitenzorg, now known as Bogor, on West Java in early March 1912. The purpose of the trip was to brief the Governor-General about the unrest, because Einthoven thought telegrams and written accounts were insufficient. From his letter of 9 October 1912, it appears that Einthoven was preparing for the meeting about the riots on 3 March and eventually filed a report, dated 1-4 March 1912.[89] In this report, which he prepared with the help of the Assistant Resident and Chinese Officers, he covers up the actual course of events to protect the police against public scandal.[90] Clearly, Einthoven thought he and his officials were better informed than Borel, so that the latter need not be consulted nor shown the report about the riots. According to Einthoven, Borel told him that he had the intention to write his own version of events, and Einthoven replied that this was unnecessary, but that if Borel was going to do it, he should show it to Einthoven first. Three weeks later, on 23 March Borel submits his version of events in a report directly to the Director of Justice, without having shown it to Einthoven or sending him a copy. Reporting to the Director of Justice in itself was correct, but according to regulations, a copy should have been sent to Einthoven.

Documents in the National Archives show that several issues led to Borel's decision to by-pass Einthoven.[91] Apparently, the work relation between Einthoven and Borel was problematic from the start. Borel was appointed at Surabaya in the summer of 1909, just before he departed for Beijing and as Einthoven recalls, during that first meeting he had to

[88] For more details, see 'Official report about the Chinese riots in Batavia and Surabaya' (Officieel relaas van de Chineesche opstootjes te Batavia en Soerabaja), in *Colonial Magazine*, 1912-01-II, p. 601.

[89] NA. NL-HaNA, Koloniën/Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 148.

[90] In 'The Dirty Work of Empire: Modern Policing and Public Order in Surabaya: 1911-1919', Marieke Bloembergen explains: 'Although a lie, the resident's declaration was understandable: it would have been hard to imagine a more humiliating, damaging event for the colonial powers than the detention of the chief superintendent by local "rebels", and therefore the story had to be covered up.' Bloembergen 2007, pp. 138-139.

[91] NA, NL-HaNA, Koloniën/Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51.

relay a warning to Borel from the Government Secretary, that Borel should keep his promise to refrain from publishing any 'offensive writing in newspapers'.[92] According to Einthoven, Borel denied any 'offensive writing' or any promise made. In the period after Borel returned from Beijing to Surabaya, there was little communication between Borel and Einthoven. Both appear to have borne grudges: Borel complains that Einthoven never consults or informs him of events or issues concerning Chinese people, while Einthoven complains that Borel often reports directly to the Director of Justice or the Government without informing him first.

Of course, Einthoven's reliance on the Assistant Resident and the Chinese Officers, made Borel (feel) redundant. In fact, the position of 'Official for Chinese Affairs' was generally undervalued, and since Residents were used to working with Chinese Officers they did not know how to or were reluctant to involve Dutch advisors, which is what Fromberg also wrote in his article 'The Chinese Movement and the *Colonial Magazine'* (Chineesche beweging en het "Koloniaal Tijdschrift") dated 8 August 1912:

> Officials for Chinese Affairs confirmed that the Statute Book of the Dutch East Indies 1896, no. 96, which set out their scope of work remained 'a dead letter.' After all, their services were seldom used nor made to good use.[93]

This indicates that not only Borel's advice was not taken into consideration, but others experienced the same, although Borel was probably only one of the few who made an attempt to assert his professional authority. Later, in a letter of 15 November 1912 to the Director of Justice, Borel defends himself in response to accusations that he is unreliable and that he sympathizes with the Chinese movement in excess. In Borel's view the Resident ignores him, and Borel argues that the archives of his predecessor led him to believe that in the past too there was this misunderstanding that Officials for Chinese Affairs could be ignored when it came to Chinese affairs in Surabaya.[94] Given that these Dutch Officials for Chinese Affairs were highly educated people who had gone through a rigid selection process and professional training, it must have been frustrating and demoralizing for someone like Borel to be ignored. As for sympathy with the Chinese movement, Borel agrees that he does sympathize but not to excess.

It is also possible that Einthoven felt he could not trust Borel and Borel's report on the Chinese riots was the final straw.[95] A few months earlier there had been a similar incident,

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[92] Ibid.

[93] See Fromberg 1926, pp. 475-490.

[94] NA. NL-HaNA, Koloniën/Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51.

[95] It is likely that the sudden death of Assistant Resident Hermanus Johannes Waleson (1862-1912) also had an impact on Einthoven. Waleson, who died of heart failure on 5 March 1912, was said to have been someone 'who was clearheaded, strong willed and his actions presented a powerful individuality', see death announcement 'Striking Bereavement' (Treffend sterfgeval) in *The News of the Day for the Dutch East Indies* of 6 March 1912. Accessed on Delpher on 03-11-2015,

when Borel was not informed of the gondola procession, held in honor of the Governor-General. In Borel's view, he should have been asked to monitor the preparations so that he could have advised against inappropriate texts displayed on the gondolas and the presence of prostitutes there. It is not clear how Borel got hold of the Chinese text of rhyming couplets (*duilian* 對聯) displayed on the gondolas, nor why he showed his translation of these texts at the reception the same day to the Governor-General without informing Einthoven. According to Borel, he obtained the texts at a late hour and there was not enough time to show them to Einthoven (although he did give them to him later), but Einthoven argues that Borel could never have done the translations so quickly and that Borel had ignored Einthoven on purpose to retaliate for not having been invited to the dinner party on 5 October at the residency.

According to the letter of 9 October 1912 quoted above, Einthoven had already advised the Government by letter of 8 April to dismiss Borel from service for his misconduct in contributing to newspaper reports on the riots, and for filing his report without notifying Einthoven. Apparently the Government did not find the arguments offered by Einthoven sufficient to execute immediate dismissal, and instead they arranged for Borel to be transferred to Makassar. It seems this was done as a disciplinary measure, but perhaps also because it was the only way to solve the conflict with Einthoven. When in October, Einthoven again urged the Government to dismiss Borel, Einthoven was promoted to the post of Director of the Department of Home Affairs. At the same time as a promotion, this was arguably a tacid acknowledgement that there was something wrong with the functioning of the Official for Chinese Affairs in Surabaya, and as such, Einthoven's transfer indicated that it was not only Borel as an individual who was responsible for what happened between him and Einthoven.

One of the local newspapers in the Dutch East Indies that discusses the transfer of Borel claims that Borel is 'the victim of his truthfulness,'[96] and that Borel's transfer was:

> for political reasons, since it is not good for a government official who deals with an important issue that his advisor is on the side of the people rather than the government; hence it was imperative that Borel left Surabaya, regardless of whether the Resident stayed or not.[97]

As mentioned above, there was also the belief that Borel sympathized with the Chinese movement, and therefore they thought that he was unable to judge objectively. A later article also touches on the issue of trust, and notes that Einthoven had allegedly complained about Borel that 'it was difficult to know if he could trust the official as he seldom expressed positive views and he did not provide constructive advice, whereas his criticism was always

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http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010135617:mpeg21:a0041

[96] Anonymous 5 June 1912.

[97] Anonymous 5 July 1912.

sharp and over the top.'[98]

In an interview published in *The Telegraph*, Henri van Kol (1852-1925), former hydraulic engineer in the East Indies and former socialist member of parliament in The Hague, explains that it is difficult to find out what had happened exactly during and after the riots, but knowing both men, he states that he is confident that Einthoven is reliable and trustworthy, whereas:

> Mr. Borel is a somewhat troublesome and sensitive person who undoubtedly was more knowledgeable about Chinese affairs than the Resident, but we should not forget, that the Resident had to consider the political side of the issue.[99]

Given that Borel is transferred to Makassar, it can be concluded that Borel's quest for justice and equality, recognition and authority fails at the time. Yet, Borel's actions did have some effect later on. One of the changes, as can be read in the *Encyclopedia of the Dutch East Indies* under the entry 'Official for Chinese Affairs' is the creation of an office for Chinese affairs in Batavia. The purpose of this office is to act as a central point for dissemination of information and supervision over all.[100] In brackets it is added that this office, formerly under the Department of Justice, had already been transferred to that of Home Affairs. According to the list of authors, Borel contributed to this edition of the encyclopedia and he is the only one with the title of 'former Official for Chinese Affairs'. It is likely that he wrote the entry on Chinese affairs in the Dutch East Indies. According to newspaper reports, back in 1913 Willem Jacob Oudendijk (1874-1953) was called in to head the office, because he had diplomatic experience in Beijing. However, some people questioned his qualification, because he had no experience in colonial government of the Dutch East Indies.

After moving to Makassar, Borel fulfilled the requirement of seven years' service to be entitled to nine months' leave. Upon return to the Netherlands in early 1913, Borel explains in articles and talks about the situation in China and the Dutch East Indies in an attempt to justify his reasoning behind his actions in Surabaya. In his lecture on the Chinese movement in the Dutch East Indies held in April 1913 at the Indies Association, he stresses that 'Dutch rule over the Indo-Chinese should be based on wisdom and justice,'[101] implying this was not the case back then. About a decade later, on 11 September 1923, an article appears in *The Fatherland* about corruption on Java, to which Borel responds a day later, expressing satisfaction over the fact that scandals are no longer covered up:

> (…) when I served as Advisor for Chinese Affairs—the Government was some kind of fetish, which had to remain holy at all cost, worse still: an honest, truth-loving official who divulged scandals was regarded as

[98] Anonymous 11 November 1912.
[99] LM. Document in the file 'House of Representatives' (Tweede Kamer), in the Borel Archives.
[100] Paulus 1917, p. 478.
[101] Anonymous 16 April 1913.

troublesome and was transferred or forced to resign.[102]

Thus, Borel's colonial career ends in disillusion, with his authority unrecognized. Perhaps it was also frustrating to see his colleagues, the ones who were once his classmates, steadily get promoted to posts at more important locations. Van Wettum is appointed Official for Chinese Affairs in Batavia on 17 August 1909. When he dies of dysentery almost five years later,[103] Ezerman succeeds him on 1 October 1914.[104]

Borel's departure from the Dutch East Indies is mentioned in the newspaper, which is telling of his image there. Appreciation by the Chinese is shown in the fact that Borel is treated to a farewell dinner in Surabaya by the Chinese Association of Commerce (Chineesche Handelsvereeniging) and the Soe Po Sia.[105] This is in great contrast with how his Dutch colleagues see Borel's departure:

Uitgeleide.

Met het Stoomschip *Tawaboro* zal heden-middag met verlof naar Nederland vertrekken, de Heer Henri Borel, Ambtenaar voor Chineesche Zaken.

Wij hooren dat dit vertrek niet onopgemerkt zal voorbijgaan. Eene betooging is voorbereid, die zich passend zal aansluiten aan de „bestrijding" welke de Heer Borel in de laatste maanden mocht ondervinden van de zijde dergenen die hij onaangename waarheden had gezegd, dan wel van hunne woordvoerders.

Een zóór hooggeplaatst ambtenaar van het Departement B. B. zal den Heer Borel het Heilige Kruis na-houden; een aantal personen zal hem uitjouwen, — achter zijn rug natuurlijk, en aan zulke lui is in Indië nooit gebrek, — terwijl de Heer J. E. Stokvis, Hoofdredacteur van de *Locomotief*, naar wij vernemen in hoogst eigen persoon den geurigen inhoud zal behandelen van het kistje, door onzen teekenaar voldoende duidelijk aangegeven.

Het zal een demonstratie zijn, de geschiedenis der laatste maanden waardig.

'Farewell' (Uitgeleide), *The News of the Day for East Indies.* Batavia, 16-01-1913. Accessed on Delpher on 29-10-2015, http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010167294:mpeg21:a0015

[102] Borel 12 September 1923.
[103] See obituary in *The News of the Day for the Dutch East Indies* of 8 August 1914.
[104] *Government Almanac for the Dutch East Indies,* 1910.
[105] Anonymous 10 January 1913.

Borel is portrayed in this sketch fleeing the stairs to board the ship, with Dutch people at the quay jeering at him. The accompanying text explains that the person waiving the holy cross meaning 'good riddance' (het heilige kruis nageven) represents the Director of Home Affairs (i.e. Einthoven), another person who is carrying a box with the words 'telor boesoek' (rotten eggs) depicts the editor of the *Locomotive* (i.e. J. E. Stokvis),[106] and then there are some other people who have come simply to hoot.[107]

It seems fair to say that Borel's return to the Netherlands early 1913 is a turning point in his life. As an obituary for Borel would later aptly state: 'Henri Borel was not a man—or perhaps not a human being—to work happily as a government official. He felt independent and detected things that others preferred to keep hidden (...).'[108] Moreover, the obituary continues, for Borel in connection with his friend Karel Wijbrands (1863-1929), director and chief editor of *The News of the Day for the Dutch East Indies*, it was 'this merciless action against and detection of injustice, chaos and corruption which united these two critical minds.'[109] Back in the Netherlands, Borel writes articles on a wide range of topics, many about China, which continues to fascinate him, in addition to his critical reviews of drama performances as editor of the *Fatherland*.

5.3 Criticizing Dutch Sinology

The China experience leads Borel to publish his ideas on how to improve mutual understanding between East and West. In his view the West should do more to understand China, and he thinks sinology has a responsibility to help. He stresses the importance of the study of contemporary China, and not only ancient China. With these ideas he starts criticizing Dutch sinology, which rouses anger but also causes change at Leiden University. Borel sets out these ideas in two of his most important articles on Dutch sinology: 'New Directions of Dutch Sinology' (De nieuwe banen der sinologie), and 'Dutch Sinology' (De Nederlandsche sinologie) which is a review of de Groot's *The Religious System of China*. In hindsight, it is possible that the ultimate aim of Borel to study Mandarin and publish about sinology is to become eligible for the Chair of Chinese at the University of Leiden, which becomes vacant when de Groot leaves for Berlin in 1912. The announcement that de Groot accepts the appointment at the University of Berlin is published in several newspapers in the autumn of 1911.[110] We know that Borel has an interest in the Chair at Leiden University. In

[106] For details about the case Van Geuns vs Stokvis, see 'The Nasty Side of Journalism in the East Indies' (De ploertigheid in de Indische journalistiek) in the *New Rotterdam Newspaper* (Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant) of 24 December 1912, it is about conflicting reports in the newspapers about the Surabaya riots. Accessed on Delpher on 03-11-2015, http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010032572:mpeg21:a0172

[107] Anonymous 16 January 1913.

[108] Anonymous 31 August 1933b.

[109] Ibid.

[110] See announcement 'Prof. J. J. M. de Groot' in *The Telegraph* of 3 November 1911 (which says de Groot will depart at Christmas), accessed on Delpher on 03-11-2015, http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:110560974:mpeg21:a0132 See also 'Prof. de Groot' in *The News of the*

'Henri Borel at Sixty', where he looks back on his career, he writes:

> Due to circumstances which had nothing to do with my knowledge of Chinese, I was not given a chance to devote myself completely to the study of Chinese upon my return from the Indies, and why not be honest about it, this was the greatest disappointment of my life. I was destined for it. It would have been the true fulfillment of my life. What I do now, I do with all my heart, but I know it was not my destiny.'[111]

Back then the expression 'to devote myself to the study of Chinese' stands for an appointment at Leiden University. De Bruin uses the same expression and he was vying for the same position too.[112] The writer of the short news item 'Professor Borel' in *News for the Day of Dutch East Indies* of 6 January 1912, cites the writer Johan de Meester (1860-1931) saying that Borel is a potential candidate. De Meester wonders if Borel's article 'New Directions of Sinology' is a public letter of application,[113] but another newspaper claims that Borel has denied this.[114] The efforts of Borel to show his competence for the Chair in Leiden fail, but there is an obvious break with tradition of training students for an appointment in the Dutch East Indies. Eventually J. J. L. Duyvendak (1889-1954) who had worked as an interpreter in Beijing and not in the Dutch East Indies, was appointed in 1919. Below I will set out what Borel's ideas were, how people responded and what the consequences for Borel were.

Borel's early ideas about sinology can be found in chapter XVI, 'Mutual Understanding', of *Daybreak in the East*, Borel feels particularly strong about how much more should be done for a better understanding between Chinese and Western people. Borel condemns England for having introduced opium, 'the pernicious drug that would poison and enervate the whole Chinese nation.'[115] In the case of the Boxer Uprising, Borel condemns the violation by Western soldiers of the profound mystery of the Forbidden City.[116] In Borel's view, hatred of foreigners in China is caused by Western aggression, but also by a lack of mutual understanding. Moreover, he wrote 'The Chinese are now trying to assimilate Western ideas and Western science. An astonishing number of works on European economics, sociology, philosophy, are now being translated into Chinese and read in China.'[117]

Hence, in his view the Chinese were doing their part, and now it was time for the West

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Day for the Dutch East Indies of 11 October 1911, accessed on 03-11-2015, http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010136141:mpeg21:a0011 See also 'Prof. de Groot' in the *New Rotterdam Newspaper* of 10 September 1911, accessed on Delpher on 03-11-2015, http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010031761:mpeg21:a0089

[111] Borel 23 November 1929.

[112] More details can be found in *An Unclarified Matter and an Angry Professor* (Een onopgehelderd geval en een verbolgen hoogleeraar) by A. G. de Bruin, published in 1920.

[113] Anonymous 6 January 1912.

[114] Anonymous 16 January 1912.

[115] Borel 1910, p. 224; English translation 1912a, pp. 268-269.

[116] Borel 1910, p. 227; English translation 1912a, p. 273.

[117] Borel 1910, p. 226; English translation 1912a, p. 270.

to try and understand China. His conclusion, in the final paragraph of *Daybreak in the East*:

> The Westerner must try to get to the bottom of the mystery of the Chinese national mind; sinology must be encouraged in the West at all universities. And a superior body of future diplomats and consuls must be formed who will go to China, and especially to Beijing, not as strangers but as reliable experts who have knowledge of the Chinese country, people, and language.[118]
> Only then will mutual understanding become possible.[119]

There is a clear stance in Borel's belief that the West should be more active towards China, also because this will prevent future conflicts. The stress is primarily on the study of Chinese and the training of experts. Secondly, only those experts should be appointed diplomats in Beijing for without this knowledge of China, so Borel claims: 'all relations, all negotiations with China are impossible'. Borel also thinks that the West needs to learn from the East. In the last paragraph of chapter VII, 'Reform in China', he writes:

> The only important thing for me is that this [i.e. China's development and modernization] will come about, although perhaps unexpected catastrophes, revolutions, debacles will shake the political conditions of the world to their foundations. It will happen because such future is already germinating in the entire Chinese nation, and the Western nations unconsciously need to be imbued with Eastern ideas, for their own unassisted intellect leaves them empty and dissatisfied.[120]

This indicates that Borel is seeking in China what he feels is missing from his own Western background and education. He is convinced that the way ahead is to modernize the study of Chinese in the West and improve relations between East and West.

As a follow-up to his ideas in *Daybreak in the East*, Borel stresses this point again in 'New Directions of Dutch Sinology' which he publishes in *The Guide* in 1911. Borel reiterates that the West needs to improve its understanding of the East. Therefore, in Borel's view, sinology should not only focus on China's ancient literature and culture, but also on the study of the spiritual aspirations of modern China in relation to the rest of the world. Borel's ideas conflict with those of de Bruin, who thinks that forecasting the future of China has nothing to do with sinology as a science. De Bruin writes:

> Whatever Borel may suggest, in case sinology is not exercised from a pure linguistic angle, it has no other purpose to than dig out and present the spiritual gems that are concealed in Chinese literature and history, and to make them accessible and explain them to those who do not understand Chinese.[121]

It sounds as if de Bruin writes in support of de Groot, who held a similar view. This exchange

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[118] Borel's footnote in original: 'Putnam Weale also noted this and said "only the most capable and brilliant diplomatic officials—men whose intelligence will help to shape events and not to be led by them, and who will not with utter firmness when the time for such action comes—should be assigned to such a difficult post as Beijing."'

[119] Borel 1910, p. 228; English translation 1912a, pp. 272-273.

[120] Borel 1910, p. 109; English translation 1912a, p. 135.

[121] De Bruin 20 December 1911.

of views influenced the considerations of finding a successor of de Groot and eventually had an impact on the decision of appointing someone new, from a different generation, as will be shown below.

In Borel's view, however, there is in fact a need for understanding present-day events in modern China and a need for learning the official, 'national' language (Mandarin) which has become so important and which he says neither Schlegel nor de Groot had ever mastered to speak.[122] In his view the program at Leiden University should include learning Mandarin. This trend to modernize sinology was seen earlier in other European institutions. For example, Norman J. Girardot in his biography of Legge refers to a meeting held in London in 1873, explaining: 'What is important here is not just the temporary eclipse of the Parisian sinological tradition, but the demise of the old *sinologie de chambre* methodology in favor of practical field experience in the Orient and an ability to speak the living languages of China.'[123]

In 1912, Borel publishes 'Dutch sinology' which is a review of de Groot's *The Religious System of China.* The last volume that de Groot would complete in the series came out in 1910, the same year as Borel's *Daybreak in the East*. In this review, Borel writes that de Groot lacks spiritual insight and philosophical intuition, and his book would cause contempt and misunderstanding among readers.

Among Borel's complaints is that de Groot refers to the Chinese as 'barbarous and semi-civilized people', that he fails to differentiate between soul and spirit, and that he thinks the Chinese are so stupid that after 'accumulated experiences of ages' they still don't have 'a notion of the reality of death.'[124] Borel supports his arguments with quotations from letters and a review. An example of a quote from a letter which Borel claims was written by one of his Chinese literary friends, who attended the Races Congress (Rassencongres) in London,[125] wrote about de Groot: 'His voluminous works are padded with a lot of rubbish.' At the end of the article Borel also quotes a recent letter from one of his colleagues, without identifying who it is, who wrote that de Groot's work is 'hopelessly out of date.'[126]

Another critical point Borel has of de Groot's book is that he finds the title in conflict with de Groot's remark in the General Preface to *The Religious System of China*: 'This book is intended less as a scientific production than as a store-house of facts, carefully gleaned from the literary relics of bygone ages.'[127] According to Borel de Groot's 'store-house' only contains information about some external phenomena of a religion but nothing about the mystic inner being, which is a typical comment in a time of the rise of the phenomenology of

[122] Anonymous 3 September 1915.
[123] Girardot 2002, p. 147.
[124] Borel 1912b, pp. 264-265.
[125] This must be the First Universal Races Congress held in London in 1911.
[126] Borel 1912b, p. 274.
[127] Ibid, p. 267.

religion. Therefore, says Borel, it may have some ethnographical value, but from a philosophical and religious point of view it is 'a junk room' (een rommelkamer). Borel goes so far as to call the work 'unscientific' in many places, for 'the scoffing and arrogant disparagement with which de Groot constantly describes Chinese rituals and sacraments and customs'.[128]

According to Werblowsky, de Groot experienced a turning point in his attitude to China in 1889.[129] At the time de Groot was in China conducting research into the 'linguistics, geography and ethnology of China in general', which resulted in many publications, most importantly the volumes of *The Religious System of China*. Besides his scholarly research, de Groot was also requested to look into recruitment of coolies directly from China, because of problems with the existing supply via labor brokers in Singapore.[130] Werblowsky cites de Groot's diary where de Groot complains of the filth, the weather, the food and hostility towards foreigners in China: 'The net result is that one becomes filled with an unsurmountable repugnance against the population.'[131] This may have influenced the condescending tone with which de Groot writes about the Chinese, something which Borel opposes. Borel and de Groot obviously have different perceptions of China, both in terms of their purpose in physically going to China, as well as their experience of living in Chinese society. Of course, de Groot completed four years (1886-1890) of fieldwork in China, which is a long period of time by any standard then and now.

In this context, de Bruin makes a point in his comments on Borel's review of de Groot's work. In questioning whether Borel is qualified to give an evaluation of China, de Bruin blames Borel as someone 'who more often responds to intuition on the spur of the moment, rather than listen to the voice of common sense.'[132] By way of comparison, de Bruin imagines how de Groot's depiction of an ancient temple would differ from Borel's:

> When prof. de Groot looks at an old dilapidated temple, where lepers drowsy of opium perform rites, he sees nothing but the filth and the repulsive, then his judgment is probably too shallow when he speaks of a barbarian state. Yet when Mr. Borel portrays in elegant words how the temple is a miracle of architectural beauty made of impeccable marble, and tries to make us believe that he listened with bated breath to the superb wisdom of the priests, or that he kneeled down in pure devotion for the divine grace of the lepers, we are even worse off.[133]

De Bruin is actually criticizing both, de Groot for being superficial and cool, and Borel for exaltedness and exaggeration. Furthermore, de Bruin refers to what he calls 'Borelian exaggeration' in a footnote about Borel's reference to his tutor in China, who had been de

[128] Ibid, p. 266.
[129] Werblowsky 2002, p. 24.
[130] Blussé 1989, p. 347.
[131] Werblowsky 2002, p.25.
[132] De Bruin 10 September 1912.
[133] Ibid.

Groot's teacher as well. In the original article, Borel writes: 'Tio-Siao-Hun [Zhao Shaoxun], the old Chinese tutor of Professor de Groot who was also my old tutor for many years.' De Bruin corrects this because Borel was in Xiamen for only eighteen months. This is not quite accurate either, for in fact it was almost two years. Moreover, de Bruin notes that de Groot once said to him

> If Mr. Borel spends one night reading a translation from Sanskrit, he would write the next day, and with a brazen face, about 'the language and wisdom of Ancient India, which I studied day and night for several decades' …[134]

While his fellow sinologists accuse Borel of bragging and discrediting Dutch sinology, Borel in his turn accuses his teachers of building storehouses of facts without 'deep, spiritual vision.' As Leonard Blussé notes, Borel's

> harsh remarks on the scholarly practice of his teachers were of course not justifiable, yet they did result in the long vacancy of the Chair of Sinology after de Groot accepted a chair in Berlin in 1912. It was difficult to draw up a profile for a successor.'[135]

Hence, Borel's ideas and criticism did not result in him being appointed at Leiden University. Yet it did contribute to changes in the direction of sinology at Leiden University. The appointment eventually in 1919 of Duyvendak[136] is evidence of this: more emphasis on the study of both ancient and modern China and Mandarin Chinese, and less on the training of Dutch interpreters in the Dutch East Indies.

When Duyvendak took over, sinology in the Netherlands entered a new era. Duyvendak set up a Sinological Institute in 1931, after receiving funds from the Boxer Indemnity payments,[137] possibly as an attempt to keep Duyvendak in the Netherlands. Duyvendak had taught at Columbia University and was considering an offer by Columbia,[138] but declined the offer when he was granted the subsidy. This was an important development after a relatively quiet period in the 1910s. Apart from Borel's works, not many new titles related to China were published in Dutch in this period: a new Dutch version of the *Daodejing* (Tao Teh King) translated by J. A. Blok (1867-1955) in 1910, and a *Hakka Dictionary* (Hakka woordenboek) compiled by Peter Adriaan van de Stadt (1876-1940) in 1912.

Ironically, while sinology went forward into the future, Borel started looking back into the past. It took a while for Borel to settle until he was appointed editor at *The Fatherland* in

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[134] Ibid.

[135] Blussé 2008, p. 157.

[136] For more details, see Barend ter Haar's 'Between the Dutch East Indies and Philology (1919-1974)' in Idema 2014.

[137] Ter Haar 2014, p. 77. According to *The Fatherland* (Anonymous 11 December 1929), Duyvendak declined the offer by Columbia University, because the Minister of Education had granted a subsidy to found an institution of Chinese studies.

[138] Anonymous 12 June 1929.

1916. Since his return in the Netherlands early 1913, he had started rereading his translations of Confucian texts but also started publishing new translations of Chinese literature. The latter include short stories and Daoist anecdotes, most of which were first introduced to him in the early 1890s by Schlegel at Leiden University. In these works, his prominent presence as the translator/author results in mistakes as the final two chapters will show.