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The Early Dutch Sinologists : a study of their training in Holland and China, and their functions in the Netherlands Indies (1854-1900)

Kuiper, P.N.

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Author: Kuiper, Pieter Nicolaas

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CHAPTER ONE

THE ORIGINS OF DUTCH SINOLOGY

Historical and legal context

In European history, the year 1848 is known as the year of democratic revolutions, which were liberal and nationalistic in nature.¹ The so-called February Revolution in Paris and its aftermath brought about political reform in France and many other European countries. In the Netherlands, it was the year of the new Constitution (*Grondwet*), which was promulgated on 3 November as a revision of the previous constitutions of 1814 and 1815. In the revised Constitution of 1848, the personal regime of the King came to an end and the power of Parliament (*Staten-Generaal*) was established. Parliamentary monarchy was born. From that time on, it was also Parliament that came to have the final word on the colonial affairs of the Netherlands.

In the Indies, from the legal point of view, the year 1848 was also a year of reform, although this reform had been prepared for almost ten years following similar reforms that had taken place in the mother country. When in 1838 the Dutch Civil Code (*Burgerlijk Wetboek*) came into effect in the Netherlands, replacing Napoleon's *Code Civil*, preparations were being made for a similar codification of the law system in the colonial possessions.² Until 1848, the old Dutch–Roman law of the Dutch Republic (1588–1795) was still in force in the Netherlands Indies. But on 1 May 1848, many new laws came into effect, mostly for the Europeans living in the colony: for example the *General Regulations of Legislation*, the *Regulations on the Judiciary System and Judicial Policy*, the *Civil Code*, the *Commercial Code*, and *Regulations concerning Crimes Perpetrated on the occasion of Bankruptcy, Evident Incapacity and Suspension of Payment*,³ and also the regulations of civil and criminal procedure and *Regulation of some Items of Penal Law which Need Immediate Provision* etc.⁴ The dualistic system of law and courts was maintained; there was one system for Europeans (from 1854 on officially including Eurasians), and another for natives (*inlanders*, including *vreemde oosterlingen* or 'Foreign Orientals,' such as Chinese). The colonial local civil government also kept an important role in the administration of justice regarding minor offences. But at the same time it was stipulated that the Governor-General was authorised to declare parts of the Civil Code or Commercial Code applicable to the native population.⁵ This article would soon have far-reaching effects on the legal position of the Chinese in the colonial possessions. Alongside the colonial administration and the judiciary system, the native population

and also the Chinese enjoyed a certain degree of self-government, in particular in civil affairs. Civil cases and minor penal cases among the Chinese of Batavia and a few other cities on Java were dealt with by their own chiefs, the Chinese officers of the Chinese Council. It took some more time before the Penal Code was promulgated, replacing the above-mentioned *Regulation of some Items of Penal Law*; the Penal Code for Europeans came into effect on 1 January 1867, and one for the native population on 1 January 1873.⁶ The idea of unification of the dualistic system of law only became an issue after 1900, and did not materialise until 1915, when a general penal code for all ethnicities was promulgated (in effect as of 1918),⁷ and in 1917, when European Civil and Commercial Law were made applicable to the Chinese (in effect as of 1919).⁸

In 1849, the journal *Het regt in Nederlandsch Indië* (Law in the Netherlands Indies) was launched, containing important judgements by the High Court of the Netherlands Indies, and in 1863 it was followed by *Het Indisch weekblad van het regt* (Indies Law Weekly). In 1854 the new Government Regulation (*Regeringsreglement*),⁹ the 'constitution' of the Netherlands Indies, was promulgated. This was also a formal law approved by Parliament, and it was based on the new Dutch constitution of 1848. For the Chinese, the ordinance of *Staatsblad* 1855 no. 79 was of great importance,¹⁰ because parts of the civil and commercial codes and other regulations, on bankruptcy crimes among other things, were made applicable to the Chinese.

It is in this legal context that the demand for the training of European interpreters for the Chinese language should be seen.

Another important factor was the influx of Chinese coolies to the Indies after China was forced to open its doors by the Treaty of Nanking, which brought the Opium War to an end in 1842. From the 1850s on, Chinese coolies were only hired for work in the tin mines of Banka and Billiton. But around 1870, when the so-called 'cultivation system' (*cultuurstelsel*) of obligatory cultivation of certain agricultural export products by the native Javanese population for the European market was gradually abolished, a plantation system run by European private entrepreneurs was introduced on Java. While on Java there was a sufficient labour force available for the sugar plantations, on the sparsely populated East coast of Sumatra, Chinese coolies were in great demand for developing the tobacco plantations in Deli and elsewhere. This would later increase the need for European interpreters of Chinese.

The need for a university chair for Chinese

On 10 April 1849, Professor P.J. Veth¹¹ gave a lecture at the Royal Netherlands Institute in Amsterdam, the predecessor of the Netherlands Acad-

emy of Arts and Sciences, in which he pleaded for the establishment of a chair for Chinese and Japanese at a Dutch university.¹² He mentioned several reasons for such a chair: the enormous size of the Chinese population, the propagation of the Gospel, the promotion of world trade, and the extension of the boundaries of scientific and scholarly knowledge. Other nations had already shown great progress in the study of Chinese, such as the British (Morrison, Medhurst, Marshman), the French (Fourmont, Abel Rémusat, Stanislas Julien), and the Germans (Gützlaff, Neumann, Endlicher), while the Dutch had done nothing so far, despite the fact that they also hoped to spread the Gospel and reap profits from the China trade. Furthermore, he argued that the Dutch overseas possessions had a population of almost half a million Chinese settlers (*volksplantelingen*). The Chinese were generally praised as industrious and useful inhabitants, provided that they were supervised by and known to the authorities. Yet there were also among them treacherous, crafty, egocentric, and greedy people, without any depth of feeling, and almost without religion. Not bound by any ties to the Dutch colonial administration, they helped each other and were bound by secret societies. It was believed that the Chinese could jeopardise the interests, the peace and the maintenance of Dutch authority on Java,

as long as their language and queer writing system pose an insurmountable barrier between them and us, as long as we lack the means to understand their mysterious nature.¹³

Veth stressed that one should not say the Chinese did not meddle in political affairs. While in the Indies, some people were worried about the effects of increased freedom of the press, the Chinese actually already had complete freedom in this respect, because no one could understand “their hieroglyphs.” As an example of a political opinion, Veth mentioned the British traveller Beete Jukes, who had heard in Eastern Java that a Chinese newspaper criticised the war of the British against China, falsely claiming that the British had been beaten time and again. Veth pointed out that the British had established the Anglo–Chinese College in Malacca and another such institution in Singapore, while in the Netherlands and the Indies there was a startling lack of governmental interest in the study of the Chinese language. Finally, he noted that there was an excellent specialist in the Chinese and Japanese languages in Leiden, who was as modest as he was learned and who would be most suitable as a professor in those languages. He did not mention his name: J.J. Hoffmann, a German.

In the same year, W.R. van Hoëvell¹⁴ published a review of this lecture in the *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch Indië*, thereby also making it known in the Indies.¹⁵ In 1838 he founded the *Tijdschrift voor Neerland's Indië*¹⁶ (Journal for the Netherlands Indies), in which he vented his criticism of

the autocratic colonial government. For a long time, an important issue was the monopoly on training of government officials at the Royal Academy in Delft, instead of in Batavia; another issue was the lack of secondary education in the Indies. In 1848, after the fall of the conservative government in the Netherlands, a small-scale 'revolution' occurred in Batavia during a heated discussion held in the club 'de Harmonie.' Afterwards, Van Hoëvell was falsely accused of having let Eurasians take part in this meeting, and he was obliged to repatriate to the Netherlands, having been notified of the dissatisfaction of the government. However, after his return to the Netherlands he was completely rehabilitated. From 1849 to 1862 Van Hoëvell was a member of Parliament, and later of the Council of State (*Raad van State*). He had great influence on colonial policy; for instance, he was in favour of the abolition of slavery,¹⁷ and in 1860 he stated in Parliament that Multatuli's novel *Max Havelaar*, which criticised the exploitation of the native population on Java, 'made the whole country shiver.'¹⁸

In his review of Veth's lecture, Van Hoëvell added some opinions of his own. On the question of the freedom of the press, he explained how easy printing was for the Chinese. They just carved the letters or rather words in a soft kind of wood, smeared it with ink, put a sheet of Chinese paper on it, rubbed it once or twice, and it was finished. No workshop, machines, or special arrangements were necessary. On Java, texts were also published in this manner;¹⁹ for instance, commercial advertisements in the *Javasche Courant* were translated into Chinese and published. As examples of the troubles that could develop owing to lack of information and communication, and which could have been avoided if the Chinese situation had been better known, he mentioned the Chinese massacre in Batavia in 1740 and another more recent revolt of Chinese at a plantation in which many people were killed in 1832.²⁰ Early efforts in 1845 to study Chinese had been frustrated by the government, for instance in the case of Kussendragers.²¹ According to Van Hoëvell, the spirit of indifference of the government towards Chinese studies should give way to great interest. In the Indies, youngsters should be trained to serve as interpreters or translators for the government. Then it would not be necessary to translate government decisions first into Malay and subsequently by Chinese into Chinese, while no one was able to judge the correctness of the translation. Needless to say, there were also problems in legal affairs because of the complete lack of knowledge of Chinese. In his review, Van Hoëvell did not mention the 'excellent specialist in the Chinese and Japanese languages' Hoffmann.²² A few years later he conceded that a professorship for Japanese could be useful, but above all he hoped some kind of school for the study of Chinese could be established in the Indies.²³

Veth's plea for a university chair for Chinese was also supported by Dutch missionary circles, who were actively propagating the China mission

in the 1850s. When the charismatic Karl Gützlaff²⁴ visited the Netherlands in 1850, he inspired many men and women to establish local China Committees to start fundraising in various places in the Netherlands. Later that year, H.C. Millies,²⁵ Nicolaas Beets,²⁶ and others combined these China Committees into one general society, the Society for the Propagation of Christianity among the Chinese (*Vereniging tot bevordering des Christendoms onder de Chinezen*), which published a journal from 1852 to at least 1864.²⁷ This society sent two missionaries to China, one of whom was H.Z. Kloekers (*see below*), and supported missionaries working with the Chinese in the Indies as well. In the early 1850s, the board of directors wrote an address to the Minister of Home Affairs about the need to establish a chair for Chinese language and literature at one of the universities.²⁸ However, because of lack of success in China and dissent among Dutch Christians, the China fervour died out in the 1860s; in retrospect, it had not been more than a 'flash in the pan' (*strooivuur*). After 1864 the Society stopped its Chinese activities, and their Christian mission concentrated on the Dutch colonies.²⁹

In 1851, in his preface to the Dutch translation of Gützlaff's *History of the Chinese Empire*, Millies pleaded for a chair of Chinese and indirectly recommended Hoffmann for that position. He used arguments similar to Veth's, writing that many European countries, even smaller ones such as Bavaria, had chairs for Chinese

while our country possesses a man who should be counted among the best scholars of Chinese in Europe, as the famous Stanislas Julien recently assured me, but still nowhere is Chinese taught at a Dutch university.³⁰

A regional government report from Batavia

In the beginning of the 1850s, the Netherlands Indies government began to feel the need for European interpreters and translators. On 26 March 1852, P. van Rees, Resident of Batavia,³¹ wrote a letter to Governor-General Duymaer van Twist, suggesting to encourage some Christian youngsters to learn the Chinese language both in spoken and written form, because the local Chinese translators could not always be trusted. He also reported the foundation of the weekly *Samarangsch Advertentie-blad* (Semarang Advertiser), which planned to publish a supplement with advertisements and announcements in all languages, including Chinese, concerning shipping, market prices, rental and sale of *proas*,³² public auctions, etc.³³ A specimen copy in Chinese characters was added. The colonial government, always wary of supposed seditious tendencies in the press, would have been even more suspicious of this supplement in Chinese characters, incomprehensible to any European in the Indies. This was just a few years before the

severe *Drukpersreglement* (Press Regulation) of 1857³⁴ was promulgated which restricted the Netherlands Indies press in a way that would have been unthinkable in the Netherlands.

In answer to Van Rees' letter, the General Secretary asked him to explain and study this matter further on 4 April 1852. Almost a year later, on 3 March 1853, Van Rees complied with this request and sent the first well-argued report on the matter to the Governor-General. He began by recalling that only a few years earlier, in 1846, a serious endeavour of a European youngster to study Chinese had been frustrated by the government's decision not to offer financial support. Copies of some correspondence on this case were added as an appendix. On 14 July 1846, C.S.W. van Hogendorp,³⁵ president of the Main Commission of Education (*Hoofdcommissie van onderwijs*) wrote to the Governor-General that the most advanced pupil at the government primary school of Batavia, R.J.M.N. Kussendrager, son of the teacher R.J.L. Kussendrager at the same school,³⁶ on his own initiative was showing a desire to learn Chinese³⁷ and had been taught for some time with success and remarkable progress.³⁸ He stressed that there had long been a need for European translators of Chinese. He stated:

We should not remain dependent on the Chinese any more; that would be contrary to our interests. But the difficulties and lesser financial benefits seem to attract few students to study that language.

Van Hogendorp then requested the appointment of Kussendrager jr. as 'pupil for the Chinese language' (*élève voor de Chinesche taal*) on a monthly stipend of f 20, under the supervision of his father, to subject him to a yearly examination and to appoint him as a translator in the future. Upon approval from the government of the Netherlands, this stipend should become a fixed item on the budget. The Council of the Indies³⁹ was asked for advice, but it replied only that nothing was known of any initiatives or efforts to replace the Chinese officers as translators by Europeans. Moreover, it was believed that the government of the Netherlands would not give its approval to such an initiative. All that could be done was to give this pupil a grant from the School Fund.⁴⁰ In reaction to this, Van Hogendorp stated that in the past the missionary W.H. Medhurst⁴¹ had done translation work for the administration, and he asked the question: why should we forever remain tributary and dependent upon the Chinese officers? Van Hogendorp believed that such dependence was not without dangers.

The Chinese follow the progress of our times in a rather practical manner, and learn or see things from us, with noticeable consequences; but in our relations with them we try to stay in the high position where we are now and where we were two centuries ago.⁴²

He also felt that a grant from the School Fund was not suitable, as this Fund was not meant for public education. In the end, the request for a stipend was refused by Governor-General Rochussen.⁴³ Later, another pupil, a certain Lubeck, started to learn Chinese and wished to continue his study in Canton, but this effort also came to nothing because he moved to Sydney.

In his report, Van Rees repeated that the need for well-trained translators was becoming more urgent by the day. His first argument for training Europeans as translators was that the Chinese were not always reliable, as had recently been seen in a case on the island of Banka. Since this case illustrates many aspects of the urgent need for European translators, it will be described here in detail.

The Banka case and other arguments

On Banka two Chinese miners, Bong Liang (also: Liong, in Chinese possibly 黃良) and Tjongman, had attempted to run away ('desertion') from the tin mine where they were working, which was considered a disturbance of the peace and could be punished by the *poenale sanctie*.⁴⁴ When they were caught, two Chinese letters were found in their possession, which were translated by a Chinese officer in Mentok. According to the translation, these letters gave orders to a secret society based in Malacca to kill the person in Singapore who had persuaded Bong Liang to go to Banka. This was in revenge for the disappointments and bad treatment he had suffered afterwards. According to the head of the Chinese in Mentok, this letter had been written by the second Chinese, Tjongman. After the Administrator of the tin mines at Merawang (Soengei Liat), J.L.E. Schepern,⁴⁵ had the suspects punished, he sent both men to Batavia.⁴⁶ This was probably because they were to be extradited on suspicion of having ties with a harmful secret society. Such behaviour was prohibited since 1851 (*see below*). The Resident of Batavia asked for the original Chinese letters to be sent from Banka, and had them translated again by a Chinese officer in Batavia. He then had the suspects heard, and sent all documents to the Procurator General (*procureur-generaal*) J.O. Wijnmalen at the High Court to ask for his advice. The latter found that the new translations were quite different from the ones from Mentok and contained little proof of any connection with a secret society or orders to kill. But there was little reason to believe that the translations from Mentok were less reliable than the Batavian ones. From the several interrogations of Bong Liang, no ties with a secret society could be deduced. On the other hand, it was clear that both suspects were victims of cruel and inhuman treatment, for which no legal basis existed, by the Administrator Schepern. There was also no proof of

Tjongman's complicity as the writer of the letters. That suspicion was only based on a statement by the leader of the Chinese in Mentok, 'because he is a bad guy' (*slecht sujet*).⁴⁷

The Council of the Indies also found no reason to give more credence to the translation from Mentok than that from Batavia and considered it objectionable to have a third translation made. Yet for the sake of maintaining authority, it advised against sending the two Chinese back to Banka.⁴⁸

Finally, Governor-General A.J. Duymaer van Twist decided in the first place to acquiesce in their having been sent to Batavia, although he was not convinced that they had criminal ties with a secret society; secondly, to allow them to remain in Batavia or return to China at the first opportunity, if necessary at the government's expense; thirdly, to write to the Resident of Banka to express the government's dissatisfaction with the former Administrator at Soengei Liat, J.L.E. Schepern, because of the imposition of illegal and inhuman sanctions; and fourthly, to request the High Court to take certain measures to prevent such incidents in the future.⁴⁹

In the same report of 3 March 1853, the Resident of Batavia also stressed that a guarantee was needed for the correctness of translations in Western Borneo, in particular of contracts, and in both directions (Chinese to Dutch and Dutch to Chinese) because of the political situation on that island. From 1850 to 1855, a war was going on in Western Borneo between the Netherlands Indies government and several Chinese kongsi of gold miners which refused to accept Dutch authority and taxation.⁵⁰ There was no lack of confidence in the honesty of the Chinese officers in Batavia, but this was no guarantee for the future either. Unreliable translations could mislead the government.

The Resident believed that Chinese should be studied in the country of origin, just as a certain Schaap had done thirty years earlier when he went to Malacca to study Malay.⁵¹ He stressed the difficult pronunciation and writing of Chinese and added that in Batavia, there were only two literate Chinese at hand (*sic*).⁵² Furthermore, in Batavia students could only learn one dialect, while they should learn the dialects of three or four places. The Resident therefore suggested asking the Netherlands Consul in Canton for advice. Perhaps two or three youngsters could be sent there and be taken care of by the consulate.

In answer to the letter of Governor-General Duymaer van Twist and the Resident of Batavia of 14 March 1853, the Vice-Consul in Canton, Frederic King, wrote on 16 June 1853 that Macao would be the best place to study because of its climate and freedom and also because it was the least expensive place. True, the Fujian dialect (Hokkien) was spoken in Amoy, but teachers of this dialect could be found in Macao too. Amoy itself was an expensive and undesirable place of residence. In Macao, the costs were

calculated to be \$2,500 per year (including \$300 for two teachers, that is \$12.50 per month for each). The suggested study period of three years was perhaps a little short, unless a student possessed extraordinary aptitude, but one could acquire a tolerable knowledge (speaking ability) in one year. The greatest difficulty, however, was the written language and the characters.

Finally, on 19 September 1853, Governor-General A.J. Duymaer van Twist sent a letter to the Minister of Colonies, Ch. F. Pahud, in which he added a few other arguments, saying:

For a considerable time now, the desirability has been recognised of appointing European interpreters of the Chinese language.

As Your Excellency knows, in the absence of such translators, the government has to depend on Chinese, who have to translate the writings presented to them into Malay, the only language understood by them.⁵³

As a matter of course, such translations can only be defective.

The need for reliable European interpreters for Chinese has become more urgent as gradually more is getting to be known to the government about deeds and activities of the Chinese residing in the Indies which are not permissible in an ordered society.

That need was felt in particular during the deliberations which led to the proclamation of the prohibition concerning the well-known Chinese brotherhoods (*bui's*); see the publication of 8 November 1851 (*Staatsblad* no. 65).⁵⁴

It was also felt during the entanglements with the Chinese on the West Coast of Borneo, as well as the sending of two Chinese from Banka, who according to two Chinese letters found in their possession, were members of a secret society in Malakka.

...

Finally the need for a European translator of Chinese is also being felt, not only during the trial of cases in which Chinese are involved or are to be heard as witnesses, but also in particular for a correct judgement of what is published by Chinese printing offices: for it is stated that in Batavia a Chinese Newspaper is regularly being published; but the government is not able to deny or to acknowledge that statement; and still less to judge whether its contents are harmful or not.⁵⁵

Duymaer van Twist also sent copies of earlier correspondence on the training of youngsters and stressed the urgency of the matter; the government should not be taken aback by the expenses. He then mentioned the suggestion of the Resident of Batavia and the Consul: to send two or three European youngsters to Canton, connect them with the consulate, and give them a solid training. The costs would be \$2,500 per year according to the Consul, but for three years it would be *f*22,500.⁵⁶ He further advised: first, always to send new students to China to guarantee success; secondly, to arrange appointments in government service upon their return; thirdly, to allocate fixed items in the budget; and fourthly, to ask Royal Approval for this proposal. Upon their return to the Indies after finishing their studies, they should be able to teach others, so that no

fixed item in the budget was necessary. Students should be sent every year for four or five years.

Before answering the Governor-General, Minister of Colonies Pahud asked the advice of 'Dr. J.J. Hoffmann,⁵⁷ who had been appointed as Japanese translator of the government of the Netherlands Indies since 1846,⁵⁸ but was living in Leiden. On 9 December 1853, Hoffmann wrote a detailed report, which Leonard Blussé⁵⁹ has called the master plan for the study of Chinese, most of which was carried out in the ten years that followed.

Hoffmann's report (1853)

In his report, Hoffmann wrote that, since the need for Chinese interpreters in the Indies had been recognised, and Canton had been chosen as the place for training them, there were three questions for him to answer. I. What was most important in Chinese studies? II. Where and how should one study? III. How much time should be needed?

In order to answer the first question, Hoffmann gave a brief introduction to the Chinese language. The peculiar relation between writing and pronunciation made studying Chinese completely different from other languages. Those who knew the language considered the characters the basis: one should first learn the characters and their meaning, and secondly their pronunciation. Complete knowledge of Chinese includes these three aspects, and Hoffmann disagreed with the opinion, expressed now and then, that learning only the spoken language would be sufficient.

Hoffmann noted that Western sinologists⁶⁰ who were in direct contact with the Chinese naturally stressed the importance of pronunciation, while scholars of Chinese in Europe concentrated on the study of Chinese literature. However, the practical and theoretical schools were not antagonistic, and had indeed profited from each other; in particular, the practical school profited from the results of the theoretical one.

The Chinese writing system was the same in the whole Empire, and was also understood in Japan, Korea, and the Ryukyu Islands. The Chinese dictionary of the Kangxi Emperor had the same authority there as in China. But the pronunciation in the various Chinese provinces was so different that a native of Peking could not, or could hardly, understand one of Canton.

In order to communicate, a common 'official language' (*ambtstaal*) or 'Mandarin language' (*guanhua* 官話, *Mandarijntaal*), based on the Northern Chinese dialect of Shandong, had long ago been adopted. The Chinese compared this dialect with a national road (*guanlu* 官路), while the local dialects were comparable to provincial roads. Every Chinese who

took the national examinations to qualify as an official, should completely master the Mandarin dialect. And anyone who claimed to have any literary education tried to learn it to a certain extent. Therefore the situation in China was similar to that in Germany, where High German had been adopted as the language of polite society while the other dialects continued to exist as popular languages without the least impediment.

This led to the conclusion that Europeans wishing to study Chinese should start by learning the official national language. Other interpreters had done so, for instance R. Morrison,⁶¹ W.H. Medhurst, K. Gützlaff, and Harry S. Parkes.⁶² With the latter three Hoffmann had had personal conversations. If it were impossible to start with Mandarin, one could start with Cantonese but that would be more difficult. Another reason for beginning with Mandarin was that in all language tools and reference works compiled by Europeans, Mandarin, the language of officialdom, was considered to be the general language, while the dialects were of secondary importance. Should one start with another dialect than Mandarin, one would have little profit from these tools and would get deficient, one-sided knowledge, not much better than that of an illiterate. Hoffmann mentioned these arguments because it had been claimed here and there that if one were proficient in certain dialects, knowledge of Mandarin would be redundant. Although this might make sense for missionaries in view of their particular sphere of activities, it did not apply to government officials, who would be in charge of official contacts between the Netherlands and China.

The interpreter should be familiar with the Mandarin dialect (*Mandarijnen tongval*) as standard pronunciation, and

when he associates it with the main types of the other dialects as variations, he will soon understand their mutual relations, get to know the special dialects easily according to fixed rules and be able to expand his knowledge constantly because it has a good basis.⁶³

For a Dutchman wishing to study Chinese, knowledge of English and French was also essential, in particular the former, because of the dictionaries and other tools in these two languages.

As to the question of where and how to study, Hoffmann also considered Canton the most suitable place because of the lack of capable Chinese teachers in the Netherlands Indies. Qualified teachers should be selected with the help of the Consul. Another reason for going to Canton was that the students would have an opportunity to associate with other Europeans who could understand Chinese; they could also meet with Chinese officials and graduated literates. Success would be dependent on the following conditions:

1. Students should start very young, when 13-15 years old. In Hoffmann's

- own experience a boy of 9 [Schlegel] learned faster—both in writing and pronunciation— than a young man of 18-19 [probably Kloekers, who was 23 at the time; De Grijs had not yet begun studying].
2. Since in Hoffmann's opinion Chinese was the most difficult language of all, the candidates should have an aptitude for languages, which could be seen from their ability to learn English. They also should have some pleasure in learning it, or this pleasure should be stimulated.
 3. They should also have a good memory, particularly because of the writing system.
 4. Capable teachers and good tools should be chosen. Hoffmann was willing to ask his scholarly friend Harry Parkes to offer help in finding suitable teachers.

The method of teaching should be left to the teacher to decide. In eight to ten lessons, general ideas of the writing system and language could be taught; afterwards one should proceed to systematic study. As tools, Hoffmann mentioned:

- a. Abel Rémusat, *Éléments de la grammaire Chinoise*, Paris 1822.⁶⁴
 - b. *The Notitia linguae Sinicae of Prémare* [Knowledge of the Chinese language], translated into English by J.G. Bridgman, Canton 1847.⁶⁵
 - c. Robert Morrison, *A Grammar of the Chinese Language*, Serampore 1815.
- At the same time, Hoffmann took the opportunity to warn against using Stephan Endlicher's *Anfangsgründe der Chinesische Grammatik* (Vienna 1845), which had too many and too serious mistakes.⁶⁶ He also sent off-prints of his Dutch and French reviews of this book (1846).

Other literary tools were the works by Stanislas Julien:⁶⁷

- a. *Meng tzeu vel Mencium* (Latin and Chinese text of *Mengzi* 孟子), 1824–26.
- b. *Le Tao-te-king, ou le livre de la raison suprême et de la vertu, par Lao-tseu* (French and Chinese text of *Daodejing* 道德經), 1842.
- c. *Le livre des recompenses et des peines* (*Kan-ing-pièn*, Chinese and French text of *Taishang ganying pian* 太上感應篇), 1835.
- d. *Examen critique de quelques pages de Chinois relatives à l'Inde*, 1841.
- e. novels and plays translated into French (for instance *Blanche et Bleue, ou les deux couleurs-fées* (*Baishejing ji* 白蛇精記, 1834); *Hoei-lan-ki, ou l'histoire du cercle de craie* (*Huilanji* 灰蘭記, 1832); *Tchao-chi-kou-eul, ou l'Orphelin de la Chine* (*Zhao shi gu'er* 趙氏孤兒, 1834), etc.).

Hoffmann pointed out that the Chinese language is divided into classical and modern Chinese:

Because the former is the basis of the latter one usually begins with the former. And when one on this basis is sufficiently acquainted with the Chinese character writing to be able to translate Chinese texts with the help of a dictionary, one usually goes on to the new literature and studies the colloquial

language in order to give a practical direction to the knowledge gained. So if the teacher in Canton should take the same course, I intend to defend him beforehand against the possible reproach that through this method the actual aim, the training of capable interpreters for practical use, has been lost from sight.⁶⁸

As to the third question, Hoffmann believed that for a suitable and diligent student with a good teacher, four years would be sufficient to acquire enough knowledge as a basis on which to perfect himself by continued study. He suggested first sending four or five youngsters to China and waiting two years for another group of four to five: if one started with a new group every year, there would be too many groups. After four years, two or three students should return to Java to begin their official careers and continue their studies at the same time. One or two of them could stay in Canton to help the next group.

Hoffmann concluded that this basic plan should be adapted later according to circumstances. He recapitulated the main points as follows:

The youngsters who wish to study in Canton to become interpreters for the Chinese language, should in particular be skilled in English; they should start with the Chinese writing system and regard the so-called Mandarin language as their point of departure, from which they will proceed to the study of the other dialects.

Finally, and most importantly, Hoffmann reported on his own 'endeavours' in teaching Chinese.

Hoffmann's earliest students

Hoffmann's first student was Gustaaf Schlegel, whom he had been teaching for four years since 13 November 1849, twice a week and free of charge. Schlegel was now 13 years old and a pupil at a *gymnasium*. He could read and translate texts on Chinese natural history and by Confucius. He learned to write Chinese characters very fast⁶⁹ and he had a good memory. Moreover, he was pleased with learning Chinese and quite proficient in the modern languages: French, German, and English. He therefore showed promise of becoming an excellent scholar and student of Chinese language and literature. For this purpose, his teacher asked for an appropriate subsidy in order to have him receive private secondary school education, but with the obligation to serve the country later. In a later letter Hoffmann was more specific, indicating that Schlegel still needed five and a half years of gymnasium education, which could be shortened to three years if he were to be given private instruction. He would have enough time to continue his studies of Chinese and later also to learn Japanese. For private instruction in the classical languages, f300 per year would be needed (that

is, *f*25 per month); for the modern languages, especially English, and mathematics, as well as books for his Chinese studies, another *f*200 would be necessary. It was probably the Minister who wrote in the margin: “I think we should keep to *f*300,” and that was the amount given to him.⁷⁰

Hoffmann’s second student was the Dutch missionary H.Z. Kloekers, whom he taught for one and a half years from about July 1851 to November 1852.⁷¹ In 1850, after an appeal by Gützlaff, H.C. Millies⁷² had already asked Hoffmann whether he would be willing to train a missionary. The following year, he was again asked by Millies on what conditions he would accept. He answered that he was willing to help talented youngsters with their studies as far as his other work allowed him to do so and as a private affair between himself and the student. As translator for the Japanese language (with a yearly salary of *f*1,800), he felt obliged to teach Japanese and Chinese without charge.⁷³ Soon after, probably in July, Kloekers started coming twice a week, and starting in September he came once a week since he went to study in the Missionaries House (*Zendelingenhuis*) in Rotterdam. After one year he was advanced enough to study the Chinese translations of the Bible. But to Hoffmann’s chagrin, Kloekers’ Chinese studies were discontinued as of November 1852 because they were considered to prevent his studying on an equal footing with the other students in the Missionaries House. In his report, Hoffmann explained that his purpose was to teach him the Chinese writing system. Kloekers could analyse characters and look them up in a dictionary. He had a general understanding of the grammar and Hoffmann just at that time wanted to begin a systematic study of grammar, by which he probably meant the study of Rémusat’s grammar. As a souvenir, Hoffmann was presented by the Missionaries House with a mantel clock (*kamerring*), which he accepted. Hoffmann suggested that after finishing his studies in Rotterdam, Kloekers could return to Leiden to study with him for several weeks in order to get to know the tools for further study, to distinguish the solid from the superficial and to learn the main grammatical characteristics.⁷⁴

There had been other requests for the teaching of Chinese, but there were no other students as the education at the gymnasium left them too little time.

Finally Hoffmann mentioned a third (potential) student, C.F.M. de Grijs. De Grijs was born and grew up in Leiden, where his father had a haberdashery and drapery shop. From 1849 to 1853, he studied at the Pharmaceutical School in Utrecht, preparing for a career in the Indies. After graduation in Utrecht, he became a pharmacist of the third class in the Netherlands Indies Army. Starting on 1 September 1853, he was stationed in Leiden for four months to study the collections of animals and minerals in the Museum of Natural History in Leiden—of which Herman Schlegel, Gustaaf’s father, was a curator—and also of tropical plants in

the National Herbarium. In this case the reason for studying Chinese was again different. Stimulated by Hoffmann, De Grijns had already decided a few years earlier that he would like to study Chinese. He would have begun already if it had not interfered with his work in Leiden. Hoffmann wished to give him a basic knowledge of Chinese. Therefore he requested that De Grijns should be allowed to stay for another three to four months in Leiden so that Hoffmann could teach him enough Chinese to enable him to continue his studies by himself with European tools on Java.

Hoffmann argued that it would be very useful for a government official trained in natural history to have some knowledge of Chinese, since the collection of flora, fauna, and minerals from China could only yield its full value if the native names and some Chinese information were added. The Chinese names added to the objects were the key to the little-used treasure of the Chinese natural sciences (*natuurkunde*), and literature on art and industry. This literature would be accessible to sinologists if they could find more information on the names of the objects.

This was, moreover, a subject into which Hoffmann himself had delved before. The first article he published on a Chinese subject was on Chinese botany (in 1837), and in 1853 he published a long article on plant names⁷⁵ and a short one on Chinese medical use of opium, as an appendix to J.C. Baud's history of opium in the Indies.⁷⁶ At the time, Hoffmann was considered an authority not only on Chinese and Japanese languages but also on Chinese natural sciences.

The beginning of sinology and japanology as an academic study

The Minister of Colonies, Pahud, agreed with Governor-General Duymaer van Twist's and Hoffmann's proposals. With foresight, Pahud mentioned a special reason to agree with the latter, namely that in this way a successor to Hoffmann could possibly be found, in case he should retire as Japanese translator of the Netherlands Indies government.⁷⁷ On 11 January 1854, Pahud asked for Royal Approval to authorise the Governor-General to provide for training of interpreters in China, and for a temporary payment to Schlegel of a monthly stipend of *f*25 to encourage and support him in his Chinese studies—all to be paid from the Colonial budget. The next day, King William III approved both requests, and on 17 January Minister Pahud notified Duymaer van Twist and Hoffmann. At the same time, Pahud allowed De Grijns to study in Leiden for the next four months. Hoffmann was asked to write regular reports on their progress. From 1 January 1854, Schlegel received a monthly stipend of *f*25, and from 1 February 1854, De Grijns was allowed to study full-time with Hoffmann. This is the moment at which the study of Chinese officially

was launched in Leiden, in combination with the practical interest in Chinese natural history.

Initially there was no connection between Hoffmann and Leiden University. It would take another year before sinology and japanology obtained their first foothold at the University. On 5 December 1854, during the debate on the national budget of 1855 in the Lower house of Parliament (*Tweede Kamer*), Baron B.W.A.E. Sloet tot Oldhuis,⁷⁸ a headstrong liberal with a critical interest in the Indies, recommended to the Minister of Home Affairs C.G.J. van Reenen to establish a chair at Leiden for Chinese and Japanese, and to appoint Hoffmann in that position. His arguments were that no country had as many Chinese subjects as the Netherlands—on Java alone 120,000—while there was not even one European official who could speak Chinese. And for centuries the Netherlands had been the only country having trade relations with Japan. In this country there were more resources for studying these languages than anywhere else in Europe.⁷⁹ While in Paris and Petersburg there were chairs for Chinese and in Kazan perhaps for Japanese,⁸⁰ in Leiden there was none. Moreover, knowledge of both languages was of great scholarly value, and could shed a new light on the history of East Asia. Now the Netherlands had the privilege of possessing Mr. Hoffmann who knew both languages, a combination that was extremely rare. Hoffmann's astonishing erudition was only matched by his great modesty. In the past, he had refused honourable and lucrative offers from other countries out of love for his second fatherland. Finally, the establishment of a chair in Leiden would advance the scholarly fame of the Netherlands and add lustre to Leiden University.

At the same meeting, this proposal was warmly supported by J.C. Baud (1789–1859), one of the foremost Dutch statesmen of the first half of the nineteenth century, who as (acting) Governor-General of the Indies (1833–6) and Minister of Colonies (1840–8) had great influence on colonial policy.⁸¹ Although he represented the old order from before 1848, he was highly respected by his opponents, including the liberal Thorbecke. Baud pleaded both for the *matter* and the *person*, repeating some of the earlier arguments. He first mentioned the unruliness (*alles behalve rustig*) of the Chinese, instancing the troubles on Borneo and the new restrictions on Chinese residence on Java. No one would dispute the need to have a means of communication with these often so 'turbulent' subjects. Now the Government could make known its orders only in Malay, which was sometimes badly spoken and understood by the European officials, often still less well by the Chinese. Moreover, there was no way of checking possibly dangerous Chinese writings that circulated on Java, other than with help of a Chinese with whom one could hardly communicate and who might even be a member of a secret society. In these circumstances, conspiracies could remain concealed and the government's orders could be misunder-

stood, causing unrest instead of peace. Therefore it was desirable that the government should arrange to teach Chinese to one or more Dutchmen.

For Japan the situation was similar. Since there was the prospect of more trade with that country,⁸² means should be found to communicate with the Japanese government. For centuries there had existed a corps of Japanese translators who had learned Dutch, but one could not judge the correctness of their translations of warrants or notices from the Japanese government. It was therefore very important for the government to have someone who knew Japanese and could be fully trusted.

Hoffmann had been employed to assist Von Siebold in writing *Nippon* and other works on Japan, and when that position ended, so did Hoffmann's means of subsistence (in 1846, when Baud was Minister of Colonies). Since Hoffmann was known for his expertise on Japan and China, he was offered attractive positions in the main capitals of Europe, but he preferred to stay in the Netherlands. Several learned men, who highly esteemed Hoffmann (such as C. Leemans), asked the government to make his continued stay in the Netherlands possible. Just at that time the Dutch government was planning to give a friendly advice to the Japanese *shōgun*, for which Hoffmann's help was needed, and it was expected that he would be needed more in the future. Thereupon Hoffmann was appointed as Japanese translator, and he untiringly continued to enlarge his knowledge of Chinese and Japanese. At the same time he also worked on his Japanese dictionary, which he wished to publish in the Netherlands. However, Hoffmann's continued presence was needed not only for practical reasons but also for the scholarly fame of the Netherlands. Hoffmann himself also wished to stay, Baud thought, although he had never made known any wish to obtain a high scholarly rank. The best means to keep him would be to confer on him a scholarly title that would bind this meritorious man forever to the Netherlands. Therefore Baud warmly supported Sloet tot Oldhuis' proposal to establish a chair for Hoffmann. At the end of this session in Parliament, Minister Van Reenen did not immediately react in his concluding remarks, which were rather short because of the late hour.⁸³

One reaction came two weeks later on 18 December 1854, when Pahud wrote a letter to Van Reenen, asking him to establish such an affiliation by appointing J.J. Hoffmann as titular professor.⁸⁴ Possibly this action was influenced by Hoffmann's earlier request to prolong De Grijjs' studies with him and his report on Schlegel's progress of 22 November 1854.⁸⁵

In his letter, Pahud first reminded Van Reenen of Hoffmann's special position and unique qualities. In 1846 Hoffmann had been appointed as Japanese translator for the Netherlands Indies Government at a yearly salary of f1,800. The reason was that other seafaring nations were trying to get contacts with Japan and the Dutch needed a translator who was able to read Japanese official letters that were sent to the Netherlands,

because of its special relationship with Japan. The position of government translator was given him in order to prevent him from accepting offers of university chairs in France and Britain. As a translator Hoffmann several times rendered useful services to the Ministry of Colonies, and he was now even teaching Chinese to two students. Since experts in Chinese and Japanese were rare, and Hoffmann's qualities were well known, it would not be surprising if other nations would offer him a more permanent position. Although the time might not yet have come for the establishment of a chair for these languages at Leiden University, Hoffmann could be given the title of professor (*titel van hoogleeraar*) because of his ability to teach Japanese and Chinese. Pahud asked Van Reenen to consider this option seriously and to cooperate in its realisation.

Van Reenen very quickly, on 26 December 1854, sent a letter in which Pahud's arguments were duly transferred to the Board of Trustees (*College van Curatoren*) of Leiden University. The only difference with Pahud's letter was that Van Reenen now asked for a position of extraordinary professor (*buitengewoon hoogleeraar*). Moreover, as an appendix, he added the original letter from the Society for the Propagation of Christianity among the Chinese which had arrived a few years earlier. It had pleaded for a chair in Chinese language and literature (*leerstool voor de Chinesche taal- en letterkunde*) at one of the universities.⁸⁶ Apparently, this letter had not been taken too seriously before Pahud's request.

On 23 January 1855, the Board of Trustees sent their answer. They wrote that it was not clear to them whether the Minister wished to establish a *chair* for Chinese and Japanese, or just to affiliate Hoffmann with the University to teach those who wished to learn Chinese and Japanese, in which case special instructions for him were needed. In any case, the Board agreed with the suggestion to create a position for Hoffmann to prevent him from going elsewhere. However, it proposed not to offer him the status of extraordinary professor, which was usually reserved for young scholars at the beginning of their scholarly career. This title would not suit the present position of Hoffmann, who had acquired a well-deserved name and already rendered important services to the country. They therefore suggested making Hoffmann a [full] professor of the Japanese and Chinese languages at Leiden University, at a proper salary, at the same time letting him continue his position as Japanese translator for the Netherlands Indies government. Moreover, it should be stipulated that he would be wholly on his own, and would not have a seat in the Senate or Faculty. Only on ceremonial occasions should he have a seat in the Faculty of Arts according to seniority. In case he would be obliged to give public lectures, these should be announced in the *Series Lectionum* (programme of courses) of the Faculty of Arts. In this way, Hoffmann would obtain a position commensurate with his rare qualities. All petty indecorousness and quarrels which his

slightly peculiar relation with the University could easily give rise to could then be avoided. And finally, if necessary, he might have to be naturalised as a Dutchman in order to be appointed.⁸⁷ In other words, they suggested making him a normal professor under special conditions.

On 1 February 1855, this letter was forwarded to Pahud, who asked Hoffmann's opinion. Hoffmann replied on 10 February that a position as honorary professor (*honorair hoogleeraar*) at Leiden, assigned to teach Japanese and Chinese, would be an improvement only if he received a higher yearly salary. Pahud informed Van Reenen on 28 February.⁸⁸

Van Reenen answered on 2 March that there was no objection against Hoffmann's proposal. If only the title were given, Hoffmann would not be a national civil servant (*landsbeambte*) and naturalisation was not necessary. Pahud replied on 5 March that this arrangement would completely satisfy Hoffmann. If he would be naturalised in the future, an appointment as full professor (*gewoon hoogleeraar*) could be considered.⁸⁹

Subsequently, Van Reenen proposed to the King, who gave approval by Royal Decree⁹⁰ on 21 March 1855 that

J. Hoffmann, living in Leiden, who by Royal Decree of 11 December 1846 has been appointed as Japanese translator for the Government of the Netherlands Indies, be given the title of professor (*titel van hoogleeraar*).⁹¹

Both the Trustees and Hoffmann were informed of this Royal Decree, and a few weeks later, on 5 April, Pahud sent a second proposal to the King. He wished to give Hoffmann a raise of *f*1,000 so that his salary would be equal to that of a full professor, to be paid by the Ministry of Colonies, and to stipulate his teaching obligations.⁹² On 9 April 1855, the King gave approval by Royal Decree:

to raise the yearly salary of *f*1,800 ... by *f*1,000, ... and therefore to confer the full sum of *f*2,800 per year as from 1 April 1855, under the obligation to teach Japanese and Chinese without pay also to those who may be assigned to him by the Government.⁹³

In this way, Hoffmann became the first professor of Chinese in the Netherlands, but at the same time he became the first professor of Japanese in the whole Western world.

Pahud again informed Hoffmann, who was extremely grateful for both the title of professor and the raise in salary. He would continue his teaching with the utmost exertion, while his raise in salary would contribute to the flourishing of Chinese and Japanese studies.⁹⁴ These were no idle words, since Hoffmann would indeed continue to lay the basis for Dutch sinology and japanology.

Plans and preparations in Batavia

On 17 January 1854, when Minister Pahud wrote to Hoffmann about the allowance for Schlegel and permission for De Grijs to study Chinese, he at the same time informed Governor-General Duymaer van Twist, permitting him to send two students from Batavia to Canton. This was his response to Van Twist's letter of 10 September 1853, in which a plan and budget for sending two or three youngsters to Canton had been proposed. Pahud now also sent a copy of Hoffmann's advice and asked Van Twist to inform him of the measures that he would take. However, implementation proved difficult, eventually taking about two years.

Van Twist forwarded Pahud's decision and Hoffmann's advice to the Council of the Indies, which on 14 April 1854 asked the Resident of Batavia for his opinion on how the training of interpreters should be organised.⁹⁵ At that time, P. van Rees had just resigned as from 1 May; he was succeeded by A.H.W. de Kock.⁹⁶ On 4 May the new Resident already sent a detailed report to the Council of the Indies, commenting on Hoffmann's advice. He stated that the costs were no problem and that he agreed with Hoffmann that four years of study would be better than three; therefore the total costs would amount to $f22,500 + f7,500 = f30,000$. Sending four or five students would not be excessive, since interpreters were needed in the three towns of Java—Batavia, Semarang, and Surabaya—on the East Coast of Sumatra and the Moluccas, and eventually also elsewhere. But it would be better not to send four to five from the start because of the costs and the probable difficulty of engaging that number of students. Preferably, the students should be of European descent (the previous Resident of Batavia was of the same opinion), and they should be skilled in languages. Since it would not be easy to engage youngsters of 14 to 16 years, the Resident proposed to do an experiment with two students only. A notice should be published in the *Javasche Courant*, and if necessary, the Minister of Colonies should be asked for help in searching for candidates in the Netherlands, where advanced and educated youngsters surely could be found. Housing, livelihood, necessary care, etc. should be provided by the Consul, who could take other measures if the actual costs exceeded \$1,250 per year. As a stimulus for engagement the students should, after completing their studies, be accorded the *radicaal* (qualification) of third- or second-class officials, be put at the disposal of the government and be appointed. All they would have to do in return was to serve the government as sworn translators without fee; translations for private persons could be remunerated for the same fees which other local translators charged according to existing regulations. The Consul should also be asked to send a report every six months on the progress of the students in Canton.⁹⁷

In a second letter of 26 May, the Resident recommended a proposal by A.P.G. Abels, English translator in Batavia.⁹⁸ This proposal can better be understood in the context of the discussion on the monopoly of the Royal Academy⁹⁹ in Delft, the training college for East Indies officials.

The problem was that in principle (there were many exceptions), starting from 1843, all East Indies officials had to be educated in Delft, in order to obtain the *radicaal* of first-class (judiciary, having a degree in law) or second-class (administrative) officials. This was a heavy financial and emotional burden for East Indies officials and their families. Moreover, as there existed no secondary education in the Indies, their children had to be sent to boarding schools in the Netherlands to get a proper education. In 1848, this conflict had contributed to the Batavian 'revolution.' A decade earlier, from 1832 to 1842, (some) East Indies officials had been trained at the Institute for the Javanese Language in Surakarta, but this school was abolished in 1842 and succeeded by the Royal Academy in Delft. In Delft, courses were given in subjects such as literary Javanese and Malay, geography, and ethnology of the Netherlands Indies, and Islamic law, but also in secondary-school subjects. It was considered that this training could better be given in the Netherlands because of the lack of scholarly education and even secondary education in the Indies, and because it was felt that the future officials should have close ties with the mother country. Moreover, there was a general prejudice against youngsters who were born and bred in the Indies, whether of European or of Eurasian descent: they were found "lazy, dissolute, less intelligent and not able to express themselves correctly in Dutch." These prejudices were not entirely without reason. In the 1840s and 1850s, there were many discussions on what would be the best way to discipline the students, who were usually 16 when they entered, in particular those from the Indies.

In the end, this conflict was solved in 1864 when the Royal Academy in Delft was abolished. The system of the *radicaal* was also abolished, and in the future officials were no longer obliged to attend any classes. They were only to pass the *groot-ambtenaarsexamen* (Higher Officials Examination) which was held yearly both in the Netherlands and in the Indies. There was also a *klein-ambtenaarsexamen* (Lower Officials Examination) for the lower functions, corresponding to the original third-class officials.¹⁰⁰ The training school for East Indies officials was abolished in Delft and moved to Leiden.¹⁰¹ Since this was to the chagrin of the Delft Municipality, they founded a new Municipal Institution for training in the languages, geography, and ethnology of the Netherlands Indies, the so-called Indies Institute (*Indische Instelling*), which continued to attract the largest number of students.¹⁰² In Batavia the Indies government founded a similar institution as a special section of the Willem III Gymnasium (Section B). At all three institutions, students could prepare for the Higher Officials Examination at their own expense.

Abels' proposal was favouring the European (and possibly Eurasian) community in Batavia and was drafted in the spirit of Van Hoëvell. At the beginning of 1855 some articles were published on this subject in the Netherlands, but from the point of view of Europeans on Java. An unnamed member of the Indies Society (*Indisch Genootschap*), a society for the study of economic and political questions, established in 1854,¹⁰³ gave a speech on 9 December 1854 at the general meeting in The Hague. This was published in the transactions of that year under the title "Recommendation to employ the so-called native children on Java to study the Chinese language."¹⁰⁴

This speech was a reaction to Sloet tot Oldhuis' plea in Parliament four days earlier (on 5 December 1854) to establish a chair for the Chinese and Japanese languages in Leiden, to be filled by Hoffmann. Sloet's main arguments were that no other country had as many Chinese subjects as the Netherlands. And there was not even one Dutchman on Java who knew Chinese, while there were chairs for Chinese in several other European countries. In his reaction to this, the speaker wished to discuss only the Chinese language from the point of view of its practical value on Java, not for enhancing scholarly knowledge. Chairs at universities mostly had the latter purpose. He also said it was not true that no European with any knowledge of Chinese could be found on Java. Apart from the Reverend Medhurst, he mentioned in particular a young man named Carvalho, who as a child had gone to China with his parents. After his return to Semarang, he could translate some Chinese texts which appeared not to be very favourable to the government. He could also speak the language perfectly. Of course, no one would disagree with Sloet tot Oldhuis that some provision was necessary for studying the language spoken by a large group of Java's population, greatly exceeding the European population in numbers. The Chinese were privileged because they could speak, write, and print whatever they liked, while 'a leaden hand' rested on the European press in the Indies. But the speaker disagreed as to the implementation of the proposals. It would not be wise to wish to teach Chinese in the Netherlands for practical use on Java. In the Indies, only men would be useful who could speak and write Oriental languages as actually spoken and written by Orientals. The necessary practice could not be obtained in the Netherlands. Even the brightest students at the Royal Academy in Delft when they arrived on Java could not express themselves understandably in Malay or Javanese on the most simple matters. Not only did they use the wrong words, but especially their pronunciation was not understandable. They also admitted themselves that their studies in Delft had been ineffective.¹⁰⁵ The speaker concluded that this would be even more the case with Chinese, so that it would be a waste of time to study it in the Netherlands.

As an alternative, the speaker proposed to train 'native children' (*in-*

landsche kinderen), by which he meant Eurasian children on Java, to study Chinese. They would be most suitable since they knew the morals and customs of the Chinese very well and had had contacts with the Chinese from their earliest youth. So it would be less difficult for them to learn the language. This was the more so because they had an aptitude for learning languages and generally could write accurately and in a fair hand (they were mostly employed as clerks). A good handwriting was also a condition for being able to write Chinese with its complicated characters. This would also give them an opportunity to make themselves useful to the large population of 'native children' who were discriminated against by the government in many ways. Moreover, the customs of the 'native children' were close to the Chinese: they were satisfied with simple clothing and food and had the same amusements (later some of these are mentioned: 'cock-fighting, opium smoking, gambling and other vices'). The Chinese and 'native children' also had great trust in each other. Like the Chinese, the 'native children' were shrewd as to their own interests, and even more patient if there was a prospect of (future) material profit. The government should only have to invite candidates, let them study Chinese in their own way, organise examinations, and appoint them. This system was much to be preferred to sending students to Delft. The British had chairs for Oriental languages in British India, and it would likewise be best to establish a school on Java.

Van Hoëvell wrote a review of this in the *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch Indië*. He was not convinced that a chair in the Netherlands would not be of any use, but he pleaded for establishing a school for Oriental languages on Java, where other Oriental languages could also be taught. In another article, a few pages further, he again pleaded for using 'native children.'¹⁰⁶

Abels had heard about the plans to train Chinese interpreters, and sent a detailed report to the Resident on 20 May 1854. He began by stating that when he came to the Indies in 1849 he already had noted the lack of European translators of Chinese. Because there was a large Chinese population, anyone well versed in that language could easily make a living and be very useful. He had also tried to learn Chinese but was hampered by lack of time and the defective communication in Malay which was spoken very badly by his China-born teacher. Now, after hearing of the new plans, he wished to study it again. It would not be impossible to learn the language with the existing tools, but a better-than-average talent for languages and perseverance were necessary. In particular, the beginning was difficult: getting accustomed to the sounds which were 'almost annoying' (*bijna vervelend*). And one needed much diligence and conviction to persevere in a study "which in itself held nothing of interest and nothing to make the labours pleasant."¹⁰⁷ Hoffmann's three to four years seemed to him very short, in particular for youngsters, who would need five to six years. He

also had his doubts as to the results to be gained by sending 13- to 14-year-old children to China; it would be beyond their capacities. They should have a good knowledge of Dutch (which might be defective for those born and bred in the Indies, especially Eurasians), and also of English and French, as they would mainly be trained by English missionaries (!) and most books were written in English. Knowledge of other languages such as French and Latin also helped. Another problem was that it was difficult to assess the stability, steadiness of character, and progress of youngsters and whether in the end they would become capable translators. Therefore Abels proposed to create an opportunity to study Chinese in Batavia: then the high expenses of youngsters in China could be avoided. There would be guarantees for both supervision and assessment of suitability, and it would be easy to increase the number of students according to need.

He proposed to go himself to China to learn the language as fast as possible and, after having gained sufficient knowledge, to return to the Indies accompanied by Chinese teachers who knew English. Then he would establish an institution (*inrigting*) in Batavia to train other students, and at the same time work as a translator. This would be the fastest way to train interpreters. There should be sufficient competition for entering into this institution. For perfecting their skills, especially in the various dialects, if necessary, the students should be sent to China for one year or so, if justified by their progress and behaviour. The advantage of such an institution would be that one could more easily assess the students' suitability and avoid useless expenses if they later appeared unsuitable. Monthly or yearly exams could also be a stimulus for the students. Also, note could more easily be taken of the development of their unstable character at that age. Studies are often pushed aside by passions. It would be difficult to influence students in a country far away, while a lot of patience and perseverance were necessary for this study. It would also be easy to enlarge the institution in Batavia; this would assure constant availability of translators. Probably the benefits to be obtained would attract many to seek admittance at their own expense.

Abels asked to be sent to China for two or three years. His former teacher told him three years would suffice as preparation for the work of a translator. Of course, he would not gain full control of the language, but the daily work as a translator would in itself lead to more knowledge. He said that he had a certain talent for and interest in learning languages. His studies would be on a scholarly level. He wished to be of use to society and at the same time assure the future of himself and his family. His conditions were that all expenses, which he estimated at \$250 monthly, should be paid by the government. After three years he should have a salary of *f*500. To guarantee his success, he was willing to accept supervision by the Consul and any other measure taken.

In its advice and considerations for the Governor-General (6 June 1854), the Council of the Indies in general agreed with the opinions of the Resident of Batavia, but not in all respects.

This concerns the training of scholarly interpreters (*wetenschappelijk opgeleide tolken*) for the Chinese language, who are not only capable of translating, but also of transmitting their knowledge to others and training others. According to Hoffmann, a person trained to such a scholarly level should have a thorough knowledge of French and English, should learn the character script first, and then Mandarin or Cantonese. He should at the same time receive a secondary education, which does not exist in the Indies. Therefore, the Council is convinced that it is better to train them in the Netherlands. It does not support Abels' request. The reasons are that this would only entail the training of one interpreter whose later training would take place in the Netherlands Indies, where there is much less opportunity to obtain a scholarly education than in the Netherlands. Its advice is to train two youngsters in the Netherlands at the expense of the Netherlands Indies government, send them in their sixteenth or seventeenth year to the Netherlands Indies and China, and complete their studies with Mandarin or Cantonese.

The Governor-General also asked advice from Tonco Modderman¹⁰⁸ (letter dated 28 September 1854), who was at the time Consul in Canton. Modderman answered with a letter dated Macao, 13 November 1854. He thought it would not be difficult to train interpreters in China. It was easy to find native language teachers, who understood enough English to express their thoughts. A yearly sum of \$1,250 would be sufficient. He agreed to accept students 12 to 15 years old, but they should know English. Youngsters with a quick mind and a good memory should be chosen, who had already finished their secondary schooling, since after arrival in China they could only learn Chinese. If four students were sent, he asked to send two of 12-13 years and two of 15-16 years. But he believed very few parents would be willing to send their 12- or even 16-year-old children to China. Supervision was the only problem. This could be solved by having the students live inside the consulate and make them subordinate to the Consul as aspirant-officials. "The Spanish government proceeded in the same manner for the translators that are trained here on its account." Although it did not seem an easy task, he was ready to do it. His only condition was the reimbursement of expenses at \$70 monthly per student. Of the total expenses of \$1,250, minus $12 \times \$70 = \840 , there would remain \$410, of which $12 \times \$15 = \180 was for the teacher, \$25 for books and writing utensils, and for servants $12 \times \$6 = \72 , clothing etc. \$135. He was ready to receive the students as soon as the civil war in the province of Guangdong (the Taiping rebellion) had ended and foreign trade was opened again. Another advantage of studying in Canton was that the students could ask advice from the well-known English and American sinologists who resided there. Abels' proposal seemed unacceptable to the

Consul because he was too advanced in age (he was about 27), was married and with a family. This would be too expensive. It would even be more expensive if he studied in Canton, and it would be risky to make everything depend upon one person's life, health and suitability. He might pass away after three or four years of study.¹⁰⁹

After Governor-General Duymaer van Twist received this letter, the Main Commission of Education (*Hoofdcommissie van Onderwijs*) was asked to search for candidates in schools and among those receiving private education with "a special talent for languages, thorough knowledge and speaking ability in English etc.," but they did not find anyone. Then A.L. Gastmann, the director of the Herwijnen Institute, a private secondary school near Bogor,¹¹⁰ was also asked to search, and he did find two candidates, J.E. Albrecht and M. von Faber, who were 'suitable and willing,' and had their parents' consent.¹¹¹

Since only two candidates could be found, the new Consul in Canton, J. des Amorie van der Hoeven,¹¹² suggested searching for other candidates in the Netherlands.

Apart from Abels, two other candidates sent in petitions probably asking to be sent to China: the above-mentioned R.J.M.N. Kussendrager on 4 October 1854 and G. Seel jr.¹¹³ on 15 February 1855, but both were rejected.

Finally, on 10 October 1855¹¹⁴ Governor-General Duymaer van Twist decided to send Albrecht and Von Faber to Canton to be trained in Chinese under the special supervision of the Netherlands Consul, and after finishing their studies and having obtained sufficient knowledge, to be appointed as interpreters for Chinese and to train others for the same. They would live with the Consul in Canton, and all needs would be paid for by the government, including clothing, medical care, pocket money etc., books and writing utensils, as well as passage to and from China. For expenses in China, an amount of \$1,250 (or f3,200 at an exchange rate of 2.56) would be available for each.

Van Hoëvell wrote in 1856 in his *Tijdschrift* that this decision was very satisfactory for many in the Indies, adding that for a long time, he had often drawn attention to the government's need for officials who could understand Chinese (for instance in his review of 1849 mentioned above), and now finally the government had accepted his advice, although without acknowledging its origin. And he was even more happy that two 'native children' (in this case, Europeans, born and bred in the Indies) were chosen. He wished them the best. They would be watched critically by those who thought that all East Indies officials should be educated in the Netherlands.¹¹⁵

However, on the same day on which the Governor-General sent the two students to Canton, he asked Minister of Colonies Pahud to train two

youngsters in the Netherlands at the expense of the Netherlands Indies government.¹¹⁶

Albrecht and Von Faber were the first Dutch students to study in China. They left Batavia on or shortly after 16 January 1856 and must have arrived in China in February 1856,¹¹⁷ where they studied in Canton, Macao, and Amoy for four and a half years until the summer of 1860.

