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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 SIX

### CHINESE TEACHERS/CLERKS IN THE INDIES

#### *The origin of the teacher system*

The Chinese language is not an easy one, and mastering it is a life-long affair. For the nineteenth-century Dutch sinologists it was even more difficult than it is nowadays, because the classical language then used in writing was much more complicated than modern Chinese. They faced a scarcity of reference works, and, as a spoken language, they could not just study Mandarin but had to learn one or more Southern dialects. Moreover, all sinologists from other Western countries in China were assisted by Chinese clerks. Therefore, after finishing their studies in China, all interpreters hired a Chinese language teacher/clerk (*taalmeeester/schrijver*) to accompany them to the Indies.

The system of engaging a teacher in China was initiated by Albrecht and Von Faber, the first Chinese interpreters to be appointed in the Indies in 1860. It all began with a defective translation. In the autumn of 1859 Government Secretary A. Loudon in Batavia asked the students in China, via the Consul, to make an assessment of the quality of the Chinese translations of three ordinances of the Indies government. The Consul forwarded the texts to the students in Amoy. These texts had, as always, first been translated from Dutch into Malay and then from Malay into Chinese. Albrecht, in his reply to the Consul, opined that “many essential elements were lacking in the Chinese translation,” and his opinion was supported by reports from Von Faber and De Grijs.<sup>1</sup>

When one compares this criticism with the Chinese translations and summaries of Dutch ordinances and other documents now kept in the Kong Koan Archives in Leiden,<sup>2</sup> one finds the latter are full of Malay and dialect words, but were probably understandable to contemporary literate Chinese on Java. However, these transliterations of personal names, official titles, and technical terms have given modern historians a lot of headaches.<sup>3</sup>

The translations sent to Canton had probably been made by a Chinese in Java who had not received much Chinese education. Perhaps there were doubts about their quality, and the Government Secretary wished to use the opportunity to have Chinese translations checked by the newly trained interpreters.

Albrecht concluded that the discovery of these deficient translations was

very disappointing for them. At first he had thought that Chinese clerks on Java would be suitable enough to assist the European interpreters, but now he found he had been wrong, and it was indispensable to bring along a teacher from China. On Java he would of course, in the beginning, have to make use of Chinese clerks to gather information, but in order to continue his studies there, he could not use people who knew less of their language than he did himself. Moreover, the interpreters would perhaps be charged with the training of other translators, and that would be impossible without a Chinese teacher, in particular when teaching the pronunciation.<sup>4</sup> In the decision to send the two students to Canton in 1855, it had been stipulated that after having gained enough knowledge of the language, they would be appointed as interpreters *and* they were to train other interpreters in the Indies.<sup>5</sup>

In the same letter, on 10 December 1859, the Dutch 'Consul in Canton,' J. des Amorie van der Hoeven, wrote to Governor-General Pahud that in the next year the students would be "adequately equipped" to be appointed, and

that they considered it highly advisable that in the beginning they should be assisted by schoolteachers from China, both for continuing their studies and because they would have to train other interpreters. This could not be done without a Chinese teacher, in particular for the spoken language.<sup>6</sup>

In April 1860, while still in Amoy, Albrecht and Von Faber were appointed in the Indies, without specification of the location, and they were also allowed to engage two Amoy teachers and decide upon their salary.<sup>7</sup>

### *The first teachers*

Albrecht and Von Faber searched for suitable teachers in Amoy. As from 15 May 1860, Albrecht hired Tan Kioe Djin 陳求仁, whose son was already living on Java.<sup>8</sup> Von Faber could not find a suitable teacher in Amoy who was willing to go to Java, but he found a teacher from Canton, Han Bong Ki 韓蒙杞,<sup>9</sup> who was a teacher of Cantonese, and he engaged him from the same date.

Their salaries were 10 Spanish dollars (*Spaansche matten*) per month (= f25.50),<sup>10</sup> with the prospect of a raise in case of good behaviour and proven suitability, and possibly to be enlarged with other emoluments. Of teacher Han's monthly salary of \$10, almost half (\$4 or f10.20) was to be paid to his wife and children by the 'Consul in Canton.'<sup>11</sup> The teachers also received a handsel (*handgeld*) of 30 Spanish dollars. On 31 July 1860, Governor-General Pahud decided to raise this salary from f25.50 to f30 per month.<sup>12</sup> This was the same as the salary accorded to native school-

teachers in the Netherlands Indies since 1858.<sup>13</sup> This fixed salary was not very high, but the teachers were allowed to keep any other emoluments, which they might earn in their spare time, for instance for non-official translation jobs, just as the interpreters themselves were expected to do.<sup>14</sup> Around the same time, the salary of the European interpreters was fixed at f300, ten times that of the schoolteacher!<sup>15</sup>

In Governor-General Pahud's decision, these teachers were consistently called "Amoy teachers" and the transcription of their names is according to the Amoy dialect, but Han Bong Ki was a native of Canton. He is one of the few teachers about whom a little more is known. Von Faber wrote in a letter:

Han Bong Ki is a refined and literate man who in China obtained the academic distinction nearest to the doctor's degree and he is from a distinguished family.<sup>16</sup>

In other words, he had probably passed the provincial examinations and was a second-degree graduate (*juren* 舉人), one grade below "doctor" (*jinsshi* 進士).<sup>17</sup> Von Faber also wrote that Han Bong Ki was "a man of character, in every sense worthy of trust."<sup>18</sup>

After their arrival in the Indies, probably in August, there were problems right from the start. Albrecht and Von Faber's request to be stationed on Java was rejected, and they were sent to the Outer Possessions in accordance with the original plan of the government.<sup>19</sup> Tan Kioe Djin, whose son was living on Java, refused to follow Albrecht to Mentok (Bangka) and stayed in Batavia, lying ill in bed (*bedlegerig*) for a long time. Finally he requested to be allowed to resign and to return to China. His request was complied with on 21 November 1860, with the stipulation that he was "to return to China speedily, if possible at his own expense, and in case that was impossible, in the cheapest way at government expense."<sup>20</sup> The latter probably meant he was to board a Chinese junk. In the end, he did return to China, but Albrecht did not obtain a replacement for Tan Kioe Djin until March 1864, when he took over Francken's teacher Oei Tsoe Khing.<sup>21</sup> Han Bong Kie also had a problem, but it was easier to solve. On 18 August 1860, Von Faber wrote to General Secretary A. Loudon that Han Bong Kie had not yet received his salary for three months, from 15 May to 15 August,<sup>22</sup> but this was probably paid to him soon.

### *A raise in salary for the teachers*

Two years later, in 1862, De Grijs tried to engage teachers in Amoy for Schlegel and Francken, who were at the time studying in Canton. He succeeded only after much trouble and had to raise the monthly salary to

25 Mexican dollars (*f*63.75), to be reckoned from the day of departure (in April), not counting other possible emoluments that the teachers might earn.<sup>23</sup> These teachers were named Ti Tik Khing and Oei Tsoe Khing, and originated from Tsjang-tsaauw and Chong Cheuy, probably both meaning Tsiangtsiu (Zhangzhou).

In August 1862, Von Faber was transferred from Montrado to Batavia, where he was appointed at the same time as Schlegel. It then appeared that Han Bong Ki's salary of *f*30 was less than half that of Schlegel's teacher Ti Tik Khing, who earned \$25 or *f*63.75. With the help of Von Faber, Han Bong Ki requested to raise his salary to 25 Mexican dollars monthly, the same as the other teachers. Han Bong Ki's arguments were that when he signed the first contract in China, he had not expected expenses in the Indies were so high, and moreover, life in Batavia was much more expensive than in Montrado. Finally, in case his request was not complied with, he would be obliged to return to China after the expiration of his contract.<sup>24</sup> Von Faber wrote in his letter that the difficulties of the Chinese language were well known, but for the interpreter they were *interminable*, and in the first years unsurmountable without the help of a Chinese worthy of trust and completely independent of his fellow-countrymen. His salary should be sufficient for this purpose.<sup>25</sup>

The new Resident of Batavia, D.F. Schaap, wrote a letter to Director of Finance J.W.C. Diepenheim supporting this request, but he also raised a more basic question, expressing doubts about the necessity of having a teacher:

But it sounds strange that students after their final promotion and appointment as interpreters constantly need to have a teacher assigned to them, in order to keep up the language. / The peculiar difficulties of the Chinese language seem to make this assignment indispensable. At least, that is what the interpreter Von Faber stated in his appended letter.<sup>26</sup>

This question would be raised again three years later, and the answer would be that teachers/clerks were indeed necessary, but the doubt remained. In any case, Governor-General Sloet van de Beele decided to grant Han Bong Kie the same salary as Ti and Oei: 25 Mexican dollars monthly.<sup>27</sup>

This salary was not unreasonable, since

the Chinese in Batavia pay the governors of their children *f*50 to *f*125 per month. This is shown in a report by the interpreter Schlegel on the Chinese schools in Batavia.<sup>28</sup>

Two years later, Governor-General Sloet wrote a letter to ask Minister of Colonies Fransen van de Putte for approval of the salary of Han's successor Lo Ling Kaai, and summarised the arguments as follows:

for a literate Chinese the sum of *f*30 monthly for a Chinese language teacher is very low indeed. In the main towns, especially in Batavia, one cannot live on this in accordance with one's standing. Chinese artisans and even coolies

generally earn more. Moreover experience has shown that for that price one can no longer find Chinese teachers.<sup>29</sup>

After this decision, all teachers were to be paid 25 Mexican dollars per month.<sup>30</sup>

Only the names and places of origin of the teachers of the other early interpreters are known. In the summer of 1864, Buddingh engaged Tsen Kin Sioe, a Hakka, arranged by the Dutch Consul in Hong Kong, for four years. Groeneveldt hired the Hakka teacher Tsjoë Tsjoek Kong for five years. Schaalje employed the teacher Tsioë Tot Koan from Amoy for three years.<sup>31</sup> On 26 August 1864, De Grijs engaged a teacher named K'eng from Amoy for three years.<sup>32</sup> From July 1866 De Breuk hired Li Phoe Nien from Amoy for three years,<sup>33</sup> and from 13 February 1867 Meeter took on Tsjhin Koei Liem, a Hakka, also for three years.<sup>34</sup>

From the beginning, the dialect to be studied was to depend upon the place of stationing of the interpreters. Teachers were also engaged according to the most common dialect at the place of stationing. From 1862 on, interpreters to be appointed on Java engaged an Amoy (or Tsiangtsiu) teacher, while those who were appointed in the Outer Provinces hired Hakka teachers. But starting in the 1870s, they sometimes engaged teachers in China who did not speak the most common dialect of their place of stationing, and they were sometimes allowed to hire another teacher for the local dialect.

### *The quality of the teachers*

In 1863, Buddingh and Groeneveldt experienced difficulties in finding suitable teachers for their studies in China. In a letter to his uncle Herman Schlegel, Buddingh wrote:

Now we also lack good teachers, because the ones we got from Hong Kong arranged by missionaries, are *nitwits*. We'll probably have to wait until 1865 to get better people to accompany us to Borneo, because the ones we now have don't understand any books except the classics which they learned by heart at school in their youth.<sup>35</sup>

The next year, when they left China, they had indeed found other teachers who were probably better qualified.

In the introduction to his Dutch–Chinese dictionary, Schlegel gave his not very flattering opinion on the teachers/clerks in general, comparing the different circumstances of the interpreters in China and in the Indies.

Now, whilst in China, an interpreter can dispose of skilled, scientifically educated and learned Chinese writers, he has, in the Indies, to make shift somehow with a plucked Chinese student, who is persuaded to leave his fa-

therland, and follow one of the interpreters as a writer, in the hope of making perhaps his fortune in the Indies. Little assistance, except for the material work of copying out the translated papers, is rendered by such writers to the Chinese interpreter, as we know by our own experience.<sup>36</sup>

Probably for this reason, in 1865 in their report on the need of a language teacher, Schlegel and Von Faber wrote that if a teacher proved to be less suitable, it should be possible to replace him without having to ask for the government's approval.<sup>37</sup>

The teachers left few traces in the archives, but there is ample proof that at least some of them had very good handwriting. Among the papers left by De Grijns and Hoetink, many neatly copied Chinese translations can be found that were doubtless written by their Chinese teachers/clerks.<sup>38</sup>

Schlegel's negative opinion about the teachers in general was not shared by all his colleagues. Some interpreters later brought along from China highly educated and learned men as teachers, who were much more than mere copyists. Examples are Groeneveldt's teacher Tan Siu Eng, who also worked for De Jongh, Hoetink, and Stuart, and Hoetink's teacher Jo Hoae Giok, who was highly respected by Borel, Stuart and Van Wettum (*see* section about these teachers below, and Chapter Twelve, section "Working as Translators").

### *The discharge of teachers*

Only of three teachers is the end of their employment known. Of course, their salary was not very high, in particular before 1862, and the above-quoted judgement on the teachers/clerks by Schlegel was rather critical, so it would not seem surprising if a teacher wished to return to China or was even dismissed. In 1860, Albrecht's teacher Tan Kioe Djin was the first to be sent back, the reason being that he refused to go to Mentok. In 1864, both teachers in Batavia resigned one after the other, and both brought forward the classical argument of urgent family affairs—possibly there was another reason not fit for reporting to the government.

On 9 August 1864, Von Faber's teacher Han Bong Ki requested to resign: his aged mother had passed away and he should be present at her funeral, and there were other urgent family affairs pressing him to return home since he was the only son. Supported by Von Faber, he also asked to return by steamship, as it was not the right season for sailing ships to go to China and he had come to the Indies with Von Faber by steam. On 24 September 1864, his requests were complied with. He was succeeded by Lo Ling Kaai,<sup>39</sup> who was already living in Batavia and whom Von Faber knew "as a solid man, who would be perfectly suitable for the work to be done by him and was in every respect trustworthy."<sup>40</sup> Lo Ling Kaai was



engaged on the same conditions as Han Bong Ki, but a small part of his salary, f10.20 or \$4, was to be paid by the Dutch Consul to Han Jaúwan in Canton, who was perhaps his wife.<sup>41</sup>

A few months later, Schlegel's teacher Ti Tik Khing also wished to resign. Schlegel wrote on 15 December 1864:

According to the latest news from China, his ancestral town Tsjang-tsjaaúw [Tsiangtsiu/Zhangzhou] has been taken by rebels who have massacred most of the population.<sup>42</sup> Ti Tik Khing's brother is in that town, and since the month of October no news of him has been received. If his brother has been killed, Ti Tik Khing would be the next person responsible for the family and be obliged to return to China as soon as possible in order to take care of the family affairs.<sup>43</sup>

Ti Tik Khing requested his resignation as from 1 January 1865; this was complied with, although his three-year contract would only expire in April 1865. From 1 January 1865, Schlegel engaged Poei Boen Phiauw for three years; Poei was already living in Batavia. He had been a schoolteacher at the Chinese Free School (*Vrije School*) or Gie Oh 義學, 'public school without school fees.'<sup>44</sup> Thus, competent teachers were to be found on Java after all, especially among the schoolteachers hired to educate Chinese children on Java; this fact was also acknowledged by Albrecht in the same year.<sup>45</sup>

### *Reports on the need of a teacher/clerk*

In 1865, Governor-General Sloet noted that all seven interpreters had hired a teacher for several years for \$25 monthly. Each time, Royal Approval had been asked for their appointment and replacement. To avoid copious correspondence (*ter voorkoming van geschrijf*) in the future, he wished to put these salaries on the budget. But before he made this decision, he asked the interpreters to write reports on the necessity of having teachers. They were to report

whether and why they would constantly need the help of a Chinese clerk or language teacher as assigned to them, and if not, when they could do without such help.<sup>46</sup>

The local Residents were also asked for their opinions. All interpreters then wrote reports, to which the Residents added their opinions. These not only clarify the role of the teachers, but also give valuable insight into the interpreters' own activities.<sup>47</sup>

De Grijjs (in Semarang) stated that the schoolteacher/clerk was now indispensable for two reasons: literary style and difficult handwriting. He started with an exposé on the complexity of the Chinese language. A Chinese essay of any kind usually consisted of a number of stock phrases that

the Chinese literati were able to combine in various ways; for a European it was an almost hopeless affair to completely get to know and master the use of such phrases. For translations into Chinese of official correspondence with Chinese government officials, the assistance of a teacher was indispensable. Therefore, all interpreters in China, such as those from England, France, and the United States, were assisted by Chinese teachers in order to obtain a clear style. Since De Grijs had accompanied the diplomatic mission of the Netherlands to China in 1863, he was probably more aware of this than his colleagues.<sup>48</sup> But, De Grijs continued, the interpreters did not need the teachers for the translation of simple notices or police regulations that were written in fairly easy language, although the less elegant style might betray the European translator.

On the other hand, translating from Chinese into Dutch was not so difficult, as long as the characters were written legibly. When reading the 'grass' or cursive script (*gras- of vlugschrift*), the assistance of the teachers was necessary, but sometimes even they had to guess the characters from the context, and they had to know expressions and compounds in both the literary and colloquial style. De Grijs added that if he could get much practice in reading the cursive script, for instance in account-books, letters, bookkeeping of the pawnshops and opium dens etc., he could soon do without the assistance of the teacher, but that was not the case. Now he could only practice his reading ability on the cursive writing of his teacher, and that was not enough. Another complication was that the Chinese of Java used countless Malay words written in Chinese characters, preferably in cursive writing, in their commercial books and letters.

As to the colloquial language, De Grijs did not need the teacher. It should be remembered that he studied and worked in China for seven and a half years. His conclusion was that he would need the teacher for three years and that the best way to become independent of the teacher would be to be charged with work concerning the Chinese by the Assistant Resident of Police.<sup>49</sup> In a letter of 21 August 1865, the Resident of Semarang A.A.M.V. Keuchenius supported his report.

Schlegel and Von Faber (both in Batavia) reported that the assistance of the teacher/clerk was indispensable. As a teacher, he was indispensable for sustaining their level in Chinese, which, because of its difficulty, could not be neglected for a moment. It had often been said that the Chinese language was the most difficult one in the world, and that one had to devote one's entire life to studying it in order to learn it and keep it up. The Chinese usually needed fifty years of study to obtain a degree at the Peking Academy: no wonder Europeans needed still more time!

As a clerk, the teacher was necessary for copying out Chinese texts: this would be very time-consuming for the interpreter, and the time was much needed for studying. Chinese clerks or teachers were indispensable during

the whole career of the interpreter. But if a teacher proved unsuitable, it should be possible to replace him with another one without being obliged to ask for the government's approval.<sup>50</sup>

The Resident of Batavia, J.C. de Kock van Leeuwen,<sup>51</sup> agreed in his letter with their proposal, but according to him, only one teacher would suffice for the two interpreters in Batavia. However, he also thought one interpreter in Batavia would suffice as they did not have much work to do, Schlegel doing the oral interpretations and Von Faber the written translations. But if one of the two interpreters would be transferred to a place where his services would be more profitable, both should keep their teachers. In any case, the teachers should not be replaced without government interference.<sup>52</sup>

Albrecht (in Surabaya) wrote in his report that he could not do without his clerk Oei Tsoe Khing, who had originally been Francken's teacher. He noted that his former clerk Tan Kioe Djin had been dismissed and sent back to China by the Resident of Batavia in 1860. The teacher was indispensable due to the difficulty of the Chinese language and the vastness of the field of study. Any Chinese claiming to be a literatus devoted all his life to studying. For Chinese it was already difficult, the more so for Europeans, in particular in the Indies where there was hardly any Chinese with a knowledge worth mentioning. In the Indies, Chinese literati could be found only among the teachers of Chinese youth. To solve the difficulties adequately, the interpreter should be assisted by a Chinese who had been educated properly in China. This was necessary not only for the continuation of his studies, but also to keep up what he had learned, as the number of textbooks by Europeans was very insufficient. Without doubt, the other European interpreters would also need the assistance of Chinese teachers; it would be a heavy job for them to study entirely by themselves.<sup>53</sup>

Schaalje (in Riau) wrote in a short report that he would always need the assistance of a literate Chinese as a clerk to copy out translations and other documents in a good readable style. He would similarly need him as a language teacher to help him read badly written documents and overcome other difficulties that would always come up, and also to assist with his continuing studies of Chinese.<sup>54</sup> The Resident of Riau, E. Netscher,<sup>55</sup> added in his letter that many different Chinese dialects were spoken on Lingga and Riau, and that their handwriting was so imperfect that the interpreter needed the assistance of a capable Chinese. Without his help, it was to be feared that the correctness of some translations would leave much to be desired.<sup>56</sup>

Buddingh (in Mentok) wrote the longest report, to which were added the most detailed comments by P.A. Gijsbers, the Residency's Secretary.<sup>57</sup> Presumably, Buddingh had the greatest problems; he incidentally was also the first to pass away (in 1870). In China, he had first studied the Amoy

dialect, and then Hakka with a teacher in Amoy. He never studied Hakka in the Hakka districts; this would have caused so many problems and costs, if not dangers, that it was never even tried.<sup>58</sup> It had been suggested to have the aspirant interpreters continue their studies in Amoy until they had learnt enough of Chinese to continue their studies of the Guangdong or Fujian dialects in the Indies, depending on where they would be stationed. Buddingh concluded that he would need the assistance of a teacher for at least seven years. The teacher whom he had engaged, however, did not want a contract for longer than four years. And if Buddingh were transferred to another place where he would have to learn another dialect than Hakka, he would need a teacher permanently. The reasons were as follows:<sup>59</sup>

1. He had studied in China for only two years, while others had studied for four or five years in China.
2. He had only worked as an interpreter for less than one year.
3. There was no opportunity to associate with Hakka Chinese in Mentok: there were only *peranakan* Chinese, who were born in the Netherlands Indies in Mentok, and who could not very well understand the Chinese language and were even less able to speak or to explain it.
4. It was too heavy a burden to study two completely different languages at the same time (Hakka and Amoy).
5. Nothing had been published on the Hakka language that could be of any help, whether in China or in European languages, except for the *Gospel of Matthew* in romanisation, not in Chinese characters.<sup>60</sup>

Buddingh wished to have a teacher for the same number of years as the other interpreters (on which his computation of seven years was based). Interpreters in China from other nations had teachers assigned to them during their full time of service, and these were on the payroll of their governments or missionary societies.<sup>61</sup>

Secretary Gijsbers then gave a detailed description of the work of the interpreter.<sup>62</sup> Here we will only mention the interpreter's task in courts of law, as this gives some insight into Buddingh's need for further study. His function in the courts was mainly that of interpreter of the translations done by the Chinese officer (*officier*), which would be easier than others for him to understand. He also had to check these translations by the Chinese officers, that is, as far as he could understand the original words of the witnesses and defendants, and report to the Court in case he noticed any defects. In the courts he could also practice his knowledge of dialect variations. Moreover, the checking of the account books was done by the interpreter with the help of Chinese officers, who knew one or more Chinese languages better than the interpreter. From this description it is clear that Buddingh needed a teacher, although Gijsbers added that Buddingh could go to the *kampong* to practice his Hakka,

or practice while accompanying the Resident to the mine districts. It is not certain whether the other interpreters were in the same predicament as he was. In any case, the position in Mentok was abolished three years later.

Groeneveldt (in Pontianak) considered it desirable for various reasons to permanently assign a literate Chinese as a clerk to all interpreters. The first reason was the difficulty of the Chinese language. Nobody could reach a level of complete mastery of the language in four or five years. Moreover, the students had to spend the first part of their study mainly on the spoken language, so during the first years after their appointment in the Indies, they would often need the assistance of their clerk to perform their translation duties. They also had to continue diligently the study of the written language, in order to obtain a scholarly knowledge of Chinese. For the continuation of their studies, the help of a literate Chinese was again indispensable.

After some time of continued study, they could do without the help of the clerk when making translations etc., but still needed him for scholarly studies of the language. Although these could not be considered to be a direct service to the government, Groeneveldt thought the support of the Government in this respect should be expected.

Groeneveldt was also of the "humble opinion" that more could be asked from the Chinese interpreter than simply translating.<sup>63</sup> He should be acquainted with everything concerning the Chinese in the region where he was stationed, know their needs, etc. Therefore, it was very useful for him, often even necessary, to have a trusted Chinese at his side, "who can see where he himself cannot see."<sup>64</sup> Finally, he repeated the argument which the others had already raised, that European consuls and missionaries in China all had Chinese clerks for linguistic reasons and in order to obtain information on the country and people.<sup>65</sup>

Resident R. Wijnen<sup>66</sup> agreed with Groeneveldt's advice to keep the teacher, "provided that the language teachers are not brought in as a mere cipher but are used for the purpose they are paid for."<sup>67</sup> He added that Groeneveldt had a scholarly education and studied a lot; he absolutely needed his teacher for his studies. If the teacher were taken away from him, he would have the choice to either give up his studies or pay the teacher himself. The latter would be problematic, since he had no other emoluments. Translating was not his main work, but the Resident sent him on several missions, where Groeneveldt needed a loyal assistant who was independent of the various factions among the Chinese and who could "see where he cannot see," as Groeneveldt had said.<sup>68</sup>

All reports show that the Chinese teacher/clerk was indispensable both as a teacher for continuing study and as an assistant enabling the interpreters to do their work properly.

*The final regulation of the teacher system (1866)*

The reports were sent to the Council of the Indies to hear their advice on the question whether or not a certain credit should be asked from the 'supreme government' (*opperbestuur*) (the Ministry of Colonies in the Netherlands) for salaries of the Chinese teachers, in other words whether or not the Netherlands Indies government should be authorised to assign teachers instead of having to ask the 'supreme government' for approval of each teacher. The advice of the Council was that the need for the interpreters of the Chinese language, or rather Chinese languages, to have teachers was based on good arguments; otherwise their studies would be neglected, and a lot of money would be wasted. So the Council agreed to ask for a certain credit. In contrast to the Resident of Batavia, they thought the interpreter should be free to choose a Chinese teacher, any government interference except checking whether there was such a teacher was not advisable. On the other hand, the reports of the interpreters raised doubts as to whether enough use was being made of them, as much as was expected when they were appointed.<sup>69</sup>

Thereupon Governor-General Sloet decided to allot f 5,355 for the salaries of the seven teachers ( $7 \times 12 \times f 63.75$ ) for 1866–7, and in the future to make this a fixed item on the budget.<sup>70</sup> He asked Minister of Colonies Fransen van de Putte for approval. In the end Royal Approval was obtained for this, but Fransen van de Putte sourly repeated the Council of the Indies' opinion in his accompanying letter to Governor-General Sloet:

I take the liberty of adding that the dependent situation in which the European interpreters seem to be with respect to the Chinese clerks and teachers testifies little to the success of training Europeans as Chinese interpreters. The Council of the Indies seems to have the same opinion in their advice of 30 June 1865 no. IX.<sup>71</sup>

Following the others, he thereby showed a lack of understanding of the complexity of the Chinese language, but fortunately this remark had no consequences.

*The teachers Tan Siu Eng and Jo Hoae Giok*

All later interpreters were allowed to take along a teacher/clerk from China to the Indies on the same conditions as the earlier interpreters.<sup>72</sup> Very few names of the later teachers are known. Since it had become standard procedure to engage a teacher, there was no need to mention their names in the correspondence with the Ministry of Colonies.<sup>73</sup>



13. *The teacher/clerk Tan Siu Eng, Batavia, ca. 1902 (KITLV Collection).*

The teacher about whom most is known is the *xiucai* (graduate) Tan Siu Eng 陳琇榮 (Tan Sioe Ing, Amoy, 1833 – Batavia, 1906), but even about him there is mostly indirect evidence. Tan Siu Eng was probably engaged by Groeneveldt in 1874 on his return from Shanghai to the Indies. According to Tan's descendants, he was engaged in Amoy by Groeneveldt in order to work in the Indies for six months. He was to act as an expert on Chinese law in the Orphans Chamber of Batavia. But six months later, when he was about to board a ship to return to China, his wife and children suddenly arrived in the harbour, and he therefore decided to stay.<sup>74</sup> There is evidence that Tan was the teacher/clerk of Groeneveldt, and he may even have been kept by him after Groeneveldt left the interpreters' corps in 1877; later Tan worked for three other interpreters in Batavia: De Jongh (1890–3, 1895), Hoetink (1892–8) and Stuart (1898–1906).<sup>75</sup> His name was once mentioned in a government decision of 1895 when he was assigned as a clerk to De Jongh (*see* illustration 13).<sup>76</sup>



According to his descendants, Tan Siu Eng worked as Groeneveldt's assistant for many years, accompanying him on his travels.<sup>77</sup> After Groeneveldt became a member of the Council of the Indies in 1889, in 1890 he was sent on a mission to French Indo-China to investigate the local opium monopoly. He was accompanied by the interpreter De Jongh as his secretary, but he was also allowed to take along "a Chinese of his choice" to act as his assistant, in a position similar to the interpreters' clerks. The Chinese assistant probably also was supposed to gather information among the Chinese in Indo-China. Groeneveldt must have taken along his former teacher/clerk Tan Siu Eng. During this journey, his Chinese assistant kept an (anonymous) travel diary that is now in the East Asian Library in Leiden.<sup>78</sup>

Tan Siu Eng's son Tan Kaij Thee 陳開堤 (1862–85) also worked as a teacher/clerk for one of the interpreters. Some time after Roelofs was appointed in Batavia in 1879,<sup>79</sup> he engaged Tan Kaij Thee as his teacher/clerk. The minutes of the Chinese Council (*Chinese Raad*, Kong Koan) state that

Kaij Thee was born and brought up in China, and later he was the personal secretary (*mubin* 幕賓) of a Dutch interpreter (*Helan fanyiguan* 和蘭翻譯官), and he also was a schoolteacher for several years.

He was considered "better educated and more experienced" than another candidate for the function of secretary in the Chinese Council.<sup>80</sup> Later he was mentioned as "Tan Kaij Thee, who was the personal secretary of the translator of Chinese (*Huazi fanyiguan* 華字翻譯官)."<sup>81</sup> A few months after June 1883, when Roelofs was allowed sick leave to the Netherlands,<sup>82</sup> Tan Kaij Thee was appointed as second secretary (二朱葛礁 *dzi tsu-koah-ta*) of the Chinese Council in Batavia.<sup>83</sup>

Another teacher about whom a little more is known was Jo Hoae Giok 楊懷玉 (in Mandarin Yang Huaiyu) from Amoy. He was brought to Makassar as Hoetink's teacher in April 1878, but he worked for Hoetink for only a year and a half. After Hoetink's transfer to Medan in November 1879, Jo Hoae Giok stayed in Makassar. He married the daughter of the Chinese *kapitein* and became a wealthy businessman.

There is a short account of his life and merits on a metal bell donated by him to the Mazu temple (Tianhou Gong) in Makassar in 1895, stating that he had collected scattered Chinese documents and contributed several times to the restoration of other temples.<sup>84</sup>

On 29 May 1896, Jo Hoae Giok was appointed as *luitenant* in Makassar.<sup>85</sup> The Chinese administration in Makassar usually consisted of one *kapitein* and two *luitenants*. In November 1897 he was also appointed as Chinese member of the Orphans and Estate Chamber.<sup>86</sup>

Borel was stationed in Makassar as Official for Chinese Affairs for one



and a half years, from October 1896 until April 1898, and he became acquainted with Jo Hoae Giok. When Jo passed away in March 1899, Borel wrote a letter to the editors of the *Java-bode* containing a short obituary.<sup>87</sup> Borel considered it his duty to recount how Jo Hoae Giok had been an honest and successful businessman and an excellent officer, being both a scholar and a gentleman; he was a rare exception among the Chinese officers in the Outer Possessions, who were usually illiterate, uneducated people, sometimes even former coolies. Jo Hoae Giok was the soul of the Chinese administration, since he was the only educated officer in Makassar, and all administrative tasks were performed by him. Borel concluded:

Jo Hoae Giok will always remain in my memory as a thoroughly decent man and refined Chinese, with whom it was for me, a European, a pleasure to associate more warmly than officially. And I do not doubt that all of my colleagues who have known him, will agree with me.<sup>88</sup>

These colleagues and their years of stationing in Makassar were Van der Spek (1880–3), Stuart (1883–5, 1894–6), and Van Wettum (1898–9). Probably because of their friendship with Jo Hoae Giok, the sinologists Stuart and Van Wettum each presented a pair of double verses (*lian*) to the Mazu temple in Makassar. To his surprise, Ezerman discovered them when he was stationed there (1903–4). He commented that he would gladly be willing to contribute to the restoration of a temple, but would never choose to express his sympathy and respect for Chinese religion in this manner.<sup>89</sup> Van Wettum's verses, perhaps in his own calligraphy, were still to be seen in the temple a century later,<sup>90</sup> but were destroyed when the temple was burned down during anti-Chinese riots in 1997.

### *Later developments*

In 1894 a critical article entitled "Interpreters and language teachers" appeared in the Amsterdam newspaper *Algemeen Handelsblad*. It pointed out defects in the system of Chinese interpreters, such as their low salaries and the lack of official recognition of their function as advisor. The anonymous author mentioned also that there were ten Chinese teachers assigned to the interpreters with a salary of f63.75 monthly.<sup>91</sup> The author at first did not know what their function was, but he had heard later that they were acting as clerks and copyists. He advised to give them a decent salary, just like the interpreters, and pay them at least f100 per month.

The next year, at Groeneveldt's initiative, the system of Chinese interpreters was reorganised, but there was no change in the teacher system. In October 1896, all interpreters were appointed in their new function as Officials for Chinese Affairs, keeping their teachers/clerks. The "Provisions

for the assignment of places of stationing and the regulation of the functions of the Officials for Chinese Affairs"<sup>92</sup> (Article X) specified that

to each Official for Chinese Affairs in active service a Chinese clerk will be assigned, who shall work under his orders and be engaged and discharged by him.

From now on, the Candidate-Officials for Chinese Affairs continued to engage teachers in China in the same manner as the student-interpreters had done before.

They could choose teachers of various dialects; for instance, the students of Schlegel's last group all had teachers of different dialects. De Bruin engaged a Hakka teacher, Thijssen took along his Hoklo teacher, and Van de Stadt his Amoy teacher.<sup>93</sup> In the Indies they would be stationed in places where the dialects of their respective teachers were the most prevalent: De Bruin in Mentok, Thijssen in Pontianak, and Van de Stadt in Rembang (Java). For the first time it was explicitly stated that some students took along their present teachers to the Indies.

The last Candidate-Official who took along a personal Chinese teacher/clerk from China was Th.J.H. de Josselin de Jong. In 1915 he engaged a Hakka teacher named Yung Siuk Kiun 熊淑君 and took him to Batavia. This is one of the very few teachers whose names are known.<sup>94</sup>

In June 1916, the system of Officials for Chinese Affairs was again reorganised. All Officials were concentrated in Batavia in one central Bureau of Chinese Affairs (*Kantoor voor Chineesche Zaken*).<sup>95</sup> The new regulations no longer mentioned Chinese teachers or clerks assigned to individual Officials, and thereby the old teacher system was abolished. However, the Bureau of Chinese Affairs could still hire "the necessary office personnel and other subordinate personnel."<sup>96</sup> When in 1917 J.Th. Moll finished his studies of Cantonese and Hokkien in China, he engaged a Cantonese clerk for the Bureau of Chinese Affairs, not for himself. He had been notified earlier that a Hokkien clerk was not needed, since the Bureau already had a clerk for that dialect.<sup>97</sup>

### *Engaging a second language teacher*

After arrival in the Indies, some interpreters were allowed to engage a second, local teacher for one year to learn the local Chinese dialect, but not explicitly as a clerk. In 1870 Meeter, who had studied Hakka only, was stationed in Pontianak, where the most common dialect was Hoklo, which is closely related to the Amoy dialect. A year later he was therefore given "an allowance of f25 monthly for one year's study expenses for learning the Amoy dialect."<sup>98</sup> In 1877 Young, who had studied Hokkien and was also

just stationed in Pontianak, was similarly allowed to engage a teacher for the Hakka or Hoklo dialect, according to his own choice.<sup>99</sup> He chose Hakka.<sup>100</sup> In 1878 Stuart, who had studied Hokkien only and was stationed in Mentok (Banka) where Hakka was the most common dialect, was allowed to engage a teacher on the same conditions "for learning the locally most spoken dialect." His fellow students De Groot and Hoetink were both stationed in Hokkien-speaking regions and did not need an extra teacher.<sup>101</sup> Stuart would later write that he mastered the second language quite well, but he forgot most of it after he had been transferred to a place where he did not have any opportunity to speak Hakka.<sup>102</sup> Similarly, Ezerman, who had only studied Hokkien in China, was allowed a Hakka teacher when he was stationed in Mentok in 1894.<sup>103</sup>

One interpreter was allowed to study Cantonese, which was then rarely spoken in the Indies. In 1885, shortly after Young had been sent to Atjeh to interpret in a court session about arms smuggling involving a ship from Canton, he was allowed a second teacher for Cantonese.<sup>104</sup>

From 1907 on, in official correspondence another kind of second teacher was mentioned, namely for Mandarin. The initiative came from Borel: in a conversation with Director of Justice A.L.E. Gastmann in 1906, he pointed out the need for some or at least one of the Officials for Chinese Affairs to know Mandarin. In the next year, he sent a formal request to Gastmann asking to be allowed a Mandarin teacher. The reason was the establishment in the Indies since 1901 of modern Chinese schools where Mandarin was the language of instruction instead of Hokkien or Hakka. Borel predicted that Mandarin would become the most important Chinese language in the future. These modern schools engaged teachers from China, and the Chinese government sent educational inspectors and other officials who spoke Mandarin to the Netherlands Indies. There were no Dutch officials who could communicate with them. Moreover, among the teachers there were some revolutionary elements that should be closely watched. It was, then, necessary that at least one Official for Chinese Affairs could speak Mandarin. For these reasons he requested permission to engage a Mandarin teacher, and also to be allowed to study for six months in Peking. Borel finally proposed that the Candidate-Officials who were being trained in Leiden should spend one of their two years in China in Peking, in order to learn Mandarin. His request and proposal were largely supported by Stuart and Director of Justice Gastmann, although Stuart felt there was no need for Borel to study in Peking, and he did not expect that Mandarin would ever become an important language in the Indies. Since the Director of Justice wished first to await the conclusion of a criminal case against Borel, his request was not immediately complied with.<sup>105</sup>

At the end of 1908, when in Pontianak, Borel made a request for an extra monthly allowance of *f* 50 to study Mandarin for one year, and



14. Borel and his Mandarin teacher Wang Fung Ting in Surabaya, 1911 (B745/III/4, Letterkundig Museum, The Hague).

for an allowance of f 50 for textbooks, to which Governor-General van Heutsz agreed on 4 February 1909.<sup>106</sup> This marks the beginning of the shift to Mandarin in Dutch sinology. He began studying Mandarin with local schoolteachers, but did not make much progress since their quality was poor: their Southern Mandarin (Nanyin 南音) was heavily mixed with Hakka or Hoklo dialect. He therefore submitted a second request to be allowed to study standard Northern Mandarin (Beiyin 北音) for four months in Peking, which was granted on 28 August.<sup>107</sup> His Mandarin studies on Borneo were not very helpful: on his arrival in Peking, he tried to speak Mandarin to the luggage porters, but they did not understand his Southern Mandarin and he continued in pidgin-English.<sup>108</sup> From October 1909 on, he studied Mandarin in Peking for four months.<sup>109</sup> Expecting to be studying a new dialect, he soon discovered it was a new language.<sup>110</sup> In

the end, he engaged his teacher Wang Fung Ting 王鳳亭 to accompany him to the Indies.<sup>111</sup> In Surabaya, he continued studying Mandarin for almost two years with Wang, who received a monthly salary of *f*70 in 1910 and *f*100 in 1911.<sup>112</sup> A number of notebooks that have survived are eloquent testimonials of his seriousness in his Mandarin studies.<sup>113</sup> Borel was the first Official for Chinese Affairs to study Mandarin.<sup>114</sup> In addition, he also used Wang as an informant about the Chinese Movement: for instance, Wang became a member of a “Soo Pao Sia” 書報社 (Reading Club) in Surabaya and his membership fees seem to have been paid for by the government (*see* illustration 14).<sup>115</sup>

At the same time, Borel kept a Hokkien clerk.<sup>116</sup> The original teacher/clerk remained an indispensable support for the interpreter for keeping up his language skills and being informed about local conditions. In his request of 1907, Borel had strategically suggested that in order to reduce costs, his regular teacher/clerk could be discharged if he were to be allowed a (more expensive) Mandarin teacher. He argued that there would be no problem as long as the Mandarin teacher could also help him in checking Chinese account books. Stuart did not agree, summarising the essential functions of the normal teacher/clerk as follows:

The abolition of the normal clerk, no matter if he speaks Hokkien, Hakka or any other dialect, seems highly undesirable to me, because it is exactly this person with whom the Official for Chinese Affairs, so to say, is in daily contact; through conversations with whom he continuously keeps up the dialect spoken by him; and since his clerk is better informed about local conditions than an outsider [such as a Mandarin teacher], he can, if needed, in most cases do the best investigations, and provide the most correct information.<sup>117</sup>

Stuart's remarks show that the Chinese teacher/clerk always remained an indispensable assistant for the sinologists, not only as an informant on Chinese affairs, but also for keeping up their fluency in speaking.

