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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)

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CHAPTER SEVEN

STUDYING IN BATAVIA AND CHINA (1864–1877)

A new training programme (1864–1867)

In 1853, in the first letter of Governor-General Duymaer van Twist to Minister of Colonies Pahud about the training of interpreters, and in Hoffmann's master plan, it had already been suggested that students who returned to Java after a few years of study in China could, while working as interpreters and continuing their studies in the Indies, at the same time train other students.¹ In the decision to send the first students Albrecht and Von Faber to Canton in 1855, Duymaer van Twist had stipulated that after appointment as interpreters, they should train other students. And in 1859, when they were about to finish their studies, Consul Van der Hoeven had expressed the hope that they could be accompanied by a Chinese teacher from China, not only to continue their studies and assist them in their work, but also to train other students.²

Four years after the first interpreters were appointed, the first steps were taken towards implementing this policy. These were triggered in May 1864 by two requests to Governor-General Sloet from young men wishing to be trained as Chinese interpreters. The first, dated 18 May 1864, was from F.A.J. Crefcoeur, then 26 years old.³ He wrote that he had arrived in the Indies "on adventure" (*op avontuur*) a few months earlier on 25 January 1864, and was now working without pay in the book trade (*boekhandel*). He had long been searching for a job in order to make a living, but without success. On the other hand, he was healthy and strong, he was well-versed in the four main languages (Dutch, French, German and English) and in various administrative matters, and he offered several references in the Indies. He hoped to get a favourable response as fast as possible in view of the urgency of his situation. The second request, dated ten days later, on 28 May 1864, was from J.R. Rodijk, who was a "native child" from Malacca, the son of an Englishman and a Malay woman, and who also had arrived "on adventure" in the Indies.⁴ He wrote that he had already studied Chinese for three years and requested to be sent to China at the government's expense to be trained as a government interpreter.⁵

Subsequently, Governor-General Sloet asked the Resident of Batavia, J.C. de Kock van Leeuwen, to consult with Schlegel and Von Faber as to whether they were able to teach the basics of the Chinese language. Schlegel and Von Faber wrote to the Resident that in the first place, the

candidates should be subject to an examination to investigate if both had enough knowledge of the four languages, in particular English and French, “because almost all books on China, dictionaries, grammars, manuals, etc. are written in those languages.”⁶ In other words, the candidates would be put to a similar test as Hoffmann’s, and with the same argument, except that knowledge of the classical European languages was no longer required.⁷ Schlegel and Von Faber continued that if the candidates came up to the mark, there would be no problem in training them, provided the following problems could be solved:

- A. The government should decide beforehand on the dialect to be learned, as it was impossible to learn two dialects thoroughly. Therefore, the place of stationing should be decided right away, so the students could immediately specialise in the dialect spoken there.
- B. An extra Chinese teacher should be assigned in order to practice after classes, “because it needs no argument, that we who are charged with other important work, cannot devote the whole day to teaching, while it is highly necessary that the students continue to study this extremely difficult language without interruption.”
- C. A number of study books were to be purchased.
- D. After finishing their studies in the Indies, the students should go to China for some time in order to obtain in the country itself a complete (*sic*) understanding of the morals, customs, institutions, etc. of the Chinese people.
- E. The training should be paid for by the government, just as it had been before. A fixed monthly stipend should be granted to the students, and it would be fair to give a fixed monthly allowance to the interpreters for the time spent on teaching, which would probably always be outside normal working hours.

De Kock van Leeuwen sent this report to Sloet, adding that he had no doubts about their ability to teach; there had never been any reason to consult anyone about this since their appointment as interpreters two years earlier.⁸

Thereupon, according to routine procedure, Sloet consulted the Council of the Indies, which gave its advice on 29 July 1864, signed by L.W.C. Keuchenius and the secretary, C. de Waal. The advice began:

The manner in which the training of Chinese interpreters was done until now was both defective and expensive. Since there are interpreters now and they will soon be followed by others destined for those places where the language (not the dialect) that they have studied is spoken, this Council finds it by far preferable to have the present interpreters teach them the basics of the Chinese language.⁹

This opinion was diametrically opposed to the one the Council had expressed ten years earlier, when they had pleaded for training in the Nether-

lands, but no reason was given for the defectiveness of the earlier training. They probably meant that the earlier students had been learning languages that were not spoken in the Indies, namely Mandarin and Cantonese, the more so as they used the word ‘language’ and showed disapproval of the word ‘dialect.’ The Council went on to put forth some general principles. A study period should be decided upon, and the study in China should be for a maximum of one year; for the latter no argument was given, but it probably had a financial reason. Furthermore, one student should be assigned to each interpreter to be trained by him, and monthly allowances should be given of *f*50 to the interpreter, *f*25 to the Chinese teacher and *f*150 to the student. Later, after the student’s return from China and appointment as second interpreter, his allowance was to be raised by *f*100 to a total of *f*250. The Council concluded that after necessary consultation with Schlegel and Von Faber, a well-argued proposal could be sent to the ‘supreme government’ (*opperbestuur*), the Ministry of Colonies in the Netherlands. The Resident of Batavia was advised to charge the interpreters to devise a plan on the basis of the above-mentioned principles.¹⁰

Schlegel and Von Faber, in their advice of 1 September 1864, reported their “further feelings about the training of Chinese interpreters in the Netherlands Indies.”¹¹ As to the length of study, it was difficult to give an answer: this depended on the capacities of the student. They thought four years under the guidance of one of the interpreters and one year in China could be the maximum study period. If the student learned the language in a shorter time, not the full time in the Indies would be necessary, but “the time of one year spent in China for finishing his studies is sufficient.” Since the student would from the start learn the correct dialect, he would not lose time and energy in learning Mandarin or Cantonese, and one year of study in China was apparently considered enough.

It was not clear to the interpreters if the allowance for the Chinese teacher was meant for their own teacher in the Indies, or for another teacher to be engaged in China. The former would be impracticable, since the interpreters much needed their teachers to help them in their work for the government and in their studies. And in the latter case, *f*25 monthly would be absolutely insufficient. In China, the teacher’s salary would be \$10 to \$15 (*f*25,50 to *f*38,25), and in a foreign country, where life was so much more expensive than in China, one could not find a good teacher for that amount. The Chinese in the Indies paid *f*50 to *f*125 to the teachers of their children, so for less than *f*50 no good teacher could be found. The allowance of *f*50 for themselves was also not enough, amounting to *f*1.60 per day, and equal to the proposed salary of the Chinese teacher (intimating that the Chinese teacher should not earn as much as the European interpreter). If one compared this with the list of fees for private translation and interpretation published in 1863,¹² in which the fee for the first hour of

private interpretation was $f8$, for the second hour $f4$, and for each following hour $f2$, a monthly allowance of $f50$ was clearly insufficient, and they proposed that it should be at least $f100$.

Passage to and from China should be by mail ship as usual, and it should be paid by the government. When studying in China, the students should be allowed to dispose freely of their allowances, and the Consul should only be obliged to assist and advise them when searching for housing etc. In the experience of Schlegel and Von Faber, it was neither pleasant nor flattering to be treated as a schoolboy too rash to manage one's own affairs. The same applied to the students in the Indies, who should then receive the monthly stipend of $f150$ suggested by the Governor-General. For China, Schlegel and Von Faber proposed a monthly stipend of \$125 to be disposed of freely, and to be used for all expenditures. This was a little more than the \$100 which they had originally received themselves, and which was later raised to almost \$110.

Finally, the students should receive an allowance for books, the prices of which could not yet all be specified. In an appendix, one list of Western and one of Chinese books were added. The Western books were in English, French, and German, and included two dictionaries, one grammar, four textbooks, one translation (with Chinese and English text) and two reference works, one on Chinese chronology and one on Chinese geography. The full titles are as follows:

W.H. Medhurst, *Chinese and English Dictionary: Containing all the Words in the Chinese Imperial Dictionary, Arranged According to the Radicals*, 2 vols. (Batavia 1842–1843).¹³

S. Wells Williams, *A Tonic Dictionary of the Chinese Language in the Canton Dialect* (Canton 1856).

Wilhelm Schott, *Chinesische Sprachlehre: zum Gebrauche bei Vorlesungen und zur Selbstunterweisung* (Berlin: Dümmler, 1857).

E.C. Bridgman, *Chinese Chrestomathy in the Canton Dialect* (Canton 1839; second edition under Bridgman's name 1841).

S. Wells Williams, *Easy Lessons in Chinese: or Progressive Exercises to Facilitate the Study of that Language, Especially Adapted to the Canton Dialect* (Macao 1842).

The Notitia linguae Sinicae of Prémare (Knowledge of the Chinese language), translated into English by J.G. Bridgman (Canton 1847).¹⁴

E. Doty, *Anglo-Chinese Manual with Romanized Colloquial in the Amoy Dialect* (Canton 1853).

James Legge, *The Chinese Classics with a Translation, Critical and Exegetical Notes, Prolegomena, and Copious Indexes*, vol. I, *Confucian Analects, The Great Learning, and The Doctrine of the Mean*, vol. II, *The Works of Mencius* (Hongkong, London: Trübner & Co. 1861).

Ludwig Ideler, *Ueber die Zeitrechnung der Chinesen* (Berlin: Dümmler, 1839).

Edouard Biot, *Dictionnaire des noms anciens et modernes des villes et arrondissements de premier, deuxième et troisième ordre, compris dans l'empire Chinois* (Paris: Royale 1842).

Three of these works are for learning Cantonese, but can to some extent also be used for learning written Chinese. De Grijns used S. Wells Williams' *Easy Lessons* also for learning written Chinese and colloquial Hokkien. These were the textbooks and dictionaries available at the time, and that they had used themselves. The Chinese texts were transcribed in Cantonese, which in any case had more in common with Hokkien and Hakka than with Mandarin. Three other books have various Southern Mandarin transcriptions. There was only one book for learning colloquial Hokkien. It is surprising that books by Stanislas Julien were no longer mentioned on this list. Although the dialect was still to be decided upon, the lack of published materials for Hokkien and Hakka was evident.

The Chinese works were five basic texts in the classical language and one dictionary.

"The book of three words" *Sanzijing* 三字經

"The book of 1000 words" *Qianziwen* 千字文

"The Sacred Edict" *Shengyu* 聖諭

"The Four Books" *Sishu* 四書

"The History of the Three Kingdoms" *Sanguo zhi* 三國志¹⁵

"The large dictionary of the Kangxi Emperor" (1716) *Kangxi zidian* 康熙字典

Before deciding, Sloet consulted Director of Finance J.W.C. Diepenheim and the Council of the Indies. In a letter dated 24 October 1864, Diepenheim agreed with Schlegel and Von Faber that the allowance for the Chinese teacher should be at least f50, because the interpreters' own teachers' salary was \$25 (f62.50). He remarked that the Governor-General seemed to favour the same allowance of f50 for the interpreters despite the decision of 1855 which stipulated that training new students was part of their job. If the Governor-General wished to recompense the interpreters, f50 would be more than enough. The students should be given a fixed allowance, and if they were able to manage their finances in the Indies for four years, they could also do so during their last year in China.

On 11 November 1864 (No. XXXIX), the Council of the Indies agreed with Schlegel's and Von Faber's views, remarking only on the height of the interpreter's allowance, which should be f50; each interpreter should be charged to train one student. Since the consuls in China no longer fell

under the competence of the Netherlands Indies government, they could not be so charged, only asked to give assistance. Only the Council member O. van Rees¹⁶ was of the opinion that the interpreters' income was generous enough, and that they should not be compensated for work that they were actually obliged to do.

On 17 January 1865 (IB no. 8), Sloet wrote to Minister of Colonies Fransen van de Putte asking for Royal Approval to charge the European interpreters of Chinese in Batavia to train one student each in accordance with Schlegel's and Von Faber's proposals, except that the interpreter's allowance should be *f*50 instead of *f*100. This measure should also be extended to all other interpreters of Chinese in the Indies.

It took various Ministers of Colonies more than two years to answer. One reason was perhaps that in the course of the year 1866, there were two changes of Minister of Colonies. Fransen van de Putte resigned on 30 May 1866 and was succeeded by P. Mijer, who was in office until 17 September 1866. The latter then left for the Indies to become the next Governor-General; he was in turn succeeded by N. Trakranen (in office until 20 July 1867). Trakranen made a decision on 11 April 1867,¹⁷ after having received detailed advice from his staff. Because he felt that expenditures for training in the Netherlands and in the Indies could not easily be compared, he had given orders to make a survey of the previous costs in the Netherlands and China. From this survey, it appeared that the costs for 6-8 years of study in Leiden and China were about *f*10,000 to *f*13,000, while studying in Batavia, if the maximum of four years were needed, and one year in China, would cost *f*14,550, and would therefore be even more expensive.

	Leiden		Batavia
	De Breuk	Buddingh & Groeneveldt	
stipend at home	3,420 (5:9 years) ¹⁸	1,850 (2:7 years)	7,200 (4 years)
equipment & books	900	900	-
passage to China	1,190	536 + 600	600
passage China to Java	600	600	600
stipend in China	7,172 (2:1 years)	5,738 (2:6 years)	3,750 (1 year)
total	13,312	10,224	14,550

The main reason for the higher costs were the higher allowances for the students in Batavia (*f*150 instead of *f*50), the allowance for the Chinese teacher in Batavia (*f*50) and the somewhat higher stipend in China (\$125 instead of about \$110). The costs remained higher even if no allowance for equipment and books (*f*900) and no passage fees from the Netherlands to

Java were needed. The staff bureau reported that teaching in Batavia was seemingly more costly, but this would be a decent training, not a defective one as had been suggested in the letters from the Indies. Therefore, the new interpreters probably could do without a teacher after graduation. Moreover, books were not necessary, since the interpreters had bought books earlier that were still government property. It was even suggested to leave out the allowance to the interpreter (*f*50), and even that of the Chinese teacher, but in the latter case the Governor-General should be asked for approval.

The staff bureau did not mention the costs of the first students, who all studied for at least four years in China. Compared with their expenditures, the Batavia study programme was very cheap indeed. For instance, the estimated total expenditures for Schlegel and for Schaalje, the most expensive student, were as follows.

	Schlegel	Schaalje
stipend at home	1,100 (3:9 years)	1,350 (3:9 years)
equipment & books	900	900
passage to China	1,200	800
passage China to Java	600	600
stipend in China	14,150 (4:4 years)	17,630 (5:4 years)
Total	17,950	21,623

In his final decision of 11 April 1867, the Minister wrote that he could agree quickly with the proposal—meaning soon after he had read Sloet’s letter—because of the urgent need for European interpreters of Chinese; and such training would need a lot of time and money anyway, since it was such a difficult language. The only changes made by the Minister were that there would be no allowance for the interpreters—they had already been charged with teaching others in 1855, and their income was sufficient and not meagre—and that it would be neither desirable nor practical (*wensche-lijk noch doelmattig*) to extend this programme to other interpreters outside Batavia. It would be sufficient to constantly be training one or two students. The programme should be effected as from the next year, and the expenditures should be earmarked on the budget for 1868.

In this way, almost four years had passed since the requests of Crefcoeur and Rodijk. In November 1864, half a year after his first request, Crefcoeur had repeated it, stressing the urgency of his need for a job. In the official correspondence, there is no mention of testing by the interpreters. But Schlegel wrote in 1873 that he did not expect much of these candidates, who had both come to the Indies “on adventure.” He added an anecdote about what became of Crefcoeur, having a special liking for such anecdotes:

Crefcoeur first set up a shop in fancy goods, then went to Australia. When Mr. van Delden¹⁹ visited that country, Crefcoeur begged him for money to buy a pistol to shoot himself, but ... he bought brandy instead to get drunk.²⁰

Schlegel did not know what became of the other candidate, J.R. Rodijk.²¹ Perhaps he is the same person as the clerk J.R. Rodijk who was honourably discharged from government service in the Department of Interior Administration (BB) in 1896.²²

No decision had been made on the place of stationing, and therefore nothing could be said about the dialect to be taught. At that time, the interpreters in Batavia had probably agreed among themselves that Schlegel would teach Hokkien and Von Faber Hakka. Schlegel had studied in Amoy for three years and brought an Amoy teacher to Canton during his last year in China, and was certainly proficient in Hokkien; according to the division of labour in Batavia, he did all the interpretations while Von Faber did the translations. Von Faber had studied some Hakka while in office in Western Borneo. He must have realised that he was the right person to teach Hakka, and apparently prepared himself for that task. He compiled a word list of the Hakka language as spoken on Borneo and Banka, with a preface, introduction, stories and dialogues, which he presented for publication to the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences in October 1866. After the meeting of the Board of Directors on 31 October, his manuscript was given to the members of the board to make an assessment. Unfortunately, two months later, the Board decided not to publish it because it was said to be lacking in scholarly value, but since it would be useful for government officials to learn some Hakka for daily conversation, the board suggested Von Faber should send the manuscript to the Government Press (*Landsdrukkerij*) for printing. This was to no avail; more than four years later, in 1871, publication was cancelled because of the lack of Chinese type at the Government Press.²³

The examination system and the choice of dialect (1868–1870)

In the meantime, at least one other request to study Chinese had been made, by A.L.G. Gobée from Semarang on 27 October 1866; he had studied Liberal Arts (*Letteren*) in Leiden for three years, but recently arrived in the Indies as a soldier.²⁴ In 1868, the training of interpreters was a fixed item on the government budget, and that summer the Resident of Batavia, H.J.C. Hoogeveen, sent the requests of five candidates to Schlegel and Von Faber. Besides that of Gobée, these were from J.J.C. Reeder,²⁵ Twijssel, Groenewald, and Wollweber, most of whom were older than twenty.²⁶ Hoogeveen asked Schlegel and Von Faber for their advice.

On 14 September 1868, Schlegel and Von Faber gave their opinion

on the candidates and offered a plan for an admission examination. They wrote that on the basis of the requests from these candidates, most of them seemed to think learning Chinese was a trifling matter for which no special previous studies were necessary. Although, in a certain sense, this might be true for the colloquial language (*spreektaal*), it certainly was not so for literary Chinese (*schrijftaal*). Learning literary Chinese required at least as much preparatory studies and intellectual education as learning literary Javanese or Malay. Moreover, they knew from another source that most candidates thought it would be easier to become a Chinese interpreter than to take the Higher Officials Examination (*grootambtenaarsexamen*, see below), and consequently the candidates wished to study Chinese either for fear of the difficulty of that examination or out of a lack of zeal for the studies necessary for it. There were other causes fostering this wrong idea. Those who passed the Higher Officials Examination were qualified as East Indies officials and entitled to climb to the top of the hierarchy, while knowledge of Chinese could only lead to an appointment as interpreter, which in the eyes of the East Indies public was an extremely low position, with a maximum salary of only f800 after eighteen years of service. But according to Schlegel and Von Faber, only a genuine predilection for the study of Chinese should be the motive to devote oneself to Chinese rather than to the normal official career. The candidates should at least have the level of preparatory studies and intellectual education of those allowed to take Part B of the Higher Officials Examination.²⁷ Some years later, Schlegel would criticise the majority of the candidates in his typical, straightforward manner:

With few exemptions: *fortune-seekers*, *half-castes* and *lazy-bones*, who shrink from the Higher Officials Examination and think learning Chinese is easier.²⁸

In 1864, the *radicaal* (qualification) system for East Indies officials and their obligatory training at the Academy in Delft had been abolished, and replaced by a Higher Officials Examination to be held yearly in Batavia and in the Netherlands.²⁹ This examination consisted of two parts (*afdeelingen*) A and B; only those who had passed part A could go on to attempt part B.³⁰ Part A comprised secondary school subjects, and students who had a university degree or who had passed the final examination of the HBS or some other special schools were exempted from taking it.³¹ Schlegel and Von Faber were of the opinion that candidates for Chinese should also at least have reached the level of part A. After studying in China and working in the Indies for several years, Schlegel and Von Faber were both not only aware of the scarcity, but also of the defectiveness of the existing study tools, and that therefore “one should possess a wealth of encyclopaedic knowledge to compensate for the lack of complete dictionaries, manuals, and grammars.” They suggested having the candidates

take an examination in the following subjects, which were mostly copied from part A of the Higher Officials Examination:

1. Proficiency in the Dutch, French, English, and German languages (*Bekwaamheid in de Neder-Duitsche, Fransche, Engelsche en Hoog-Duitsche talen*), in particular a thorough knowledge of Dutch and French grammar in all respects. Study tools were all written in the latter three foreign languages, and the student should be able to read and understand these languages without the help of a dictionary. This was no new argument, nor was the second linguistic argument new, which Hoffmann would be happy to hear: "A thorough and comprehensive, higher scholarly knowledge of the grammar of one Germanic and one Romance language is a powerful and indispensable aid to fathoming the structure of the Chinese language and to obtain a correct understanding of this extremely difficult language, which is after all the main requirement for a Chinese interpreter."
2. Arithmetic (*De Rekenkunde*)
3. Basic principles of mineralogy, geology, botany, and zoology (*De beginselen der Delfstof-, aard-, plant- en dierkunde*)
4. Basic principles of physics and astronomy (*De beginselen der natuurkunde en cosmographie*)
5. Geography (*De aardrijkskunde*)
6. History (*De geschiedenis*)
7. Double-entry bookkeeping (*Het Italiaansch boekhouden*)

The last-named was necessary because the main work of the Chinese interpreter was the verification of Chinese account books (*handelsboeken*), and one could not learn Chinese bookkeeping without being initiated into bookkeeping in general.

All but one of the subjects were copied from part A of the Higher Officials Examination. The following subjects of part A were not included: algebra, geometry, and trigonometry; drawing and linear drawing; the basic principles of the Netherlands local and central government, and economy and statistics. The only addition was the emphasis on Dutch and French grammar, and bookkeeping; the latter was one of the optional subjects of part B.³²

Schlegel and Von Faber suggested that since in the budget funds were only earmarked for two students, those who had the highest marks, in particular in languages, should be chosen. Actually, competitive examinations were obligatory for all government-paid training programmes for officials.³³

In order to economise and save the trouble of organising a special examination committee, they suggested that the Higher Officials Examination Committee should also test the candidate-interpreters at the same time as

the aspirant-officials of the Civil Service. The same exemptions should be applied. Therefore, they were of the opinion that the request of Gobée, who had passed the admission (*admissie*) and *mathesis* examinations of Leiden University,³⁴ could be immediately accepted, if his age (23) presented no problem. In general, the age of the candidates should preferably not exceed twenty years. Reeder should also be exempted,³⁵ but they feared that his advanced age of 33 years would cause great problems in learning Chinese, in particular the pronunciation:

The [Hokkien] Chinese language has guttural and nasal sounds, and at a higher age the vocal cords are not pliant enough to produce these sounds with ease. On the other hand, since this candidate has been studying other Oriental languages for a long time, this may have kept his speech organs in a pliant state, and it may be easier for him to learn colloquial Chinese than could be expected otherwise.³⁶

The dialect to be learned should be decided by the government, since experience had shown that it was impossible to become proficient in two dialects. Finally, they wished the government would immediately order two copies of each of the books on the list that they had sent four years earlier.

Nine months later, on 24 June 1869, Schlegel and Von Faber gave an explanation of some points of their advice, answering a letter from Resident Hoogeveen of 15 June. This concerned the rules for exemptions, the suggestion of immediate (!) approval of the requests of Gobée and Reeder, and the Chinese dialects to be taught. Schlegel and Von Faber admitted their misinterpretation of the exemption rules: Article 5 stipulated exemption for those with a university degree or a diploma from the HBS and some other schools. Strictly speaking, this included neither admission to a university nor a diploma from a military academy (e.g. KMA). Schlegel and Von Faber now mutually disagreed as to the proposed exemption rules. Schlegel was in favour of exemption for those with diplomas from HBS, *gymnasium* and the military academies, and persisted in his suggestion of immediate approval of Gobée's and Reeder's requests (unless there were objections against their advanced age). Von Faber now stated that there should only be an exemption for those with a university degree;³⁷ and he wished no immediate approval of these two requests. As to the dialect, Schlegel and Von Faber reported that on Java mainly the Tsiangtsiu (Zhangzhou 漳州, Hokkien) dialect was spoken, and in the Outer Possessions the Kia Ying Chow (Kay Ying Tsiu 嘉應州, Hakka) dialect.

Another four months later, on 4 October 1869, the Director of Interior Administration (*Binnenlandsch Bestuur*), F.G. van Bloemen Waanders,³⁸ wrote to the Governor-General. He had been invited to make the necessary arrangements and plans together with the Resident and the two interpreters. Waanders agreed in all respects with the interpreters' advice, but he was in favour of Schlegel's more generous conditions for exemption,

and he was of the opinion that students could also be trained in the Outer Possessions, contrary to the Governor-General's decision of 7 July 1867.³⁹ As to the two candidates mentioned, good study results were to be expected from Gobée, and a small difference in age did not matter. But his ability should be tested by the interpreters. The other candidate, Reeder, was too advanced in age to study Chinese. Waanders' suggestions were to charge one interpreter in Batavia with teaching the Tsiang-tsiu dialect, and one in Padang (Buddingh) or Riau (Schaalje) with teaching the Kia Ying Chow dialect. Teachers should be engaged for these dialects. The examination system (including Schlegel's conditions for exemption) should be adopted. The Governor-General should decide on Gobée's request, and require that he be tested by the interpreters in Batavia as to his ability to learn Chinese. If approved by them, he could immediately be appointed by the Governor-General as a student-interpreter (*élève-tolk*), and he should be taught the Tsiang-tsiu dialect, while temporarily the interpreter's teacher was to be relied upon, for payment of *f*50 monthly.

However, three weeks later, on 22 October 1869, these suggestions were rejected by the Council of the Indies under Vice-President F.N. van Nieuwenhuyzen.⁴⁰ No deviation was allowed from the Minister of Colonies' decision that it was "neither desirable nor practical" to train interpreters outside Batavia. No investigation had been done as to whether any of the interpreters in Batavia could just as well teach the Kia Ying Chow dialect. A statement from the interpreters would be necessary to justify any deviation from the Minister's decision. Moreover, Director of Interior Administration Waanders had neglected article 12 of Royal Decree no. 47 of 11 May 1864, which stipulated that a competitive examination was obligatory for all government-subsidised training programmes for civil officials in the Indies, meaning that an examination was obligatory for all candidates. Royal Approval was also necessary for the expected higher expenses than those on the budget.⁴¹ Gobée could not be immediately appointed as student-interpreter, but had to take the competitive examination. The Council concluded that the matter had not been handled with due care by Director of Interior Administration Waanders, and therefore they requested him to revise his plan.

Three months later, on 9 February 1870, Hoogeveen, the Resident of Batavia, asked Von Faber and Schlegel in a confidential letter if they could teach the Kia Ying Chow dialect, and if not, who could. Von Faber had four years earlier compiled a handbook for Hakka, but now he admitted that he was not qualified to teach that dialect. He candidly wrote on 10 February:

The undersigned, M. von Faber, Chinese interpreter in Batavia, has been able to study the Kia Ying Chow dialect for too short a time, and afterwards has hardly had any opportunity to continue his studies in that dialect or even to

keep up what he had learned, such as to possess sufficient knowledge of that dialect to teach it or to do oral interpretation into or out of that dialect at a court of law, and therefore he *can* and even *shall* earnestly declare that he is neither able to speak nor to teach the Kia Ying Chow dialect.⁴²

Schlegel admitted on 11 February that he also could not teach the Kia Ying Chow dialect, since he had never studied it: in accordance with his government assignment, he had concentrated on the Amoy and Tsiang-tsiu dialects, which were generally spoken on Java. In a second confidential letter, he answered the Resident's other question, stating that Groeneveldt, interpreter in Pontianak, would be the most qualified to teach Kia Ying Chow dialect, since he had been speaking it daily for five years and was still continuing his Chinese language studies.

The next month, on 30 March 1870, the new Director of Internal Administration, H.D. Levysohn Norman, sent Governor-General Mijer a new plan for teaching Chinese; his predecessor Waanders' plan had been criticised and he was asked to revise it. He suggested asking the Minister's approval for teaching outside Batavia, since Von Faber and Schlegel were not able to teach Kia Ying Chow dialect while Groeneveldt in Pontianak allegedly could do it. Funding would be no problem: while the students were in China, no stipends were necessary in the Indies, so the f4,800 on the budget should be sufficient. From this amount, books should immediately be bought, while other books were to be paid by the students from their future salaries, and teachers should be sent from China. "It is important to arrange things this year, in order that the two students can start to work [i.e. study] after their appointment."⁴³ He suggested requesting (1) to train students outside Batavia, (2) to determine the examination programme, (3) to approve the stipends in the Indies and China, and (4) to have books sent. Subsequently, one student should study the Tsiang-tsiu dialect in Batavia, and one Kia Ying Chow with Groeneveldt; a Chinese teacher should be assigned (f50), and the entrance examination should be done by the same committee as that for the Higher Officials Examination. His predecessor had suggested that the stipends in China should be paid directly to the students, but this need not be stipulated by the government.

Now the Council of the Indies agreed in its advice of 22 April 1870, and after Governor-General Mijer had consulted the local authorities, he wrote to Minister E. de Waal on 5 May 1870, asking for approval of the four items mentioned by the director.

The Minister's staff advised him to accept these suggestions, and stated that for the first three of these no ministerial approval was necessary, and sending the books would also be no problem.

Minister De Waal decided the examination rules on 15 August 1870, after minor changes. In general, not more than two students were to be trained, and he added the usual necessary condition of repaying the costs

of training etc. in case they were discharged less than five years after finishing their studies.⁴⁴ Here discharge from “government service” should be changed into “Indies service” (*Indische dienst*). This was because of correspondence with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the last two years, which could entail attempts by that Ministry to engage the interpreters trained in China at the consulates in China. In that case, the costs of training should be refunded to the East Indies government. Finally, measures should be taken to send two copies of the necessary books.

This decision of the Minister was finally adopted in a decision of the Governor-General on 16 October 1870 (no. 2), and this was published in the Bulletin of Acts and Decrees (*Staatsblad van Nederlandsch-Indië*) (1870, no. 151), entitled “Conditions for government subsidies for the training of Chinese interpreters in the Netherlands Indies.”⁴⁵ After sixteen years of ad-hoc decisions, this was the first general system for the recruitment and training of Chinese interpreters.

This decision consisted of four articles:

- Article 1. According to need, usually not more than two persons at a time could be designated by the Governor-General to be trained as Chinese interpreters in Batavia or elsewhere in the Netherlands Indies.
- Article 2. Candidates should not be older than twenty years, and take part in a competitive examination (in the four languages and other subjects mentioned above).
- Article 3. The students should receive a monthly stipend of f150 in the Indies during a maximum of four years, and \$125 in China during a maximum of one year, and free passage to and from China.
- Article 4. Those who passed the examination and were designated as students should sign a promise to repay all expenditures paid for them by the government in case they were discharged from the Indies government’s service within five years after finishing their studies.

However, this decision came too late for the five candidates of 1868. None of them took part in any examination. The most serious candidate, Gobée, whose request dated from 1866, was by now far too old; he now was pursuing a career in military administration, and in April 1870 he had already entered the Military School.⁴⁶ About Reeder nothing is known; the other three candidates perhaps had careers in the lower civil administration.⁴⁷

The first student-interpreter in Batavia: J.J. Roelofs (1871–1872)

Just when the examination system was established, the need for interpreters became urgent after the passing away of two of them. On 16 August

1870, Buddingh passed away, but his vacancy in Padang could be filled because Meeter happened to return from sick leave in the Netherlands.⁴⁸ But after the death of De Breuk on 10 November 1870, there was no replacement for him in Cirebon. Therefore, a few months after the promulgation of the new rules, Governor-General Mijer decided not to wait for the yearly Higher Officials Examination in the autumn but to organise a special examination committee. Announcements were published in the *Javasche Courant* (the Indies Government Gazette)⁴⁹ and other newspapers. The examination took place from 13 to 15 March 1871 in the building of the Batavian Society (*Bataviaasch Genootschap*). For the languages and physics there was a written and an oral examination; the other subjects were only examined orally. The candidates had to write an essay in Dutch, and translate Dutch texts into the three other languages without using a dictionary, while the translations of certain difficult words were supplied. In order to pass, the candidate was at least to score 20 points for the four languages. There were only two candidates. One was the 19-year old Johannes Jacobus Roelofs, who was born in The Hague and had come to the Indies with his family in 1862. His father was at first a shopkeeper in Batavia and in 1867 became a shipping agent (*expediteur*) at the Java Bank. Roelofs was of purely European descent, and he passed the examination. The other candidate was H.E. Busscher, a “native child,” whose capacities were so far below the average that the committee could not consider him eligible.⁵⁰ Their results were as follows:⁵¹

Subject	Roelofs	Busscher
Dutch	6	4
French	8	4
English	5	2
German	5	3
Arithmetic	4	4
Botany and zoology, mineralogy and geology	7	3
Physics and astronomy	5	2
Geography	6	5
History	5	6
Bookkeeping	8	6

The marks are on an ascending scale from 1 to 10, where ‘5’ represents ‘barely satisfactory knowledge’ (*even voldoende kennis*).⁵² Busscher only had satisfactory results in the last three subjects.

Actually, it remained just as difficult to find suitable candidates as before, and Schlegel would later complain that Roelofs would not have taken part in this examination if he had not failed to pass part A of the Higher

Officials Examination the year before.⁵³ On 20 April 1871, Roelofs was designated as student-interpreter to be trained by Schlegel in the Tsiang-tsiu dialect, with the usual stipends and conditions. It was explicitly stated that he was to sign for repayment before he could begin his studies.⁵⁴

All that is known about Schlegel's teaching method for his first student Roelofs—except the book list—is that he began to revise a manual (without doubt Doty's) and conversations in the Amoy (Tsiang-tsiu) dialect, "because there existed no sources to learn the Hokkien dialect except living ones."⁵⁵ He planned to have it published, but did not finish his revision at the time.⁵⁶ Two years later, in 1873, he finished his Dutch translation and adaptation to the Tsiang-tsiu dialect of Doty's manual, which was entitled *Hollandsch-Chineesch handboekje van het Tsiang-tsiu dialect*. All of his later students in Leiden copied it by hand, but it was never published.⁵⁷ There is no mention of engagement of a new teacher from China, so probably Schlegel's teacher was used.

Half a year after the first examination, another attempt was made to recruit more students. On 1 July 1871, the first Director of Justice,⁵⁸ T.H. der Kinderen,⁵⁹ a staunch supporter of the interpreters, suggested to the Governor-General to organise another examination that autumn. He stated that it took five years to train an interpreter, and there was only one student at the time. The vacancy in Cirebon could not be filled, and within five years, the need would be even greater. It would be desirable to train two more students, and Schlegel was said to be happy to train one other student together with Roelofs. Director of Interior Administration Levysohn Norman advised Governor-General Mijer that funding would be no problem for a third student, because of the passing away of two interpreters, but that according to the regulations, there should only be an opportunity for one other student. Mijer agreed and subsequently, the examination committee for the Higher Officials Examination was charged with organising an examination for student-interpreters together with the Higher Officials Examination on 18 September and the following days.⁶⁰ Announcements were published in the newspapers. However, this time not even one candidate showed up for the examination.

In 1872, after working as an interpreter in the Indies for ten years, Schlegel was obliged to ask for leave in the Netherlands in order to recover from ill health; he was suffering from diabetes. He planned to turn over the teaching of Roelofs to one of his colleagues, preferably Groeneveldt, who should in that case be transferred from Padang to Batavia.⁶¹ Schlegel was granted two years' leave on 8 June 1872 and left the Indies on 20 June.⁶² But two months later, Groeneveldt was charged to accompany the first Dutch Consul General and Minister Resident in China, J.H. Ferguson, and to act as his secretary and interpreter for one year. Groeneveldt could be borrowed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs despite the shortage of

Chinese interpreters. Since the colonial government would lose for some time one interpreter for whose training they had dearly paid, they tried to make the most of this assignment. In Governor-General J. Loudon's decision of 5 August 1872 to assign Groeneveldt to China for one year, the Director of Justice was charged to recommend Groeneveldt to profit from his stay in China to learn another dialect not yet known to him, and to ask him his opinion about the possibility of being accompanied by Roelofs or another student suitable to be trained by him in China, and if necessary to make suggestions.⁶³ Thereupon, Groeneveldt wrote two letters to the Director of Justice, both dated 6 September 1872, accepting the training of Roelofs, but rejecting the recommendation to learn another dialect.⁶⁴ The first letter gives a description of Roelofs' probable study environment in China:

The student Roelofs is now learning the Hokkien Dialect, which is spoken in Amoy and environs; my destination, as far as I know, is Shanghai, where one hears a completely different language; in this respect, Amoy would be the best place for him; even Batavia would be preferable to Shanghai.

But an interpreter should learn more than the colloquial language; he should also be proficient in the literary language and know about laws and customs, in a word, the whole of Chinese life. For this part of his studies, which is surely the most difficult, China offers more favourable opportunities than Batavia, and in particular the guidance of an expert is a great advantage; during my stay in China I felt the lack of that in many respects.⁶⁵

Moreover, the objection to Shanghai which I mentioned, can be largely remedied. The student Roelofs will of course engage a teacher and a servant from Amoy, and, being together with me, he will get into daily contact with other people who speak that dialect, and in Shanghai there will be a number of merchants etc. from Amoy, with whom he can associate as much as he deems fit.

I do not know enough about the natural endowments and progress of the said student; from Mr. Schlegel I have always heard favourable reports. On the basis of this I dare say that after his stay in Shanghai under my guidance for one year, he can be fully equipped to stand on his own feet and to qualify himself further during another year in Fujian province.⁶⁶

The second letter was not about Roelofs, but it summarised the problems for the European interpreter of Chinese in learning other dialects:

Here in the Indies, generally only two dialects are spoken: the so-called Hokkien and the Hakka or Kheh dialect. Chinese from other regions can only be found in few places and in small numbers. I know these two dialects, and it would be of no use for my work in the Indies to learn an extra dialect.

As to the Shanghai dialect, there is to my knowledge in all of the Indies not one Chinese who speaks that dialect.

Finally, I should emphasise that although Chinese dialects differ greatly, they also have much in common, and that it is already quite difficult and requires a lot of practicing to learn two dialects without mixing them up frequently.

Even if I could use it here in the Indies, I would still hesitate to study a third dialect on a regular basis.

I am very pleased with my assignment in China, because I expect much profit for my studies. But I hope that the Government will on the basis of the above abandon the said recommendation and leave it to my own judgement how I shall profit from the opportunity given to me.⁶⁷

The new Director of Justice, W.H. de Pauly, considered Groeneveldt's objection well founded and advised abandoning the recommendation. Subsequently, Governor-General Loudon took a new decision on 22 September, stipulating that in deviation from the study regulations, Roelofs was to be sent to China with Groeneveldt, to study there for a maximum of two years. At the same time, Groeneveldt was notified that the government had abandoned its wish to have him learn yet another dialect, and would let him decide himself how best to profit from his stay in China.⁶⁸

After Roelofs had studied in Batavia for one and a half years, he was ordered to proceed to China with Groeneveldt.⁶⁹ They left accompanied by Groeneveldt's Chinese teacher/clerk on 22 October 1872,⁷⁰ and proceeded to Shanghai. Groeneveldt was in function as per 14 November 1872, and one year later, his assignment was prolonged for another year.⁷¹ Roelofs probably stayed with Groeneveldt for one year. Subsequently, he went to study in Amoy, where he was given assistance by the Netherlands' Vice-Consul J. Paterson, and from 23 April 1874, Consul C.J. Pasedag.⁷² In contrast with the earlier students, he was on his own in Amoy, and when his younger colleague J. van der Spek met him in Batavia in 1880, he made the following impression:

He seems to me a bloke with a quick mind, but without any aspiration for higher, nobler things; and now and then he shows that he associated with less exquisite people in Amoy.⁷³

He stayed in China until April 1875, seven months longer than allowed, being there for about two and a half years; in total, he studied for four years. After his return to Java, he was notified of the serious dissatisfaction of the government, because his stay in China had exceeded the allowed period; however, the government was willing to overlook this and decided to pay the stipends for October to April advanced by the Consul in Amoy, and also Roelofs' travel expenses.⁷⁴ On the same day, 17 June 1875, Roelofs was appointed as interpreter in Pontianak.⁷⁵

The second student-interpreter in Batavia: J.W. Young (1873–1875)

Just before Roelofs left for China in 1872, a third attempt was made to recruit student-interpreters in Batavia. On 9 September, Governor-General

Loudon charged the committee for the Higher Officials Examination of that year to organise an examination for aspirant-interpreters; this was to be taken on 18 November and the following days, simultaneously with the Higher Officials Examination.⁷⁶ Director of Justice De Pauly was to make public announcements of the opportunity to be trained as interpreter.⁷⁷

This time, there were at first three candidates, one of whom withdrew, but of the remaining two, only the 17-year old J.W. Young passed the examination; the other candidate A. Buijn failed. James William Young was a “native child” (Eurasian),⁷⁸ a son of the Malay translator James Young (1832–1906), who happened to be a friend of Schlegel. He had been a student at the Willem III Gymnasium.⁷⁹ The examination results of the two candidates were as follows:

Subject	Young	Buijn
Dutch	10	3
French	6	5
English	8	2
German	7	3
Arithmetic	4	2
Botany and zoology, mineralogy and geology	6	2
Physics and astronomy	3	2
Geography	5	2
History	6	3
Bookkeeping	6	5

Young was excellent in Dutch and good in English, but weak in Arithmetic and Physics. Evidently the other candidate, Buijn, whose results were poor except for “barely satisfactory” marks for French and Bookkeeping, was not eligible. The Governor-General decided on 2 January 1873 that Young was to be trained as an interpreter for Chinese, and that he was to be taught the Tsiang-tsiu dialect in Batavia under the usual financial conditions. Von Faber would be responsible for his training.⁸⁰

Young studied under Von Faber in Batavia for three years, from January 1873 to December 1875. Apart from Tsiang-tsiu (Hokkien), he may have also studied Cantonese. This was after all Von Faber’s specialism, and Young was later said to speak Hokkien, Cantonese, and Hakka with a pureness of accent and ease seldom attained by Europeans.⁸¹

On 22 December 1875, Young was granted permission to stay in China for “one and a half years,” but he remained in China for little more than one year. He studied from January 1876 to 3 February 1877 in Amoy,⁸² where he was assisted by the Netherlands Consul C.J. Pasedag.⁸³ He once requested via Pasedag to be sent some copies of the *Staatsblad van Ned.-Indië*

(*Bulletin of Acts and Decrees*) and police ordinances etc. to practice translating into Chinese. The Director of Justice then sent him the *Staatsblad van Nederlandsch-Indië* of 1875 and six police ordinances (*keuren*).⁸⁴ He received his last allowance over January 1877, and he left for Java on 3 February 1877.⁸⁵ During his last days, he may have met the three students from Leiden, De Groot, Hoetink, and Stuart, who arrived in Amoy on 2 February.⁸⁶

On 8 February 1877, he was allowed to engage a Chinese teacher for three years, who would accompany him to the Indies.⁸⁷ After a total of four years of study, like Roelofs, Young was on 16 March 1877 appointed as interpreter in Pontianak.⁸⁸ He took over the vacancy left by Roelofs, who had been transferred to Padang almost a year earlier. After arrival in Western Borneo, he was allowed by Resident Kater to engage a teacher for the Hakka dialect for f25 monthly for one year,⁸⁹ probably since he had not been able to study that dialect in China.

The failure and success of the Batavian system

Just as in the 1850s, the attempt to recruit students and to set up a training programme in Batavia failed. Only two students were ever trained in Batavia. Moreover, while doing so, the regulations were constantly violated: because of circumstances, Roelofs had to leave Batavia after one and a half years of study (instead of four), and was allowed to study in China for two years (instead of one), which actually became two and a half years; and Young was not a pure European—which was only unofficially undesirable. In 1873, after Schlegel returned on sick leave to the Netherlands, he attempted to obtain a professorship in Leiden, and gave another explanation for the failure of the training programme in Batavia:

In the first place, the hot climate of the Netherlands Indies is not very beneficial for studies, and is detrimental to the desire to work of both the student and the teacher, who, next to teaching, also has to perform his official duties as interpreter of Chinese, and therefore can use but little time in teaching his student.

The combination of translating/interpreting and teaching proved not feasible. In the second place, Schlegel argued, the examination could only be taken in Batavia, so that candidates from the Netherlands could hardly take part.⁹⁰ In the Netherlands, there would have been a much larger pool of potential candidates. When explicitly asked by Minister of Colonies Fransen van de Putte if suitable candidates could be found in the Indies, he gave a negative answer, explaining:

The Minister should know that most parents in the Indies would send their sons at an early age to Europe to be educated there. And even the large majority of those who finish the Willem III Gymnasium, also go to Europe afterwards.

Schlegel gave other arguments for his opinion that the climate harmed the zest for study. Teachers at the Willem III Gymnasium had more than once assured him that this was the case, and Schlegel could also assess this when he was appointed a member of the Final Examination Committee of that school in 1870.⁹¹

From September 1873 on, Schlegel was charged with the training of interpreters in Leiden. From then on, all new interpreters were first taught in the Netherlands. But still it was in Batavia that the basis had been laid for a competitive examination system and for specific conditions of study, including an actual total period of four years; the choice of the Hokkien dialect had also explicitly been made there, with a second option of Hakka. Starting in 1873, this system would be implemented in Leiden with more success, and would remain basically the same for more than forty years until 1917.⁹²

