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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 TEN

SCHLEGEL'S STUDENTS IN CHINA (1877–1898)

The first group: De Groot, Hoetink, Stuart (1877–1878)

During their studies in China, Schlegel's students lived most of the time on Gulangyu, a small island close to the much larger island of Amoy (Xiamen); like Amoy, it is a barren, rocky place. It has scattered huge boulders, on which the waves of the sea make the sound of drumming, whence the name Gulangyu 鼓浪嶼, 'Drum-wave-island.'¹ Most Westerners preferred to live there, fleeing from the crowded and filthy town of Amoy, while the merchants' offices and warehouses were on the Amoy side. The following description is based on *A Short History of Koolangsu* (1878), a short guide to Gulangyu by the British 'second consul' and later famous sinologist H.A. Giles.² It gives historical and geographical information and even a complete name list of foreign residents.

On 10 October 1878 there were 251 foreigners residing in Amoy, of whom about 200 were living on Gulangyu and 50 in Amoy. The majority (133) were British, followed by 38 Germans, 21 Americans, 19 Portuguese, 16 Spanish, 8 Japanese, 7 Danish, etc., but no Dutch. Among the foreigners there were 81 bachelors, 51 married men, 13 spinsters, and 45 married women with 56 children. On Gulangyu there were at the time 2,835 Chinese residents.

Shipping and trade in Amoy were mainly a British affair. In 1877, in total 429 steam ships entered the harbour, of which 377 were British, and there arrived 243 sailing ships, of which 103 were German, 93 British, 13 Danish and only 10 Dutch. Tea was the most important item of trade, while the duties paid on opium amounted to more than one quarter of the total trade.

On Gulangyu the foreign community lived in Western houses, the first of which had been built in 1859. There was one Protestant Church, capable of holding 200 persons, there were four Chinese temples, and there was a Masonic lodge. There was "The Club" that had been erected in 1876, comprising a library, a reading room, a billiard room, a bowling alley, a bar, and a committee room. Attached to it there was a small theatre, where during the winter performances were regularly given with the assistance of the ladies. For sports, there were a racquet court, a Recreation Ground with a lawn tennis court, etc. There was a race court on the Amoy side, where yearly races were held; it is now part of Xiamen University. There

was some “extremely good shooting” to be done in the environment and one could take “pretty if somewhat monotonous” walks around Gulangyu. A daily newspaper *The Amoy Gazette* was printed in one of the two printing presses in Amoy. On Gulangyu there were Chinese and foreign shops, where prices were somewhat higher than elsewhere on the China coast. Ice and soda water were produced on the island, and there was a company intending to supply “*pure un-watered milk*” (italics by Giles). Finally, there were several cemeteries for Europeans.³ Most foreigners were merchants or had other professions connected with the harbour and shipping. The British and Germans each had their own consulate with professional personnel, there was a Customs House and the Danish telegraph company;⁴ there were about ten missionaries with their families. The Chinese originated from various places in China, but there were many Cantonese and half-casts. Most merchants did not speak Chinese and communicated with their Chinese ‘compradores’ (middlemen) in pidgin English.⁵

Unfortunately, little is known about the studies of the first group of Schlegel’s students. They arrived in Amoy on 2 February 1877 and left one year later on 9 February 1878.⁶ They were received and helped by the Consul, the German merchant C.J. Pasedag, who had been living in Amoy since 1858.⁷ He had been appointed by Ferguson as the first Netherlands Consul in Amoy on 23 April 1874 and remained in function until 25 November 1884.⁸ Earlier he had given assistance to Roelofs, and he was still assisting Young, who would leave one day after the arrival of Schlegel’s students. Pasedag’s main task was to handle the drafts of \$140 for each student that the Department of Justice sent each month from Batavia, which included \$125 allowance and \$15 for the teacher’s pay; all three students signed each month for the receipt of this draft.⁹ There were no financial problems, except that the passage fees from Hong Kong to Amoy had not been paid in advance by the government, but these were soon restituted at the request of the students.¹⁰

Each student hired a private Chinese teacher, but only the name of De Groot’s teacher is known: Tiō Siao Hun 趙少勳;¹¹ he was then about forty years old¹² and he would later be Van der Spek’s, Borel’s, and De Bruin’s teacher.¹³ Hoetink engaged a teacher from Zhangzhou, whose name is not known.

The students had Chinese names that were probably given to them by their teachers. Of course the characters of these names were to be pronounced according to Hokkien pronunciation. Jan de Groot’s name was Ko Iên 高延, but he also had a seal with his complete name in Chinese word order: Ko Iên Iâ-kok hâng dzī 高延哪嶧行二 (Jan Jacob de Groot, the second son).¹⁴ Hoetink’s name was Hu-ting 富亭 and he had a similar seal with his complete name: Hu-ting Bih-tát-dzū-sū hâng it 富亭篋達裕士行一 (Bernardus Hoetink, the eldest son).¹⁵ No Chinese name of Stuart is known.

Nothing is known about the contents of their studies, but they must have been similar to those of the second and third groups of students, which are described below.

Of course, the students made use of the opportunity to buy Chinese books. Later many of these ended up in the East Asian Library in Leiden. In 1885, when De Groot was on leave in Holland and going again to China, he sold his library of 49 books acquired during his first visit to China to the Leiden University Library. They are listed in Schlegel's supplement catalogue.¹⁶ Hoetink compiled a manuscript catalogue of sixty Chinese books that he must have collected during his studies in China. Many of these are the same as De Groot's books, but half of Hoetink's books were novels or other works of literature, while De Groot collected more books on history and very few works of fiction.¹⁷ After his retirement Hoetink donated his Chinese books to the Leiden Library.¹⁸

The students must have rented lodgings and engaged house personnel in Amoy. The names of three of their servants are known: Hoetink's 'samanman' Ts'un-tsuí, house 'coolie' Íng-ǒng 永旺 (*Yongwang*) and his 'boy' P'iao.¹⁹ However, the three students did not always live together. For instance, at one time Hoetink rented a room for one month with a Chinese friend, and he lived alone in Zhangzhou for some time.

From the start, De Groot showed his usual ambition and activity, not only in his studies, but also in society, where he fulfilled a position in the Dutch Consular Court. As from 1 March 1876, there existed Consular Jurisdiction in Amoy. Almost a year later, on 15 January 1877, Pasedag wrote to Ferguson that he had found one assessor for the Dutch Consular Court, but that it was difficult to find a Registrar and Bailiff. There were few people who knew Dutch, and he asked Ferguson to send a Dutch official from Java, who would know both Dutch and Malay. Ferguson replied on 19 January that this was impossible, and that a German would be good enough, or even an Englishman or Frenchman. By happy coincidence, the three Dutch students arrived at that time in Amoy and a full court could be formed. In April two assessors were appointed, the Germans L.A. Andersen,²⁰ 40 years old, Marine surveyor at Amoy, and M. Rost, 36 years old, merchant; at the same time J.J.M. de Groot, 23 years old, student-interpreter, was appointed as 'Chancellor at the Netherlands Consulate in Amoy and Registrar with the Consular Judge.'²¹ All three were sworn in on 10 April. No records of any cases tried were found in the archives. In December 1877, their positions were continued for 1878,²² but De Groot resigned when he left Amoy and was replaced by Pasedag's two clerks.²³ He and later Thijssen were the only (known) Dutch students fulfilling this position. Not all students were eligible, since the minimum age was 23.

De Groot would use his time in China to great scholarly profit. He studied a lot, but according to one report, he did not speak the language

very well. A year later, when Van der Spek arrived in Amoy, he was told that “De Groot spoke Chinese badly but he studied a lot.”²⁴ In his condensed diary—unfortunately he later destroyed his original diaries—he wrote about his studies in Amoy:

This year is used mainly for the gathering of information about the yearly festivals of the Amoy Chinese, which I regularly and as much as possible attend and observe in the town.²⁵

His teacher Tio must also have been an important source of information on Chinese customs.²⁶ On the basis of this information and his own observations and studies, he wrote his standard work about the yearly festivals and customs of the Amoy Chinese after he was appointed in the Indies. It was printed in two parts in 1881 and 1883 in Batavia,²⁷ and he obtained a doctorate in Leipzig for this work on 5 December 1884.

De Groot also travelled around a lot through Fujian province:

Travel also through the Beixi [北溪?] basin and that of the Min [閩] from its most Southwestern sources until the capital Fuzhou, where I visit for the first time the Gushan [鼓山] Monastery, which would during my second stay in China [1886–90] be of such great service for my studies of the Buddhist monastic system. Moreover I travelled through the region of the Southern parallel river of the Min, and that of the Jinjiang [晉江], with the Quanzhou [泉州] prefecture.²⁸

A glimpse of his conditions of travel may be obtained from his study of the yearly festivals. Although this was never explicitly stated,²⁹ he was probably accompanied by a servant:

On our travels through Fujian province, each evening we occupied the village temple as it suited us and without ceremony to serve as our lodgings for the night; because inns are not available everywhere, and where they are, it is best to avoid them as much as possible on account of the dirt and vermin. We spread our mats out on the altar table, crept into our blankets and slept as on a bed of state right under the eyes of the gods and goddesses. The populace that came flocking in of course observed all our movements with the greatest curiosity and attention, but no one ever thought of challenging [the appropriateness of] our lodgings, or blaming us for the violation of the altar; on the contrary, in every village we experienced a high degree of courtesy and assistance, although we were certainly considered by the majority to be not better than shiftless tramps. One hundred cash (± 25 cents), laid down each morning before our departure in the ashes container—this was said to be money for incense and candles, but in reality it was a tip for the temple keeper—served to leave behind a good impression and prepare a similar good reception for possible successors. A Chinese who would travel through the countryside in Europe and might try to stretch his tired limbs on the altar of a village church, would encounter a completely different treatment!³⁰

Reading this account, one can only deplore De Groot's decision to destroy his diaries. He explained the reason for this in his condensed diary. He

expected that these diaries would not be of any interest for other readers than himself. For the same reason he also did not publish travelogues, in contrast to some of his colleagues (De Grijns, Van der Spek, Borel):

My diary of that whole year of heavy exertions, labour and danger to life I have destroyed, after taking out of it everything that I could use in my scholarly studies.

What's the use for the world and for scholarship of all these details, that, in the end, only touch upon me? I have always disliked reading travelogues and it would therefore be improper for me to write them and in that way make others swallow something that I don't like to eat [between lines: to offer them something that is not to my taste]. These things in general only serve to make the authors themselves and their adventures interesting. Fortunately I have always been able to resist requests from many publishers and editors of newspapers to deliver travelogues for their printing business.³¹

De Groot complained about the short time given him to study in China, blaming Schlegel for this:

What a bad turn Schlegel again did us by making the Government prescribe that we could only stay one year in China! We were not even given the time to make good for what the thoroughly bad training in Leiden had spoiled! ... In China where the opportunity to obtain knowledge was so incomparably better and more favourable, we were only grudgingly apportioned a minimum of time.³²

Later all sinologists who had studied for only one year in China would agree with this, although they did not explicitly put the blame on Schlegel. They would on their own initiative tell Groeneveldt, the Honorary Advisor for Chinese Affairs, that one year was not enough.³³

Hoetink also profited greatly from his time in China. When Van der Spek arrived in 1879, he was told that "Hoetink spoke Chinese very well."³⁴ This was not only because of his talent for languages, but probably also because he could get along well with the Chinese. He had several Chinese friends, who were mostly merchants originating from Zhangzhou and elsewhere in the interior of Fujian. The given names of two friends are known: T'ien-k'it, in characters 天乞兄 (*Tianqi xiong*, elder brother T'ien-k'it) and Hing-saam [恒三?]. The nickname of a third friend is also known: Puî, in character 肥 (*Fei*, Fatso), a common nickname in China; this person was also once called Puî-luî-lui (very fat). T'ien-k'it seems to have been Hoetink's best friend, and Hoetink lived for one month in a room in his house.³⁵ T'ien-k'it's brothers became Hoetink's friends as well: T'ien-k'ui, T'ien-tsuí, and his eldest brother T'ien-laî, who had an opium shop in Zhangzhou.³⁶

Schlegel had advised to send the students as soon as possible after arrival in Amoy, for instance after a few months, to Zhangzhou to come into daily contact with the Chinese there and learn the most widely spoken dialect

of the Indies.³⁷ In that way they would be immersed in a purely Chinese environment, which would be beneficial for their studies. Of the students of the first group, only Hoetink seems to have done this. When the second group of students visited Zhangzhou for the first time, they were accompanied by Hoetink's friend and made a 'pilgrimage' (*bedevaart*) to his former house. In that house they found a lantern with the text: *Futing Da Helanguo fanyiguan* 富亭大荷蘭國翻譯官, "Hoetink, government interpreter of the Great Country of Holland." On a later visit to Zhangzhou they paid their respects to this house again.³⁸ Van der Spek never mentioned that De Groot and Stuart had studied in Zhangzhou.

There is more evidence showing that Hoetink was the only student who went to Zhangzhou. The date of his arrival is not known, but in any case he was there on 12 November 1877. On that day, about three months before completion of his year in China, he wrote a letter in English from Zhangzhou to Pasedag in Amoy. He informed him that he was about to finish his studies in China and that he had written a letter to Director of Justice L.A.P.F. Buijn in Batavia requesting travel funds to Batavia for himself and a Chinese clerk. He asked Pasedag to forward this letter, which Pasedag did the next day.³⁹ In the archives no such letter from the others was found, and Pasedag never forwarded such letters from the others to Batavia.⁴⁰

About Stuart's studies in China nothing is known, except that he was called the 'Don Juan' of this group.⁴¹

Before leaving, all three probably engaged Chinese teachers whom they took along to the Indies. On 9 February 1878 De Groot (and probably his fellow students) left Amoy and travelled to Java. On the way, De Groot visited Canton, and from Hong Kong he took a small steamer full of Chinese emigrants to Singapore, in order to personally observe the shipment of coolies (*koelievaart*).⁴² On 16 March 1878, all three students arrived in Batavia coming from Singapore.⁴³

After arrival in Batavia the three students submitted a formal request to be appointed as interpreters in the Indies; this was normal procedure. On 11 March Director of Justice Buijn asked Groeneveldt's advice as to where they should best be stationed. Groeneveldt had left the interpreter corps the year before and was now working as *referendaris* for the central government, but he also advised the government about Chinese affairs. He replied on 20 March that this question was difficult to answer, since in most places the interpreters had little work to do, at least as long as their functions would remain unchanged—intimating that this should change. He wrote that he would propose places for these newly arrived students, not because he imagined they would have much to do, but since they were here, they should be stationed somewhere. Now that all seven positions assigned in the *Staatsblad* had been filled,⁴⁴ Groeneveldt proposed to

appoint them in Cirebon, where an interpreter had once been stationed (De Breuk), on Banka, which position had been abolished for reasons unknown to him (Buddingh), and in Makassar, which had a large Chinese population of 4,193.⁴⁵

Accordingly, on 13 April 1878 De Groot was appointed in Cirebon, Stuart in Mentok (Banka), and Hoetink *temporarily* in Makassar.⁴⁶ The first group of Schlegel's students trained according to the new system surely must have felt disappointed when they received this unhearty welcome in the Indies (if indeed they knew). A year later, Hoetink wrote a letter of warning to Van der Spek in Amoy. On 18 May 1879 Van der Spek noted in his *Diary*:

Hoetink writes that there are changes in the air regarding the interpreter corps and that we perhaps won't become interpreters.⁴⁷

The second group: Van der Spek, Moll, de Jongh (1879–1880)

The second group arrived in Amoy on 28 February 1879 and left for Batavia one year later on 3 March 1880. Much more is known about them as Van der Spek's *Diary* is still extant,⁴⁸ and he wrote fourteen "Letters from China" that were published in the newspaper *Het Nieuws van den dag* in 1879–80.⁴⁹

They were similarly received and assisted by Pasedag. They were confronted with similar financial problems as the first group, because expenses in Hong Kong had not been advanced to them, but this issue was solved soon at their request.⁵⁰

From their second day in Amoy, they were also helped and introduced into Chinese society by Hoetink's Chinese friends, in particular by T'ien-k'it, which was to the profit of both sides, as would appear much later.

After a week, for \$35 they rented a furnished house on the Amoy side, above the store of the ship chandlers Gerard and Co. (Kopp and Rost), where they lived for one month.⁵¹ From 8 April to 1 December they lived in the German C.O. Kopp's house on Gulangyu, where they rented three bedrooms and three sitting rooms (*see* illustration 16).⁵² The last three months, from 1 December 1879 to 25 February 1880, they rented a house in Zhangzhou.

As house personnel they hired on the day of arrival a 'sampanman' (Ts'un-tsu) and a house 'coolie' (Íng-ōng 永旺), who had both worked for Hoetink. They also hired a cook (Bô-á) and a large and a small 'boy' (Sing-hai and Ke-á).⁵³ Later De Jongh and Van der Spek seem to have hired girl servants as well, one of whom was called Amay.⁵⁴ When they moved to Zhangzhou, the servants came along.

Their cook Bô-á had earlier worked for a German lady, so that he had



16. Moll, De Jongh, Van der Spek, their landlord C.O. Kopp (?), the teacher Faan Sing (?), large and small boy and another person in their house on Gulangyu, 25 April 1879 (courtesy F.R. van der Spek, Noordwolde).

been trained in Western cooking. Van der Spek highly praised his ability in one of his “Letters from China.”⁵⁵ The students usually ate Dutch or at least Western food, using knives and forks. On their first trip to Zhangzhou they took along large quantities of potatoes, meat, butter, bread, brandy, soda water, etc.⁵⁶ Van der Spek and his fellow students did not like Chinese food, because of its “Chinese smell” (*’t Chineesche luchtje*), although they conceded that it was healthy. They ate Chinese food and used chopsticks only when invited by Chinese friends.⁵⁷

After their arrival in Amoy, Pasedag—usually called ‘Poki’ 寶記 by Van der Spek, the Chinese name of his company—introduced them in ‘The Club,’ and they also met his two German clerks August Piehl and Wilhelm Haalcke who were in their mid-twenties. They also immediately went to look for Hoetink’s friend T’ien-k’it 天乞, who was not at home but returned their visit later that day. The following days, according to a British custom, they paid courtesy visits to many foreign residents, which were returned later, for instance the British “2nd Consul” H.A. Giles, the German Consul C. Bismarck, and Mrs. Boyd who had known Schlegel, De Grijns, and Francken very well and spent happy evenings with them.⁵⁸ They also visited other Consuls and missionaries like John Van Nest Talmage.⁵⁹

On the day of arrival they had already engaged De Groot's teacher Tiō Siaó Hun, whom Van der Spek usually called Tiō-lák-siā 趙六舍, "Sixth Master Tiō."⁶⁰ At the introduction of T'ien-k'it, they engaged the second teacher Ong King Tong [王經冬?], who came from the interior of Fujian. He would later be Van der Spek's teacher and accompany the students during their three-month stay in Zhangzhou. In October they learned that Ong had to pay \$3 each month to T'ien-k'it, one fifth of his salary, as 'squeeze' (commission).⁶¹ The third teacher, named Fan Sing (or Faan Sing), only appeared once in the diary.⁶² Van der Spek did not provide characters for these names. They engaged another teacher later, but no name is mentioned (*see* illustration 17).⁶³

Ten days after arrival, on Monday 10 March, they started studying with the teachers. In the beginning the teachers gave the students some presents that might be useful for their studies. Tiō gave each of them a copy of the novel *Pingshan lengyan* 平山冷燕, on which he wrote the Chinese name of each student and a date, and placed a poetic seal.⁶⁴ Ong King Tong, whom Van der Spek called in English "the true-born Chinaman," and who came from a wealthy family from Nanjing 南靖,⁶⁵ presented them with a small pot of red ink, the biography of his great-uncle, and a Chinese seal.⁶⁶ They also received useful presents from Hoetink's former boy P'iao. The day after they had given him a large tip of \$5, he brought them "three ink-stones etc." Van der Spek was highly surprised about this generosity and wrote: "Does one find such a thing often among Dutchmen?"⁶⁷

When they began their studies, they were probably given Chinese names by their teachers. Van der Spek introduced these names as follows:

My name is Sih Péh 薛伯, and my style 字 is Pang Kiét 邦傑, "greatest hero in the land," because the *Book of Songs* says: "Hey, Péh is brave, greatest hero in the land!" 詩經云伯兮絜兮邦之傑也.⁶⁸

Moll's name is Bú P'ik 武珀 and Arie de Jongh's name is Yông Alí 楊亞理.⁶⁹

Each student had his own teacher and was taught individually. For the first few weeks Tiō was Van der Spek's teacher; later he was taught mostly by Ong. These classes seem to have been given every day except Sunday, but is not clear how many hours they lasted. Sometimes there were only classes in the morning, when they had other activities in the afternoon.

Van der Spek only wrote in his *Diary* about his studies during the first two months, March and April 1879. He sometimes gave the titles of Chinese stories or books that he was working on, or simply mentioned that they were "studying" (*studeeren*). The study programme during these months began with 'colloquialising' stories from *Jingu qiguan* 今古奇觀 that they had studied earlier in Leiden, namely *Du Shiniang* 杜十娘⁷⁰ and *Maiyoulang* 賣油郎.⁷¹ 'Colloquialising' probably meant reproducing the story in Tsiangtsiu colloquial, either in oral form before the teacher or



17. The students with their Chinese teachers, friends and servants in front of the "Dutch Consulate" (note the Dutch flag) on Gulangyu, 29 April 1879. Standing, from left to right: Ts'un-tsui (sampanman), Hing-saam (friend), A.E. Moll, A.A. de Jongh, J. van der Spek, T'ien-k'it (friend), Sing-lai (large boy); next row: Ke-a (small boy), sitting: the teachers Tio Siao Hun, Ong King Tong, Faan Sing; in front Bô-á (cook), Ing-ōng (house coolie) (courtesy E.R. van der Spek, Noordwolde).

written in transcription, just as Schaalje had done before, or both. Four days later he was working on another story, *Nü xiucai* 女秀才,⁷² which he finished in ten days on 26 March. On that day he began with the *Sacred Edict*, and two days later he studied the collection of sayings *Xishi xianwen* 昔時賢文,⁷³ a version of which had been studied earlier by Hoffmann's students, and a new book, the popular moral tract *Mingxin baojian* 明心寶鑑.⁷⁴ Three weeks later, on 19 April, he was reading *Sanguo zhi* 三國志, the famous novel about the Three Kingdoms.⁷⁵ This is the last reference to a text which they read. The only other reference to his studies is on 12 August, when he quoted some characteristics of a novel and the structure of an essay.

Apart from reading literature they must have practiced translating Netherlands-Indies ordinances into Chinese, and Chinese account books etc. into Dutch. They had done this also in Leiden, and other students such as Young and Borel did the same in China.

Their studies seem to have slackened off during the hot season. On

20 May Van der Spek wrote: "It is already rather hot and I do not have much desire to study." And on 19 June: "For the rest each day is like the previous day. Doing little work, but not feeling bored."⁷⁶

In addition to reading and translating, they practiced conversation, perhaps beginning by learning by heart a conversation guide as had been done before. From the conversation they probably also learned about Chinese culture and society. Van der Spek never wrote directly about what he learned about China, noting only some strange and shocking opinions of his teachers about Western civilisation, such as:

Tiō claims that European women have a higher position than men (because the men are always so extremely polite and subservient).⁷⁷

His later teacher Ong said about missionaries:

Ong tells me that the missionaries cut out the eyes of dead converts and send these to Jesus in order to obtain credit. Moreover he cannot understand that we try to make converts, while they couldn't care less; the Chinese are furious at people who go over to Christianity.⁷⁸

He only once mentioned the third teacher, after one week of studying, showing that he did not have a high opinion about the teachers:

The teachers are so terribly stupid that Fan Sing thinks Holland is far from China but closer to Japan etc.⁷⁹

Ong King Tong invited the students twice to take part in festivities. On 9 April, after his marriage, he invited them to see his new bride; according to Chinese custom a wife could only be shown to guests during the honeymoon period.⁸⁰ In one of his Letters from China, Van der Spek gave a detailed description of this visit, showing his appreciation of Chinese etiquette and courtesy among the literate class. According to him, in this respect the Chinese were much more civilised than the French, who were the model for all Europeans but who still seemed to be 'blunt Hannoverians' compared with the Chinese. This visit was an opportunity to practice their skills in elementary conversation. When they arrived in the bridal room to view the seventeen year old bride, one of the students said to the teacher:

"I congratulate you. Your honourable wife is pretty and intelligent." The teacher is delighted that his students show that they have become Chinese to a large extent, and he answers: "*Khi kaam* [豈敢 how would I dare to accept?], my stupid Inner Room [內室] (that is: wife) is ugly and stupid; moreover her bound feet are very large." We say: "You are too modest, her golden lilies (poetic name for small feet) are small, only two inches long." Saying this, we again take a look at these parts of the body, at which no one in China takes offence. This interesting and polite conversation continues for almost a quarter of an hour and touches upon the large hall (small room), the beautiful (unsightly) bed, etc. I won't repeat these words, fearing that they will not be sufficiently appreciated by the "Red-Haired Barbarian."⁸¹

In September, Ong invited them for dinner at his home during the Ghost Festival, when according to Chinese popular belief the Doors of Hell are opened and Hungry Ghosts roam around and should be given food to deliver and pacify them (text in italics is in Chinese):

We go to Ong King Tong, *to eat the Deliverance Meal*. We have first eaten at home. Moll eats like mad again, *the Lord of the Hungry Ghosts is a great immortal*, lots of fun and jokes, and many women are also sitting and watching.⁸²

Van der Spek merrily took part in the festivities, but he was not the keen observer of Chinese customs that De Groot had been, nor did he find inspiration in Chinese festivals and their stories as Borel would later.⁸³

During their studies, the students acquired a small Chinese library. About twenty of Van der Spek's books are now in the East Asian Library (KNAG Collection). Most of these are novels and other literature, but there are also the usual dictionaries, law books and the *Four Books*. On most of these books his Chinese name is written by the teacher and the seal of his style is placed.⁸⁴ De Jongh's books are now also in the East Asian Library. He donated his Chinese library to the Sinological Institute on 16 January 1936.⁸⁵

Just as they had done in Leiden, the students took active part in the social life of the foreign community of Amoy, which according to Van der Spek comprised about sixty men and twenty women.⁸⁶ They went to dinners, 'tiffins' (lunches), parties organised by consuls and merchants, theatre performances, and they regularly visited "The Club" with its facilities. There were ample opportunities to practice their language skills, and they would sometimes speak German, English, and French on the same evening, apart from Dutch and Chinese. They would also often invite others to have dinner at their house. During these evenings, music would be made, they sang songs, told jokes and gossiped, but rarely got drunk. Van der Spek greatly enjoyed some of these evenings, but in general he did not like the merchant talk without any higher aspirations, the rudeness of the Germans and the arrogance of the English. Van der Spek liked to speculate about the national character of different nations. He admired the zeal of the Dutch of the Golden Age (seventeenth century), lamenting the "half-heartedness and little energy" (*lauwheid en weinige energie*) of his present compatriots.⁸⁷

As pastimes, the students almost daily took walks on Gulangyu, often went horseback riding, mostly on the Amoy side, bowled and played billiards at the Club, and went hunting. In particular De Jongh liked to hunt, and he shot a large number of birds during this year; he would later be a member of the Board of the Netherlands-Indies Society for the Protection of Animals (established in 1898).

At this time there were no other Dutchmen living or staying in Amoy,

except captains and other seamen of the few Dutch ships arriving in the harbour, who were often invited for dinner to their house.

Van der Spek's best foreign friend was the Dane C. Hansen, and the students associated most with Danish and German young men. These were Pasedag's two young clerks Haalcke and Piehl, the Germans H. Budler, L.P. Michelsen, Schröte(r) and C.O. Kopp, the Danish telegraphist F. Irminger, and the Scotsman John L. Anderson. In total the names of about forty foreigners are mentioned in the *Diary*.

During the first two months, and later in Zhangzhou, their Chinese friends would invite them for dinners, to see the sights and take part in activities and outings. On 12 March 1879 T'ien-k'it invited them to see a Chinese opera at a friend's shop. This was their first visit inside the town of Amoy, about which Van der Spek wrote in his second letter:

This was the first time we went into town. Anyone who has never before seen a Chinese town can hardly imagine what it is like. And the little town of Amoy is, according to many witnesses, "more Chinese than Chinese," in other words in crampedness, messyness and indescribable smells it is number one on the list of dirty and cramped towns of what is probably the most unhygienic people of the world. In the broadest streets at most four or five people can stand next to each other, on condition that they do not have too broad shoulders. And if one meets another person in an alley, with which Amoy is well provided, both must push themselves to the walls and slide alongside each other. If one adds that dogs and pigs are roaming in great numbers on the streets, so that one is sometimes obliged to make one's way through with a stick; that the olfactory nerves are put to the heaviest test; that one is every moment in danger of bumping into awfully smelling coolies who never wash themselves; that here and there the faces of beggars, awfully deformed because of leprosy and other illnesses grin at you; and what not! then it is easy to understand that one thinks thrice before going for a walk in Amoy for a second time.⁸⁸

At the friend's shop they were first offered tea and cigars, but to their disappointment the opera was in Mandarin, of which they understood nothing. Moreover, Van der Spek could not at all appreciate the 'unbearable voices,' the faces 'smeared with red paint,' the 'exaggerated, ridiculous movements,' the 'false' women—at first Van der Spek did not know the women roles were played by men—and the spitting of the actors. According to him, not the least artistic illusion was present.⁸⁹

T'ien-k'it later invited them to visit the famous Nanputuo temple 南普陀寺 in Amoy, which also did not make a favourable impression on Van der Spek (25 March). T'ien-k'it also took them on a four-day trip to Zhangzhou (31 March – 3 April). For going to the interior they needed a passport, which was written out by their teacher.⁹⁰ They travelled by Chinese junk to Chiobe (Shima 石碼), and then by sampan to Zhangzhou, the total trip lasting about nine hours; on other occasions the trip could take up to fifteen hours. In Zhangzhou they passed the nights in the

opium shop of T'ien-k'it's eldest brother T'ien-laî, where they slept on the hard beds for opium smokers. T'ien-k'it and his brother T'ien-k'ui then showed them the sights. For instance, they made a day long excursion in five sedan chairs to the Baiyun Mountains 白雲山, about 10 km South East of Zhangzhou, where they saw the place where the famous philosopher Zhu Xi (朱熹 1130–1200) had taught and lived. In one of his "Letters from China" Van der Spek described this outing.⁹¹

The second time they were to go to Zhangzhou, T'ien-k'it was ill, and Hîng-Saam instead took them to his home near Tong'an 同安, where he showed them the sights (30 April – 4 May). For the next four months there are no references to the Chinese friends in Van der Spek's *Diary*, so the students clearly did not become as close with them as Hoetink had been.

That summer, when the Dutch schooner *Velox* was in the harbour, they availed themselves of the opportunity to take a twenty-day trip to Formosa (25 June – 13 July). Coming from dry and barren Amoy, Van der Spek greatly enjoyed the lush vegetation and beautiful scenery of Taiwan, as Buddingh had done sixteen years earlier. They paid several visits to the tea merchant John Dodd, who was both British and Dutch Consul in Tamsui, and for whom Van der Spek felt the greatest admiration, and they visited Twatutia (now Taipei) with its tea stations and Kelung (Keelung) harbour. Van der Spek wrote a long description of this trip in his *Diary* and in his last four "Letters from China," and later also a serial in the *Soerabaiasch Handelsblad*.⁹²

When they made an excursion to the sulphur springs in the mountains near Tamsui, they visited a Chinese house, where they gave an impression of their language skills. They could not refrain from playing a practical joke, though it was much milder than their 'student pranks' in Leiden:

On the way we rested a few times. We entered a Chinese house and pretended not to be able to speak or understand a word of Chinese, which of course did not surprise them. For fun we only spoke Dutch and disregarded their answer: thia[~] boē hiaó tit [聽未曉得] (I do not understand you, literally: 'to listen, not achieving understanding').⁹³ We were entertained with tea and had a sort of conversation in sign language with the host. Like in all Chinese houses, scrolls of paper were hanging on the walls, on which maxims were written; just as with us Bible texts at the railway stations. Suddenly we begin to read aloud these maxims, and now you should have seen the surprise of the Chinese bystanders! If I say that they were gaping at us, I am putting it very mildly; because the lips of a Chinese always keep a respectful distance of each other, except when he pronounces a word containing *m*, *b* or *p* (no other labials exist in the Amoy language). In short, they exclaimed a long hey! and showed an expression on their faces as if they couldn't believe their ears.⁹⁴

When travelling in the interior, the students could in case of distress request the protection of the Chinese authorities. They did this once in September

1879 in Chiobe (Shima), on the way back from Tsiangtsiu to Amoy. In Chiobe there was only one boat available for Amoy, but the captain dared to ask the absurd price of \$6 (or *f* 15). Since he could not be convinced to lower the price, they went to the *Haifang's* 海防 office,⁹⁵ which was responsible for the protection of foreigners, delivering their Chinese calling cards and showing their passes. They were not personally received, but after waiting for a quarter of an hour, they were told that they could travel to Amoy at any price they wished to pay, and were escorted to the boat by ten policemen. The captain had fled, which proved Van der Spek's opinion that Chinese were cowards. Before leaving, the policemen asked for a tip, in English called a *cumshaw*, from Hokkien *kám-siā* 感謝, literally "thank you," here meaning a "present or tip." As a joke, Moll then said to their servant: "Give them 1 kak 角 (10 cash) each." In total this would amount to 100 cash, or about *f* 0,25.

The gentlemen of the police became angry and asked if we were not ashamed. Shame is a serious matter for the Chinese. We answered: "Ashamed? Are you not ashamed, that you dare to ask for a *cumshaw*? We are not like the Chinese, who let themselves be plucked and fleeced by the police; but we are loyal subjects of the Great Country of Holland and follow the laws and customs of our country. If you dare once again to ask for anything, I'll have you brought to my elder brother, the *Haifang*, who will have you given a decent beating." They slinked off [without pay] and the captain returned.⁹⁶

After this incident the captain was most obliging, which for Van der Spek was another proof of his cowardice. All these Chinese ways of behaviour, both of the captain and the policemen, would certainly not endear the Chinese to Van der Spek, but on the other hand, the Chinese would probably also feel no sympathy for foreigners priding themselves on their power to evade 'normal tips.'

From the *Diary* one can see that Van der Spek was seriously studying the colloquial language. Chinese names, words and phrases given in romanised form always have the correct tones, which is an important criterion for the level of competence in Chinese. They are mostly in Schlegel's transcription. A few personal names are in Douglas' transcription, probably because that was more common among the foreigners.⁹⁷

Unfortunately, Van der Spek used characters for Chinese names only during the first few days. Later he only wrote characters when quoting book titles and written texts. Characters were not so important when one was studying the colloquial language.⁹⁸

Van der Spek referred a few times to their level of competence in Chinese. When they visited Zhangzhou for the first time in March, he described their conversation with the Chinese teachers during a walk as "murdering the Chinese language" (*Chineesch radbraken*).⁹⁹ In August he did not have a high opinion of his own knowledge of Chinese, because,

for a certain reason (not clearly expressed), he was ready “to bet my little knowledge of Chinese (it is not much, but aside from that I have distressingly little).”¹⁰⁰ But later in Zhangzhou, when they were receiving a group of Chinese guests, he wrote: “we can understand most of them well.”¹⁰¹ However, he never reached the level on which he could enjoy a conversation in Chinese, probably not only because of his dislike for the Chinese, but also because his competence in Chinese was insufficient for a real conversation.¹⁰²

In general, Van der Spek did not have a high opinion of China and the Chinese. He not only disliked Chinese theatre, art and food, but also had a negative opinion about the Chinese character in general, often referring to Chinese men as *staartmannen* (queue men) and women as *kleinvoeters* (small-footers, after Hokkien *pák k'a* 縛腳, “bound feet”). Such designations were not uncommon in the nineteenth century. Like many Westerners, he considered the Chinese in general a cowardly, crafty, treacherous, superstitious and ugly people—only once, on their visit to a tea plantation in Formosa, did he spot beautiful women.¹⁰³ Moreover they were in his opinion extremely unhygienic and even immoral. These were at the time common Western ideas, but in his *Diary* and “Letters from China” he gave examples from personal experience. Only for their immorality did he lack personal examples, mentioning Schlegel’s essay about Chinese prostitution as proof. Van der Spek did not find any inspiration in Chinese literature, but only examples of queer Chinese national characteristics, and he still continued quoting his favourite European poets and other authors.

On the other hand, being a student of Chinese language and culture, he did make his own observations and had a talent for putting things in perspective. He sympathised with the hard life of the coolies, for instance on his outing in a sedan chair near Zhangzhou:

Indeed, one should feel pity for those ill-fed Chinese, who have to carry a beef-eating European while the sun burns their bodies that are $\frac{3}{4}$ naked. It would be easy to understand if such people would have communist tendencies. True, they are not being forced to act as beast of burden for their fellow humans—except by hunger, and they do their best to obtain a load of “human meat” and earn a few stupid cents; but I do not consider this work fit for humans. Yet in the interior one has to make use of it, if one wishes to see anything without getting a sunstroke. However it is ridiculous, even irritating, that the lazy foreigners in the harbour towns, even for absurdly short distances, have themselves transported in a ‘sedan.’¹⁰⁴

During this trip, he also felt sympathy for the simple Chinese village people:

After another hour we arrived in a village and stopped to give the carriers some rest. We were soon surrounded by a number of rustics. It was a pleasure to observe their childish cheerfulness and curiosity: our cigars, lorgnettes, water bottles, everything surprised them and they asked questions. ... I do not

have much experience with this, but I prefer the industrious, merry, natural Chinese rustics to the artificial, priggish, pedantic scholars among them.¹⁰⁵

Through his contacts with many Chinese, he at times became well aware of Chinese aversion to Europeans, but he was also aware of the reasons for this:

What have they heard and seen of us? They have hardly heard more than cannons and clerics, who roar almost equally hard; and seen hardly more than the arrogant English merchants, who consider it a greater sin to enjoy a glass of alcohol after twelve o'clock on Saturday evening than to treat John Chinaman as a dog.¹⁰⁶

As interpreters, they would take their own, neutral position, but because of their personal contacts during their studies, they tended to sympathise with the Chinese:

John [Bull] does not particularly like anyone who is friendly to John Chinaman, and speaks his language. ... My two Dutch friends and I who are here to finish our studies of Amoy Chinese and see no reason to kick someone with slant eyes and a queue as if he were an animal, have more than once been treated with benevolence and hospitality by them, if not friendship.¹⁰⁷

And being scholarly trained sinologists, they knew how to respect Chinese culture. For instance, after an account of Chinese geomancy (*fengshui*), which to Europeans was just a superstition blocking the construction of railroads etc., he wrote: "Foreigners take too little account of such deeply engrained prejudices."¹⁰⁸

Studying in Zhangzhou

Schlegel was in favour of studying in Zhangzhou, and Hoetink had done so two years earlier. Probably for this reason, the second group decided to study there for some time, and in September they went to Amoy to talk this over with T'ien-k'it.¹⁰⁹ However, finding a house in this entirely Chinese environment was not so easy, and in three visits to Zhangzhou they did not manage to find suitable lodgings themselves. They were either 'squeezed' by T'ien-lai, cheated by a bogus landlord or simply chased away. Finally John Anderson's *godownman* (warehouse keeper) and their 'boy' found a suitable house for them.¹¹⁰

On 24 November, a week before moving to Zhangzhou (Chang-chow), they wrote a letter in English to Pasedag asking for his assistance:

We beg to inform you, that we consider it necessary for our study of the Chinese Language and Customs to live in the city of Chang-chow, 漳州府, from the 1st December of this year till the 1st March 1880.

Therefore we request you very kindly to communicate our purpose to the

Tao-tai [Resident] of Amoy, in order that H.E. may send information about this to the Chinese authorities in Chang-Chow-fu.

We hope that in this way we will be protected by them, according to the Treaty between Their Majesties the Emperor of China and the King of the Netherlands, signed at Tientsin in the year 1863.¹¹¹

On 1 December 1879 they moved to Zhangzhou with their servants, the girl servant Amay and two teachers. They went to live in a two-storeyed house measuring 10.5 × 5.8 m, located on a lonely open spot in the town, much of which had been destroyed by the Taipings in 1864. On the ground floor there were a large hall (t'ia² 廳) which they used as dining room, four small rooms including one used as a bathroom, and a courtyard. On the second floor there were three bedrooms with a common verandah.¹¹²

From now on they were living in a completely Chinese environment. Like in Amoy, they began by being visited and paying visits to many Chinese. They met Schlegel's and Francken's teachers several times (no names are given), and local Mandarins, military Mandarins, merchants, and the Chinese physician Tân 陳, who was a student of Western medicine trained by Dr. Patrick Manson in Amoy.¹¹³ Some Mandarins did not come themselves but sent red Chinese calling cards.¹¹⁴ The only foreigners they met were a Roman Catholic priest whom they visited a few times and friends from Amoy coming over. In the new environment Van der Spek at first gave longer descriptions of his activities. Besides visits, they took long walks in the early mornings, sometimes with their teacher Ong. They also visited nearby villages and climbed the hills. He never mentioned their studies with the teachers. A typical day is the following:

In the morning a walk and we also visit T'ien-laî. Walk from 6:30 to 9:00 in and out of the town. Zhangzhou lies within a circle of mountains, close by or farther away. Closest by the hills there is heavy clay soil. From my window I see rather high mountains. ... In the afternoon eight or so guests arrive, some friends of Hoetink, others of the teachers, mostly 'show-offs.' One of them is a Moslem, a rather interesting guy. After a lot of talking, while we can understand most of them well, we take a walk with those guys, also to a garden; small but pretty. Trees, flowers, two flights of stairs to an artificial rock, small bridge, etc. A *wuyinshi* [五音石].¹¹⁵

During one of these meetings they played a 'students' prank.'

Morning walk. In the morning two military officials come to visit us. Present cigars and after ten puffs he gives it to his neighbour to smoke. They get some bad red wine, of which they take a small sip and we carry out a plan to keep all leftover wine in a bottle and hereafter to present it again.¹¹⁶

Later that day, when they visited the Manchu official Bashisi 八十四,¹¹⁷ who of course spoke Mandarin, their boy translated this into (pidgin?) English; this boy may have been from outside town, perhaps he was Cantonese, otherwise he would probably have spoken Hokkien.

In the afternoon a visit to Bashisi, in four chairs with the boy. He stands at the door and we greet, sit down and greet, while the boy makes his body bow to the right and to the left, get tea. One hundred cops etc. around us. Boy interpreter Mandarin–English. Rise up and bow, at the door again, when getting in the sedan chair again. Visit Schlegel's teacher.¹¹⁸

On 3 December 1879, about three months before their period of study was to end, the three students wrote a joint letter announcing this to Director of Justice Buijn in Batavia, which they asked Pasedag to forward for them.¹¹⁹

In Zhangzhou Van der Spek inserted even more Hokkien words and phrases in his *Diary* than he had done in Amoy. These were now romanised in Zhangzhou pronunciation. He sometimes seems to have used Hokkien words for reasons of keeping his privacy. On the last day of John Anderson's five-day visit, they went to a Chinese brothel. Van der Spek's description in his *Diary* is unintelligible unless one understands Hokkien. In the following quotation the Hokkien words in the original are given in italics:

Nothing special, take a walk. In a *bawdyhouse*, where I take the *prostitute* on my *knees* and feel through her *sleeve* the *tits* and *pubic hair*. Moll smokes opium.¹²⁰

In this Chinese environment, Van der Spek seems to have acquired a better feeling for the Chinese language and people, appreciating Chinese humour:

Now I'm starting to like some Chinese jokes; in the beginning I found them awful.¹²¹

The Dutch students were usually received in a friendly and polite manner, but once they met an unfriendly reception, when in the company of an unnamed Chinese musician they visited a village near Zhangzhou to attend a religious festival: k'òà² hui² [看香], literally 'to watch the incense.' They were surrounded by an enormous mass of people, got separated from each other, and then suddenly clods of earth and stones were thrown at them. When the situation became threatening, they decided to return. Later they heard that a rumour had been spread that the foreigners, who were wearing white hats and light coloured suits, seemingly funeral clothes, had come to disturb the festivities.¹²²

Despite many interesting experiences in Zhangzhou, Van der Spek was usually unhappy there. He wrote several times that he "disliked the Chinese" (*land aan de Chinezen*) and once that he "terribly hated the whole Chinese language and all Chinese."¹²³ At Christmas the students refused to speak a word of Chinese during the whole day. Clearly the immersion in Chinese culture was too intense for them. But Van der Spek not only disliked the Chinese; he also felt a grudge against his old friends from

Amoy, such as Hansen and Piehl, when they came over to visit them in February.¹²⁴

They celebrated the Western New Year at home, with some dishes prepared by Pasedag's cook. While they treated their guests to cheap red wine, to their surprise the Chinese brought them a banquet! At midnight, fireworks were set off and guns were fired, and they sang Dutch songs.

But strangely, Van der Spek wrote nothing about the festivities of Chinese New Year, which lasted from 10 to 24 February.¹²⁵ In his last "Letter from China," written on 20 February 1880, he described his feelings at the end of his studies in Zhangzhou, indirectly referring to the New Year festivities:

We now have been living for almost three months in Zhangzhou, completely isolated from other Europeans. A very good way of getting to know the Chinese national character, I agree, but for the rest ... "Oh, loneliness, where are thy charms that the wise have discerned on thy face?" One hardly takes notice any more of the roaring or raging of that *mare magnum* [great ocean], the outside world; one becomes indifferent to *the bright tumuli* of civilised life, one finds oneself in solitary confinement, one vegetates, one is a living corpse. Slowly the days creep forward; when the mail arrives, one pounces on one's letters and reads them again and again, two or three days, and afterwards one eats, drinks, sleeps, takes the same familiar walks, sees the same familiar, annoying things and becomes silent as a statue for lack of matter for conversation.¹²⁶

They left Zhangzhou on 25 February 1880, boarding a Chinese sailing ship transporting wood with very little space for sleeping. This was on the day after the Lantern Festival, the last day of the Chinese New Year Festival, but Van der Spek wrote nothing about it.¹²⁷ When he left he quoted the words that Voltaire supposedly had said when leaving the Netherlands:

Adieu canaux, canards, canaille, or rather *au diable*. The canals (few and narrow, stink like Hell); no foreigner would eat ducks, because of the ... [filthiness] of the Chinese; canaille, no question about that.¹²⁸

They stayed one week in Amoy. As a farewell present they gave Pasedag a very European present: the illustrated *Goethe-Galerie* by the German painter Wilhelm von Kaulbach. They signed the contracts with the teachers who would accompany them to the Indies,¹²⁹ and left on 3 March for Hong Kong. Then they travelled to Singapore, where they stayed for twelve days, meeting many Dutchmen and Germans, and visited the Maharaja of Johore. On 27 March they arrived in Batavia, where they stayed in the Java Hotel. Van der Spek's first impression was:

We ended up with the matron in the Java Hotel and discovered that it was a less fine lot, all officers, who even did not abstain from cursing in the presence of women, etc.¹³⁰

They were received by several high government officials and had a collective audience with Governor-General Van Lansberge. They also met five of their colleagues: Groeneveldt (six times) and Albrecht (twice), who had both left the interpreters' corps; the two interpreters in Batavia, Von Faber (twice) and Roelofs (thrice); and De Groot (thrice) who happened to be in town.¹³¹ Van der Spek in particular appreciated his many visits to Groeneveldt, whom he found "extraordinarily nice" (*buitengewoon aardig*). They also visited the Museum of the Batavian Society, the clubs Concordia and De Harmonie, Buitenzorg (Bogor), etc. In his *Diary* Van der Spek wrote down all kinds of gossip and stories about the sinologists and others, and a large number of jokes that he had heard. Although the students knew Schlegel's liking for fantastic stories, they may still have been surprised by one joke of Groeneveldt's. He said to De Jongh, who had the greatest admiration for Schlegel:

Do you know what Schlegel should have become? A quack doctor, then he would have been world famous.¹³²

Van der Spek asked Groeneveldt's opinion about Schlegel's translations: "So-so." Groeneveldt gave Van der Spek more or less the advice to leave the corps when there was an opportunity,¹³³ an advice that he would take at heart. Government Secretary J.H. Pannekoek spoke with De Jongh about the same subject, advising him not to leave the corps immediately, but to wait and see,¹³⁴ which he would subsequently also do.

On 26 April all three were appointed in *temporary* positions: Van der Spek in Makassar, Moll in Cirebon, and De Jongh in Rembang (Java).¹³⁵

On the way to Makassar, which took twelve days, Van der Spek visited Semarang, where he did not see De Grijs, and Surabaya, where he visited Meeter several times.¹³⁶ He arrived in Makassar on 18 May, was sworn in on 28 May, and was received by the Governor on the next day. Thus ended the *Diary's* account of Van der Spek's studies and life in China and the Indies.

*Financial problems of the third group:
Ezerman, Borel, Van Wettum (1892–1894)*

The third group arrived in Amoy on 6 October 1892. They planned at first to stay for one year just as the two previous groups had done, but their study period was later extended for another year at their request, and they left Amoy in August and September 1894. The colonial and consular archives give some information about their studies, but from Borel's letters to Van Eeden, his diary, and his publications much more is known about him and his studies than about his fellow students.

Upon their arrival they were received by the acting Consul General for Southern China, Karl Christian Feindel, who was at the same time career Consul for Germany. He had been made acting Consul General after P.S. Hamel became ill and left China in June 1892.¹³⁷ As before, the task of the Consul was to hand over the monthly drafts to the three students and give necessary assistance. This time, from the start there were serious financial problems that would take almost a year to be completely solved. (The reader not interested in these financial troubles can skip this section and proceed to the next.)

As with the first and second group, only the passages from Holland to China had been paid for in advance by the government, that is the travel fees up to Hong Kong. The extra travel fees from Hong Kong to Amoy, amounting to \$35 per person, had not yet been paid to them. In order to pay these fees, the students had borrowed in total \$100 from Consul F.G.G. Seip in Hong Kong. Borel, who was always short of cash, borrowed \$70 of this for himself and his wife.

The second problem was that a monthly allowance of only \$125 was paid to each student, and not the additional \$15 for the teacher's salary, while in the 1870s all students had received a total of \$140 per month.

The third problem was the most serious. The students were paid \$125 in dollars, as prescribed by the Ministerial Resolution of 1873, but in the last twenty years the dollar had lost about one third of its value. While in Schlegel's time the official exchange rate for the (Mexican) dollar had been 2.50 hard guilders (for the Spanish dollar 2.55), it was now only 1.60.

The allowances were always paid at the end of the month; accordingly, four days after arrival Ezerman and Borel, who were clearly less prepared than Van Wettum, already asked Feindel for an advance payment of \$20.¹³⁸

On the previous day, Feindel had written a letter in English to Governor-General Pijnacker Hordijk, explicitly raising the two problems of the passage fee from Hong Kong and the teachers' salary, adding that he could hardly be expected to give advance payments to students with such low allowances:

Pasedag used to advance funds necessary for their sustenance & draw on the Colonial Exchequer for sums disbursed.

This arrangement is impracticable under the altered circumstances as the amount of official fees in hand would hardly meet the contingency, and I am not sure that I am authorised to use Government means for the purpose indicated.¹³⁹

At the same time the students also sent a request to the Governor-General, which was forwarded by Feindel.

Borel raised the same question a few days later in his first letter to Frederik van Eeden, dated 15 October 1892. While he wrote enthusiastically about China, he also apologised for not sending him any presents

and not repaying a certain debt to him. Now the value of the dollar had decreased from *f*2.50–2.75 (when Schlegel was interpreter) to *f*1.25–1.30 at present (the latter exchange rate proved to be exaggerated):

As a result we have been simply cheated with our $125 \times f1.25$, that is about *f*150 per month. Since the government *continued* to pay in silver and not in gold, so that we only have half of what our predecessors received, because all prices have risen ... You understand that with my 125 dollars per month that are worth *f*1.25 here, I have to live in highly straitened circumstances and can only buy what is necessary. It was a great disappointment for us. We had fully expected the promised *f*4,000 per year and it had been told us with certainty. ... However, we intend to worm our way through and I am considering writing about China for newspapers to earn a little more; otherwise I *cannot* make ends meet. It is only for one year, and then I'll have a large salary and as much again in private emoluments in the Indies.¹⁴⁰

Almost thirty years later, Ezerman wrote that the teachers also did their best to give assistance. While the students were humbly writing for help to the upper echelons in Batavia, the teachers, who as strict Confucianists at other times pretended to despise the superstitious divining practices in the temples, very thoughtfully went to the temple of Guanyin, and after making a sacrifice and offering presents, asked the will of the gods, whereupon they predicted a favourable outcome to the students.¹⁴¹

But in the beginning of December, two months after the students wrote their first request, and despite a second request to the Director of Justice, none of these problems had been solved and the Consul in Hong Kong was threatening to take judicial action against Borel. Thereupon Feindel wrote to Borel's father to inform him of his son's predicament. The students also sent letters seeking help from Schlegel in Leiden and Groeneveldt in Batavia.

In the meantime, on 24 December 1892 Pijnacker Hordijk decided to restitute the travel fees and to pay the teachers' salaries retroactively from October 1892. On 17 January 1893 Feindel sent a draft of \$100 to Seip in Hong Kong repaying the students' debt. On 3 February they received the Governor-General's decision and three drafts of \$184 for their January allowance and the teachers' salaries from October to January.¹⁴²

However, Pijnacker Hordijk had made no decision on the devaluation question. Therefore, although in the meantime part of their request had been met with, the students' pleas for help to Schlegel and Groeneveldt would still prove to be indispensable.

When Schlegel received the students' plea for help, he wrote an 'urgent and confidential' letter dated Leiden 25 January 1893 to Minister of Colonies Van Dedem. Of course, he did not know that the matter had been partly solved, and still proposed that the full passage fees from Hong Kong to Amoy for the three students and Mrs. Borel should be restituted. Because of the danger of legal proceedings, he proposed to arrange the

question of the teachers' salaries also as soon as possible, if necessary by authorising the Netherlands Consul in Amoy by telegraph to settle the debt and advance the necessary teachers' salaries. Because of the devaluation of the dollar, now worth only $f1.60$ or 800 Chinese cash, compared with the former rate of $f2.55$ or 1,200 Chinese cash, the students could hardly make ends meet with their monthly allowance of \$125. Schlegel proposed to give them an extra personal allowance of \$25, resulting in a total of \$150. He also forwarded the letter from Feindel to Borel's father, confirming that Borel was actually being held liable for a debt of \$70. He requested to comply speedily with the youngsters' justified requests.

Minister Van Dedem indeed took swift action. He sent a telegram to Pijnacker Hordijk saying he wished to restitute travel fees from Hong Kong to Amoy, and he also wrote a letter explaining that it was fair to restitute these passage fees, although they had not been mentioned in the Royal Decree of 15 July 1892 no. 22 by which the students had entered the colonial service. In the second place, the question of the salaries of the teachers was not clear. It was not mentioned in the Resolution of 1873 (*Staatsblad van N.I.* 123), and it was not known if these had been paid in 1879–80. He let the Governor-General decide. Finally, \$125 was too low because of the present exchange rate. The conditions of study should be changed or the students should be given personal allowances as Schlegel proposed.¹⁴³

At that time Groeneveldt was nearing the summit of his official career; he was not only Honourary Advisor for Chinese Affairs but also a member of the Council of the Indies, and he would later that year become its Vice-President. When he received the students' plea for help, he wrote to Governor-General Pijnacker Hordijk on 29 January 1893 that he assumed the teachers' pay had been neglected by mistake, since it had been given in the past. He had already informally heard that the Director of Justice was taking measures to arrange the matter. He did not mention the passage fees from Hong Kong, which had already been paid. The second complaint was about the devaluation of the dollar, making their income insufficient. He considered this complaint also well founded. Although they were formally allowed \$125 per month, and according to the letter of the Resolution they could make no claim for more, their incomes had gradually decreased owing to the continuing devaluation of silver, while on the other hand the government profited in the same measure, having had to pay a smaller amount of guilders for those \$125. This could not be the intention of the Resolution. The government should take a fixed value for the dollar and each month buy drafts for each student, just as for the Chinese teachers in the Indies who were engaged at \$25 per month, but were paid in guilders ($25 \times f2.55 = f63.75$). Therefore the Director of Justice should also pay each student monthly $140 \times f2.55$. In that way they would receive a larger amount of dollars, so that the devaluation of the dollar would no longer

cause a significant loss for them, actually resulting in a slight gain for the government.¹⁴⁴ These measures should also be made retroactive.

Thereupon Pijnacker Hordijk consulted the Director of Justice, W.A. Engelbrecht. He agreed with Groeneveldt but added that in the draft budget of the Netherlands Indies for 1893, *f*312,50 (125×2.50) had already been reserved, and he proposed an exchange rate of 2.50,¹⁴⁵ as had been effective by law in 1856 and 1873.

After Governor-General Pijnacker Hordijk had received the Council's and Engelbrecht's advice and the letter from Minister of Colonies Van Dedem (which must have arrived by the middle of March 1893), he decided in accordance with Engelbrecht's advice on 14 April 1893 (no. 5).¹⁴⁶

From February to April 1893 the students had duly received a monthly allowance of $\$125 + \$15 = \$140$.¹⁴⁷ On 13 May they received a letter from the Governor-General announcing the full compensation of the exchange rate, which they would receive around 1 June.¹⁴⁸ But when on 2 June they received drafts of \$433.68 as compensation for October to April and a monthly allowance of \$207.44 for May (allowance and teacher's pay), this was a great disappointment. The official rate at the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation in Amoy was 1.60, while the Department of Justice had bought the drafts in Batavia at a rate of about 1.70. The students again wrote a letter of protest, stating that their monthly allowance should be \$227.50 and the compensation for October to April fell short by \$124.62. They asked to be paid in guilders in the future.¹⁴⁹

During this bickering about their financial conditions, probably an essential role was played by Borel, who not only had no qualms about protesting against his superiors, but also had great difficulty in budgeting his own expenses and was always short of cash.

In reaction to their protest, the Indies Government used a better form of remission, and for the month August the students received \$222.93.¹⁵⁰ This was still not satisfactory, and Dr. Franz Grunewald, who was now acting Consul General,¹⁵¹ also wrote a letter to the new Director of Justice, A. Stibbe, at the same time requesting on behalf of the students to arrange that the drafts should arrive at the beginning of each month instead of at the end.¹⁵² As from September they were paid in drafts in guilders that could be exchanged at Tait & Co in Amoy, and the drafts would arrive earlier. After about a year of constant complaints and protests, the financial situation of the students was finally arranged in a satisfactory manner.¹⁵³

The extension to two years in China

On 24 February 1893 the students received a letter from Groeneveldt informing them that he had forwarded their request and done his proposal

to Governor-General Pijnacker Hordijk. He probably also suggested that they could extend their studies if they wished. Two days later Borel wrote to Van Eeden:

I like it here so well that I am thinking of probably staying longer than the prescribed one year, and of going to the Indies in January or February 1894 (instead of October). When requested this is always allowed.¹⁵⁴

When the Governor-General announced the compensation in the letter received on 12 May, he also notified them that if they wished, they could stay a year longer in China. Two days later, Borel wrote this in a letter to Van Eeden, adding: "I will accept this with pleasure."¹⁵⁵ No doubt they were told that they had to submit a well-argued request if they wished to stay longer, and studying another dialect may have been suggested as a positive condition. The idea of offering the students a second year in China must have come from Groeneveldt. He was the only high official with a well-founded personal opinion about this question.

A week later, on 22 May 1893 two students, Ezerman and Van Wettum, sent a request to Pijnacker Hordijk for extension of their studies in China with another year. Their argument was that from October 1892 to May 1893 they had experienced how useful their stay in China was for learning the spoken language, but that they feared after one year they would not yet be advanced enough to be able to adequately fulfill their functions in the Netherlands Indies. Therefore they hoped to have an opportunity to practice the spoken language more, in particular in the interior, and to learn more about Chinese customs and conditions. If permission were given, they intended to stay for a few months in the Hakka districts in order to learn the basics of the Hakka dialect as well.

Director of Justice Stibbe, advised taking the request into consideration, although it was without the seal required for requests to the government. Since the time allowed for their studies by Ministerial Resolution, a total of five years, had passed, it would be impossible for the Governor-General to decide in the affirmative, but he could ask the advice of the Honorary Advisor for Chinese Affairs, and then request putting it on the national budget.¹⁵⁶

Two weeks after Ezerman's and Van Wettum's request, on 5 June 1893, Borel wrote exactly the same request to Pijnacker Hordijk, with one exception:

that he is not unconditionally sure that, if permitted, ..., he would stay a few months in the Hakka districts, because he might have to devote all his time to learning the Amoy and Tsiangtsiu dialects;

that he therefore wishes to be given the liberty to decide later if it seems desirable to him to proceed temporarily to the Hakka districts, and that he, if he cannot go there, and is later stationed in a place where Hakka is the main dialect, wishes to be given the privilege that his predecessors had, of studying the Hakka dialect for some months in that town in the Netherlands Indies.¹⁵⁷

The Council of the Indies, with Groeneveldt as Vice-President, advised on 7 July 1893 to take Ezerman's and Van Wettum's request into consideration, although it was without seal, because it was an official matter that could have been requested in a normal letter (*missive*). The same was true of Borel's request, which had not been seen by the Director of Justice. The advice of the Council began:

According to the Council's Vice-President, one year for studies in China is certainly too short. However much the youngsters may have learned in Leiden, they cannot become very proficient in the Chinese spoken language, and they need one year of practical exercise in China before they are able to use it to any extent.

Only then they are adequately equipped to study successfully the characteristics and customs of that nation, by way of free and easy contacts with the Chinese; this part of their training should not be neglected, since in the Indies they are often asked to give information on these topics.¹⁵⁸

Groeneveldt added that all interpreters trained according to the Resolution of 1873 had told him that one year in China was not enough, and previously the studies in China had lasted at least two years and often much longer. It would be profitable for the State if these requests were accepted. This matter should be regulated by a Ministerial Resolution, since the extension was because of generally prevalent reasons and not confined to this case. There would be no need to change the budget since the extra costs could be transferred within the budget from the projected interpreters' and their clerks' salaries in the Indies, which would amount to about the same.¹⁵⁹

Since the original study period would end in October, there was still time to consult the Minister of Colonies, but the permission should be given by the Governor-General, so it would be best if the Minister answered by wire.

Pijnacker Hordijk agreed with this advice and sent it to Minister of Colonies Van Dedem on 20 July 1893. At the Ministry, Bureau D (personnel) also advised positively, remarking that no objection had been raised against having to wait another year for the interpreters, so that should not be a great problem—evidently, the need for new interpreters was not so urgent.

On 12 September, Minister Van Dedem sent a telegram to Pijnacker Hordijk: "longer stay interpreters China O.K." (*langer verblijf tolken China goed*).¹⁶⁰ The latter wired a similar message to Amoy on 16 September 1893.¹⁶¹

At the same time, Van Dedem asked Schlegel if it would be necessary to change the Resolution of 1873. In his reply, Schlegel proposed without much enthusiasm that the original maximum study time of five years could be extended to six years, of which at most two years could be spent in China. He added that in general the students could easily complete their

studies in five years, but the last three youngsters in Leiden had taken a little more time than the earlier ones—they actually needed eight months more—for which they themselves were to blame: they had definitely not studied with the same diligence and seriousness as their predecessors, and made too much misuse of the freedoms of student life. Therefore they now needed to compensate their losses in China.¹⁶²

Nevertheless, Schlegel also considered it in the interest of their later service to the government to extend their studies in China to a maximum of two years.

He also proposed to raise their monthly allowance in China, because of the devaluation of the dollar, which was now only worth *f*1.50—even less than at the beginning of the year. He proposed to raise their allowance from \$125 to \$175 per month, and also pay \$15 for the teachers (without a raise).

Schlegel continued that for the present students, the situation had been ameliorated, but it had taken a lot of writing in both directions (*heen en weer geschrijff*), during which the students were so to say in want, in particular of the necessary funds for settling in the interior, and consequently had lost precious study time.

In the future, students in China should immediately be compensated for travel fees from Hong Kong to Amoy, and the Consul should be authorised to pay the monthly allowances, so that they would not be dependent upon the Consul's benevolence and have to wait for months before receiving their allowances.

Minister Van Dedem changed the resolution on 9 October, but only in part followed Schlegel: the study time became as Schlegel proposed, but the allowances were to be reckoned in Dutch guilders, as Groeneveldt had written, but at the official rate that had been decided for the present students in April. From now on, all students could study for two years in China, and the allowances would be *f*312.50 for students and *f*37.50 for teachers, with a fixed exchange rate for the dollar of 2.50.¹⁶³

The dialect question again (1893)

Almost a decade earlier, in 1884 and 1885, the dialect question had been raised in Parliament by J.T. Cremer. He had asked if it was advisable to train students in the dialects of Guangdong, and whether the interpreter corps should be split into two sections, one for Hokkien and one for Hakka. After consulting Groeneveldt and other experts, Minister Sprenger van Eyk had answered that splitting the corps was not necessary since the interpreters would be able to master two dialects. In addition, he decided that a new Chinese course should start in Leiden. In 1888, after Schlegel's course had been started, the same question was raised again in Parliament:

The Chinese interpreters only learn the Hokkien dialect. On Sumatra other dialects are also spoken nowadays. Is it not necessary to take account of this during their training?

The Minister answered that from now on the government intended to have the student-interpreters also learn “the other dialect spoken in the Indies, Hakka;” but in the opinion of the advisors of the Netherlands Indies government, this could only be done in China; in the Netherlands only the basics of the Chinese language were being taught.¹⁶⁴

In October 1893, during the debate about the Netherlands Indies budget for 1894, the same question was raised again, doubtless again by Cremer. He remarked that the plan to train interpreters in the Guangdong (Kuantung) dialect had not been realised, although immigration from Guangdong province in the Outer Possessions had continued. Now the study period of the student-interpreters had been extended by the Ministerial Resolution of 9 October.¹⁶⁵ Cremer asked the Minister of Colonies if care had been taken to train them in “the Guangdong dialect.”¹⁶⁶

Minister Van Dedem asked Schlegel for his opinion, adding that from the students' requests it appeared that they were studying more than one dialect, but it was not clear if this was “the Guangdong dialect.”¹⁶⁷

More than thirty years earlier, there had been a misunderstanding within the government because the name “Canton” could refer both to Guangdong Province (Kuantung, Kwangtung) and to Canton city (Guangzhou 廣州). As a result, five Dutch interpreters had studied Cantonese, a dialect that was at the time rarely spoken in the Indies. This misunderstanding was now repeated: while Cremer and Minister Van Dedem meant Guangdong *province* with its Hakka and Hoklo dialects, just as in the parliamentary minutes of 1884–5 (when Schlegel's advice was not asked), Schlegel understood it as Canton *city* with the Cantonese dialect. He must have been confused because the Minister used the *singular* form,¹⁶⁸ and the names Guangdong and Canton are identical when written in Chinese characters (廣東).¹⁶⁹

Schlegel replied immediately to Van Dedem's letter, as if bitten by a hornet. On 1 November 1893 he wrote that there were no strong objections to learning a second dialect for the student-interpreters, but that it should *in no way* be “the Guangdong dialect” (*Kuan-tung dialect*, meaning Cantonese), because this was spoken nowhere in the Indies:

The older interpreters (to whom I also belonged) have had to learn this dialect on orders of the government, with the sad consequence that they laboured for nothing and frittered away their time.¹⁷⁰

The second dialect to be learned by the students should be Hakka, which was spoken by the Chinese in the Outer Possessions.

Still it would be better, according to Schlegel, if the students did not

learn a second dialect in China. This would only lead to confusion, and instead of learning to speak one dialect reasonably well, they would learn to speak two dialects *poorly*. For instance, if one of the students was appointed on Java, he would never be able to use his Hakka and would forget it within a few years. The same would be true if he had learned Hokkien and was stationed in the Outer Possessions, such as Montrado, Pontianak, or Banka. The government had been messing about too much with the interpreters.¹⁷¹ But since the students wished to learn a second dialect, there were no strong reasons for not allowing them to do so.¹⁷²

Three days later, Van Dedem replied by asking Schlegel why he did not mention the East Coast of Sumatra (Deli), while the parlementarian minutes of 1885 were about that region. He asked if Hakka and not “the Guangdong dialect” (dialect from Guangdong province) was spoken there.¹⁷³

Schlegel replied on 7 November, continuing the misunderstanding about the name “Guangdong” (Kuantung), which he now spelled correctly “Kwangtung.”

He wrote first that he did not understand why the Minister was asking the same question again, since he had clearly written that “the Guangdong dialect” (Cantonese) was nowhere spoken in the Indies. He referred to his *nota* of 1873 about the Chinese dialects in the Indies,¹⁷⁴ concluding that on the plantations of the East Coast of Sumatra a mixture of dialects was spoken, while Cantonese was only spoken by some prostitutes from Canton. Then he summarised Schaank’s 1885 article about the Chinese in Deli.¹⁷⁵ Schaank’s conclusion was that for Deli (East Coast of Sumatra) one should mainly study the Hoklo and Hakka dialects, although the Amoy (Tsiangtsiu) dialect could also be useful.

Schlegel expected that the Amoy dialect would gain the upper hand in Deli, since coolies were as much as possible to be brought from Amoy in order to end the endless feuds between Chinese from different regions.¹⁷⁶ Schlegel was evidently irritated; greatly exaggerating, he said that if the Netherlands Indies would appoint an interpreter for every Chinese dialect, the corps of eight would have to be enlarged to forty interpreters. He added that Chinese from other regions always learned the locally predominant dialect in order to communicate with the other Chinese. For instance, all Hakkas and Cantonese on Java spoke Amoy Chinese; just as Germans who settled in the Netherlands learned Dutch (like his father and his teacher Hoffmann). His conclusion was that the interpreters should only learn two dialects: Tsiangtsiu (Amoy, Hokkien) and Hakka.

Van Dedem wrote in the margin that he was surprised about Schlegel’s statement that “the Guangdong dialect” was nowhere spoken in the Indies, but that on account of this he had changed his draft answer in Parliament.¹⁷⁷ The result was as follows:

The Guangdong dialect [Cantonese] is spoken nowhere in our Colonies, therefore training in it would be useless. The Chinese in our Outer Possessions either speak the Tsiangtsiu (Amoy) dialect that is common on Java, or a related dialect [Hoklo], or the Hakka dialect, and the student-interpreters who are now in China are studying that dialect.¹⁷⁸

Life on Gulangyu

When the students arrived in Amoy, there was no European house available on Gulangyu, and they first stayed in the hotel. They rented rooms at the reasonable rate of \$1.50 per night, about \$45 per month.¹⁷⁹ Three months later, in January 1893 Borel and his wife were still living in the hotel, but by then the hotel keeper agreed to charge a cheaper rate of \$75 per month for both.¹⁸⁰ In June 1893 they moved to a bungalow atop a rock in Gulangyu, which they rented until October.¹⁸¹ This house had a beautiful view on all sides. It was called Tsióh t'áô bé 石頭尾, 'Stone's Tail' (Stone's End).¹⁸² Borel was very happy here. Since one could not live in the house during the winter, they again stayed in a hotel in October, and from November 1893 they lived in another, ordinary house close to the sea.¹⁸³ It is not known how long Ezerman and Van Wettum stayed in the hotel, but at some time they also moved to a place for themselves.¹⁸⁴ Like Borel, they probably continued to live on Gulangyu. There is no evidence that any student went to the Hakka districts or studied the Hakka dialect.¹⁸⁵

For Borel, the main reason for renting a house during the summer of 1893 was that his wife was expecting a baby in September. They rented the house for \$40, but they also engaged domestic personnel including a cook, a 'boy,' two coolies etc., with expenses for food ("very cheap, 50 cent per day") in total costing \$110 per month, so Borel still had \$100 to spend.¹⁸⁶ At least in September, Borel also engaged an Amah.¹⁸⁷ On 5 October 1893, Borel's wife gave birth to a daughter, Wilhelmina Suzanna (Mientje). Other members of his household included at times a monkey, various birds, and a large pack of dogs, one of which was a large hunting dog called Hector.¹⁸⁸

Disciplining his servants was just as difficult for Borel as it had been for Schlegel to discipline Borel. After he had kept a household for about half a year, and after a few incidents, he finally knew how to deal with his domestics. On 25 November 1893 he wrote to Van Eeden about the Amoy Chinese:

They are a queer kind of people. In the past, when I was nice to them, talked with them etc., I was cheated and robbed. *Now* I snap at my servants, and never concern myself with them, and if the least thing is not in order, I scold them. And now it's smooth sailing all the way. Now they think I'm a great mandarin. Isn't that miserable? And so much depends upon them. When you

are served badly, get bad food, and your things are dirty, that has a greater influence on you than you realise. In order to have those people feel respect for you, you absolutely have to invite now and then a Consul, *hai kòan* [海關, Customs official], for dinner, who is the greatest foreign Mandarin. They love to serve such distinguished guests who dine with their *Daotai* [Resident] and Vice-Roy. A Mandarin is after all a different kind of being than an ordinary Chinese. By chance my teacher got to know that my father is a great military Mandarin. Now *all* the Chinese call me *Tāi Dzín* (大人), that is Great (Grand) Man, the title of the Mandarins.¹⁸⁹

Borel had very little contact with his fellow students and seldom mentioned them. On 15 May 1893 he wrote to Van Eeden:

Ezerman and Van Wettum I rarely see. I lost them completely during the last year. In particular Ezerman, I cannot stand him any more. I have still tried to get along with him somewhat, but it is impossible. I feel *physically unwell* when he is near me.¹⁹⁰

The next time he mentioned them was in December. On 5 December he invited them over to his house for the Saint Nicholas Day festival. He wrote to Van Eeden that although he did not like them, on such an evening it was possible to be together like brothers and forget it, giving a long description of the festivities and the presents given.¹⁹¹

Although he noticed that by living in isolation from other people, not seeing anyone, he had made progress in his studies and thinking, his relationship with his wife suffered because of his bad temper when she disturbed his thinking. Later, after he changed his behaviour, his relationship with his wife and colleagues improved. On 18 December he wrote:

Therefore I have been more sociable lately. For instance, every Saturday I invite Ezerman and Van Wettum (of whom I do not think much) and we play a game and drink something nice, very commonplace. I also pretend interest in all kinds of small trifles and act as if I knew nothing about art and philosophy. When I am so humdrum, Christine always comes through with a very strange sweetness, which helps me much more than a long session of thought.¹⁹²

Borel also had little contact with other foreigners in Amoy. The only person with whom he could talk was the British Consul Forrest, who had introduced him to antique shops.¹⁹³ He found it very unpleasant that he could not talk with anyone about literature, and wrote about the foreign community: "a few hundred Europeans, who don't amount to much" (*niet veel zaaks*).¹⁹⁴

In one letter to Van Eeden he described a social gathering at which something special happened:

Yesterday I had a beautiful experience. I had dined at the home of a certain Mr. Hughes, the 'bigwig' of the island. You should know that I sometimes on purpose mix among the people, to be normal, to speak English, and keep myself informed of things. But it is a real chore. Those English are rather stupid

people. The ladies (there are about thirty of them here) are awfully dressed and always flirting. It is very disgusting, that ugly behaviour of married women. After dinner and the traditional cigar smoked by the men, I appeared again in the drawing room, where they were making music. Very bad, much poorer than in Holland, all those songs. Something like *café chantant*. There was among the ladies one who had newly arrived, with a very gentle face, still young but with grey hairs on her forehead. That made an impression of sadness with her light eyes and the rest of her hair that was light gold. She was the only one I could talk to, and she loved music so much, she said. I absolutely had to play, but I warned Mr. Hughes that it would not at all go down well. Now you should know that I really like to play because I play so rarely, I have no piano. And I played that (I think Adagio) beginning of the *Moonshine Sonata*. Nice that they became so silent, all those ugly people, as if they had a vague premonition that something would happen. I had forgotten what was sitting around me, and I played it continuously, very well and simply. When I stood up they were all a little taken aback, but soon afterwards again started a 'song'.¹⁹⁵

Borel's wife told him that the new lady had been crying during the music and had been watching him with a very sad look. For Borel, who loved to play the piano and had a weak spot for women, this was a most interesting experience.

Borel's greatest hobby was collecting Chinese art. He had already bought his first piece in The Hague, and now seems to have spent all his money on buying art. Collecting also was an important motivation for Borel's travels to the interior. He became proficient in evaluating prices and recognising fakes. He often wrote to Van Eeden and Thorn Prikker about new additions to his collection. One of his favourite pieces was a *Pik Ting* (*Bai Ting* 白汀) porcelain statue of Guanyin, a photograph of which later appeared as frontispiece in his *Kwan Yin*. In the summer of 1893, he had a picture taken of himself in Chinese dress, in his House on the Rock, sitting surrounded by his art and leafing through a traditional Chinese book (see illustration 18). He sent this picture to Van Eeden and Thorn Prikker.¹⁹⁶ His fellow students Van Wettum and Ezerman also collected Chinese artifacts and art.¹⁹⁷

During his first year, Borel had a very high opinion of the Chinese and of his teachers, mainly based on their outward appearance. In his first letter to Van Eeden, ten days after arrival, Borel wrote about the educated class in his typical impressionist style:

I found in them nothing of rudeness, unwieldiness, or the like, but found them so beautiful and elegant of movement and gesture that I loved them. They have a singular walk, a way of lifting their hands, when they want to get something, a way of bowing, so very sensitive, that one would think they are a better people than we are. I first did not wish to observe these people from the inside, but only wished to have the beauty of their outward appearance enter into me, of their gowns, their walk and gestures, just as they live before my eyes in colour, line and movement.¹⁹⁸



18. Borel in Chinese dress in his house on the rock on Gulangyu, summer 1893 (B745/IV/13, Letterkundig Museum, The Hague).

And three months later, Borel wrote with great sympathy about the misery and cheerfulness of the lowest classes of Chinese:

The Chinese are a very unhappy, poor, neglected, but good people. A very clever people, but also very naïve. You have no idea how primitive they are.

I penetrated deeply into Amoy itself. Foreigners rarely go there, except in the suburbs. One million people live in filthy slums, in narrow alleys with dirt, and bins with faeces, and mud, and damp vapours coming out of the soil. Much, much worse to see than what I saw of slums in Paris. A beautiful city for your eyes, those narrow little streets full of gold, everywhere gold, gold, gold on black shops and sign boards, everywhere red, and in the twilight there is mist and golden vapour with a glory of light from lamps, and in the golden mist the gowns of the Chinese, softly moving colours. But too horrible to find it beautiful in a way that would make you glad and happy. A misery which makes you hurt, as if something terrible had been done to you personally. Thousands of coolies toiling under enormous burdens, worse than beasts, and they are lean, and sick with misery. Beggars move around with bodies that are not human, but rotten pieces, decayed legs upon which pus and sores are golden-green, sometimes swollen as elephants' feet. Also bodies without legs, that jump forward on the ground. And screaming, roaring like beasts, because the coolies run with their burdens shouting "k'ap tióh, oa-á, oa" [磕着, 倚阿, 倚] (Watch out for bumping! Out of the way!), without end.

But within that misery an agility, a great liveliness. Say something to one of those beast-coolies and he laughs like a child; ask those wretches something,

and they begin to talk like children, and laugh, laugh out of pure pleasure that such an ugly foreigner in all those black clothes understands them. Among themselves also a lot of fun, when they have a moment of rest. Not the rudeness and dirtiness of a low-class Amsterdammer. But with lively, elegant gestures and laughter, such movements and sounds that one sees directly that they are a better people. Yes, that merry cheerfulness of those Chinese in their misery is really something, it is an emotion to see and you begin to love them in the mass.¹⁹⁹

But after a year, and after several conflicts, and suffering from the hot climate and his too intense studies of Buddhism, leading to a month of illness in October, his opinions changed drastically and became similar to Van der Spek's final negative opinions in 1879. In a letter to Van Eeden of 21 December 1893, he first expressed his regret about the decline of Chinese artists and art, but ended in a general complaint about the Chinese:

It is a pity that the Chinese nowadays no longer include such types, and are such enormously bad, mean people. I think that I earlier wrote rather enthusiastically about the Chinese, but I was misled, typically Mr. Artist ... But "take care!" It is a degenerate race; they are cowardly slaves, cheats, and pederasts. It is so serious that for instance onanism, pederasty etc. are not even considered vices here, and become publicly known. These people have no feeling at all for good or bad, right or wrong. For instance, yesterday I talked for two hours with my teacher about the fact that if someone could sell something worth 5 cents to me for 100 dollars, saying that it is worth that much, a Chinese does *not* consider this cheating. They are such crafty thieves that they have made theft into a virtue. They cheat the foreigners and they cheat each other. They do not know gratitude. I had a coolie who said his breast was hurting because of the water-hauling from the well. To the great amusement of my English friends, I then hired another coolie for that work. One week later the former robbed me.²⁰⁰

Borel's teachers

The students started their studies with the teachers on Friday, 19 October 1892, two weeks after their arrival.²⁰¹ Like their predecessors, they also took on Chinese names that were probably chosen with the help of their teachers. Borel called himself Bú-lé 武禮 (*Wuli*), literally: "Military Etiquette," a combination of warlike and peaceful virtues. This name can be found on a red seal in his diary from Amoy. Van Wettum's name was Biktam 墨湛 (*Mozhan*), literally "Imbued with Ink [Scholarship]." He also had a style (*zi* 字) which matched his name: Hān-hiong 翰香 (*Hanxiang*), literally: "Fragrance of the Writing Brush." Seals with these names were printed on the Chinese books that he acquired in Amoy. No Chinese name of Ezerman is known.

Borel gave long descriptions of his teachers in his letters to Van Eeden.

In January 1893 he was taught by a teacher named Ts'î Pik Kang 徐伯江,²⁰² whom Borel always called by his given name Pik Kang. He wrote to Van Eeden:

And then my teacher Pik-kang, with his pointed nose, and his Apache face, just like an American Indian with a queue. I do not understand anything about that character. He explains to me those super-wise books of Confucius and Laozi, in such a way that he must surely understand all of it to be able to say it that way. ... explaining it to me as if it is as simple as an ABC-book, speaking, gesturing. His gestures are worth gold. ... He makes gestures for almost anything when I do not fully understand his words.²⁰³

Borel was at the time very fond of Pik Kang, and he even wished to take him along to Europe on his leave. Pik Kang must have been the teacher of one of his fellow students. Borel later wrote that in the beginning they often switched teachers, but later he stopped using their teachers. He wrote to Van Eeden almost in a doctor's style:

In the past I sometimes switched with the two other teachers of Ezerman and Van Wettum, but they are too much addicted to opium to ever recover. I have often tried to do something for them but nothing helps against opium illness if you cannot constantly observe the patient.²⁰⁴

From the start, his own teacher was Tio Siao Hun 趙少勲, who had also been De Groot's and Van der Spek's teacher, and who was now almost sixty years old (*see* illustration 19). On 16 May 1893 he wrote about Tio:

I owe a lot of my progress in Chinese to my old teacher Tio Siao Hun. Enormously learned is that man, and at the same time so surprisingly ignorant. ... He is an eminent man. What a 'spirit' in a Chinese! You should see him once, when he is talking about the Chinese theatre! He is himself almost an actor. His gestures are wonderful to see. Everything that he tells you, you can see happening before your eyes. Besides, he is a very capable artist. ... Tio never had a chance to study and he was a poor schoolmaster, who did not have much time to be alone with his art. ... He makes those simple landscapes from which you can feel he is a real artist.²⁰⁵

At this time, Borel also planned to take along this teacher to the Indies as his 'secretary,' and later to show him Europe during his leave. Borel also promised him that he could come to live in his new house:

He hates filthy Amoy with all its misery, and is very happy that in June he gets a room in my rather large house to live in. This summer I'll keep him out of Amoy, because with the fierce heat there is cholera, fever, etc, and it would be a great loss for me, an unsurmountable loss, if he suddenly passed away.²⁰⁶

More than thirty years later, Borel wrote an article about his first teacher, his "first-born" ("De eerstgeborene"), a literal translation of Chinese *xiansheng* 先生, "teacher." In this article he said that he engaged Tio for a monthly salary of \$12 for four hours of teaching per day, "which certainly



19. The teacher Tio Siao Hun in Amoy, ca. 1893 (Henri Borel, uncatalogued, Letterkundig Museum).

cannot be considered a great amount of money” (*wat toch stellig geen rijkdom mag heten*). But Borel had paid his teacher better than he remembered; he had not underpaid him. According to undated lists of monthly expenses in his notebooks from Amoy, he paid him \$15 when living in the hotel, and when renting the house on the rock, once \$18, several times \$20 and once even \$24.50 and \$25.50.²⁰⁷ This should be more or less in accordance with the varying amounts paid to him by the government. The teacher’s salary of f37.50 should in dollars be about \$22.

In this article he described Tio’s outward appearance as follows:

He was an old man, far into his fifties, who always walked in a long, silken gown, on thick felt slipper-shoes, with his long queue solemnly on his back, and spectacles with extra large glasses. When he sat down on a chair, he did so slowly, reverently, as if he were landing on a throne, and he remained seated with his silken gown in superb folds and his colossal sleeves hanging down widely, as if he were a statue, in motionless rest. It was not long—just as long as I needed to learn to understand him—before I noticed that he actually was my spiritual father, and I, who engaged him, his child.²⁰⁸

Despite Borel’s exalted description of his teachers, there was also a dark side to them, which he soon noticed, and which would in the end have a serious consequence. ‘Squeeze’ was one of the facts of life in China, and Borel knew already in January that Pik Kang was squeezing him when

introducing him in the shops of Amoy. But Tio not only did that, he also monopolised Borel's household. No vendor could come to his house without paying 'squeeze' to the teacher, probably when Tio was living with Borel. After more than a year Borel finally found this out as well, and now he understood why Tio had accepted his meagre salary!²⁰⁹

One can only guess that this was the reason why in the autumn of 1893 Borel suddenly fired his beloved teacher Tio. He only once casually referred to this incident in a letter to Van Eeden:

Nowadays I have another teacher, a Chinese from Zhangzhou, and he is even a *xiucaï* (doctor in literature), a real bigwig, who knows much more about it than the old Tio. (This Tio had cheated me and I had to remove him.)²¹⁰

He added about the new teacher:

A *xiucaï* is a true bigwig, since the literati are the highest class. A simple *xiucaï* is here *really* more respectable than a millionaire. His father is a *juren* (one grade higher), and he has a large placard and a wooden board before his doorpost, on which he is praised as an example, and he can visit the highest mandarins.²¹¹

A few years later Borel wrote in an essay entitled "The Glamour of the Chinese" about his former teacher Tio: "He was a bad man, a scoundrel, a cheat, like the others."²¹² Of course, nothing remained of Borel's magnificent plan to take Tio to the Indies and to Europe, and he probably never engaged him again; at least he never mentioned his name again in his letters or diary. From now on he only referred to "my teacher" without giving any name.

In his diary, Borel seems to refer indirectly to this and other incidents that had happened during the preceding months. On 22 November 1893, he started keeping a diary for the first time in China, writing:

Let me not now attempt to unravel what a great many unpleasant things have happened to me. When I come to think about it, I have been very unhappy. Mostly due to myself. I have given too little consideration to other people's positions and affairs. I wanted to get too much out of life. And now I have more or less discovered for the first time ... that—I do not know how and why—I am a very evil man, and also very good, but everything is relative. ... My first duty should be: to forgive, to have compassion, to love.²¹³

Many years later, Borel would express his indebtedness to his first teacher Tio, just as he would be grateful to Schlegel. In 1916, after hearing that Tio had passed away, he dedicated his collection of essays about Chinese literature and philosophy *De Geest van China* (*The spirit of China*) to Tio with the words:

Dedicated to the memory of my simple, old Chinese teacher TIO SIAO HUN who first initiated me into Chinese philosophy and imparted to me the Spirit of China, in the years 1892–4.²¹⁴

In 1920, when Borel revisited Amoy, he also paid his respects to Tio Siao Hun's grave.²¹⁵

Borel's studies

A few days after their arrival in Amoy, each student received from the Consul, on behalf of the Governor-General, a copy of Volume I of De Groot's *Religious System of China*, which had just been published in Leiden.²¹⁶ They were not only to study the Chinese language, but also Chinese customs and manners.²¹⁷

The studies in China were much more intense than they had ever been in Leiden. Now they were taught four and a half hours per day, 27 hours per week, while in Leiden Schlegel had only taught them six hours per week. On 17 January 1893, Borel wrote to Van Eeden:

Do you know how we live here? Very simply, and every day the same. In the morning from 9:30 to 12 I study Chinese with my Chinese teacher, read books, talk about things etc. In the afternoon from 2 to 4 the same. From 4 to 8:30 I take a walk, and eat. From 8:30 to an indefinite hour, sometimes 1:30 at night, I review and drill, only interrupted by an hour of teaching English to Christine.²¹⁸

The curriculum consisted of reading (colloquialising) stories from *Jingu qiguan*, classical literature and later mostly practical texts. Borel's first notebook from Amoy, dated 19 October 1892, contains a vocabulary of "Du Shiniang," a story from *Jingu qiguan* which they had read in Leiden as well, and which they probably colloquialised.²¹⁹ In January 1893, his teacher Pik Kang explained 'Confucius' and 'Laozi' to him in a very simple manner.²²⁰ In February 1893 he was also studying and translating a book about Guanyin, *Guanyin jidu benyuan zhenjing* 觀音濟渡本願真經.²²¹ He made a Dutch translation in a small notebook.²²² He wrote very enthusiastically about this book to Van Eeden. Borel always found much inspiration in this and other Buddhist sutras, but he conceded that he would still need another ten years before he could master the language.²²³

In May 1893 he was reading another book, the *Zhongyong* 中庸 (Doctrine of the Mean), one of the *Four Books*, which he perhaps had read in Leiden as well. In a letter to Van Eeden he criticised James Legge's translation, just as Schlegel often did in his dictionary:

The most famous sinologist, James Legge, translated all the *Five Classics* and the *Four Books* (the so-called Classics, no Buddhism) but horribly. There is one book among them, the *Zhongyong* of Confucius, the Doctrine of the Pure Middle, which he spoiled awfully by seeking all kinds of things behind it that are not at all actually in it. It is a very simple book, and everything is written very clearly, it is sublime in its simplicity. ... I am translating it, orally in the colloquial, the spoken language.²²⁴

Borel also studied the *Daodejing* 道德經, which was not taught in Leiden:

There is another book, by Laozi, the *Daodejing*. That is beautiful and it can make the sinologists shiver if they hear its name. Schlegel wrote me not to begin with this, because he himself also understood nothing of it, he said. I began reading it; it is very simple, and therefore I believe they have not understood it, they look for too much behind everything.²²⁵

Probably on Schlegel's advice, Borel had to concentrate his studies on preparing for his core activities as an interpreter:

I am not allowed *now* to work too much on such books. I am employed not as a sinologist, but as a Chinese interpreter. I must do all kinds of miserable work such as reading merchants' letters, studying Chinese merchants' account books, Chinese laws, Chinese bookkeeping, etc., etc. You don't do that for fun.²²⁶

From the start, Borel complained about the difficulty of the Chinese language:

... I have to work very, very hard. That is so strange, I was not at all used to it, but now I *have* to. It is so tiresome, specially for your eyes, that Chinese. And time and again there appear characters that you have never seen in your life. ... All those little strokes, Oh, they are so difficult. But if you know them well, they are actually quite beautiful. The characters themselves are so alive, so to say.²²⁷

He regarded the Chinese characters not just as the writing system of a language, but as a kind of symbols for ideas. This view of the Chinese writing system was very common in the nineteenth century, and it was also propounded by Schlegel. Borel continued:

It is such a beautiful way of reading, the Chinese language, but strange in the beginning. That is, you don't read the 'sound' of each word, but each word is a symbol that depicts the meaning. But this would become a very long letter if I had to describe it in detail.²²⁸

After he switched teachers in the autumn of 1893, Borel complained twice about the difficulty of his studies:

It is not at all easy. You have no idea of the wretched, dull exhaustiveness of my Chinese studies. Not the reading of the classics. But the unravelling of shorthand, of commercial account books, and Chinese malversations. Every time, that brings me down out of it. Sometimes I do not write in my Book²²⁹ for four days because of my listlessness. Besides, I now again have a piano and I give myself a real treat of Bach's Preludes and Fugas.²³⁰

A few weeks later he complained again:

It is a pity that I am still struggling in my poems. That is because I do not have enough time to go into it. I have to do such exhausting Chinese work. You should not forget that I have so little time and live as in a prison.²³¹

He wished to get rid of his daily obligation to study Chinese with his teacher. In his Diary he wrote on 5 January 1894:

I would give a lot to have the following: A simple room with white walls. A normal table with paper, ink and a penholder. No books. To be alone in that way from 10 to 12 in the morning and from 2 to 4 in the afternoon. Nobody comes in. And it is impossible to obtain this ... Is this not great misery?²³²

All students bought a small library of Chinese books. Borel mentioned in his letters that he had ordered Chinese Buddhist books in Peking, or tried to get hold of a sutra of a sect of vegetarians.²³³ One can obtain an impression of his library from the auction catalogue of his books in 1934.²³⁴

A large part of Van Wettum's library has been preserved. It was auctioned in 1917,²³⁵ and at least 54 Chinese books were acquired by the Royal Netherlands Geographical Society (*Koninklijk Nederlandsch Aardrijkskundig Genootschap*). These books are now in the KNAG Collection in the East Asian Library in Leiden. The books that he bought in Amoy can be recognised by one or both of his Chinese seals printed on the cover.²³⁶ These comprise the usual books: the *Four Books*, school books, encyclopaedias, *Shiwu yin* 十五音, the *Qing Code*, books about popular religion, and many novels and stories (*Jingu qiguan* 今古奇觀, *Sanguo zhi* 三國志, *Haoqiu zhuan* 好逑傳, *Yu Jiao Li* 玉嬌梨, *Liaozhai zhiyi* 聊齋志異, *Xixiangji* 西廂記, etc.). Some of these show intensive use; *Haoqiu zhuan*, for instance, is full of notes and corrections of misprints.

Travels

Borel always continued to live on Gulangyu and there is also no evidence that Ezerman and Van Wettum moved to the interior for their studies. However, all students undertook travels to the interior of Fujian.

In April 1893, Ezerman and Van Wettum wrote a letter in German to the acting Consul, Grunenwald, announcing their plan to travel to Tachien (probably Datian 大田) in the interior of Fujian, asking him to notify *Daotai* (Resident) Lin.²³⁷

In May 1893, Borel planned to take a seven-day trip by sedan chair (!) to Zhangzhou, Quanzhou, and Dehua 德化, together with his teacher Tio. He wished to leave as soon as the compensation for his allowance arrived.

The choice of these places he explained in a letter to Van Eeden:

I go there to hunt for one or two Pik Ting [*Bai Ting* 白汀 porcelain] pieces, which I can buy for little money compared with the value in Europe. In Quanzhou there is still some old bronze. It will be an interesting tour. Europeans never go there, the missionaries don't get further inland than Zhangzhou.²³⁸

However, he never wrote about this planned trip later, so it was probably cancelled.²³⁹ He also planned to live near Nanputuo Temple in Amoy during the summer of 1893, and to go to Zhangzhou for his studies in October, but these plans were also not realised. Of course, after his daughter was born in October, it would have been inconvenient for him and his family if he moved elsewhere.

At the end of 1893, Borel already had made several trips to Zhangzhou and other places.²⁴⁰ In a letter to Van Eeden, he expressed a positive opinion on the Chinese in Zhangzhou, but only after superficial contacts with them, just as after his first contacts with the Amoy Chinese:

Zhangzhou is a very large city. What you can also learn there is how to be patient. There you are surrounded by thousands of Chinese. In the midst of one million Chinese there are living only two or three missionaries, so the majority of them have never before seen a foreigner. As long as you keep quiet they will not harm you. Chinese in Amsterdam run twice as much risk of being harassed than I did in Zhangzhou. The intense fun of those people when they hear that you speak their language is delightful.²⁴¹ And none of them wishes to hurt you, and—most remarkably—there are no street urchins. They never throw dirt or other things at you. That is because the children here have so much respect for grown-ups.

I noticed that the Chinese in the interior are *better* than those here on Gulangyu and the suburbs of Amoy, who have had more contact with Europeans. The Zhangzhou Chinese seem to me to have retained better the national virtues (and vices), but *no* European wickedness.²⁴²

On 19 November 1893, Borel wrote a letter in German to Grunenwald asking him to arrange travel passes for Van Wettum and himself to Zhangzhou, where they wished to go in the next week.²⁴³ This trip was postponed until 25 December, and lasted less than a week.²⁴⁴ In his diary he described the beautiful clouds and river scenery, about which he wrote a poem. He wrote about the city of Zhangzhou:

In Zhangzhou the large Nanshansi temple was the first Chinese Buddhist temple that I found a real God's House. ... Zhangzhou itself, seen from the outside, is a metropolis from ancient times, where now still gleams the grandeur of the lost, immense beauty of centuries ago.²⁴⁵

The largest trip Borel made was to Hong Kong and Canton, from 17 February to the beginning of March 1894. He took this trip on the advice of his doctor; the sea voyage would be good for his ailing health. In Canton he hoped to find antiquities: "Would there still be old porcelain? And bronze? And jasper?"²⁴⁶ After a refreshing sea voyage of two days, he stayed a few days in Hong Kong, where he wrote to Van Eeden: "I had difficulty imagining that I was in China. As to the bustle, it seems like Paris."²⁴⁷

He also commented on the language situation:

The Chinese do not understand a word of me nor I of them. They speak the Canton dialect. For instance, Amoy 'to buy' *bé* [買] is in Canton *mai* etc. The Chinese in the larger shops speak English, but not everywhere. I made myself understandable at one antiquarian's by writing characters with a writing brush on paper. There is no very beautiful old art here, enormous Japanese vases, etc., but all new. And a lot of imitations.²⁴⁸

About Canton he wrote:

Anyone coming there for the first time is struck with disgust, so strong that he is unable to see the beauty everywhere. But I already knew that appearance of stuffiness and decay, from before, from so many other Chinese cities. And there is a very beautiful soul in those depressingly dark Chinese cities full of dirt and stench.²⁴⁹

In Canton he visited the Wah Lam Sze (Hualinsi 華林寺), the temple of the five hundred Arhats, which made a deep impression on him.²⁵⁰

He also paid a visit to a flower boat, just as Schlegel had done thirty years earlier. He went there at the invitation of a young student-interpreter at the British Consulate, who could speak Cantonese well. Since Borel knew very little Cantonese, he could not have the interesting conversations that Schlegel had had. He also knew little Mandarin. When Borel was introduced to a Chinese official on one of the flower boats, all he could do was:

I bowed a little and mumbled something in the little Mandarin that I knew, the dialect which throughout the whole country any high ranking Chinese should understand.²⁵¹

Borel's publications

In the first week after arrival in Amoy, Borel already planned to write articles for Dutch newspapers in order to compensate for his meagre allowance. Later he presented some articles, including one about a Chinese marriage ("Een bruiloft"), to the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* with the help of his friend Thorn Prikker, who wrote to him on 22-28 January 1893 that his article had been refused:

As you know, I sent your article about China to the editor of the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*. Luck was against you. They would want you as a correspondent from China, but then you'll also have to write about other things and *in particular* write Dutch. You should know that according to the editor of the *NRC* there exists "Dutch," and there exists "*Nieuwe Gids* language." They don't want the *Nieuwe Gids* language; therefore there is no alternative to writing in pure Dutch. They will now correspond with you directly. I'll try to have your article published somewhere else for the necessary cash. ... The editor wrote literally to me: "We still need a correspondent in China. If Mr. Borel ... should be inclined to write *normally* about facts and to make things the main topic, that is, to deliver newspaper work, then we could correspond about that."²⁵²

No evidence could be found that Borel's article about the Chinese marriage was published in any journal, but three years later, in 1897, it appeared in his collection of essays *Kwan Yin*.

Borel's first article to be published was an article in *T'oung Pao*, which appeared in the last issue of 1893, no doubt with the support of Schlegel, but of course without pay. It was a translation into French of two pledges of friendship.²⁵³ Borel sent off-prints to his friends Thorn Prikker and Van Eeden, who were very impressed.²⁵⁴

In a letter to Van Eeden, Borel had expressed his admiration for Schlegel as a linguist. On 26 February 1893, when talking about the miserable translation of the *Daodejing* by other sinologists, who in his opinion sustained nothing of the original intention of the book and misunderstood almost everything, he stated that translation of the old books needed devotion and love, without which everything became nonsense:

Strangely enough, for such a person, our Professor Schlegel *does* have that, and he is the *only* person in whom one can trust safely, and who is an oracle in Chinese. I have *great* respect for him as a Sinologist, to the extent that such a thing is possible.²⁵⁵

The next year, Van Wettum wrote an article in English that was published in *T'oung Pao*.²⁵⁶ Borel also wrote an English article that he intended for *T'oung Pao*, "Chinese Principles of Poetry," which he finished on 26 January 1894.²⁵⁷ But Schlegel seems to have refused publication.²⁵⁸

Borel was fascinated by the Chinese theatre and he wrote several articles about it. As early as 16 May 1893, he sent a short piece about the Chinese theatre to Van Eeden, announcing that he was writing a larger article on the same subject.²⁵⁹ He planned to offer that article to the "old" *Gids* for publication via his cousin, the well-known drama critic J.N. van Hall,²⁶⁰ who already in 1892 had asked him to write about China for this journal.²⁶¹ Two months later he finished it,²⁶² and he sent it to *De Gids*. On 25 November 1893, Borel wrote to Van Eeden that *De Gids* had accepted his article!²⁶³ Most of this article was written in a detached, descriptive style, not the exalted style typical of *De Nieuwe Gids*. It was published in the second 1894 issue of *De Gids* as "The Chinese Theatre" (*Het Chineesche tooneel*, pp. 363-93).²⁶⁴ This article at once established Borel's name as a writer and China specialist in the Netherlands. Thorn Prikker wrote to Borel:

Fellow, my dear fellow, your piece about the Chinese actors, do you know that almost all newspapers have published summaries of your piece in the old *Gids*? You would never guess what the *Haagsche Courant* ... just wrote about it.²⁶⁵ Something like this. The piece was written by someone who left here two years ago with a lot of poetical talent. Not bad, right? You would never have dared to think that, right? ... If I were you, I would send more such pieces to *De Gids*. ... we must in this society be shrewd politicians, the more seriously so the better.²⁶⁶

His second article in *De Gids*, “A Dead Mandarin” (*Van een dooden Mandarijn*), was a description of a Chinese funeral. From now on Borel would publish a series of articles and poems in this journal.²⁶⁷

Borel had hoped he would meet wise Buddhist monks in China and learn from them. However, the Buddhists whom he met in Amoy were only “meek donkeys” (*goedige ezels*).²⁶⁸ Reading Buddhist texts was the only method of attaining this purpose, and also to better understand his collection of Buddhist art. He read these texts with his teacher, who could not be of much help, and he had to rely on his own reference works in order to understand these texts.

He also studied Taoist authors such as Laozi and Zhuangzi, searching for wisdom. Giving expression to this quest, he wrote an article titled *Wu wei* (無爲 in Mandarin pronunciation), in which he collected what he had read and seen; he at first called this “A study after Laozi’s philosophy” (*Een studie naar aanleiding van Lao Tsz’s filosofie*). He finished it on 2 July 1894²⁶⁹ and also sent it to *De Gids*, in which it was published in 1895 (vol. II, pp. 41–276). When it was reprinted in *Kwan Yin* in 1896, he changed the subtitle on advice from various quarters, probably including his sinologist colleagues, and called it “A phantasy after Laozi’s philosophy” (*Een fantazie naar aanleiding van Lao Tsz’s filosofie*). It is a story about a boat trip to a small island in the sea near the city of Hā dó, probably a pun on Hā bûn 廈門, the literary pronunciation of the characters for “Amoy.”²⁷⁰ On this island Shien Shan [仙山], the Mountain of the Immortals, he met a wise man who was said to know “the secrets of Heaven and Earth,” with whom he had a long conversation about life, art, poetry and love. This story he dedicated to Frederik van Eeden, and it would remain Borel’s favourite work throughout his life. It was also reprinted as a booklet several times, and translated into English (twice), French, German, and Italian.²⁷¹

In the end, Borel also succeeded in publishing articles in the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*. From August 1894 on, he became a self-styled “war-correspondent” by sending ‘Private Correspondence,’ reporting in a detached and factual manner on the historical background of the Sino–Japanese War and its repercussions in Amoy. After leaving China, he continued publishing similar articles in the *NRC* about the war and other topics.²⁷²

The students’ relations with the Consulate

As in the past, the students were sometimes asked to render translation services to the Consulate. Their linguistic and also advisory skills made them indispensable to the German Consul, in both Dutch and Chinese affairs. But getting to know the Chinese from the Indies was also profitable for themselves, since in this manner they could practice their Hokkien

and learn about the position of the Chinese in the Colonies. Being students of the Chinese language, they often sympathised with the Chinese, sometimes trying to help them and protect them against injustice by local mandarins. Borel described the following case in which he was himself involved:²⁷³

A Chinese, Tan Boen Tjen, grandson of a *majoer* of the Chinese, and son of a *kapitein* in Batavia, who was staying in Amoy, was sued by a cousin and summoned to pay 5,000 dollars. Being a Dutch subject (in the Indies) he was entitled to protection by the Consul, and invoked his aid. Since—note this well!—neither the Consul nor his interpreter understands the Amoy dialect (only the Mandarin dialect, which the population of Amoy understand just as little as Hebrew), the assistance of one of the student-interpreters temporarily residing in Amoy was invoked. It was an extremely simple case. Tan Boen Tjen gave assurance that the debt had already been paid by his grandfather; inquiries could be made with the Orphans and Estate Chamber in Batavia, which had managed the estate, and the receipt was now kept by a notary in Batavia. When asked for his advice, the student-interpreter suggested to the Consul to request the *Daotai* (the Chinese Mandarin in charge of the case) not to administer justice before Tan Boen Tjen had had an opportunity to claim that receipt from Batavia. The Consul agreed or at least pretended to do so. At his request the student-interpreter wrote himself—since the Consul does not write Dutch—to the Orphans and Estate Chamber, after having first answered the Consul's question: "What is actually the Orphans and Estate Chamber?" And Tan Boen Tjen wrote to the notary. One can imagine the indignation of the Dutch student-interpreter, when he heard three days later that Tan Boen Tjen nevertheless had been apprehended and condemned to pay 5,000 dollars. The Consul did not interfere at the time, although the *Daotai*, who is on very good terms with the foreign Consuls, in such cases usually would obey the Consul.

But the nice thing was: after a sizeable period of time the receipt did arrive in Amoy, proving that Tan Boen Tjen was fully within his rights. Thereupon again nothing was done to help him.²⁷⁴

In the same article, Borel wrote about the strained relations with the German acting Consul General Grunenwald, who had recently been transferred from Peking:

The Consul—a German—does not speak Dutch, reads a little Dutch (but don't ask how little!) and does not write Dutch at all. The consequence was that when the three student-interpreters were in Amoy, they were charged with all correspondence, which they at first did willingly. In the end the Consul simply sent to them a coolie with documents for translation, without a polite request, after which one of the students respectfully reminded the Consul that they were not employed by the Consulate, and that a polite accompanying letter would be appreciated, since the translations and correspondence were done out of courtesy, not duty. The answer was not in Dutch style, but in Prussian-militarist style, namely that the Imperial Royal (*kaiserliche königliche*) Consul, at the same time acting Dutch Consul, gave them an "order"^s to make a translation. Whereupon one student, glad to be a Dutchman, answered by returning the documents without translation.²⁷⁵

This incident almost got the students into trouble, since Grunenwald sent a letter to Batavia. On 3 October 1893, he wrote a letter in English to the Director of Justice, A. Stibbe, in Batavia, suggesting to formally regulate the relationship with the students. In this letter he had discarded his authoritarianism, but it is clear that he did not feel much respect for the students, opining that they were better salaried and less fully occupied than the student-interpreters in Peking from other nations:²⁷⁶

The three gentlemen sent here by the Government to learn Chinese are in no connection whatever with the Consulate General. Sometimes, however, it is not to be avoided to ask for their services for translating essential notary acts into Dutch, although I restrained myself as much as possible from asking for a service which they are not officially obliged to grant and which I am unwilling to regard as a favour done to me personally. The German, English, and French Governments also send students out to China (to Peking) with the principal purpose that they shall learn Chinese. But at the same time they are attached to their respective legations and bound to do all the services their superiors may think fit to ask them for. In this way the three Governments save the expenses for a clerk and for a second interpreter. As now the three Dutch students here, who besides get a higher salary than their more occupied colleagues of the other nations at Peking, will stay one year longer at Amoy I beg to draw your attention on the principle other nations follow with regard to their students and to propose that the three gentlemen (Van Wetum, Borel, Ezerman) and whoever may be sent out in future ought to be officially given to understand, that they are officials to a certain point, belonging to the Consulate General and, therefore, have to render their services to the latter, whenever they are wanted. Such an arrangement made, the Consulate General would be always able to dispense with a clerk and an interpreter, who *otherwise* would be necessary, if the Government should deem it apt to send out from home a new Consul General. By this way the Government would save expenses and the young students would acquire a certain knowledge of the official work which may not be without advantage for their future career, without interfering in the least with their Chinese studies.²⁷⁷

Director Stibbe replied on 23 November 1893 that the Consul should write to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who could then contact the Minister of Colonies about the conditions.²⁷⁸ However, no further correspondence by Grunenwald about this subject could be found in the archives.

Three years later, the Minister of Foreign Affairs asked the Minister of Colonies if he could borrow “the six students in China” to work in the Consulates. When Schlegel was consulted, he first told him there were only three students in China, but he advised against using them for this purpose, since studying Mandarin would interfere with their studies of the Southern dialects. He proposed to establish a special training course of Chinese for consulate personnel. Thereupon the Minister of Colonies refused the request of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The reasons for this were the moratorium in the training of interpreters and Schlegel’s negative advice.²⁷⁹

Yet two years later the Minister of Foreign Affairs consulted Knobel, Groeneveldt, De Groot, and Hoetink about the possibility of such a training course,²⁸⁰ but took no action, and another ten years later, in 1910, a special regulation was created for training Chinese and Japanese interpreters for the Foreign Service.²⁸¹ The first Chinese interpreters so trained were J.J.L. Duyvendak and Th.H.J. de Josselin de Jong.

The third group finish their studies in Amoy

After two years of studies, the level of competence in Chinese of these students was supposed to be higher than that of their predecessors. However, Ezerman would later concede that during his studies in Amoy he only obtained a “working knowledge” of Chinese.²⁸²

Three months before the end of their study period in China, the Governor-General decided to allow the three students to engage teachers under the usual conditions, and passage fees for themselves and Mrs. Borel. The Director of Justice informed the students of this via the Consul in a letter of 27 July 1894.²⁸³

That summer there was a plague epidemic in Canton and Hong Kong, and the harbour was in quarantine; no ships were allowed to visit Hong Kong. Since the Infectious Diseases Act was in force in Hong Kong,²⁸⁴ the French Mail was now redirected to Shanghai, and the students were to travel by way of Shanghai. They planned to take the French Mail on 1 September to Singapore.²⁸⁵ However, since it was later announced that Hong Kong would be declared free of plague by 9 September, Borel decided to travel with his wife via Hong Kong instead. Ezerman and Van Wettum probably travelled via Shanghai, and Borel and his wife travelled a little later via Swatow, Hong Kong, and Singapore.²⁸⁶ In the South China Sea they met with a typhoon and Borel arrived stricken with illness in Singapore.²⁸⁷ After arrival in Batavia, Borel wrote a postcard to Van Eeden saying: “... I am here in Batavia to pay my respects to all kinds of bigwigs. ...”²⁸⁸

On 24 October 1894, all three were appointed as Chinese interpreters in the Outer Possessions. Borel had requested to be stationed in Riau, “which should be almost like Gulangyu,”²⁸⁹ and this request was granted. Ezerman was stationed in Mentok (Bangka) and Van Wettum in Pontianak (Western Borneo).²⁹⁰

The fourth group: De Bruin, Thijssen, Van de Stadt (1896–1898)

The fourth group arrived on 8 January 1896 in Hong Kong, where they were received by the Dutch Consul General, F.J. Haver Droeze.²⁹¹ The

latter was a retired military engineer, who would play an important and active role during their studies in China. The students left Hong Kong two days later, and arrived on 12 January 1896 in Amoy.²⁹² Like the third group, they studied in China for two years, leaving for the Indies on 13 January 1898.

The conditions of their studies were the same as the previous group,²⁹³ but they also studied two other dialects. They studied Hokkien for one year and four months in Amoy, Hoklo for three months in Chaochow, and Hakka for four months in Kia Ying Chow (Meixian).

In Amoy they were received and helped by the acting Consul, H. von Varchmin, and later by his colleague F. Reinsdorf, who were both, like Feindel, in the first place representing Germany. In 1895 the Dutch "Consulate General" had been moved from Amoy to Hong Kong, and from then on Feindel's title was no longer Consul General but only Consul.²⁹⁴ From 1896 on, the Consul General in Hong Kong, F.J. Haver Droeze, who was a career Consul, would be the intermediary between the students and all Dutch authorities. Accordingly, most documents concerning the students in China are now in the archives of the Consulate General in Hong Kong.

In 1896, F.M. Knobel, Minister-Resident in Peking,²⁹⁵ wished to end the consular representation by German career Consuls.²⁹⁶ On 14 April 1897, he reported to Minister of Foreign Affairs J. Röell that, if needed, one of the students could temporarily be made acting Consul in Amoy, under the strict supervision of the Consul General in Hong Kong.²⁹⁷ He added that in October of the previous year he had met them in Shanghai, where Van de Stadt and Thijssen had made a favourable impression on him.²⁹⁸ This suggestion did not lead to any results. As of 9 June 1897, the German merchant August Piehl was again appointed Consul in Amoy.²⁹⁹ At the time no suitable Dutchman could be found.³⁰⁰

Consul General Haver Droeze received a letter of credit for one year for the students, on the basis of which the students' monthly drafts with their allowances and teachers' fees could be paid.³⁰¹ Consul Von Varchmin received these drafts in Dutch guilders, as before, for which the students signed receipts, and they were paid in dollars.³⁰² The passage fees from Hong Kong to Amoy were this time directly paid by the Consul General in Hong Kong.³⁰³

Since there was no empty house available, for the time being they stayed in the Cosmopolitan Hotel, but they later must have rented other lodgings. The general conditions of the studies of this group are well documented, such as where and when they studied which dialects, because the archives were kept by the Consul General in Hong Kong. But in contrast to the earlier groups, no diaries or letters (except the official correspondence) could be found. Therefore less is known about their feelings about China.

On 16 December 1895, even before the three students arrived in Amoy, Consul General Haver Droeze suggested to Knobel to appoint one or more of them as members of the Consular Court in Amoy, if they were 23 years of age.³⁰⁴ When they arrived in Hong Kong, Droeze immediately notified Knobel that they were too young: Thijssen and De Bruin were 22 and Van de Stadt was only 19.³⁰⁵ But one year later, in February 1897, Consul Reinsdorf in Amoy suggested appointing Thijssen as “chancellor and secretary,” and in March Thijssen was indeed appointed as “secretary” (or: Registrar, *griffier*) of the Consular Court in Amoy for the year 1897.³⁰⁶ Hardly anything is known about their studies in China. Only the name of one of their teachers is known: Tio Siao Hun, who had also taught the three previous groups of students.³⁰⁷ Another teacher hailed from Formosa.³⁰⁸

The students used Chinese names that were probably provided by their teachers. Annes (Anton) de Bruin called himself 眉綸安敦 (Bì-lùn Antun, *Meilun Andun*),³⁰⁹ Emile Thijssen 戴先意明 (Tài-sien I-bîng, *Dai-xian Yiming*), and Peter van de Stadt 施達闢 (Si-tát Pit, *Shi Dapi*). These were all queer names containing transcriptions of both surname and first given name, in customary Chinese order. The names were needed in the summer of 1897 for their application for passes to the interior of Guangdong. The data sent to Haver Droeze for this purpose included the following description of the students:³¹⁰

	A.G. de Bruin	E.F. Thijssen	P.A. van de Stadt
age	23	23	21
height	medium	tall	medium
hair	light blond	brown	brown
eyes	blue	brown	blue
special marks	lost forefinger of right hand	moustache, spectacles	moustache

Von Varchmin’s complaint about De Bruin

During the first months in Amoy, an incident occurred involving De Bruin and Consul H. von Varchmin which led to a complaint by Von Varchmin to the Governor-General. De Bruin later described the origin of the conflict in a letter to Consul General Droeze:

More than fourteen days after my arrival here, I came across Mr. Von Varchmin, who, it seemed to me, said in a rather sharp tone: “Aren’t you studying? You have to do a lot of work!” Since I was confident that I was already fulfilling my duties in the field of studies, this was the immediate cause of the incident.³¹¹

The incident happened a few weeks later, when Von Varchmin paid a visit to the students and invited them for dinner. During this visit, De Bruin did not deign to appear, and as to the invitation for dinner, he let Von Varchmin know by way of one of his fellow students that he did not wish to come (*Er wollte nicht*).

Von Varchmin was shocked by this impolite behaviour. On 17 February, he first wrote a private letter to Consul General Droeze in Hong Kong explaining the matter and asking him to reprimand De Bruin. However, Droeze seems not to have taken it very seriously, answering that De Bruin was at the disposal of the Governor-General and was absolutely not placed under him. He did not even consider himself competent to call him to account for such a matter, which was completely outside consular jurisdiction.

Having found no redress, on 27 February Von Varchmin repeated his complaint to Governor-General Van der Wijck, saying De Bruin had behaved so outrageously (*flegelhaft*) towards him that if this young man did not receive an official reprimand, he would refuse to have the least social or official contacts with him. He would be completely indifferent to such a non-person, who, to judge from his manners, was of the lowest class origin, but in his function as Consul of the Netherlands, he considered that Dutch subjects should behave themselves politely towards him. He asked the Governor-General to reprimand De Bruin in a proper manner and give him instructions on how to behave towards the Consul. While the other two students were nice and pleasant youngsters, with whom he had the most friendly contacts, De Bruin was isolating himself completely and had contact with no one at all, which for that matter did not concern Von Varchmin anyhow.³¹²

After Governor-General Van der Wijck had received Von Varchmin's complaint, on 15 April Government Secretary C.B. Nederburgh sent a letter requesting De Bruin to answer for this matter, at the same time asking Droeze to investigate it and report on it.³¹³

On 25 April Droeze replied to the Governor-General that he would first await De Bruin's answer, adding that after receiving the Governor-General's decision of 22 December 1896 no. 21, he had on 9 January 1896 written to Von Varchmin, announcing the three students' arrival in Amoy and asking him, when needed, to give the students assistance and introductions to the authorities. He had not taken measures after Von Varchmin's letter of 17 February for the reasons mentioned above, and he asked whether he could investigate the matter in writing, or had to go to Amoy in person.

On 8 May, Droeze received De Bruin's letter of 3 May answering for his behaviour, in which he explained the origin of the incident and concluded:

Even leaving aside position and higher age, I confess that I behaved disrespectfully and therefore I have offered my apologies to Mr. Von Varchmin, which he found completely satisfying.³¹⁴

Droeze reported this immediately to the Governor-General.³¹⁵ Thereby this storm in a teacup ended.³¹⁶ However, it gives some insight into the students' position in Amoy, and into both men's characters and sensibilities.

Studying Hoklo in "Swatow and the interior"

On 27 February 1896, Consul General Haver Droeze wrote to Governor-General Van der Wijck requesting his attention for the need for the candidate-officials to study the Swatow dialect (Hoklo). His argument was that emigration from Swatow had increased considerably, and in the years 1892–4 yearly 30,000 to 50,000 Swatow Chinese had emigrated to the Straits Settlements, many of whom would probably end up in the Netherlands Indies. Droeze had heard that recently more and more Swatow Chinese had arrived in Deli. He wrote about the language:

The languages spoken in Amoy and Swatow are closely related, similar to Spanish and Portuguese, but anyone who understands the language of Amoy still needs a few months before he is also competent in that of Swatow.

He advised that possibly one of the students could at a convenient time also spend a few months in Swatow and the interior in order to study the languages spoken on the coast and in the interior.³¹⁷

The idea to have one candidate-official study the Swatow dialect was most probably connected with Knobel's ambitious scheme for annexation of the Swatow region and the Hakka districts in the interior by the Netherlands. He had already seriously considered this plan when travelling in the Swatow region in January and February 1896.³¹⁸ A few months later, in July 1896, Knobel would propose this plan to Minister of Foreign Affairs Röell, who refused to consider it (*see below*).

Based on Droeze's proposal, Governor-General Van der Wijck consulted the Director of Justice and decided on 29 April 1896 to charge the students "before the end of their study period to proceed for a few months to Swatow and the interior in order to study the languages spoken there."³¹⁹

Although this was not made explicit, Thijssen and later Hoetink understood this as meaning that both Hoklo *and* Hakka had to be studied, since Hakka was the usual second dialect to be learned.

Thijssen expressed his doubts about the feasibility of learning two more dialects in such a short time. Schlegel, who was always opposed to studying even a second dialect, recounted this in a letter to Minister of Colonies Van Dedem of 14 September 1896:

Now already the three above-mentioned candidates have received orders from the Governor-General of the Netherlands Indies to spend a few months in Swatow and the Hakka districts, in order to study the languages spoken there as well. The candidate Thijssen, who told me this, adds: "I do not believe it will be possible to learn to speak those dialects in a few months."³²⁰

No exact time was stipulated in the decision, and the place for study was later interpreted as meaning only the Hoklo-speaking region "Swatow and Chaochow." More than half a year later, on 15 December 1896, Van de Stadt wrote to Droeze that he and his colleagues had decided to go to Swatow and Chaochow at the end of January or the beginning of February 1897, which seemed the most suitable season. He asked Droeze what should be done to obtain a house, and how they should receive their monthly allowances, which at the time could only be paid by the Chartered Bank in Amoy. He suggested that one of them could come to Hong Kong to discuss the matter.³²¹

Droeze wrote to Ivo Streich, acting Consul for the Netherlands in Swatow, asking if the students could rent a European or Chinese house at Swatow or Chaochow. He also arranged for their allowances to be payable in Swatow, and he reassured Van de Stadt that all matters would be arranged in time. There was no need for one of them to come to Hong Kong.³²²

In January 1897, Thijssen made preparations by travelling to Swatow and then to Chaochow, where on 13 and 14 January he rented three different houses for three months, finally returning to Amoy.³²³

On 16 January 1897, Van de Stadt, as always representing the three students, wrote to Droeze, informing him that they planned to leave Amoy within a few days, since the rent was already running. He asked if the government intended to compensate the travel fees, which would be about \$30 each. He also apologised for not being able to see the Dutch warship *Koningin Wilhelmina der Nederlanden*, which would soon visit Swatow and Amoy.³²⁴

On the same day, De Bruin also wrote a letter to Droeze thanking him for his gracious help on their journey to Chaochow, but also expressing doubts similar to Thijssen's. After one year in Amoy, he had noticed insufficient regulation of their studies, the relative importance of Hakka vis-à-vis Hoklo, and the impossibility of learning so many dialects in such a short time:

I find it awkward and strange that still so relatively little is regulated in the training of Officials for Chinese Affairs. Mr. Hoetink wrote to me recently that knowledge of the Hakka dialects is most necessary, at least during the first years, and therefore advised me to take leave of Amoy for good as soon as possible. But if I consider how many subjects there still are, despite our training in Leiden and the trouble that I have taken here, about which it is

impossible to engage in a conversation, then I wonder how gruesomely little Hakka Chinese one can pick up in a short time, the more so since study tools such as dictionaries are lacking. If the climate in the Indies allows, I would be glad to continue my sinological studies there, but I still do not see clearly what is the best way. Anyway, the future will have to show us.³²⁵

On 19 January 1897, only Thijssen and De Bruin left for Swatow, while Van de Stadt remained in Amoy. Acting Consul Reinsdorf had asked him to postpone his trip and work for the Consulate, since Secretary C. Steuber had passed away. Van de Stadt left Amoy on 11 February.³²⁶

From Swatow, Thijssen and De Bruin travelled to Chaochow by sedan chair with three coolies, and they hired four coolies to carry their luggage, for a total price of \$9.50 each. Van de Stadt would later travel in the same manner.³²⁷ On their return trip from Chaochow to Swatow they took a “Hakka-boat” instead of sedan chairs, which cost them only \$1.50 each.³²⁸

Nothing is known about their studies in Chaochow. They probably made use of teaching materials and Bible translations in romanised Chaochow dialect compiled by missionaries. Droeze informed the Director of Justice as follows:

They will settle down in Chaochow Fu for several months, nine hours away from Swatow, the residence of the Daotai, where there is a large population and they will have ample opportunity to study the Swatow dialect.³²⁹

Strictly speaking, the Chaochow (Teochiu, Tjoe-tjoe, Tio-tsioe) dialect is slightly different from that of Swatow, but this difference was never mentioned in the correspondence. The students, however, would designate the dialect always as “Chaochow dialect,” and their teachers as “Chaochow teachers.” They rarely used the name “Hoklo,” which was originally a slightly derogatory name given to the population of Swatow and Chaochow region by outsiders, meaning “those characters from Fujian” (*die snuiters van Hok(kian)*).³³⁰

The students stayed less than three months in Chaochow. Thijssen and De Bruin arrived about 20 January, but they had returned in Amoy by 8 April, and Van de Stadt was back on 15 April.³³¹

After their return to Amoy, the students realised that the *f* 350 for their allowances had from the start been exchanged at an unfavourable rate, and asked for a more favourable arrangement and recompensation. They received about \$250 at a rate of 1.40, while the official rate was now even as low as 1.21; thereby they lost \$35 every month. But since their suggested remedy, to change the guilders into Mexican dollars in Batavia instead of China, amounted to a return to the old system that had proven unfavourable, their request was refused.³³²

Van de Stadt's request to study Mandarin in Peking

Even before the students went to study in Chaochow, in September 1896 Van de Stadt sent a request via Consul General Haver Droeze in Hong Kong to the Governor-General in Batavia, asking the latter to charge him, in addition to his assignment in Swatow, to go also to Peking for six months to study “the language of the Mandarins” (*taal der mandarijnen*) and become acquainted with their opinions and ideas.³³³ This request was supported by Droeze as follows:

Staying in Peking could offer an opportunity to study various matters, about which one can not or not as well gain knowledge in Amoy.
And since Mr. Van de Stadt has shown himself to be an intelligent man, I do not doubt that he would make use of it in a profitable way.³³⁴

At about the same time, Minister of Foreign Affairs Röell asked Minister of Colonies Bergsma if the studies of the Candidate-Officials in China would allow them to be temporarily stationed in Peking to study Mandarin. Bergsma then asked Schlegel for advice, who wrote that this would lead to an even greater “fragmentation” (*verbrokken*) of their Chinese studies, since they had been ordered to study Swatow and Hakka dialects as well, and Mandarin would be of no use to them in the Indies. Consequently, Bergsma replied that the students should not study Mandarin.³³⁵

However, this correspondence had not been made known to the Indies Government. Therefore Director of Justice J.C. Mulock Houwer on 11 November 1896 consulted Hoetink, who was since 1892 stationed in Batavia.

In his letter of 16 November 1896, Hoetink conceded that it was understandable that the Candidate-Officials for Chinese Affairs wished during their studies in China to see more of the country. He himself had also had a feeling of dissatisfaction after he only got to know the Southern provinces of Fujian and Guangdong without seeing other parts of the Chinese Empire, in particular the capital Peking.³³⁶ If one were to advise with authority on Chinese affairs in general, one should have seen the workings of the government in the capital, and also know Mandarin.

However, Van de Stadt had not been sent to China at the government's expense to acquaint himself with conditions in the Chinese Empire, nor to acquire skills to make him suitable for the consular service in China, but with the well-defined purpose of being trained for the position of Official for Chinese Affairs in the Netherlands Indies.³³⁷ For that position, it was not necessary to stay in Northern China or to study Mandarin.

Hoetink repeated the old arguments: the Northern Chinese did not emigrate to the Indies, and the Official for Chinese Affairs would hardly ever profit from a knowledge of Mandarin. The Netherlands Indies gov-

ernment would also probably never ask him for information about Northern Chinese affairs, and if needed, he would be able to give it without ever having been in Peking.

Hoetink did not know why the study in China had recently been lengthened to two years, but he *guessed* it was done in order to learn the dialects and customs of other “tribes” in Guangdong. Among them, the most important one was the Hakka dialect, widely spoken in some of the Outer Possessions (Borneo, Banka, Medan), and recently, Hakka immigrants were also increasing in Batavia. Therefore he presumed that the decision of 29 April 1896 no. 38 was meant to oblige the Candidate-Officials to go to the Hakka districts in Guangdong and study Hakka. When they were sufficiently familiar with this dialect, they could also study other widely spoken dialects such as Cantonese (*sic!*) and Hoklo. But for a decent study of the language and customs of the Hakkas, one year would be hardly sufficient, since they would have to start from scratch.

Hoetink considered a stay outside Southern China for several months to be not in the national interest, and he advised refusing Van de Stadt’s request. On the other hand, there was no objection to allowing Van de Stadt, after finishing his studies in China, to go to Peking for a few months at his own expense. Hoetink considered this a luxury (*eene luxe*) which could only be paid for by Van de Stadt himself.³³⁸

Four months later, on 21 March 1897, when the students were halfway through their stay in Chaochow, Governor-General Van der Wijck decided on the basis of Hoetink’s advice to refuse Van de Stadt’s request to study Mandarin in Peking. But Government Secretary Nederburgh wrote in an accompanying letter to Haver Droeze that according to an announcement from Minister of Colonies Bergsma, there might be an opportunity for one of the Candidate-Officials to be temporarily appointed as Secretary-Interpreter in Peking.³³⁹ He had already notified Bergsma of Van de Stadt’s request.³⁴⁰ However, three months later, on 25 June 1897, Nederburgh wrote that the Minister of Foreign Affairs had already abandoned this plan. Therefore there could be no opportunity for Van de Stadt to be officially stationed in Peking.³⁴¹

In this way, the study of Mandarin by an enterprising Dutch sinologist was frustrated. It would be more than a decade before Borel, in 1909, as the first Dutch sinologist in the East Indies service, would be allowed to study Mandarin.

The decision to study Hakka as well

Van de Stadt’s request (and Hoetink’s letter) would have another consequence for their studies in China. Hoetink had stated in his letter that the

decision of April 1896 to go to "Swatow and the interior" would probably be understood by the Candidate-Officials as an order to study the Hoklo dialect and customs. According to him, this would not justify the lengthening of their study period in China, even if they went to the interior in Chaochow. Therefore they should proceed to the Hakka districts and preferably settle in Kia Ying Chow.³⁴² If this understanding was correct, the Government should charge the students to act accordingly.³⁴³

Government Secretary Nederburgh had added in his letter to Droeze that Hoetink was not completely right when he presumed the study period in China had been extended in the first place to study the Hakka language and customs, but the importance of these studies could, according to the Governor-General, be a reason to change the decision of 29 April 1896 no. 38: one or more of the students could be charged to go to the Hakka districts to live there for some time. Nederburgh asked Droeze for his opinion or submit a proposal.³⁴⁴

On 5 April 1897, Droeze sent the Governor-General's decision to turn down Van de Stadt's request, and copies of the other letters, to Van de Stadt in Chaochow asking him to consult with Thijssen and De Bruin and answer him together or individually.³⁴⁵

On 15 April, Van de Stadt replied from Amoy, also representing the other two students. He stated that they could not judge whether the Hakka dialect was predominant among the Chinese in the Indies, but they were prepared to believe that the information supplied by Hoetink was correct. In that case, it seemed desirable that the Candidate-Officials for Chinese Affairs should also study the Hakka dialect, and they would be highly pleased if the Governor-General would order them to do so.

However, Van de Stadt continued, Hoetink's remark that a year would be hardly sufficient for learning Hakka was entirely correct. While the Chaochow dialect was only a variant (*eene nuance*) of the Amoy dialect, which could be learned within a few months, Hakka was an independent language utterly different from the Chaochow dialect. Therefore they proposed, if they were ordered to study Hakka, to go there for at least one year. They asked the Consul General to make such a proposal to the Governor-General. However, they feared that the extension of their period in China would entail a considerable financial loss, influencing their rights to furlough and pension. Therefore they asked, in case of extension, to have their period of service start from 1 January 1898.³⁴⁶

After receiving this letter, Droeze first consulted Ivo Streich, Netherlands Consul in Swatow, about studying the Hakka dialect, asking him in English whether:

this could be done without fear of any difficulties. If the Taotai of Swatow is informed that one or more gentlemen are living in the Hakka districts, could he prevent any molestation or annoyance?

And which would be the best place to live in: Kia Ying Chow would have the advantages of a city, but for reasons of health and quietness it would appear to me that a smaller place for instance Sam Ho Pa, Tsja Hang or Ko Pi would be preferable.³⁴⁷

After having gained sufficient information, he wrote to the Governor-General on 29 April 1897, first giving an introduction on the Hakkas, whose language had much in common with Mandarin. Anyone speaking Mandarin could more or less express himself among the Hakkas, while this was impossible with the population of Swatow or Canton City. Hakka was most purely spoken in Kia Ying Chow, and it would be desirable to study there for a few months. The students should ideally settle in the suburbs, as the centre of the town was extremely dirty and unpleasant for a European to live in. The students should seek assistance from missionaries of the Basler Mission who published books in Hakka and were well acquainted with their customs and manners, and local conditions. There was no reason for fear:

I heard that there needed be no fear for bad treatment in Kia Ying Chow. The American, English and German missionaries in the Hakka districts have at least until now had little or no annoyance from the population.³⁴⁸

The English missionary D.W. Cooper, who visited Haver Droeze on that day, had studied the language for nine months in Kia Ying Chow. According to Cooper, nine months or one year would be enough to learn to express oneself; the students, who had already spent a few months in Chaochow and had an idea as to how much time would be needed to learn Hakka, wrote to Droeze that one year would be hardly sufficient. Their request to arrange it in such manner that they would not suffer financial loss, was reasonable. Droeze therefore proposed to charge the students to settle in Kia Ying Chow to study the language, customs and manners of the Hakka for one year, and to decide that their period of service would start on 1 January 1898.

Not all of Droeze's suggestions were accepted. A few months after their return to Amoy, the students received a sequel to the previous order from the Governor-General, dated 25 June 1897:

to proceed until the end of their study period to Kia Ying Chow (Ka Yin Tsoe) in order to study the Hakka dialect spoken there.³⁴⁹

On the same day, Government Secretary Nederburgh wrote to Droeze that the need of extending the study period had not been sufficiently proven. With due respect to Hoetink's opinion that one year would be hardly sufficient, he stated that the opportunity to study Hakka was not lacking in the Indies. An amount of money could be allotted for continuing their Hakka studies, as had earlier been given to Ezerman to study Hakka in Mentok.³⁵⁰

On the day of receipt of this letter, 12 July 1897, Droeze notified the students in Amoy of this decision.³⁵¹ The result was that they would have less than half a year to study Hakka.

Studying Hakka in Kia Ying Chow

On 16 July 1897, as soon as the students received Droeze's letter and other documents, Van de Stadt immediately replied to Droeze that they wished to leave as soon as possible for Kia Ying Chow, asking him to apply to the authorities of Guangdong province for passports for the interior, also including the list of their personal data mentioned above.³⁵²

One week later, on 23 July, Van de Stadt wrote a second letter to Droeze, stressing that the students wished to leave as soon as possible, since the study period in the Hakka districts was so short. To win time, the passports should best be sent directly to Swatow. He would go alone to Swatow in a week or so to rent a Hakka boat. They would not be able to travel very fast: Streich had written him that on account of the flooded river, they would at least need two weeks to reach Kia Ying Chow.³⁵³ They would travel along the Han Jiang 韓江, the river at Chaochow (Chaozhou) named after the famous writer and local magistrate Han Yu 韓愈 (768–824).³⁵⁴

More than two weeks later, Van de Stadt wrote a letter from Swatow on 10 August. He had arrived on 4 August but had great trouble finding Hakka boatmen, and he finally hired a houseboat from the American Baptist Mission for five months. Since the missionaries did not dare to have it cross over to the Swatow side because of a typhoon threat, Van de Stadt took the plunge and sent a steam launch to tow it over. It could be cleaned and slightly repaired on the same day. As soon as Thijssen and De Bruin would arrive, they could leave. The passports had been ready since a few days previously. He also chartered a second boat for as far as Kia Ying Chow, on which the cook, coolie and teachers could live, and where meals could be cooked.³⁵⁵ They took along at least one teacher from Chaochow and their house coolie from Amoy. Students often did this when changing dialect, probably to keep up their skills in other dialects.

Almost a month later, on 5 September, Van de Stadt reported their arrival in Kia Ying Chow on 30 August. They had left Swatow on 13 August, the day his colleagues arrived. The captain had warned them of the high water, and indeed, they had to wait for five days in front of the bridge of Chaochow, until the water had fallen enough to pass under it. The rest of the voyage was without problems, but slow because of the strong current. In Kia Ying Chow they hired a nice little house with a verandah looking out on the river, and stone steps leading down to the river, where they

would moor their boat. They got to know the German medical doctor Wittenberg and the missionary Lörcher, and sent their calling cards to the Sub-Prefect (*zhouguan* 州官) and other officials, who answered with their own cards, offering to have the boat protected by soldiers and to have the students escorted by sergeants (*vaandrighs*) on their travels. "Of course, we declined this offer with thanks," Van de Stadt wrote. His first impression was as follows:

The impression that I have of Kia Ying Chow and the Hakkas, is for the moment very favourable. I find the people here infinitely more pleasant than the people of Chaochow. I believe that time will pass quickly here and will not at all be so disagreeable as we originally imagined.³⁵⁶

Little is known about their studies. Learning three dialects in a row was not easy. One of the students³⁵⁷ would later comment about their studies of Hoklo and other dialects of Southern China:

Whoever travels there—we know it from experience, because we lived in Swatow for three months and then we left for the Hakka country—still experiences great difficulties, although the language is closely related.

The Chinese languages are monosyllabic and the variations in tone make every small deviation immediately into a puzzle.

One finally gets so many sounds in one's head that a mild form of insanity is the tragic but unavoidable fate of every serious sinologist. Aside from working in white-lead factories, studying the languages and dialects of Southern China is surely the most dangerous and treacherous labour one can devote oneself to.

Moreover, one needs sheer inexhaustible patience, because one time and again loses what one has learnt.³⁵⁸

In October, Van de Stadt showed his scholarly interest by studying the variation of dialects. When travelling from Amoy to Kia Ying Chow by another route, he walked for five days through the interior:

My purpose was mainly to observe the gradual change of dialects and to see to what extent I could express myself with my knowledge of Amoy, Tsiangtsiu, Chaochow, and Hakka. When in Thaipu [Dabu 大埔] I had returned to fully Hakka territory, but it became clear to me soon that this language differs considerably from that of Kia Ying Chow.³⁵⁹

In general, the students' relations with the Hakkas were excellent. Van de Stadt wrote to Droeze:

Our relation with the population is ... excellent. We are very rarely abused and even surprisingly little gazed at.³⁶⁰

There was one small incident, again at first concerning De Bruin, which led to unforeseen developments, but in the end without serious consequences. It began about three weeks after their arrival in Kia Ying Chow:

On a walk through town Mr. De Bruin was continuously abused by three lanky fellows as a “foreign devil,” “foreign dog” [*fangui* 番鬼, *fangou* 番狗] etc. After some time this began to annoy my colleague—he turned around and grabbed one of the fellows by the collar. The latter then denied having abused him, and Mr. De Bruin let him go.³⁶¹

Afterwards De Bruin found it desirable to inform the Sub-Prefect in a letter which he wrote with the assistance of his teacher. The Sub-Prefect answered by issuing a proclamation in which the population was told

that we were Dutch officials who were fully entitled to live here, and that we were not to be harassed.³⁶²

A few days later, on 4 October, anonymous placards of a highly inflammatory nature were posted at the four city gates, “informing the whole prefecture.” These were directed against the missionaries, who were said to mislead the uneducated people, squandering money to buy land for building churches, and posing as medical doctors. At the Meeting Hall new regulations were said to have been made to the effect that Chinese in town were to stop renting houses to the “foreign devils,” and those who would not obey within a few months were threatened with having their houses set on fire. But the final sentence seemed the most serious:

In the first place, those who catch the head of a foreign devil are offered an award of \$200. The award can be collected at the Meeting Hall; this is certainly no idle promise.³⁶³

When the students discovered the placards, they personally tore them off the walls and sent copies to Colin M. Ford, acting Dutch Consul in Swatow, and to the Prefect in Kia Ying Chow. Van de Stadt wrote to Ford that he considered there was absolutely no danger, but that he only thought it desirable to inform him. In his letter to the Prefect, Van de Stadt pointed out that such an inflammatory proclamation could harm the friendly relations and asked for measures to punish the culprits and prevent such utterances in the future.

The letter was returned unopened with the message that the Prefect’s servants should receive at least three or four dollars for delivering it. The students refused to accept this, and Van de Stadt paid a personal visit to the Mandarin, where he was received very politely and had a long conversation with the Prefect (*zhizhou* 知州), Guan Guanghuai 關廣槐. The latter seemed to regard the matter as a joke and impressed upon Van de Stadt that there was nothing to fear, offering to send two soldiers for their protection, which Van de Stadt declined. He gathered the general meaning of the conversation, although his language level was limited:

It was of course difficult for me to have a conversation since my knowledge of both Mandarin and Hakka is highly insufficient.³⁶⁴

The Prefect would later describe this meeting in a letter to Ford as follows:

A certain Dutch translator named Van de Stadt, who is studying the local dialect here, came to my office asking for an interview, explaining about the anonymous placard. I told him that the local authorities should of course always protect foreigners travelling in the interior according to the treaty, and that there was certainly no further danger at all, and that the unfounded slander of the moment was actually unreliable. I impressed upon him that there was no need to become suspicious, comforting him with friendly words.³⁶⁵

Later that day Van de Stadt discussed the matter with the American missionary George Campbell,³⁶⁶ who considered the matter much more serious than the students did. He thought the Prefect did not dare to issue a new proclamation. He had already written to the American Consul asking for assistance. Unfortunately, at that time the German missionaries were not in town and could not be consulted. Campbell told Van de Stadt that the Chinese who had abused De Bruin belonged to the most powerful clan in Kia Ying Chow, and according to a rumour, they were enraged over the Mandarin's proclamation in which they were called 'evildoers,' and therefore issued this 'anti-proclamation.'

Thereupon Van de Stadt decided it was best to discuss the matter personally with acting Consul Ford in Swatow. After five days of travel down the river, he arrived in Swatow on 11 October and had a meeting with Ford, who had just received his letter and had written to the *Daotai* (Resident) of Chaochow. At this point, Van de Stadt seemed to become somewhat nervous himself: he wrote to Droeze asking for pistols. But in a later letter he explained that this was not because he thought he would ever need them, but for safety only.

When Van de Stadt returned to Kia Ying Chow, travelling via Amoy, the Prefect had posted a new proclamation.³⁶⁷ In his letter to Ford, the *Daotai* of Chaochow explained the measures taken:

At the same time I issued a proclamation to the inhabitants saying that each should behave himself and respect the laws, that it was strictly forbidden to provoke the foreigners, create trouble and spread unfounded rumours, hoping that the Chinese and the foreigners would live in peace together. Moreover, I ordered the police to visit and capture the rascals of the anonymous placard, and to bring them to justice; their case is now pending. ... and to send soldiers to protect each foreigner and church whenever needed.³⁶⁸

In this way the whole matter blew over.

Later, during their travels in the interior, De Bruin and his fellow students always felt safe:

Chinese criminals cannot be compared to those in Europe: this is shown by the safety with which one can travel in the interior—except in times of xenophobia—if one knows the language of the region.

We slept several times in inns, ten to twelve days of travel from the coast,

surrounded by one hundred to one hundred and fifty of the most low-down individuals, without protection and without weapons, yet we never experienced any trouble.³⁶⁹

The incident also had no consequences for De Bruin, who would later express his great appreciation for the Hakkas as follows:

A frugal way of living, coupled with toughness and a rarely seen perseverance, these are the characteristics of this highly likeable people.

The months that I spent in the midst of the Hakkas count among the most pleasant of my life.³⁷⁰

In August 1897, Droeze asked Van de Stadt to give him as much information as possible about the geography and population of Kia Ying Chow. Van de Stadt replied that he would be happy to give all information he could obtain during his study in the Hakka districts.³⁷¹ This resulted in a memorandum (*nota*) entitled "Some remarks about the Hakka Chinese," dated December 1897. The memorandum comprised subjects such as "Differences with the Hoklo," "The Position of Women," "Hygiene," "Language," and several economic subjects: "Trade and Shipping," "Trade in Kia Ying Chow," "Industry," "Agriculture," and "Husbandry." This memorandum gives an idea of what the students learned about local customs and manners, and about the linguistic situation. It also shows Van de Stadt's fascination with Hakka women. The following are some selections.

Differences with the Hoklo

Hakka means 'stranger,' and the Hakkas truly deserve their name. Anyone who would settle among the Hakkas without having first stayed in other parts of China would get a completely false impression about the character and customs of the Chinese.

The position of women

There is one circumstance to which all characteristics can be ascribed which distinguish the Hakkas from the Chinese surrounding them. That is that it is not customary among the Hakkas that women artificially make their feet smaller. The difference caused by this circumstance is almost incredible. The Hoklo woman (Chaochow) is a painted doll, whose only use is to be a means of procreation. She can only move around as if walking on land with skates under her feet. She is totally unfit for work of any significance. One seldom sees her on the streets, and with the shyness of a doe she curiously watches the foreigner from behind her reed curtain hanging in front of the door. The Hakka woman is completely different. Proud as a queen, with a bearing worth carving in marble, she strides forwards. She is a living and thinking creature and has her part in the daily work. Her family is supported by her at least as much as by her husband. As a result of her fitness for work outside the household, she has a more casual and natural relation with the other sex. When one arrives on a Chinese passenger ship at Kia Ying Chow, the ship is immediately swarmed by women, eager to carry the new arrivals' luggage. And one need not fear to trust heavy loads to her; they are in general stronger or at least better trained in carrying than the men are. A large number of women earn their living by carrying from the morning to the evening heavy

buckets of water from the river to different corners of the city; for a certain distance there is a fixed rate of a few cash. Washing clothes is also mainly done by women, and even the wives of the well-to-do go to the river's shore to cleanse their own clothes. Jollity and jest are never lacking. When the boatmen of the surrounding ships call out innocent pleasantries to them, they always have a quick-witted answer ready. One has to have lived among other Chinese to realise how un-Chinese this behaviour is. Our Chaochow teacher and also our Amoy coolie were extremely annoyed by the boldness of the Kia Ying Chow beauties. ...

Hygiene

What otherwise distinguishes the Hakkas in a positive sense is their cleanliness. Whoever walks through the streets of Amoy and afterwards through those of Kia Ying Chow, will immediately notice the enormous difference. The Hakkas are also cleanly as regards their bodies, they bathe every evening with warm water.

Language

Much more important than differences in customs, manners and traditional costumes, is the difference in language with the surrounding inhabitants. A Hoklo can understand absolutely nothing of Hakka, while a Nanking or Peking Chinese can make himself understood without great difficulty. ... The Hakkas are proud to belong to the Northern tribes and mostly regard the Hoklos and Cantonese as a conquered people, who are not entitled to be called Chinese. Our teacher in Kia Ying Chow claimed that "the Hoklo language is no language, it is just a kind of stammering."

This urge to be counted as Northern Chinese drives many Hakkas to learn Mandarin, and almost every inhabitant of Kia Ying Chow with any education can speak rather pure Mandarin.

We were often confronted with the problem that our teachers, out of pedantry, used Mandarin expressions that are not understood by the lower classes. ...³⁷²

Droeze found the memorandum very worthwhile because it had been compiled in the midst of the Hakkas, although he considered the account of the position of women exaggerated: low-class women among the Cantonese and other tribes also had big feet and did heavy work. When Droeze asked Van de Stadt to write this report, he did not tell him for what purpose this information was needed,³⁷³ and Van de Stadt probably never got to know the real purpose. This information can only be found in the secret correspondence between Droeze and Minister of Foreign Affairs De Beaufort, where the memorandum was one of the documents provided to convince De Beaufort that the Netherlands should annex part of Southern China!

Droeze already cherished this annexation plan in January and February 1896. And in the summer of 1896, during his visit to the Netherlands, Knobel proposed to Minister of Foreign Affairs J. Röell that, since China was on the verge of disintegrating anyway, it would be in the Dutch interest to annex parts of Eastern Guangdong, including Swatow, Chaochow and Kia Ying Chow. In this way a constant flow of new coolies for the

Indies could be guaranteed, and would not be hampered in case Germany would annex Swatow. Knobel's proposal was supported by Groeneveldt. But Röell was from the start firmly opposed to his plan. In January 1898 Knobel made a second attempt with the (new) Minister of Foreign Affairs, W.H. de Beaufort. This time he was supported by Haver Droeze, who wrote his extensive report including concrete measures and methods of organising.³⁷⁴ This attempt was also not in the least convincing to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. De Beaufort refused, arguing that, in the first place, the Netherlands did not have the means to organise such an enterprise, being constantly occupied in wars in the Indies, and in the second place the Netherlands wished to maintain a neutral position and not offend the British and Germans; whether it might be offensive to the Chinese seems to have been no issue at that time.³⁷⁵ In that year (1898), four Western powers obtained large concessions in China: Britain leased the New Territories for 99 years for better protection of Hong Kong (its ending entailed the handover of Hong Kong in 1997), and also leased a concession in Weihaiwei (Shandong) for 25 years; Germany leased a concession in Kiaochow (Qingdao, Shandong), France in Kwangchow Wan (near Hainan), and Russia in Manchuria (Port Arthur, Dalian). Van de Stadt's memorandum had almost played a part in the 'scramble for concessions' at the turn of the century!

On 18 November 1897, Van de Stadt wrote from Kia Ying Chow to Droeze asking him about the rules for engaging teachers and the time they were to leave China or to arrive in the Indies. The students had never received any official instructions about these matters, but in 1896 Hoetink had written to De Bruin that all Officials for Chinese Affairs in the Indies had a Chinese clerk with a salary of *f*63.75 per month, advising them to engage teachers in China under these conditions. Van de Stadt asked Droeze if this was correct. He was planning to take along his Amoy teacher, and Thijssen his Chaochow teacher, who were both on half pay, while De Bruin wished to hire a Hakka teacher.³⁷⁶

One month later, on 22 December 1897, before having received a reply from the Indies, all three students returned to Swatow. One of the reasons was that Van de Stadt had been ill for some time while the German doctor Wittenberg was not in town. He had gone to Swatow to see a doctor two weeks earlier, and now went for the second time, accompanied by the two others. From there Thijssen first went to Chaochow to collect his teacher.³⁷⁷

Thijssen also returned to Amoy to arrange some of their financial affairs, while De Bruin and Van de Stadt travelled directly to Hong Kong. By that time the decision of the Governor-General allowing them to engage teachers had arrived.³⁷⁸ All three students left Hong Kong on 13 January 1898.³⁷⁹ They arrived together in Batavia on 21 January 1898.³⁸⁰

One month later, on 20 February 1898, De Bruin was appointed as Official for Chinese Affairs in Mentok (Bangka) and Van de Stadt in Rembang (Java).³⁸¹ Six weeks later, on 3 April 1898, Thijssen was appointed in Pontianak.³⁸² These places of stationing were no doubt connected with their choice of teachers: in Mentok Hakka was the most common dialect, on Java the Amoy dialect (Hokkien) and in Pontianak the Hoklo (Chaoc-how) dialect.

However, De Bruin and Van de Stadt were stationed there for a short time only: De Bruin would already be transferred to Medan (also Hakka-speaking) in November 1898 and Van de Stadt would be transferred to Makassar (Hokkien-speaking) in June 1899.