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

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CHAPTER FOURTEEN

STUDIES AND MISSIONS

One of the main contributions of the interpreters to Indies society and government was their writings about Chinese customs and traditions. They often published in newspapers or periodicals on their own initiative, but some larger academic publications were supported by the Ministry of Colonies. The Chinese secret societies that were active in the archipelago drew special interest. Some interpreters were also sent on study missions to China. These assignments were combined in one way or another with the promotion of direct emigration of Chinese coolies to the Indies. After 1900, Officials for Chinese Affairs were also charged with the inspection of working conditions at plantations and mines in the Indies and the supervision of the remigration of coolies.

Studies and publications

When the first interpreters were appointed in 1860, it was expected that they would continue their studies in the Indies. This was one of the reasons for allowing them to bring along Chinese teachers from China. Five years later, in 1865, the interpreters were asked about the need of a teacher, and all agreed that he was indispensable for the continuation of their studies. Schlegel and Von Faber explained that Chinese was the most difficult language in the world; it would take a lifetime to learn it, and one also had to keep up one's knowledge. Where even a native Chinese needed fifty years of study to obtain a degree at the national examinations in Peking, Europeans would need even more time. Groeneveldt wrote that no one could gain complete mastery of the language in four or five years, and that the interpreters had in particular to continue their studies of the written language in order to obtain scholarly knowledge of China. Although scholarly studies were not of direct service to the government, Groeneveldt thought the government should support them.[1] Here a distinction was made between practical and purely scholarly studies; it was later mentioned several times by government officials.

Little is known about how they continued their studies. Judging from his publications, Schlegel was certainly very active and productive during his ten year stay in the Indies (1862–72), and so was De Groot during his five-year stay (1878–83). Among Schaalje's and De Grijs' papers there is

some evidence of continuing studies in the Indies,[2] but it is little compared with that from China. It is known that Meeter studied together with his learned friend Kwee Kee Tsoan. As to the spoken language, many studied local Chinese dialects in the Indies, sometimes with an extra stipend for a special teacher.

The main source on the sinologists' studies is their publications. Most of these have some connection with their work in the Indies. These publications appeared in various forms for different categories of readers. Almost all of them are in Dutch; there are only a few scholarly works in English, French, and German. Publications appearing in newspapers, mostly in the Indies but also in the Netherlands, were intended for the general public, and took the form of articles, polemics, book reviews, or letters to the editor. Others appeared in various journals: general informative journals, law journals or scholarly journals in the Indies. Some of these were intended for specific categories of readers such as lawyers and scholars. Others were published in general or scholarly journals in the Netherlands, and a few in international scholarly journals. Finally, some appeared as monographs in various forms. The publications discussed here were written both during the sinologists' government service in the Indies and afterwards.

Newspaper publications were mostly not works of scholarship, but they were still the result of some kind of study. They often seem of ephemeral value and have therefore been mostly forgotten. But for a number of sinologists, this was an opportunity to say their piece. Some sinologists were prolific writers and even became famous as journalists. The first of these was Meeter, who published more than 120 newspaper articles including 40 during his active service. Next there were Van der Spek (57 articles), Young (14 articles), Borel (innumerable, no complete list available), and De Bruin (32 articles, after his service). Other important contributors to newspapers were Schlegel, Von Faber, De Groot, and (later) Groeneveldt. Some of their contributions were polemics between sinologists, such as between Schlegel and Von Faber (1867), Young and Von Faber (1882), Meeter and Schlegel (1892), Borel and Schlegel (1895), Borel and De Groot (1898, 1912), Borel and De Bruin (1912), or between sinologists and others (Meeter 1882–92). Three sinologists got into personal trouble as a result of their too-candid publications (Moll, 1881; Meeter, 1883; Borel, 1895, 1904, etc.). These articles were published in local or general newspapers, but many of them were distributed much more widely by means of reprints or summaries in other Indies newspapers.

Publications in journals appeared in general Indies journals such as *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indië* and *De Indische Gids* (1879–1941), and in the Netherlands journal *De Gids*; in scholarly journals like *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* (Batavian Society for Arts and

Sciences), *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië* (KITLV); in law journals such as *Het regt in Nederlandsch Indië* (1849–1914), *Indisch weekblad van het recht* (1863–1914), and *Indisch tijdschrift van het recht* (1915–47). Monographs appeared in the series *Verhandelingen van het Bataviaasch Genootschap*. Some contributions appeared in international sinological journals such as *Notes and Queries on China and Japan* (1867–70), *The China Review* (1872–1901), and *T'oung Pao* (1890–). Here we can discuss only publications by interpreters and Officials for Chinese Affairs, not the many later scholarly works by Schlegel and De Groot (except when connected with their work in the Indies), or literary and other works by Borel.

The Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences, established in 1778, was the oldest scholarly society in the European colonies, and its publications were the most prestigious. It published *Verhandelingen* (treatises) and from 1853 on also a journal, *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, but it also published other monographs. Dutch sinologists published in total nine items in the *Verhandelingen*, most of them during the first twenty years (De Grijs, 1863; Schlegel 1866 (3), 1872; Groeneveldt, 1880, 1887 (Museum catalogue); De Groot 1881–3; Stuart, 1904). Appearing in its journal were notes or articles by De Grijs (1856), Francken (1864); Von Faber (1864), Schlegel (1873), Schaalje (1873 (2)), Albrecht (1879), Schaank (1889 (Dayak), 1893), and Groeneveldt (1908, Hindu); but most were by Young (1882, 1886 (2), 1888, 1889, 1894, 1895). Francken's and De Grijs' Amoy–Dutch dictionary was separately published as a book (1882).

Most sinologists were members of the Batavian Society for some time, in particular while stationed in Batavia, but most cancelled their membership after some years.

Many contributed to the Museum of the Batavian Society by donating Chinese coins from China or that had been found in the regions where they were stationed. Some contributed descriptions of coins (De Grijs, Von Faber, Moll), and Stuart published a large catalogue of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Annamese coins in the Museum in 1904.

From 1870 until 1914, almost continuously at least one of the sinologists stationed in Batavia was a member of the Board of Directors of the Batavian Society. He usually also had a special function such as Secretary, Editor, Curator, Librarian or Treasurer, but mostly two functions concurrently. The most prominent Board member was Groeneveldt, who had various functions from 1875 on and was President from 1889 until 1895. Van Wettum's sudden death in 1914 marked the end of the sinologists' membership of the Board (*see* list in Appendix G).

When staying in the Netherlands, some sinologists published in the KITLV's *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Ned.-Indië*:

(Hoffmann, 1853, 1854;) Schlegel, 1884, 1885; De Groot, 1885, 1892; Groeneveldt, 1898; Hoetink, 1917, 1918, 1922, 1923 (2).

Contributions to legal journals, mostly in *Het regt in Nederlandsch-Indië*, were made by Schlegel (1862 (2), 1865), Francken (1862), Meeter (1876 (*Weekblad*), 1879, 1882), Young (1884), Stuart (1900), Ezerman (1910), and Van Wettum (1914). This list does not include published advice to the courts or the relevant summaries, such as those by Hoetink (1901). Another important legal publication is Albrecht's *nota* on law concerning the Chinese (1890).

Sinologists also published in general Indies journals such as *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indië* (Young, 1890 (2), 1892, 1894; De Groot, 1891; Schlegel, 1897; Groeneveldt, 1900); *De Indische Gids* (Van der Spek, 1883, 1892; Von Faber, 1884; Schaank, 1885, Young, 1885, 1887; De Groot, 1886, 1898; Schlegel, 1892; Groeneveldt, 1898; Ezerman, 1917); and *Tijdschrift voor het Binnenlandsch Bestuur* (Schaank, 1888–9, 1913 (native police); Young, 1890).

The English sinological journal *Notes and Queries* (1867–70), based in Hong Kong, includes several contributions by Schlegel (1867–70),[3] and Buddingh (1869, short notes). *The China Review* (1872–1901), also based in Hong Kong, published contributions by De Groot (1878–81),[4] Groeneveldt (1875–9) and Young (1881). From 1890 on, Schlegel and to a lesser extent De Groot published regularly in *T'oung Pao*. Other contributors to this journal were Van Wettum (1891, 1894, 1901), Ezerman (1891), Borel (1893), Schaank (1897 (2), 1898, 1902), and Young (1898).

Besides articles in newspapers, journals and series, a few sinologists also published books or brochures (Schlegel, 1869 (thesis), 1875 (*Uranographie*); De Groot, 1883 (oath), 1885 (kongsi system), etc.). Some published popular books such as those by Young (1895) and Borel, whose articles were collected in book form (1895, 1897, 1900, 1901, 1916, 1925, etc.), De Bruin (1918), and Ezerman (1920).

The subjects treated in these publications often had some connection with their work in the Indies. The following list of subjects is not exhaustive:

Language: dictionaries by Francken and De Grijs (1882), Schlegel (1882–91), Van de Stadt (1914); linguistic studies by Schaank (1897, Hakka; 1897–1902, historical phonology). Schlegel later published several linguistic studies, such as on Malay loan-words (1890) and parallelism (1896). Here Von Faber's unpublished Hakka studies could also be mentioned, as well as the manuscript dictionaries by Schaalje (1864, 1889) and Von Faber (1898), two popular articles (Young, 1884, Borel, 1895), and the Chinese textbooks by De Bruin (1914–7). The number of language studies is relatively small.

Chinese law and customary law: after arrival in the Indies, Schlegel and

Francken immediately obtained opportunities to publish in the legal journals, but afterwards such publications were relatively rare. Meeter's newspaper articles about bookkeeping and bankruptcy are closely connected with legal matters, but he also wrote about Chinese inheritance law, marriage and adoption. Sinologists also engaged in debates in newspapers on Chinese legal questions and legislation for the Chinese—in particular Meeter, but also Young, De Groot, Borel, and after his retirement Groeneveldt (1898). Much was also published about the Chinese oath (*see* special section in Chapter Thirteen).

Chinese customs and traditions: De Groot published three major works on Chinese customs and traditions in 1881–3 (yearly festivals), 1885 (kongsi system) and 1892–1910 (religious system). Schlegel published about secret societies in 1866 (*Hung-League*), while others wrote minor studies of this subject (*see* special section in this chapter). Other minor studies about customs were published by Schaalje (1873, bound feet), Young (1883, queue), Schaank (1888, queue), Albrecht (1879, education) and Meeter (1883, education), Van der Spek (many subjects), Borel (many subjects), etc. Several sinologists published about Chinese gambling (Von Faber, 1881; Meeter, 1883, several articles; Young, 1886, 1890; Borel, 1900).[5] De Bruin published a book on the Chinese on the East Coast of Sumatra (1918), and Ezerman one about the Guanyin temple in Cirebon (Tiao-Kak-Sie, 1920), although without any scholarly pretensions.

Some other sinological subjects not directly related to their work were:

- History: Groeneveldt (1880; 1896, early Chinese sources about the Indies; 1898, early Sino–Dutch contacts); Hoetink (1917–23, history of the Chinese officer system);
- Translations of literature: Schlegel (1866 *Hoa Tsien Ki*; 1877, *Vendeur-d'huile*), Borel (1897, *Guanyin jidu benyuan zhenjing*; 1896, Confucian *Analects*, *Mencius*; 1898, *Daodejing*), and shorter texts in newspaper articles (Van der Spek, Borel, De Bruin).
- Travelogues from China: Van der Spek (1879–80; 1882), Borel (1897, 1910, 1916, 1922, etc.), De Bruin (1916), Ezerman (1917);
- Works of fiction concerning the Chinese: Young (1890, 1894, 1895); Borel (1895 *Wu Wei*); Ezerman (1950).

Quite a few of these Dutch works were translated into Malay (Albrecht, 1890; Young, 1886, 1887, 1894; Van Wettum, 1914; Hoetink, 1917, 1923; Ezerman, 1920), and some into French (Albrecht, 1879; De Groot, 1881–3).

Some published on other subjects: Von Faber (1885, Herwijnen school), Albrecht (1879–1937, law indexes), Borel (literature and music).

Some died too young to publish anything substantial (De Breuk, Buddingh, Roelofs), while others only started publishing at the end of or after their career in the Indies (partly Meeter, De Bruin, Hoetink). Only

six sinologists published hardly at all (De Breuk, Buddingh, Roelofs, A.E. Moll, De Jongh, Thijssen).

As to the cause of the limited scholarly results of the sinologists in the Indies, two diametrically opposite opinions were put forward: by Albrecht (1879), and thirty years later by De Groot (1911). In his 1879 *nota* about the work of the interpreters, Albrecht stated that the lack of opportunity to practice their linguistic and advisory skills had dampened most interpreters' enthusiasm for study. Moreover, the Government in general showed little interest in sinological studies, in contrast to studies of the native Indies population. Albrecht wrote in his *nota*:

> If the interpreters have little official and private work, they can all the more—one could argue—spend time on their own studies, in order better to fulfil their tasks on the few occasions when their services are required. However, not every person has a knack for continuous study, at least not in a regular way. One also wishes to be of practical use and to be rewarded for one's efforts. Other linguists receive various assignments from the Government and report regularly on the results of their studies, which are followed with interest and appreciated by the Government. The interpreters for Chinese arrive in the Indies with great illusions, are appointed at some outer post and are left completely to their own devices. Nobody cares whether they study or not. The difference is that the former apply themselves to the languages of the native peoples, which are considered pre-eminently worthy of the Government's attention, while the latter study the language of a people that is only tolerated in the Indies as an indispensable element, but which receives to a much lesser degree the care of the Government. When expert information and help is so rarely asked, it is no wonder that their diligence slackens and it takes a lot of energy not to become depressed.[6]

On the other hand, Groeneveldt later asserted that most sinologists, who like other specialists would not have much to do, knew how to use their time profitably,[7] which probably included time for studies.

In a *nota* of 1911, De Groot took an extremely pessimistic view of the scholarly competence of all his colleagues, "with one exception." He put the blame for this entirely on the recruitment by competitive examinations, since the purpose of his *nota* was to have this system changed. He did not ascribe the problem to their weak position in the government, but seemed to reason the other way round: their lack of scholarly competence had weakened their position as advisors.[8]

When he was asked to train a second group of Officials for Chinese Affairs, he wrote a *nota* to Minister of Colonies J.H. de Waal Malefijt, dated 2 March 1911. In it he asserted that the function of Official for Chinese Affairs had become more important in the Dutch colonies and would continue to be become more important. The government needed in the first place completely reliable advisors. The sinologists should not only have considerable knowledge of Chinese institutions, customs and con-

ditions, but also the desire and competence to improve and enlarge that knowledge. Actually a lifetime of study was required of them, the more so because of the difficulty of the Chinese language and (just as difficult) Chinese literature, without which one could not gain a solid knowledge of institutions, customs and conditions.

Superficiality, dilettantism and amateuristic bungling (*oppervlakkigheid, dilettantisme en beunhazerij*) should be avoided. De Groot had expressed a similar argument in 1888 (*see* below), but here De Groot may in the first place have been thinking of Borel, whose works he characterised as "dilettantism."[9]

According to De Groot, the government had given the sinologists ample time for study in the Netherlands and in China, but the weak point was the recruitment procedure by means of a competitive examination. According to him, the high salary always lured a large number of candidates to take part in these examinations. Such an examination might be fine for other officials of the Internal Administration, to whom various careers were open, but not for Officials for Chinese Affairs, since it did not test or ensure the main requirement: a good mind for study and research during the whole time of service.

History had given indisputable proof of this. With one exception (no name was mentioned, but he must have meant himself), none of the interpreters or Officials for Chinese Affairs had done anything worth mentioning for enlargement or improvement of the knowledge of Chinese culture. Most of them found their professional position unsatisfying and impossible, and tried to find refuge in other directions or in other employment. De Groot mentioned seven of his colleagues: De Jongh (who was transferred to the Opium Monopoly), Hoetink (who in Deli did notarial and other administrative work, and later found another function), Stuart (who like the previous two passed the Higher Officials Examination, but did not obtain a function with the Internal Administration), Van der Spek (who went to study medicine), Borel (who "exclusively applied himself to literary work, flavoured with romantic dilettantism in the field of sinology"), Van de Stadt (who went over to the Billiton Company), Van Wettum (who was doing other governmental work). The remaining two or three

> only vegetated on their salaries, not disturbed in their holy rest by the administrative or judicial powers, or ignored. Until finally pension or death delivered or will deliver them from a failed career. / These are hard truths, and undeniable facts.[10]

De Groot's conclusion was:

> *The Officials for Chinese Affairs were never men who originally brought to their functions a desire for the study of China and the Chinese.* Therefore they continued to live on some elementary linguistic knowledge obtained during their

> training period. As a consequence, it was impossible for them to meet the requirements of the responsible task for which the Government had appointed them; and most importantly, they found their position difficult and unpleasant, actually impossible, and one after another quit as best as they could.[11]

A new method of recruitment was the only way to correct this basic fault, and to guarantee the main requirement of their function: "love for study and research during their full period of service." Such a new method was allowed in the revised regulation of 1906, since instead of an examination, a "comparative investigation" was now also possible.[12] In De Groot's opinion, from now on all candidates should be students of the Faculty of Arts who after recommendation by their professors should be tested by himself. This was the same method the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had practiced two years earlier, when he had tested two such candidates.[13] Actually, this was an informal test reminiscent of that by Hoffmann in the 1850s and 1860s. De Groot had tested J.J.L. Duyvendak by giving him a certain book to study, requiring him to return some time later to discuss the book and answer questions.[14]

This *nota* by a scholar of De Groot's stature is of course an important document, but it needs some comment. De Groot's harsh criticism of his colleagues is not fully justified. He forgot to mention that he himself was one of those who left the interpreters' corps as soon as possible, not because he lacked a mind for study, but because he had nothing to do and his knowledge and scholarship were not appreciated. Moreover, the remaining unnamed sinologists were not two or three, but six men in total (Roelofs, Young, A.E. Moll, Ezerman, De Bruin, Thijssen). Among these, Young had an impressive list of scholarly and other publications, and when De Bruin visited him in Berlin in 1914, De Groot seemed to approve of his application for the professorship in Leiden.[15] Ezerman and Thijssen were highly appreciated officials. He also did not mention any of the earlier interpreters, such as Schlegel, Francken, Von Faber, Albrecht, and Meeter, who were not recruited by a competitive examination, and most of whom certainly had a mind for study. Finally, the number of candidates for the examination was often not as great as De Groot asserted. And it should not be forgotten that De Groot would leave Leiden for Berlin later that year, being unhappy about his situation as professor in Leiden as well. Ezerman once complained that professional sinologists (*beroeps-sinologen*) tended to be so 'fierce' (*féroce*, in French),[16] which well typifies De Groot's attitude here.

The main point in this *nota* was De Groot's perception of the need for a new recruitment system. The Minister of Colonies accepted De Groot's proposal, which was then applied to J.Th. Moll, a student of Dutch language and literature in Groningen, and A.D.A. de Kat Angelino, a student of Indology in Leiden, who both passed.[17] Their careers, however, were

not much different from many of the earlier sinologists: both of them also left as soon as they had an opportunity. The highly talented De Kat Angelino left the Bureau for Chinese Affairs in 1920, after only three years, to pursue other employment, and J.Th. Moll left the Indies in 1923 after six years of work at the Bureau. By contrast, De Groot's previous group of students, recruited by competitive examination, remained in function as Officials for Chinese Affairs for about twenty years.[18]

Before and afterwards, the Indies Government always stated that it needed practical men in the field of sinology, not scholars. The purpose of training both in Leiden and in China was to train such men.[19]

Although the regional authorities in the Indies may not have stimulated Chinese studies among the sinologists, the Ministry of Colonies was generous in granting subsidies for large publications such as Schlegel's dictionary (in total *f* 36,000) and De Groot's *Religious System of China* (for each volume *f* 1,000, probably in total *f* 6,000).[26] For those who wished to study further, there were opportunities for publication and for study missions to China. But for many, their weak position as advisors was depressing and demotivating, and ambitious scholars left the Indies as soon as possible. From the 1880s on, De Groot was clearly—as he stated himself—the most productive and authoritative Dutch scholar on China. Yet his colleagues' lesser contributions should not be forgotten, both in legal and scholarly journals and in popular publications. The latter are also a rich source of information on the Chinese in the Indies.

Study missions

In another respect, the Indies government had stimulated scholarship by sending several sinologists—there were too many of them anyhow—at their request on study missions to China. When De Groot and later Hoetink requested to be sent to China for further study, the government always agreed with a fully paid study trip lasting one or two years, although it at the same time charged them with other practical tasks.

When De Groot was on leave in the Netherlands, wishing to pursue a scholarly career and not to return to the Indies as an interpreter, he requested the Minister of Colonies to send him on a two- or three-year scholarly mission to China.[20] His justification for this was that the interpreters could not adequately fulfil their advisory function, since they studied in China for only one year and were then mostly occupied with language studies. The government needed more information about Chinese social institutions and customs in order to regulate the civil law for the Chinese. In an added *nota* under the motto "Knowledge is power," he further explained the need, stressing the importance of customary law among the Chinese

and the need to know more about the dangerous Chinese secret societies. On the advice of the Minister of Colonies, who had just received questions in Parliament about the need for interpreters knowing dialects such as Hakka and Hoklo, De Groot in a second letter also proposed to study Hakka and Hoklo for two years in order to train other interpreters in these dialects.

His request was sent to the Governor-General to decide, who first asked advice from Honorary Advisor for Chinese Affairs Groeneveldt, Director of Justice Buijn and the Council of the Indies.

Groeneveldt wrote that De Groot would be the right person to do research in China, as he had already shown in his *Yearly Festivals and Customs of the Amoy Chinese*. He would certainly come up with results and be more useful than as an interpreter in the Indies. But it would not be necessary to gather more information for the regulation of law for the Chinese, since Groeneveldt himself and Albrecht were already compiling a draft text. On the other hand, the study of Chinese law in itself, and of other subjects such as secret societies, would certainly be useful.

There was also no need to study the Hakka dialect, which was known to a number of interpreters, and Hoklo was so similar to Hokkien as not to need special training. Moreover, there was no need to train others, there being a surplus at the time (*see* graph in Appendix H).

Director of Justice Buijn did not agree with any of De Groot's reasons for a study mission: in his opinion there was enough information available about Chinese customs for drafting new laws, and he was worried that De Groot might discover some customs that were contrary to the principles of Dutch law. He also disagreed with De Groot's attributing to the interpreters a function as advisors on Chinese law. On the other hand, learning the dialects of the most unruly Chinese would be a useful task. At the same time, De Groot should not be charged with studying the social, economic and religious life of the Chinese; it would be entirely up to him whether to study such subjects or not.

The Council of the Indies also disapproved of De Groot's two arguments for the mission, but agreed with a two-year purely scholarly mission to study the languages, geography and ethnography of China.

Governor-General then decided to send De Groot on a purely scholarly mission to study the languages, geography and ethnography of Southern China. He would receive this charge upon his return to the Indies.

De Groot was highly pleased with this decision. On the last page of his *Kongsiwezen*, published half a year later, he stressed the need for such a mission:

> May this book serve to show that one cannot decently know the Chinese in the colonies unless one studies them in their own fatherland, and therefore it is important for a government that seeks it power rather in politics and

> knowledge of a country and its people than in bayonets, to have large-scale ethnographic studies and researches carried out in the Middle Country.[21]

After his arrival in Batavia, De Groot was charged with the mission, and he received an additional task: he also had to arrange for the emigration of Chinese workers for the plantations in Deli and the tin mines in Banka. Besides his normal salary and travel expenses to and from China, he received an extra monthly allowance of *f* 200 for extraordinary expenses. He could engage two language teachers at *f* 100 each per month.[22]

De Groot went to Amoy, where he stayed most of the time, settling in a little house on a steep hill on Gulangyu with a fine view of the mountains on the Chinese mainland.[23] But he also travelled widely in Southern China, both for research and to arrange the emigration of workers. His teachers were used as informants for his research; one of these was his former teacher Tio Siao Hun. With their help, and by studying Chinese texts, he collected an enormous mass of information.

After a year and a half, on 6 January 1888, when his mission was nearing its end, he requested to be allowed to study for another two years. In his opinion, hasty, superficial and dilettantish studies were to be avoided; in particular, religion, the basis of all social institutions, had not yet been sufficiently studied. If he would have to leave China now, all his efforts would become worthless. Moreover, he still had to continue his difficult task of arranging the emigration of Chinese workers. His request was again approved (*see also* the section on the emigration of coolies).

Two years later, towards the end of his stay, De Groot travelled to Northern China and visited Nanking, Peking and other places, subsequently going on to Japan where he visited Nagasaki, Kobe, Kyoto, and Tokyo. Finally, he went to the United States, visiting several places and universities, and returned on unpaid leave to the Netherlands. In January he had already been offered a job as teacher of Chinese and Malay at the Public Commercial School in Amsterdam. His mission was extremely fruitful, resulting in De Groot's magnum opus, *The Religious System of China* (1892–1910). But it was also his last visit to China and the Indies.

In 1889, while De Groot was still in China, Hoetink also went on a one-year mission for studying the languages, geography and ethnography in China. However, the primary purpose of this trip, which was at the request of the Deli Planters Committee, was to arrange for the emigration of workers. While De Groot had stayed most of the time in Amoy, Hoetink was sent to Swatow, where he arrived in July 1889. He successfully arranged for the emigration from Hoihow (Haikou) and Pakhoi (Beihai) in Western Guangdong. No scholarly results of Hoetink's mission are known. After one year in China he went to the Netherlands for two years' leave (1890–2).

In 1898 Hoetink submitted a second request for a study mission, perhaps inspired by Van de Stadt's request to study in Peking. This time he asked for a two-year mission to study the languages, geography, and ethnography of China,[24] proposing to make an adequate Chinese translation of the civil and commercial law applicable to the Chinese in the Indies. This could only be done with assistance from Chinese scholars and libraries in China. He also proposed to make lists of standard transcriptions of Chinese names in four dialects (Hokkien, Hoklo, Hakka, and Cantonese). These were to be used in the Civil Registration (*burgerlijke stand*) for the Chinese, which was expected to be introduced soon.

After the request had been granted, Hoetink was, as usual, also charged with arranging the emigration of Chinese workers to the Indies. During these two years, he stayed about half of the time in Tientsin and Peking, and the other half in Southern China. This mission resulted in manuscript Chinese translations of the civil and commercial code, but the translations were never printed; the manuscripts are now kept in the East Asian Library in Leiden. Hoetink also at least produced a list of transcribed names in the Hakka dialect, which has not yet been located.[25] This mission also did not result in any publication.

While Van de Stadt's request for a stay in Peking in 1896 had been refused, mainly as a result of Hoetink's negative advice, later study missions for learning Mandarin were granted. These were Borel's four-month mission to study Mandarin in Peking in 1909, from whence he took along his teacher Wang Fung Ting to the Indies, and H. Mouw's one-year mission to Peking in 1914–5. Ezerman went on a four-month mission to China in 1915–6 to study various matters of interest to the Bureau of Chinese Affairs, visiting Singapore, Hong Kong, Canton, Shanghai, Peking and Hankow. A few months later, De Bruin went to Peking to study Mandarin for half a year, but by this time he was no longer in Government service and his studies were at his own expense. Three of these missions resulted in published travelogues.

All study missions were important sources of information about China.

Secret societies

In China, secret societies have existed for a long time and in different forms. According to the early Dutch sinologists, the archetype of such institutions was the oath of brotherhood among the three heroes Guan Yu, Zhang Fei and Liu Bei from the Period of the Three Kingdoms (third century A.D.). This story is related in the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo zhi yanyi*) and in other forms of literature. Wishing to restore justice and order in the world, they swore an oath of loyalty, proclaiming

that although they had not been born at the same time, they were ready to die together.

Secret societies often functioned as a refuge for discontented men who would support each other and be loyal to each other, even until death. In China they had often instigated rebellions, or at least the government assumed they might. One of the best known secret societies was the Hung-League or Heaven and Earth Society, dating from the eighteenth century, allegedly striving to overthrow the (foreign) Manchu dynasty and restore the previous, ethnic-Chinese Ming dynasty (1368–1644). However, many secret societies had a strong tendency to become criminal organisations, such as the well-known Chinese Triads which can be compared to the Italian mafia. Secret societies were also active in Southeast Asia and other areas of Chinese emigration. In the nineteenth century, secret societies in the Straits Settlements and the Malay States were several times the cause of mass fighting and riots, and in Singapore they controlled traditional criminal activities such as gambling, prostitution and human trafficking. But it should be stressed that in 1851 the Netherlands Indies government assumed there were also harmless secret societies, and these were not banned. Young later refuted this, and Schaank explained that philantropic societies for mutual assistance in case of burials or illness, or for supporting the needy, keeping up temples, or cleaning small rivers etc. were not secret.[27]

In 1851, after a major criminal case involving a secret society and opium smuggling came to light on Java in Surabaya, Rembang and Pasuruan,[28] the Netherlands Indies government prohibited harmful secret societies, active members of which could be punished with banishment.[29] Naturally, secret societies became a subject of study by sinologists. In the beginning, the Indies government sent Chinese documents concerning these societies to Hoffmann in Leiden, who was then the only European available knowing Chinese. Hoffmann published two articles with translations and analysis of some of these documents. Based on other studies as well, his conclusion was that they were dangerous for the Dutch authorities in the Indies. He also asserted that they were related to the secret societies in China, but he rejected the missionary Röttger's theory that they were similar to a communist proletarian organisation.[30] From now on, the activities of these societies were always one of the main arguments for the need of European interpreters of Chinese.

After the first European interpreters of Chinese were appointed in the Indies in 1860, some of them wrote studies on secret societies. The first and best known of these is Schlegel's classical study *Thian ti hwui: the Hung-league, or Heaven-earth-league: A Secret Society with the Chinese in China and India* (1866).

Schlegel's interest began in a very practical manner. In the spring of 1863, a large number of secret society documents were found in the house

of a man suspected of theft in Padang (Sumatra). Schlegel was asked by the judicial authorities to make translations of these manuscripts, which were later shown to contain "the laws, statues, oath, mysteries of initiation, catechism, descriptions of flags, symbols and secret signs etc." of a society with two hundred members. Most of these texts were at the time unintelligible to him, and he asked to have them returned after the case was decided. In addition, he requested to have all such documents in the Netherlands Indies at his disposal, hoping to find out the secrets of these societies. In this way he obtained another book containing statutes from Japara (near Semarang, Java), and some other documents, but most important were two large manuscripts presented to the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences by J.E. Teysmann, hortulanus of the Botanical Garden in Bogor.[31] Schlegel also borrowed diplomas (membership certificates) from his colleague Von Faber (from Montrado, Borneo) and from E. Netscher, Resident of Riau.

Apart from these documents, however, he did not find any informant on these societies. No one dared to confess being a member, and even if someone should confess, he could not be of much help in translating the documents, since most members were recruited from the lower classes not well versed in Chinese language, history and the secrets of the league.[32] Chinese literati, such as his teacher, were also unwilling to offer help. If they were members, they would be afraid to help him, since these societies were banned both in China and in the colonies. And if they were not members, they would be prejudiced against them and could not be induced to even look at the documents, "the looking at it being deemed already contaminating." In Schlegel's opinion, he could therefore only give tentative translations, in particular of the poems, of which he added the Chinese characters.[33] In this case he was too modest, since his translations have proven to be excellent.[34]

His studies resulted in an impressive monograph, a classic study on the rituals of Chinese secret societies, which was highly acclaimed nationally and internationally.[35] It was very fortunate that Schlegel chose to use English instead of Dutch (or even French or German). Almost twenty years later, in 1885, De Groot was full of praise: he stated that Schlegel had studied the documents carefully and with the greatest acuity (*met de grootste schranderheid*), and in 1895 even the ever-critical Meeter called it "a good book."[36] A full century later the book was reprinted in Singapore, the United States, and Britain. In 1940 there appeared a Chinese translation that was later reprinted in Taiwan and Mainland China.[37]

In his Preface, Schlegel compared the Hung-League to European Freemasonry, as Milne (1825) and Hoffmann (1854) had done before.[38] Just as in his translations he strove for 'equivalence' (idiomatic translations) when explaining Chinese institutions, Schlegel tried in this case to point out similar ones in Europe, thereby making the Chinese system more ac-

ceptable for Europeans. In his Introduction he delved into Chinese and Western history to explain the League's symbolism. He concluded that the government should show "forbearance" to the secret societies, just as it had towards Freemasonry.[39] Schlegel always was ready to stand up for the Chinese against widespread European prejudices. And this time he was successful; at least, in his inaugural address in 1877 he asserted that his *Hung-League* had diminished sinophobia among the populace in the Indies, leading to a relaxation of immigration rules on Java.[40]

Later, two other interpreters published short studies of similar materials, also purely based on documentary evidence. Schaalje translated two diplomas from Penang (1870), and Young translated a catechism and a receipt of membership fees from Pontianak (1883).[41] Schaalje collected a great number of documents, which can now be found in Dutch libraries.[42] Many years later, in 1896, while stationed in Riau, Borel obtained a catechism, but when he presented it to the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences and offered to make a translation, the Society's secretary Hoetink refused to accept it, since it had already been translated by Schlegel and others.[43]

However useful Schlegel's and his colleagues' studies may have been in helping to understand the documents, regulations and rituals of a secret society, they did not give much insight into the actual function of these organisations. As to their workings, Schlegel only summarised that these societies were considered dangerous, since "they lead very often to a tacit resistance against the laws of the land, or even to revolt."[44] Schaalje, who was stationed in Riau, had more opportunity to witness the activities of secret societies, which were prevalent there as they also were in nearby Singapore. In his phrase, they had almost obtained 'civil rights' in Riau. Being confronted with their real activities, he had an opposite opinion to Schlegel's on their nature. From 1877 on, he wrote several articles about the workings of the secret societies, none of which was published.

Schaalje's earliest article was entitled The secret societies (*De geheime genootschappen*), dated 1877–8, and consisted of two parts.[45] Part I is a translation of a short catechism found in a Chinese home during a police search, and a translation and analysis of a few diplomas. In the Introduction he mentioned his two main sources on secret societies, Schlegel's *Hung-League* and the Report on the Penang Riots of 1867 that had made much clear. But still, in Schlegel's opinion much was lacking in his own work. All information was most welcome; Schaalje therefore had undertaken this translation. Like Schlegel, he found that it was difficult to press uninitiated Chinese to say anything about the secret societies, because of a general fear of them. The fear was inspired not only by the government ban but also, and even more so, by their regulations which contained threats of dire reprisals by other members and by the first notice in the

catechism which struck terror into the hearts of the superstitious: "Those to whom these writings should be of no concern, will by seeing them be struck by every kind of misfortune."

Part II has the separate title "The function of the secret societies among the Chinese in the Netherlands Indies" (*De werking der Geheime Genootschappen onder de Chinezen in Nederlandsch-Indië*). This was originally a *nota* for the Resident of Riau in 1877. Schaalje's main conclusion was that secret societies such as the Hung-League, Tien-ti-hui 天地會 and Gie Hin kongsi 義興公司 were dangerous to public order and peace. He explained that while writing his *Hung-League*, Schlegel had only been in the Netherlands Indies for a short time (four years), and in Batavia secret societies rarely or never made any trouble. Schaalje considered them dangerous enough even if only because of the threatening language in their regulations, adding that this conclusion could also be drawn from *The Hung-League* (pp. 135, 152-66). He gave an elaborate account of the troubles and crimes perpetrated by members of secret societies in Riau in the 1870s, which were typical of the Triads, such as gang fighting and harassment of witnesses.

A few years later, in November 1884, in his *nota* on his planned study mission to China, De Groot also commented on Schlegel's *Hung-League*, saying that Schlegel had cleared up much but not all about them. He expressed the wish to study the dangerous secret societies, in order that the government could better suppress them. In February 1885, Groeneveldt added to this that Schlegel had only studied the external features and not the essence or purpose of the secret societies. He stated that, if anyone, De Groot would be the most suitable person to unveil their mystery.[46]

Later that year, De Groot published his book about the Chinese kongsi or 'republics' on Borneo, the Preface of which is dated July 1885. De Groot's main thesis was that these were no secret societies. According to him, the Borneo kongsi were derived from the cherished system of Chinese village autonomy. Only after these kongsi had been suppressed by the Dutch in 1855, had they developed into secret societies. Therefore, the best way to combat them was to give the Chinese more autonomy (*zelfbestuur*), more freedom to decide their own affairs.[47] Here, De Groot showed that he was thinking decades ahead of his time. In this book he had a different opinion on secret societies than in his letter to the Minister of Colonies half a year earlier. What he had written then was probably more an argument to convince the government of the need of his scholarly mission to China, than his own opinion. He wrote extensively about secret societies in the last chapter, entitled "The origin and nature of the secret societies in the colonies" (*De oorsprong en aard der geheime genootschappen in de koloniën*, 172-93). De Groot opposed Schlegel's theory that the secret societies in the Indies were branches of similar organisations

in China, since there was no hard evidence for this. Moreover, just as Hong Xiuquan's Taiping rebellion (1850–64) could not be considered a Christian sect although Hong himself had at first been inspired by Christianity, the secret societies in the Indies were not affiliated with those in other places. On Borneo, there had never been 'missionaries' (*zendelingen*) from outside making propaganda for these societies; all that happened was that some Chinese from Borneo had gone to Singapore to get ideas on how to organise such a society. Moreover, he asserted that these were not rebellious organisations, wishing to overthrow the colonial government, but only strove for mutual support among members. One negative effect was that they entailed much gang fighting between Chinese from different regions, but these societies were rather troublesome than dangerous organisations (*eer lastige dan gevaarlijke lichamen*).[48] Like Schlegel, De Groot showed sympathy and understanding for the secret societies:

> One should also consider that this system [of mutual support] was in particular always indispensable for the Chinese in our colonies, who were constantly surrounded by foreign and hostile peoples, and dominated by a nation of which the interests, ideas and customs were in so many respects the opposite of theirs.[49]

As an example to prove his point, De Groot gave an account of a personal confrontation with a secret society:

> In 1881 it came out in Montrado that a confederacy had been formed. It had already held several nightly meetings, recruited about one hundred members, chosen a leadership committee and devised regulations; and what finally became clear at the *Landraad*, when the case was tried? That the target of the whole business was only a club of Chinese newcomers, whom they intended to give a grand-scale beating, and who had decently joined together in a counter-association. Not a trace or a shadow was discovered of plans against the Government, or of cooperation with foreign associations. Only the old theme, the formation of a clan "for washing their dirty laundry within the family" was dominant.[50]

Although the danger was not as great as was often thought, De Groot still recognised the threat of secret societies:

> It will be unknown to few, that it is just this spirit of mutual support, basically a fine characteristic of the people, that in the colonies is a nightmare for all European rulers. This is not without reason. Because when elevated by the confederacies to a written, strictly enforced law, this each time lames their arm, makes their laws and regulations arrogantly into dead letters, keeps all offenders out of their reach, and makes all decent administration of justice actually impossible. If anything, a secret society is a state within the state.[51]

Examples of these regulations could be found in Schlegel's *Hung-League*, but their working was not the subject of De Groot's study:

> We, however, have only taken upon ourselves to elucidate the basis and nature of the secret societies, and not to discuss their working, and therefore we do not further delve into this subject.[52]

On the last page De Groot ended with a general plea for the Chinese:

> May this work also somewhat diminish the fortunately lessening fear for the Chinese (*Chineezenvrees*) and that in many respects so groundless antipathy which is mainly based on lack of knowledge, against a people to whose dogged diligence Borneo, Deli, Banka, Billiton and Riau are indebted for their prosperity and importance, their entire significance as a colony![53]

In his later writings De Groot seems never to have studied secret societies again. No references could be found in his major work, *The Religious System of China*, nor in his plan for the unpublished volumes, and but few in his *Sectarianism and Religious Persecution in China* (1903–4). Even if he may have wished to study them more deeply, he probably never found suitable informants about this topic.

In addition to the 1851 ban on harmful secret societies, the Resident of the East Coast of Sumatra R.C. Kroesen in 1884 promulgated a short bylaw (*keur*) for the suppression of secret societies.[54] In this bylaw consisting of only one article, a number of crimes such as the possession of a secret society's documents, using their signs or signals, leading or facilitating meetings, urging others to join, and giving financial or other support, all became punishable with three months of forced labour (*krakal*). In this way, any member could be punished.

In 1887, there were three incidents involving secret societies that caused a change in public opinion. Schaalje was the first sinologist to analyse this change in an unpublished article entitled: "The other side of the picture" (*Het blaadje wordt omgekeerd*).[55] According to him, the Indies government had until then followed a course of non-intervention towards the Chinese secret societies, letting the Chinese take care of their own affairs. To Schaalje's knowledge, the 1851 ordinance had never been applied.[56] Secret societies were hardly active on Java, and as a result of Schlegel's and De Groot's writings, were considered harmless and even beneficial institutions. But already in his *nota* to the previous Resident of Riau in 1877, Schaalje had warned against this attitude, now stating:

> That nice and kind and soft attitude—if one can call it that—towards the Chinese in their secret societies always puzzled me.[57]

He warned against the danger of De Groot's proposal to afford more autonomy to the Chinese, since in his experience they were unfit for this. He asserted that the Chinese in Riau were "highly stupid, uneducated, without any notion of civilisation" (*in hooge mate dom, onontwikkeld, vrij*

van alle begrippen van beschaving), and most of them were victims and instruments of their richer compatriots.

The three incidents that caused a turnabout in public opinion in 1887 were the murder of a Chinese officer in Karimon (West of Riau) at the instigation of the Ghie Hok kongsi from Singapore (April 1887, Schaalje, p. 13); the murderous attack on the well-respected Protector of Chinese in Singapore, William Pickering, by the same kongsi (July 1887);[58] and the incident having the most direct impact, the discovery that two Chinese officers in Pontianak were members of a secret society with possible affiliations with Singapore, which became publicly known in September.

The last-named incident is the only known case of direct involvement of a sinologist with a secret society. Early in 1887 it was discovered that a 'missionary' of the Sam-Tiam-Hoey 三點會, a secret Society from Singapore, had been active in Pontianak and two Chinese officers had become members. The police had found letters putting pressure on some local Chinese, threatening them with reprisals if they would not join. Their purpose was mutual support in case any of them would come into contact with the police. It was, however, not yet clear whether this was a dangerous secret society, and the two Chinese officers were only suspended. The interpreter Young, who had been stationed there earlier, was then transferred from Batavia to Pontianak, switching places with A.E. Moll. One of the reasons for this was that he knew Hakka.[59] Two weeks after his arrival, Young was sent on a secret mission to Singapore to investigate the matter. On the way back he had to travel via Batavia for consultation with Groeneveldt.[60] On 16 May 1887, as a result of this mission, A.H. Gijsberts, Resident of the Western Division of Borneo, wrote a letter to Governor-General O. van Rees, classified as top secret, informing him that both officers were members of a secret society that was dangerous to public order. On 14 November of the same year, Van Rees decided that both officers were to be dismissed. In the summary of Gijsberts' letter, however, nothing was said about a possible link with Singapore.[61] In the same decision, the Resident of the Western Division of Borneo was invited (that is, charged) to promulgate a bylaw for the suppression of secret societies similar to the one on Sumatra. And the Residents of Riau, Banka and the Assistant Resident of Billiton were to report immediately if such a bylaw were necessary in the regions governed by them.[62]

When as a consequence of Van Rees' decision, E.A. Halewijn, Resident of Riau, considered whether to make the Sumatra bylaw locally applicable as well, he first asked Schaalje's opinion. This was a rare case of a Resident asking an interpreter's opinion. Schaalje wrote a *nota* advising not to make the bylaw applicable. His argument was that because of the frequent comings and goings of Chinese from and to Singapore, these societies were so common in Riau that it would be utterly impossible to implement the by-

law. Since secret societies had obtained 'civil rights' in Riau, in his opinion it would be dangerous to prosecute their members as strictly as was being done on Sumatra, and the means were also lacking. Besides, there was no need to create a new bylaw. To suppress the influence of the secret societies, Schaalje proposed that the population should be reminded of the Ordinance of 1851 no. 65, and that this should be strictly applied, in the sense that if a criminal offence was committed under the influence of a secret society, this should count as an aggravating circumstance when meting out punishment. [63]

During the next year, 1888, this bylaw was made applicable in Riau, Banka, Western Borneo and Billiton. Resident Halewijn did not follow Schaalje's advice.[64] Twenty years later, virtually the same regulation was promulgated by Governor-General Van Heutsz for all of the Netherlands Indies.[65]

Since none of Schaalje's articles had been published, Groeneveldt, who seems to have had ideas similar to Schaalje's, probably did not know about them. In 1889 he sent Schaalje a letter and some diplomas, saying:

> I see that you in Riau have a lot to do with secret societies. Can you help us a little further in the understanding of them than Schlegel did, who explained the form, but because of a prejudiced theory has a completely wrong opinion of the true nature of these societies?[66]

In still another unpublished article from 1889, Schaalje analysed these diplomas, and repeated his opinion of 1877 that the secret societies should be suppressed as much as possible. But as others had written earlier, he felt there was no danger of rebellion against the Dutch. In his opinion, the aim of "overthrowing the Qing and restoring the Ming" was only a means for some people to obtain influence among their compatriots as leaders of a kongsi, to gain power and "play the boss" (*de baas spelen*) in certain regions, excluding all those who were not members of the "Club," and defying the legal authorities of the country in which they were legally residing.[67] In other words, they were not really aimed at *overthrowing* the colonial government.

The third and last major publication on secret societies was J.W. Young's article about the past and present legal position of Chinese secret societies in the Straits Settlements and the Netherlands Indies (1890). Without doubt, this was another, indirect result of his mission to Singapore in 1887. It was probably written during his two-year sick leave in the Netherlands (1889–91). Young admitted that the secret societies had originally had the lofty philosophical purpose of mutual support, but that their practices were mostly different from the ideal. Being himself a freemason, while Schlegel was not, he may have been more aware of this difference.[68] In this article, Young explained the legal situation in the Straits Settlements,

where the secret societies were from 1869 on regulated by means of an elaborate system of registration. This system did not curb their influence. And when in 1887 the Protector of Chinese, Pickering, was assaulted in his office by one such member, new and stricter requirements for registration were created.[69] In 1890 this led to an actual ban on harmful secret societies.[70] Young agreed with Schaalje's opinion as to the danger these societies could cause to public order and peace. And concerning the Indies, Young assumed that the government's purpose with the bylaw of 1884 was to find a more moderate manner to discourage membership, since strict application of the 1851 ordinance would lead to depopulation of regions where almost all Chinese were members. He did not expect that this new bylaw would be successful in courts of law, putting forward an argument typical of a defence lawyer, namely that it would be impossible to obtain convincing evidence. In Young's opinion (like Schaalje's), secret societies could only be suppressed through strict application of the 1851 ordinance, that is, by banishing leaders and active members.

Apart from this article, in 1890 Young also anonymously published a short story about the pernicious influence of a secret society from Singapore on a simple and honest immigrant in the Indies. In the story he described how an immigrant from Guangdong, probably a Hakka or Hoklo, due to the machinations of a shrewd 'missionary' from Singapore, became entangled in a secret society. As soon as he became a member, he was harassed by members of another secret society, and after he had once defended himself against an attack and struck back, he was suddenly murdered during a public festival.[71] In this case there was direct interference by a Singapore secret society, but it resulted only in trouble among the Chinese themselves, and there was no trace of rebellion against the colonial government.

S.H. Schaank gave in *De Kongsi's van Montrado* (1893) a balanced picture of the Borneo secret societies in general, but he also stated that most of them were harmful, though not all had political motives.[72]

In Deli, the bylaw of 1884 led to at least some convictions. Schaalje was probably involved as an expert in one case at the *politierol* in Deli in 1893, when a certain Lo A Siu 呂亞壽 from Lufeng (Guangdong) was sentenced to three months of forced labour for membership of a secret society. Among the papers left behind by Schaalje there are some documents relating to Lo A Siu, such as a pass for a three-month stay in the Netherlands Indies (on which Schaalje had noted the conviction) and a few Chinese documents. But there are also one or two secret society documents that may have belonged to Lo A Siu, and on the basis of which he may have been convicted.[73]

After Young's article appeared, no Dutch sinologist published a comprehensive study of the workings of the secret societies. It is regrettable that

none of Schaalje's articles were published, since they might at least have led to a discussion among sinologists and others—there appeared many articles by others about the secret societies in the Straits Settlements in the Indies newspapers—giving a deeper insight into the criminal workings of secret societies than earlier studies had provided.

Although Schlegel and De Groot were aware of the negative side of Chinese secret societies, their most important studies gave a generally positive image of them. Thereby they strengthened the understanding, respect and sympathy for the Chinese among the Dutch, in contrast to the often expressed negative opinions about them. Both studies came out when the authors were still interpreters, showing how an interpreter, although not consulted by the government, through his publications could influence public opinion and thereby also the government.

Arranging the emigration of coolies

Making arrangements for the direct emigration of Chinese workers or 'coolie-trade' from China to the Indies was one of the most important special assignments for the sinologists. In the 1860s and 1870s, this was done to provide for temporary needs; in the 1880s and 1890s it was aimed at regular emigration to the Indies.[74] After 1900, to this were added the inspection of Chinese labour conditions in the Indies and the repatriation of coolies.

From the 1830s on, and even more after 1842, large numbers of Chinese emigrants had left China, driven by hunger and poverty in search of a better life. After gold was discovered in America (1849) and Australia (1851), these places attracted even more Chinese. In Chinese these places were simply called "Gold Mountain (Gold Mine)," later distinguishing "Old Gold Mountain" 舊金山 (Jiujinshan, San Francisco) from "New Gold Mountain" 新金山 (Xinjinshan, Australia). The advantage of Chinese labourers was soon discovered by Europeans. China could provide the most hardened workers for the cheapest price. Later, Chinese were for instance employed for building railroads in the United States and exploitation of the guano islands in South America. However, the demand being high, and both push and pull factors being strong, emigration of coolies was accompanied by many evils. These ranged from press-ganging (*ronselen*) and kidnappings in China by the coolie brokers, to virtual slavery and cruel treatment overseas. Atrocities in Cuba, vividly described in a Chinese booklet *Sheng diyu tushuo* 生地獄圖說 (Illustrated stories from living hell),[75] led to the first Chinese Inspection Mission to the Americas in 1874. Afterwards the emigration of contract workers was prohibited in China, since the system of indentured labour was not much different

from slavery. But this ban was sometimes lifted and the emigration of free workers was at times still allowed, resulting in an insecure labour supply.

There was also emigration to Southeast Asia, as there had been for centuries. Emigration to the Straits Settlements was organised by Chinese emigration brokers there together with Mandarins in China. The work force needed for the Netherlands Indies, such as the tin mines on Banka from 1825 on, and the tobacco plantations in Deli starting in 1864, was usually obtained from the brokers at the coolie markets in Penang and Singapore. This trade entailed not only all kinds of abuse of coolies (although not as serious as in Cuba), and squeeze and fraud by the brokers, but also higher prices and lesser quality than if the workers could be directly shipped from China. For these economic reasons, which also involved a certain humane element, interpreters were several times sent to China to arrange for direct emigration of Chinese workers to the Indies.

The first interpreter sent to China on such an assignment was De Grijs. In March 1866 he went to Hong Kong for the Netherlands Indies Railway Company, having obtained three months of leave.[76] Workers were needed for the railroad to be built from Semarang to Yogyakarta. This was, together with the line Batavia-Buitenzorg (Bogor), one of the two earliest railways built in the Indies; both lines were completed in 1873.[77] In Hong Kong, De Grijs requested the Governor, Sir Richard Graves MacDonnell, who always took Chinese opinions into account, not to obstruct him, with which the latter agreed. De Grijs first chartered a ship for 400 coolies, but then there appeared 800 candidates. Together with a Dutch doctor he selected 400 men, who signed a contract in the presence of the British Harbour Master and were brought to Java. In the meantime, he received orders from the Indies Government to recruit workers for Banka's tin mines. But when he had about one thousand men, the order was suddenly cancelled. At that time, he later stated, he could have had thousands or ten thousands of men. Twenty years later, he acknowledged that this entailed press-ganging (*ronselen*), and buying and selling of people, but he also remarked that the whole world was full of buying and selling.[78] After his mission in 1866, in order to save costs, he advised the Government to charge the Consuls with the task of recruiting workers. Later shippings were indeed organised by the Dutch mercantile consul in Hong Kong, Bosman.[79] In 1867, the railway section from Semarang to Tanggung (25 km) was the very first in the Indies to be opened to the public.[80]

In August 1875, within a year after his return from China to the Indies, Groeneveldt was also sent to Hong Kong to arrange for the emigration of coolies, now for Atjeh. The first Atjeh War in 1873–5 had not been successful for the Dutch and had taken a heavy toll both of the military and of the labour force needed for public works such as harbours and roads. About 38% of the coolies had died or fled, and replenishment was ur-

gently necessary.[81] At that time, just after the discovery of the atrocities in Cuba, emigration *under contract* had been forbidden in Hong Kong. Just as had been done ten years earlier, the Governor of Hong Kong, Sir Arthur Kennedy, promised Groeneveldt not to obstruct the *free* emigration of workers. Diplomatic initiatives in London resulted in permission to ship 1,500 coolies "on faith of assurance of good treatment."[82] But as soon as Groeneveldt had chartered a ship, many protests arose among the Chinese population in Hong Kong, putting the affair in a bad light, and Governor Kennedy gave no permission for boarding. According to the Dutch Colonial Report over 1876, the protests came from wealthy Chinese merchants who supported the coolie brokers in the Straits Settlements. In the end Groeneveldt only succeeded in obtaining 190 coolies from Hong Kong for Atjeh, and his mission was considered a failure. Afterwards, coolies for Atjeh were acquired in Penang and Banka with the assistance of local Chinese brokers.[83]

Ten years later, in 1886, De Groot was charged to arrange for the regular emigration of Chinese workers to Banka and Deli, in the latter case at the request of the Deli-Maatschappij and other tobacco companies.[84] The subject of his contribution to emigration has been treated in more detail by Bool, Van Dongen, and Werblowsky, and will only be summarised here, also using some other sources.[85]

On 14 March 1886, when De Groot was sent to China by Governor-General O. van Rees for two years to study its languages, geography and ethnography, he was at the same time charged to travel via Mentok and consult with the Resident of Banka about measures for promoting emigration of Chinese coolies for Banka—the tin mines on Banka were a government enterprise—and he was allowed to visit Deli, Penang, and Singapore to study immigration, as far as was needed for the promotion of emigration from China to Deli.[86] On Banka, he stayed with Resident Sol at his home and visited several mining districts, gathering information about the situation of the Chinese miners and their emigration. Via Singapore, he went to Deli, where he stayed with F. Gransberg, secretary of the Deli-Maatschappij, and visited several tobacco plantations.[87] In 1886, De Groot received a mandate (*volmacht*) from the Deli-Maatschappij and a few other companies to promote emigration.[88] Travelling via Singapore and Hong Kong, he arrived in Amoy on 11 June 1886.[89]

A year and a half later, on 6 January 1888, in his request to Van Rees for the prolongation of his mission to China by another two years, De Groot explained what difficulties he had encountered in his attempts to arrange the emigration of coolies. The Mandarins were strongly opposed to emigration in general, and there were no Dutch Consuls to persuade them to concessions. None of the Netherlands Consuls were Dutchmen; they were all foreign merchants, who were not eager to exert themselves, and being

merchants were not respected by the Mandarins, while De Groot himself was not entitled to correspond directly with the Mandarins. All he could do was to ask German trade firms for assistance, since these had no connection with the interests of the Straits coolie brokers, who would oppose by all possible means any infringement upon their monopoly. Moreover, they were protected by German career consuls against the Mandarins' tricks and devices. He first tried Pasedag & Co., now led by A. Piehl, in Amoy—a company with which he had become well acquainted during his studies in Amoy. De Groot wrote in his request:

> After a long struggle I succeeded in getting Pasedag & Co. here to venture a trial shipment in March of last year [1887]. There had already been recruited six to seven hundred workers for Banka, who were ready to board ship when, mostly due to interference by the firm's hostile competitors, among them all kinds of fabrications were spread about slavery, human trafficking, beri-beri, Atjeh, etc., scattering all recruited men to the four winds but for a small number.[90]

De Groot announced that a second attempt with Petersen & Co. in Amoy was about to succeed. Recruiters had already been busy for three months in the interior. And if it failed again, one should persevere by all possible means. In any case, he had tried every means and could not be blamed for the failure.[91] No more information about this shipment to Banka could be found, but the emigration from Amoy to Deli was in general no success because of the lower quality of the workers, and in 1890 De Groot was charged to stop the shipments from Amoy.[92]

In the same request for prolongation, De Groot stated that he was confronted with an even larger obstacle for recruiting workers to Deli: there was an official order from the Governor-General of Guangdong and Guangxi, the famous reformer Zhang Zhidong 張之洞,[93] to his subordinates to prevent all emigration to Sumatra, even indirect emigration via the Straits Settlements. His appeal for help to Ferguson was also rejected.[94] De Groot followed the same course he had tried for Banka, and on the basis of his mandate (*volmacht*) from the Deli-Maatschappij and other companies, he promised the agency of recruiting and shipment of workers to Lauts & Haesloop, a German company in Swatow. This was the region where the best quality workers were found, the so-called first class workers, who were called Teochius or Hoklos, while Hakkas and others were second class.[95] The prospect of great profits for this German firm induced the German Consuls in Canton, H. Budler, and in Swatow, E. *Freiherr* von Seckendorff, to request Zhang Zhidong to lift the ban on emigration. Official reports about the situation and the treatment of workers on Sumatra's East Coast were of great help in persuading Zhang Zhidong to change his opinion, and subsequently the local Mandarins were worked on so energetically by Von Seckendorff that they submitted positive advice to

their superior. And indeed, the ban was lifted and emigration was allowed in April 1888.[96] The first shipment of workers for Deli departed from Swatow and arrived in Deli in May 1888.[97]

In the meantime, De Groot travelled to Shanghai to consult with Ferguson. In De Groot's opinion, Ferguson was not at all at ease with De Groot's success, since he had not been able or willing to tackle this matter for a dozen years. Now he tried to prevent De Groot from continuing his efforts by confronting him with lies: that both the Dutch and the Indies Government did not truly want this emigration, and that the Governor-General of the Indies was cheating him. At least, this is what De Groot wrote in his diary. De Groot then showed Ferguson a copy of his memorial about the deplorable situation of Dutch Consuls in Southern China, with which Ferguson did not at all agree.[98]

Ferguson always warned that the Chinese government would only allow emigration if Chinese Consuls were allowed in the Indies. Actually, this would later prove to be no insurmountable impediment to free emigration. As Van Dongen wrote, nowadays Ferguson would be considered ahead of his time: he considered that in the long run it would be unavoidable to accept Chinese consuls in the Indies, and he was opposed to the unequal position of the Chinese in the Indies, proposing to apply European law to them.[99]

At the time, Ferguson was writing a book entitled *The Philosopy of Civilization*, which was published in 1889, in which he compared the "Asiatic Coolie-traffic" with "African Slave-trade." He was later criticised by Minister of Foreign Affairs Hartsen for this.[100] But his basic opinion about the emigration of workers from China was not much different from that of the planters. Like them, he was opposed in particular to the coolie-markets in the Straits Settlements, where batches of coolies were sold to the highest bidder, but his opposition was on grounds of inhumanity, not because of the higher cost and poor quality of the coolies. Ferguson was in favour of direct emigration of workers under contract (although forbidden by the Chinese government), if the conditions were clear and were checked by the relevant authorities; he also proposed direct repatriation in order to avoid the brokers in the Straits trying to lure the returning coolies into dependency by means of opium, gambling and prostitution.[101]

There was also a scholarly aspect to the controversy between De Groot and Ferguson. On the one hand, De Groot, who had in his youth broken with the Roman Catholic Church, was now ardently gathering information about Chinese religion, which would later result in his *Religious System of China*. On the other hand, Ferguson, a deeply religious man, was just writing his *Philosophy of Civilization*, in which he proclaimed the superiority of Christianity, with respect to the abuses of the coolie trade concluding that "all these are temporary evils which will vanish before the advancing Christian Civilization."[102]

When a later representative of the Deli Planters Committee, H.C. van den Honert, was sent to China, he agreed with De Groot that from Ferguson not much help for the emigration of workers was to be expected. But he also felt that De Groot was "in a chronic state of anger" towards Ferguson and was "exaggerating."[103]

Since permission for emigration could be withdrawn at any moment, a more stable basis needed to be established. From now on, the planters acted collectively, united in the Deli Planters Association (established in 1879) under the leadership of the Deli Planters Committee, in order to cope better with the Straits coolie brokers. In May 1888, De Groot travelled to Singapore to consult with representatives of the Deli Planters Committee (F. Gransberg, J.M. Rappard and others), and also with the member of Parliament J.Th. Cremer, one of the leaders of the Deli-Maatschappij. It was then decided to send Rappard to China as agent of the Planters Committee. Various arguments for this were brought forward. De Groot wrote in his diary that it was in order to increase mutual trust,[104] but another reason not mentioned by him was that Rappard had to make up for De Groot's "lack of financial competence,"[105] probably since the prices were too high. A third reason was that De Groot received a summons from the Indies Government dated June 1888 to cease active promotion of direct emigration, and could no longer act alone.[106] Cremer travelled to Shanghai to try to persuade Ferguson, and Rappard went to Amoy, where De Groot would assist him.

In 1888, several shipments of coolies were sent to Deli, comprising in total 1,165 workers, mostly Hoklo, of whom 729 travelled directly from Swatow and 428 by way of Amoy.[107] In this way, De Groot laid the basis for regular emigration of workers from Swatow to Deli. This emigration would continue until 1931, although new problems would often arise.

After his initial success, De Groot and the Planters Committee still expressed the need for regular Dutch consular representation in Southern China in order to safeguard a continuous supply of coolies for Deli. This led in the end to the transfer of Ferguson—much against his own wish—from Peking to Swatow, where he arrived on 23 October 1888.[108]

In December 1888, the Deli Planters Committee sent a request to Governor-General C.H.A. van der Wijck, in which it reported discouraging news from China. Rappard was needed in Deli and De Groot had stated that he would lay down his mandate as soon as Rappard left China. Although their interests had long been represented by De Groot, it had become evident that these could better be taken care of by someone knowing all the ins and outs of the situation in Deli. The Committee firmly believed that the only suitable person who could take on this important task was Hoetink, who had been stationed in Medan for nine years. As a well-appreciated member of the *Landraad*, Hoetink was fully

aware of judicial practice; he knew Chinese, and he was tactful and modest in his contacts with higher authorities. Moreover, he was an outsider to the planters' world and was willing to proceed to China for one year in the interests of direct emigration and to represent the Deli Planters Committee. This request was supported by the Resident of the East Coast of Sumatra, G.A. Scherer.[109] Director of Justice Buijn also agreed, suggesting that Hoetink could be charged to study the languages, geography and ethnography of China and be helpful in arranging the emigration of workers to Deli. Ferguson should be notified, and Hoetink should be introduced by him to the Chinese authorities, who needed to become better informed about the situation of Chinese immigrants in Deli. Groeneveldt agreed with the mission for arranging emigration, but he considered the need of a study mission to China less evident, albeit useful in itself. Emigration was reason enough to send Hoetink. He suggested sending Hoetink for one year on condition that Ferguson agreed. If he did not, this mission was not advisable.[110] A week later, Governor-General Van der Wijck informed Ferguson and asked him to reply as soon as possible.[111]

On 22 February 1889, Ferguson replied sourly that Hoetink would have to settle in Amoy (which was impractical), and would have to know Mandarin (which he certainly did not). Hoetink fulfilled only the other two conditions: knowledge of Chinese customs and having tact.[112]

This reply from Ferguson could have been foreseen, since he had always shown himself to be a firm opponent of Indies sinologists. A few months later it seemed the mission would be cancelled,[113] but on 15 May Ferguson suddenly sent a telegram stating that Hoetink was welcome in Swatow. The reason that he now agreed was doubtless that he wished to take leave to the Netherlands and needed someone to a replace him in Swatow. A week later, Van der Wijck decided to send Hoetink for one year to Swatow, to study the languages, geography and ethnography of China and to offer assistance to Ferguson in Swatow for the promotion of emigration of suitable workers to Deli.[114] On 2 June, Hoetink was mandated by the Deli Planters Association as their representative to promote emigration.[115] Hoetink arrived in Swatow on 8 July; Ferguson also left Swatow during that month, and left China in September.[116]

From the end of 1888 on, De Groot seems to have occupied himself less with the emigration question, except for a few new conflicts with Ferguson.[117] He concentrated most of his energy on his studies and research. This becomes apparent both from his diary and from Bool's, Van Dongen's and Werblowsky's studies.

Hoetink was successful in Swatow. His main achievement was that he arranged for the emigration from Hoihow (Haikou on Hainan) and Pakhoi (Beihai, West of Hainan).[118] By now, a regular German shipping line between Amoy, Swatow, Hoihow, and Deli had been established for the

emigration and remigration of coolies. According to the data presented by Hoetink in 1899, the total number of emigrants to the Netherlands Indies in 1888, 1889 and 1890 were respectively 1658, 5501 and 7151.[119] From these figures it appears that Hoetink's contribution put the crown on De Groot's pioneering success. When Cremer reported in Parliament on 14 March 1890 about the emigration of workers, he praised both De Groot and Hoetink for their contributions. After this mission, Hoetink went on two years of leave to the Netherlands, as De Groot had done.

The emigration problem was the main reason for appointing a Dutch Consul in Amoy in 1890, but just two years later the first and only incumbent, P.S. Hamel, had to leave because of illness. From 1895 on, the Dutch were represented by a Consul General in Hong Kong, F.J. Haver Droeze. As a final solution for the emigration problem, during the 'scramble for concessions' in 1896 and 1898 the Minister Resident in Peking, F.M. Knobel, and the Consul General in Hong Kong, perhaps inspired *sub rosa* by the Deli Planters Committee, suggested to the Minister of Foreign Affairs to annex the Swatow region for the Netherlands. These proposals were immediately rejected and remained secret for a long time.[120]

In 1898, Hoetink was at his own request sent for the second time to China on a mission, now in order to translate Indies civil and commercial law into Chinese, to which as usual was added the promotion of emigration. This mission lasted for two years, from 1898 to 1900. He first investigated the causes of declining emigration. From Swatow he reported on 6 June 1888 that Deli did not have a bad name in China. The reasons for the decline in emigration were a succession of extraordinarily good rice harvests which took away the need to leave, and the occurrence of a plague epidemic, inciting men to return home instead of emigrating, in order to guarantee a decent burial in case of death. Hoetink also pleaded for better payment of the coolies, this being the best method to attract new workers.[121] He spent about half of his time in Southern China,[122] but from Tientsin also corresponded about emigration questions with Knobel.[123]

In promoting emigration, some sinologists played a primary role as troubleshooters. These were very practical matters, requiring inventiveness and tact, in combination with knowledge about the Chinese. After early missions by De Grijs and Groeneveldt, in 1888 De Groot laid the basis for regular emigration from Swatow to Deli, and Hoetink did the same for the emigration from Hoihow and Pakhoi.

Other coolie matters

After 1900, some Officials for Chinese Affairs became involved in other coolie matters, when they were charged with the inspection of labour

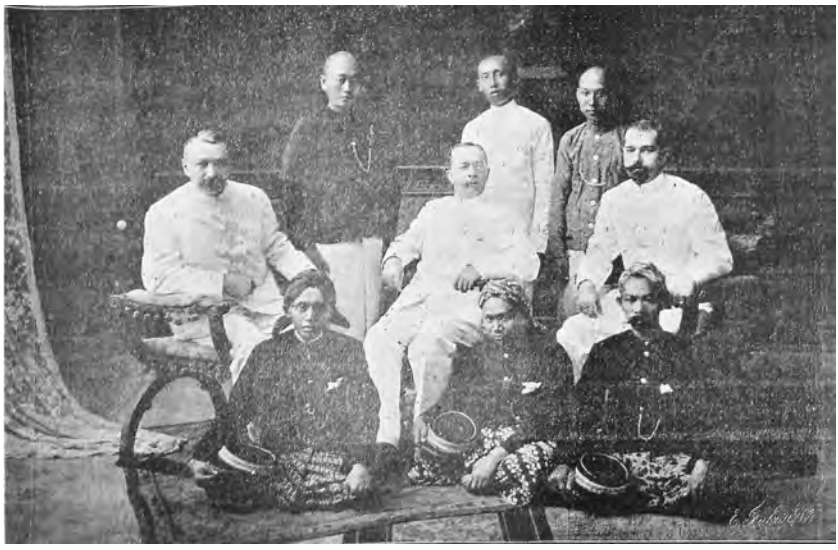
conditions in the Indies and the accompaniment of direct repatriation of coolies.

When Hoetink returned to Batavia in 1900, he was temporarily placed at the disposal of the Director of Justice to fulfill special tasks.[124] During the following years, he was charged to investigate the working of the *Coolie Ordinance* in a number of mines and plantations in the Outer Possessions, where most workers were Chinese. In the regulations for the Officials for Chinese Affairs of 1896, the inspection of Chinese labour conditions for the regional government (Resident) had already been defined as one of their tasks (article V). The first *Coolie Ordinance* for Deli dated from 1880 and was revised in 1889, regulating the rights and obligations of workers and employers, but actually rather consolidating the exploitation of coolies than warranting their rights, in particular because of the system of *poenale sanctie* (indentured labour): the prohibition to leave the premises and the corporal punishment for doing so. In 1900–3 Hoetink visited mines and plantations on Sumatra, Borneo, Banka, Billiton, and Singkep, and wrote reports about them.[125]

Labour conditions were a hot item in those years. In 1902, the lawyer J. van den Brand published a pamphlet criticising the enormous profits earned by the planters in Deli, entitled *The Millions from Deli* (*De millioenen uit Deli*). Basing himself on Christian ethics, he exposed the exploitation and abuse of Chinese and Javanese coolies in Deli. This pamphlet caused a shock in both the Netherlands and the Indies, and the next year the public prosecutor J.L.T. Rhemrev, a Eurasian, was sent from Batavia to Medan to investigate possible crimes. Although in his report he pointed out many flaws in Van den Brand's writings, showing that the latter was exaggerating, his conclusions were similar. He proposed several means to improve the situation, such as to appoint special officials to supervise the observance of the *Coolie Ordinance*, and the establishment of a *Raad van Justitie* in Medan—until then, all cases involving Europeans had been tried (or *not* tried) in faraway Batavia.[126] The Director of Justice had already proposed the establishment of a labour inspector in 1902, and he evidently had a candidate in mind: Hoetink. But Hoetink had made known in March 1903 that he was not interested.[127]

In March 1903, after two and a half years of working for the Department of Justice, Hoetink was given a year of leave to the Netherlands because of long service, as from 7 April 1903.[128]

A year later, when he returned to Batavia, on 30 April 1904 Hoetink was charged with revising the *Coolie Ordinance*. He already knew about this charge before he left the Netherlands.[129] Hoetink finished his first draft on 8 July 1904, and the second on 12 January 1905, the day after he had received new comments from the Deli Planters Committee.[130] Both versions were printed.



*25. Hoetink as Labour Inspector and his staff, the two Adjunct-Inspectors F.E. Spirlet (left) and D. Bijleveld (right). Each inspector had a Chinese interpreter from the Straits Settlements (standing) and a Javanese interpreter (sitting on the floor), Medan, 1904 (*Weekblad voor Indië*, 1904, p. 714).*

Possibly in preparation for more inspections by Officials for Chinese Affairs, article V of the regulation of their functions was expanded in January 1904 so that it also included the inspection of the labour conditions of the *native* population.[131]

In the meantime, Hoetink was again offered the position of labour inspector on the East Coast of Sumatra. Now he was ready to accept on two conditions: the position should not be made subservient to the Resident of Deli, and he needed at least two assistant inspectors. Realising that the local planters would consider him a snooper (*dwarskijker*)—just as Schlegel had written thirty years before—he was well aware of the difficulty of the position.[132]

On 24 July 1904, Hoetink was appointed temporary Inspector of Labour on the East Coast of Sumatra, becoming a High Official (*hoofdambtenaar*) at *f* 1,200 monthly,[133] a rise in salary of 50%. This appointment was all the more justifiable as he had passed the Higher Officials Examination in 1893. At this moment Hoetink's career as Official for Chinese Affairs ended (*see* illustration 25).

The tasks of the inspector were defined as direct supervision of the regulation on mutual rights and obligations of employers and employees, regular visits to enterprises, checking the local conditions and receiving complaints, and reporting and making proposals.[134]

Van den Brand's pamphlets and Rhemrev's inspection results had not only shocked the Dutch general public, leading to debates in Parliament, but also the Deli planters. They were accustomed to being left to their own devices, lived during the acme of liberal entrepreneurship, and were not used to any government interference. It was a wise choice of the government to charge Hoetink with the task of becoming the first Labour Inspector, since he knew the local situation and had tact and understanding.

In Hoetink's draft *Coolie Ordinance*, the obligations of employers were increased and the *poenale sanctie* was abolished, but as long as the new ordinance had not been proclaimed, Hoetink could do no more than to urge the employers to comply. Still, many realised they had no alternative and respected some of the new rules, such as the new labour contracts. But when after one year the introduction of the new ordinance was postponed for a long time, this was a blow for the Labour Inspection. Now even more, Hoetink could only use his moral powers to ameliorate the labour conditions. "All I can do is talk," he often said. But in a creative way he was more than able to do so, upright in his words and knowing the practical demands of the enterprises. He only wanted "some humanity towards the smallest of small people, a little heart" (*wat menschelijkheid … jegens de kleinste der kleine luyden; wat hart*).[135] In his farewell speech he said that he constantly asked the planters to see the workers in another light, not to consider them as "contract animals" (*contract dieren*) but as human beings deserving a worthy human existence.[136]

According to newspaper reports, he achieved many successes. Not only were the new-style labour contracts accepted; living and medical conditions improved as well, and schools were established for (native) coolie children, which had been completely unimaginable until recently. However, still much more needed to be done and in the end the schooling project became a failure. Typical of Hoetink's creative talent was his combining the interests of the planters with that of the coolies, for example in his initiative to found a Chinese Remittance Bank, the Tong Sian Kiok 同善局 in June 1905. This was a non-profit foundation helping to send the coolies' savings and letters to their families in China. The bank was established in cooperation with the *majoor* Tsiong Yong Hian and the *kapitein* Tsiong A Fie, both popular Hakka officers. An attractive booklet containing its regulations was published in Chinese.[137] In a newspaper article Hoetink explained that this bank could prevent the coolies' losing their savings to their foremen, to gambling and to opium, and at the same time promote emigration, since it would strengthen the opinion in Southern China that Deli was not a bad place to work.[138] When Hoetink left a year later, this bank was mentioned as one of his achievements, so it must have had some success. In 1907, the *majoor* and *kapitein* and other Chinese founded the Deli Bank, which could deliver similar services, but was in operation only for a few months.[139]

A similar measure was that at the end of the field season (*veldtijd*) in 1905, the impressive number of 1,091 Chinese contract labourers were directly repatriated at the planters' expense, taking along a total amount of $95,000 (on the average $87 per person). Such measures had also been taken earlier, for instance in 1888.[140] Direct repatriation as a means to promote emigration was related to the so-called *lau-kheh* recruitment. After a few years of work, in the Outer Possessions a *sinkheh* "new guest" (*orang baru*) would be called a *lau-kheh* 老客, "old guest" (*orang lama*). Sometimes groups of *lau-kheh* were charged to urge their compatriots in their home villages to come to work in the Indies. This method was in particular successful on Billiton.[141]

In 1905 no "rows" took place among the Chinese, owing to the tactful functioning of the Labour Inspector Hoetink, who was praised for not acting as an inquisitor (like Rhemrev), but as an arbiter.

When after two years Hoetink was at his own request discharged and obtained a pension after 28 years of government service, he stated in his farewell speech that he looked back with satisfaction on his achievements as Labour Inspector. Resident J. Ballot, Assistant Resident E.L.M. Kühr (Borel's brother-in-law), and others also expressed their great appreciation.[142]

After Hoetink left, his two assistants also soon left the service. Two years later, in June 1908, a Labour and Immigration Inspection covering all of the Netherlands Indies was established.[143]

A new version of the *Coolie Ordinance* for the East Coast of Sumatra would finally be proclaimed ten years later, on 22 June 1915, replacing the 1889 version.[144] But there was still a long way to go, since for the planters the *poenale sanctie* remained indispensable.[145] This measure was finally abolished in Deli in 1931, after the threat of a boycot of Deli tobacco by the United States. Moreover, as a result of the financial crisis it had become easy to obtain labour, which made the *poenale sanctie* superfluous. In 1941 it was abolished in all of the Netherlands Indies.[146]

Some other sinologists also occupied themselves with coolie matters. For instance, Borel performed an inspection of the tin mines in Singkep in 1904 and wrote a critical report.[147] According to him, this led to his transfer to Makassar, which he could only avoid by requesting leave to the Netherlands. More than twenty years later he explained in a newspaper article what had happened. When he performed inspections accompanied by the head administrator and the fearful *mandurs* (foremen), all seemed in perfect order, but when he returned at night, speaking Chinese with the coolies, he discovered the most gruesome abuses and even crimes. But at the time such matters could only be covered up, and that happened with his report also.[148]

In April 1905, Van de Stadt was sent to Singapore, Pakhoi (Beihai), and

other places in China to investigate the situation of recruitment of coolies for Banka and to arrange for a regular supply of workers for the Banka tin mines, having a mandate to recruit 6,000 coolies.[149] He stayed in China until the end of the year, but did not achieve any success. The mission was observed with concern by J. Stecher of the Deli-Maatschappij, who feared that competition between Deli and Banka would drive up the costs,[150] as had happened in the past before the Deli planters decided to cooperate in 1888.

After Van de Stadt's failure, from 1906 on several shipments of coolies were sent directly at the government's expense from Banka to Southern China. As with the gratis repatriation of coolies from Deli in 1905, the main purpose was to promote emigration. In this manner the pitfalls of gambling, opium and prostitution in Singapore could be avoided, since that town was the unavoidable stopover for remigrating coolies from Banka. On three shipments the coolies were accompanied by Official for Chinese Affairs Thijssen, who afterwards wrote detailed reports. The reason why Thijssen, then stationed in Surabaya, was sent to China was probably that on Banka no Official for Chinese Affairs was available at the time.

The first mission was announced in *De Sumatra Post* under the title: "Good Things from Banka." Thijssen was to leave within one month after Chinese New Year (25 January 1906), the date of expiration of the contracts, and would be accompanied by two European doctors. This time, according to the newspaper, for a change the government was not tight-fisted, and also paid attention to details. For instance, dangerous overland travel with their savings on Banka, where robbers were rampant during the season when the Chinese coolies returned home, was avoided since the coolies could embark in several harbours on the island.[151]

While the official reason for the first shipment was to promote the recruitment of miners for Banka in China, since Van de Stadt's mission had been unsuccessful, it was also meant to protect the coolies, who often lost their savings in Singapore, from becoming prey to the coolie crimps.

Thijssen's detailed first report was published in several newspapers and summarised in others. With two ships of the Ned.-Indische Paketvaart Maatschappij, in total 683 miners were repatriated, being paid on arrival a total sum of *f* 47,281.50, on the average *f* 169 per person. When these savings were paid at the ports of arrival Hoihow (Haikou) and Pakhoi (Beihai), but even in Hong Kong, many local Chinese were surprised that coolies could earn such large amounts of money with simple labour. Thijssen described how he took good care of the coolies, solving various personal problems, even advancing their savings from his own pocket for about ten coolies who had requested the wrong harbour of disembarkation. He justified this in his report by noting that the repatriation was intended to benefit the coolies. In conclusion, he also made a lot of other suggestions for improvement.

Two years later, on 2 January 1908, he was in a similar manner temporarily put at the disposal of the Resident of Banka in order to arrange the repatriation to South China of miners whose contract ended in February. He was to leave Batavia on 18 January after consultation with the Director of the soon-to-be-established Department of Government Enterprises (*Gouvernementsbedrijven*).[152] No report of this mission could be found.

The next year, in January and February 1909, he escorted another repatriation of 1,139 workers from Banka to Southern China.[153] This time Thijssen's report was not published in the newspapers, but it has survived in Borel's archive.[154] The coolies were now transported on a ship of the Java–China–Japan Lijn, the *Tjibodos*, to Hoihow, Pakhoi and Swatow, where they received in total *f* 67,644.80, on the average *f* 59 per person. Now the situation had changed and the government had become tight-fisted again. The food was provided by a (Chinese) comprador, probably at the cheapest rate. Before the ship left Banka, the Resident came on board and, after trying the food, "expressed in strong terms his dissatisfaction with this 'filth'." During the journey, Thijssen protested several times, fully supported by the captain, but he could only achieve slight improvements. Afterwards, Borel wrote on the first page: "N.B. The last time that an Official for Chinese Affairs accompanied them. From now on they do without," and later in the margin: "Nowadays no Official for Chinese Affairs accompanies them. Too 'troublesome,' probably! H.B." No further repatriations escorted by Officials for Chinese Affairs are known.

Following the reports on abuses in Deli by Van den Brand and Rhemrev, Hoetink became the first (temporary) Labour Inspector on the East Coast of Sumatra; he combined an understanding of the interests of the enterprises with sympathy for the coolies. Thijssen's assignments were probably also intended to mitigate criticism of the coolie system. From now on, ideas about labour relations were changing fast in society.[155] De Groot seems later not to have felt so proud of his accomplishments in this respect,[156] and in the 1980s Hoetink was (unjustly) accused by a modern scholar of "being on the side of" the planters only.[157] Actually, by the standards of the time the efforts of both achieved fine results under extremely difficult circumstances.