

Letters to the Editors

Nous avons reçu d'un de nos lecteurs, monsieur R. Cornevin, Secrétaire Perpétuel de l'Académie des Sciences d'Outre-Mer, la lettre suivante:

Bravo de vous être affranchi du colonialisme culturel anglo-saxon. Permettez-moi de vous apporter un nouvel élément en français.

C'est la vaste entreprise de notre Académie, un dictionnaire biographique dont l'objectif final est de 30.000 notices.... ce qui, au rythme actuel, risque de demander plus d'un siècle.... à moins que les bonnes volontés ne se multiplient.

L'Académie des Sciences d'Outre-Mer lance simultanément deux nouveaux volumes d'*Hommes et Destins*.

Après le tome III, consacré à Madagascar, l'édition prochaine d'*Hommes et Destins* sera celle du Tome IV, consacré au *Cambodge*, et Tome V, consacré au *Maroc*.

Au cours d'une conférence de presse le général de Gaulle avait cité les noms de Van Vollenhoven, Binger, Ponty....et les journalistes avaient témoigné d'une inquiétante perplexité devant ces noms.

Ainsi quelques décennies après la période coloniale, l'ignorance de ceux qui ont marqué la vie de ces pays est-elle quasi-totale.

C'est pourquoi l'*Académie des Sciences d'Outre-Mer* dont les membres (100 titulaires, 100 correspondants, 50 associés (étrangers) et 25 membres libres) sont des témoins privilégiés de cette époque a entrepris ce dictionnaire biographique.

247 notices dans le premier volume, 250 dans le deuxième, qui couvrent non seulement ceux qui ont marqué l'ensemble de l'ancien domaine colonial français, mais aussi par exemple les missionnaires français ou suisses au Mozambique, au Lesotho qui ont joué un rôle en ces pays. De même, Charles Guérault, officier français déserteur en 1791 plus connu dans l'Histoire coloniale britannique sur le nom de Charles MacCarthy est traité dans le tome II. Bien entendu les nationalistes Vietnamiens (Pham Boi Chan, Ho Chi Minh) Malgaches (Ralaimongo), Africains (El Hadj Omar, Samory, Behanzin, Abd el Kader, Abd el Krim etc) sont traités.

Le 75ème anniversaire de l'Académie Malgache célébré en 1977 amenait à spécialiser le tome III sur Madagascar.

Les événements du Cambodge et les pertes de documentation subies entraînaient à consacrer le tome IV au Cambodge, alors que le tome V sera plus spécialement consacré au Maroc.

Cette spécialisation géographique des volumes n'entraînant pas pour autant l'arrêt des autres volumes où figurent les personnalités ayant servi en plusieurs pays.

Chaque volume comprend 250 noms, les notices comprennent de une à quatre pages dactylographiées double interligne; la liste des oeuvres (s'il y en a) de la personnalité traitée et la bibliographie des livres ou articles qui lui ont été consacrés.

Toute contribution sera la bienvenue au siège de l'Académie des Sciences d'Outre-Mer où les deux premiers volumes sont en vente 15 Rue La Pérouse, 75116 Paris.

Tome I 1975, 668 p, 60 F.; Tome II (2 vol.) 1977, 786 p., 100 F.

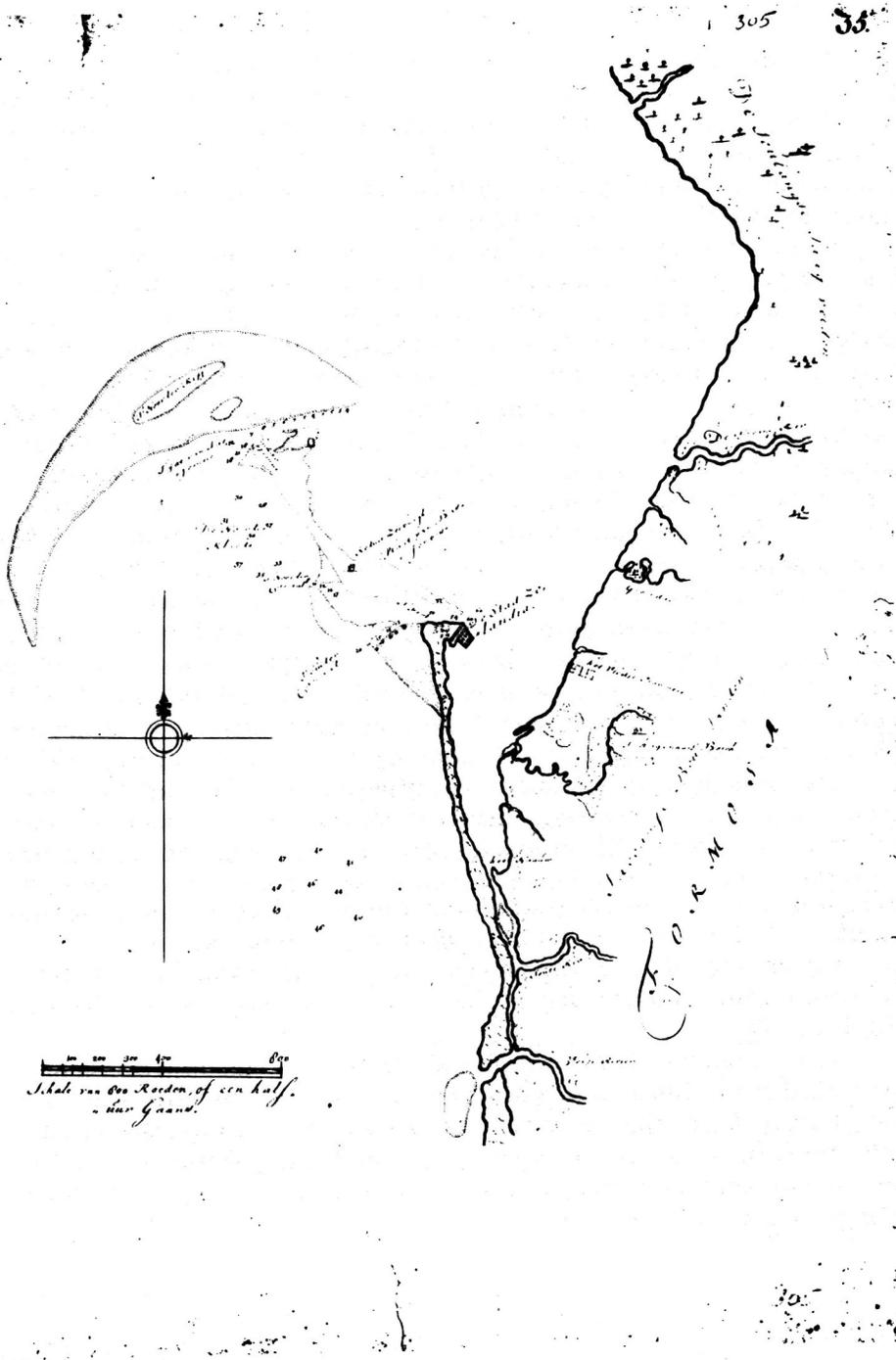
R.Cornevin.

A Note on William Campbell's Translations of Dutch Documents

Thank you for the informative report by Leonard Blussé about the 'Zeelandia Project' in *Itinerario* No. 1978/1, in which he traces the history of this unique international effort from its pre-war beginnings to today.

I was surprised, however, by his description of the Rev. William Campbell's translations of Dutch sources on Taiwanese history as 'excellent translations' (p. 7), and I would like to add this note as a caveat to readers who are not familiar with the Dutch language.

While the Rev. Campbell by his arduous labours introduced the history of the Dutch on Taiwan to many readers in the Anglo-Saxon world, his knowledge of the Dutch language had its limitations. His translations usually transmit the general meaning of the documents translated, but they cannot be relied upon for any details, as even a superficial comparison with the originals will make clear. In his translation of *'t Verwaerloosde Formosa* ('Neglected Formosa'; Amsterdam, 1675), for instance the following passage occurs, describing the little island or sandbar on which Zeelandia was located: 'It had the name of Tayouan, and was surrounded by the sea, the strait which separated it from the mainland of Formosa being about two cannon-shots wide at its broadest part'. (Camp-



Schets van den Rooden, of een half, van Gaand.

bell, *Formosa under the Dutch*, Londen, 1903; reprinted in Taipei, 1972, p. 385). From the original (vol. 1, p. 15) it is clear, however, that it was the island of Tayouan, and not the strait separating it from the mainland, which was two cannon-shots wide. This passage has rather misled some present-day Taiwanese scholars in their eager attempts to trace the exact spot where Coxinja landed on Taiwan.

Campbell's imperfect understanding of the Dutch text sometimes leads to passages of somewhat obscure English, like the following, taken from the account of the events leading up to Coxinja's invasion: '(Zako) flatly denied before the Governor certain matters in connection with Koxinga's preparations for war and intentions as to Formosa; having acted thus entirely on his own account before the Governor....' (*Formosa under the Dutch*, p. 394)....What does 'acted thus' refer to? The correct translation is: '(Zako) had the temerity to deny now to the Governor's face certain details about Coxinja's war preparations and design on Formosa which he, Zako, had come to disclose to the Governor....before, out of his own volition'. (*'t Verwaerloosde Formosa*, vol. 1, p. 26). A little further on, Campbell has Zako and some other Chinese 'interrogated under threats of severe punishment'; actually, according to the original text, they were tortured. This mistranslation, by the way, seems to have been caused by nineteenth-century squeamishness about the gory details of the earlier European expansion, rather than by misunderstanding of the text. The unwary reader might be led astray by the mention, on page 395, of '...farms throughout the country - excepting a few in the south, which had been rented at a higher price than the previous year - which had never before been worked with so much profit', and arrive at erroneous conclusions about the agricultural system then in effect on Taiwan; actually, the reference is to the farming out of taxes on the natives, and the translation should be '...the usual tax farms, except for a few in the south, were sold at a higher price than in the previous year, never having been auctioned off with greater pleasure than at that time....' (*'t Verwaerloosde Formosa*, vol. 1, p. 27)

These examples have been picked practically at random and could be multiplied many times over without much effort. These criticisms should not detract from the value of Campbell's publications as convenient collections of some crucial documents; but Campbell was no scholar of seventeenth century Dutch, and his works should certainly not be used as primary sources for research.

Johannes Huber
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A Reply

Poor Campbell! Although I may have praised him a bit too exuberantly, I still maintain that his translation is an achievement, his English style being in general much clearer than the long cumbersome sentences of the 17th century Dutch original, which often leave the reader at a loss.

Thus Campbell's translation in Huber's first quote is probably closer to the original meaning than Huber's. The first part of the sentence omitted in Huber's quote, already gives the surface of the sandbar of Zeelandia as being one mile in circumference or one square mile (not very clear which one)*. It therefore seems probable that the inner bay between the sandbar and the island of Formosa is meant, which was indeed two cannon-shots, i.e. several kilometers, wide. I must confess that being a Dutchman and having access to the Dutch original, I have always used it rather than Campbell and have formed my opinion of him from the (too?) enthusiastic use made of him in China and Japan.

Remarks about 'nineteenth-century squeamishness about the gory details of the earlier European expansion', implying that Campbell was trying to cover up Dutch cruelty against the Chinese, however, are not only too rash but also unfair. Not only speaks the original of 'ter scherper examen' (under sharper examination) which *may imply* torture, but what is more important is that Campbell left out in his English translation the complete chapter on the 'Chinese cruelties and tyranny committed upon the Pastors, Schoolmasters, and the Netherlanders there'.

Fortunately Inez de Beauclair has included this remarkable piece - a must for Polanski adepts - in her recent edition of the *Neglected Formosa* (San Francisco: Chinese Materials Center Inc., 1975).

One last remark, and I may be totally wrong in this one. I would not be surprised if Campbell, fighting malaria and quite busy spreading the gospel in 'Far Formosa', actually had the original texts translated in Holland and reshaped the crude translation into readable English. The curiously ambiguous use of the word 'farm' (as Mr. Huber has pointed out) leaves me with this impression, since two totally different words are used for agriculture and tax farming in Dutch.

Leonard Blussé.

*De Compagnie verkoos tot haare sedem aan de Westzijde van dit Eylandt een kleyn dorre sanfplaat/van omtrent een mijle groot/genaamt Tayouan/van 't vasteland door de Zee afgescheijden ende omspoelt/op sijn breedste omtrent twee Canon schooten wese.