

1912-02-18

Singapore.

01

18 February.

Dear Professor Snouck Hurgronje,

I am very sorry to say that I shall miss Mr. van Deventer as I am leaving for Europe on Sunday (the 25th February). My itinerary is not absolutely settled; visits to Switzerland & the Levant may come before my arrival in England, but in any case June should see me in London & I hope to visit Leyden about the same time. There is, however, some official work awaiting me in London which may expedite

my journey. I am not due back in the Straits before ^{the end of} January next.

This may enable me to see Mr. van Deventer on his return. It would be a great pleasure to me to meet him.

We are trying out here to give the natives more self-government on aristocratic lines, i.e. taking the best-born & cleverest children & training them up for the Civil Service. The system works well enough, but we have to reckon with the democratic spirit at home which believed in giving votes to everybody & letting training look after itself. Then the trouble begins; the wrong people are elected to office by ignorant electorates, & the natives get discredited. At the present ~~moment~~ moment we are passing a law abolishing the elective system

in all municipalities owing to municipal scandals. I hope Mr. van Deventer will visit Kuala Kangsar in Perak & see our school for Chiefs' Sons; it is quite an interesting experiment. Kuala Kangsar is only about $4\frac{1}{2}$ hours by rail from Penang & could be visited in a day. The Sultan of Perak also lives there.

When Mr. Barnes sent you the inscription it had not been deciphered. The real interest lies in certain other inscriptions on the same pillar; these others are in a script that has not been identified. I ^{a photo of} took it to Leyden & showed it to Mr. Juynebolle & Professor Kern but they could make nothing of it. Col. Gerini in Siam also failed to make it out. Mr. Barnes hoped that the reading of the Arabic inscription might throw a light on the others (there are two one on each side of the pillar), but these

the Malay does not help us un-
fortunately.

I shall write to you when
I reach Europe so as to keep
you informed of my whereabouts
in case we are near one another.

Yours very sincerely
R. Pilkinton

18/2 '12 ?

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WINDSOR-HOTEL

ALEX

Wilkinson



de wedede Heer

D. C. Snouck Hurgronje

Witte Singel, 84 A.

Leiden

Holland



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1915-07-21

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21st July.

Dear Dr. Snowick Hurgonje,

Your letter of the 26th May (in these days of censored & delayed correspondence only reached me yesterday. It will, I fear, be impossible to do very much literary work while the war lasts, but the experience of war is an education in itself. When the war broke out I was actually administering the government of the Colony in the absence of the Governor; & the experience

was unique. On the whole, it⁰² was discouraging. The excitement unbalanced many of our best minds; the wildest rumors found ready belief; & men were accused & condemned (in the popular mind) on no evidence whatever. Most dangerous of all was the feeling against the Mohammedans. Every Moslem was regarded as a Turk in disguise; & even Jews, Armenians, Arabs & Syrians were suspected & persecuted. It was little use preaching a saner doctrine. In February our Indian regiment mutinied; & for a few hours all our lives were in danger. In April there was a small insurrection in the Malay State of Kelantan. But on the whole the Moslems

have been loyal; & the troubles⁰³ that we have had were due (in my opinion) to our own mistakes. The Moslems have now been given an advisory board through which they can make their wishes & grievances known; they have appreciated this form of representation very highly. I think that, in spite of the mistakes made, the war will strengthen the good feeling between the Government & the Moslem population.

But it will be a great relief when the war is over. I was born in Turkey & lived there for many years;

04,
my mother is there still, having
been unwilling to quit the
country because of her age; &
the madness of the Young Turks
had been a great grief to me.
With all their faults I prefer
the Turks to any of the Balkan
Christians. And while there
is justification for any amount
of political hatred against
the German nation the
abuse hurled at individual
Germans & at German science
struck me as a temporary
madness. One cannot say these
things openly in wartime.
Even as it is I have been
attacked bitterly in the press

because my wife is a good German scholar & is therefore accused of German sympathies & even of being a German or Austrian.

Mr. Spakler is still here; my wife & I see much of him & of his sister. All studies are suspended during the war; but there is a very decided living interest in Malay things among some of our younger officers, & several texts of Malay works are in preparation. I have nothing in hand myself except a history

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of British intervention in
Malaya — too political a subject
for publication just at present.
My post too gives me few
opportunities. But I have been
Colonial Secretary for four
years, & my next appointment
— if, as I hope, it takes me
to the Malay States — may
give me further & most
exceptional opportunities for
work. There will be no leave
for me ^{to Europe} while the war lasts;
but when the war is over I
may be more fortunate.

Yours very sincerely

R. J. Wilkinson

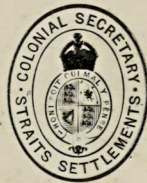
Wilkinson

21/7 '15



De weledere en hooggeleerde Heer ^{XOI}
Dr. C. Snouck Hurgronje
Witte Singel 84^a
Leiden
Holland.

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1932-07-31

Mitylene. 01

31 March. 1932

Dear Dr. Snouck Hurgronje,

It was with great pleasure and interest that I received your letter. During the last 25 years news of you reached me from time to time; indeed at one time I was told that my own University (Cambridge) was anxious to make you her Regius Professor of Arabic. Did you ever meet Prof. Browne or Prof. Bevan? Prof. Browne was essentially a "modern", interested in the politics of the present-day Arab world. Prof. Bevan is a classical student, devoted to ancient Arabic. The two were a great contrast, though

good friends.

02

What you tell me about the Achehese Dictionary is most interesting. In 1905 at Leyden at the house of ~~Dr.~~ ^{Prof.} van Ophuijsen I met a youthful Javanese student of great personal charm, and have often wondered whether he could have been your Dr. Husain Jayadinigrat. I can remember that he was a Rader and that his name ended in ningrat. Dr. de Gooijé was then Professor of Arabic but the student was then so young that he might easily have been your pupil afterwards. No Malay trained by us is comparable to Dr. Husain, but some young Malays are beginning to write for our Asiatic Journals; and more would do so if the higher

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officials encouraged it. Unfortunately the Home Government is inclined to underrate the importance of vernacular and even of local knowledge; the desire today is to create a great "Imperial Service" with officers transferable easily from Colony to Colony. Listening to reports that have filtered through from Cyprus to Nitylene I gather that much of the trouble and discontent in the former island is due to the fact that there are no friendly relations between the Civil Service who speak no Greek and the local population who are inclined to resent the high salaries and lack of ^{local} interest of the ruling class. However, this is a phase that may pass away. You in Holland are much more methodical in your training of officers and

indeed in education generally.

One can ~~interest~~ learn a language in the country where it is spoken, but the student misses always the grounding that a training at a centre of learning gives. We are none of us really trained Orientalists in England. Dr. Blagden and Dr. Winstedt got their degrees in Classics; Prof. Browne in medicine; & I myself in History; none in Oriental Languages. Prof. Bevan is an exception; but, there again, the old classical tradition of Oxford and Cambridge is apt to value Arabic for the light it throws on ancient Semitic speech more than for its value as a spoken tongue of the present day. But things are improving; the present generation is being fired by the doings of men like Col. Lawrence, St. John Philby and Thomas.

There is one service of yours to which I am referring in an Appendix: your work in helping us to our present orthography of Romanized Malay. That work of yours made it possible for me to write a Romanized Dictionary instead of using the Arabic character as I did in my first. Thirty years ago every user of Romanized Malay was a law unto himself; today there is a recognized system. And while the omission of the Arabic lettering is to some extent undesirable in a ^{Malay} dictionary the book could not have been printed at all in Mitylene had the Arabic character been a sine qua non. It had also standardized to some extent the Malay taught and spoken in all the schools of Netherlands India and Malaya. In our own Negri Sembilan where the Minqakaban adat entered into the law

of the land it is not necessary⁰⁶
to know Minangkabau Malay.
The official lingua franca
will take you anywhere, though
a certain number of local
words have to be picked up.

It is perhaps too much to
expect that I shall ever write
another edition of my Dictionary.
But when it is off my hands
I hope to begin a Supplement;
and in the pursuit of knowledge
it is just possible that I may
visit that Mecca of the
Indonesian student, Leyden.
In any case that is always
the hope of your old correspondent,

Yours sincerely

R. F. Wilkinson

P.S. Wilayati will appear in my
Addenda. Many thanks. I should
not have omitted it.

1932-12-11

01

Mitylene.

11th December.

1932

Dear Dr. Snouck Hurgronje,

Very many thanks
for your letter of the 8th Nov.;
it arrived during my absence
on a yachting-trip among the
Aegean islands. On my return
the other day it came as a
shock to me to learn that
the copies of my dictionary
which I had been assured
had been sent off in September
were not actually sent off till
the 31st October. It is satisfactory
at least that your copy had
reached you, for not all seem
to have reached their destinations.
Things in Greece are not very
satisfactory.

I have also to thank you for your very kind invitation. It has long been my wish to revisit Leyden and I had hoped to do so early in 1933, now that my Dictionary does not tie me to Mitylene. But my movements are still uncertain; for, while it is my intention to give up my Mitylene house on the 31st March, nothing is yet settled as to my next place of residence. New taxes and new restrictions are being imposed daily in this country, and it is very doubtful whether conditions by the 31st March will be such as to encourage my

staying on longer in Greece at all. On my recent yachting trip I visited seven of the islands of the Dodecanese which are under Italian rule; and though the rate of exchange crippled a salary in sterling there is a good deal in favour of a move to Rhodes or Cos. There is also Cyprus, which is also Greek in speech but under British rule. And again I may decide to leave these parts altogether, though their climate is lovely. At the present moment I am only waiting to learn what taxes the new Greek Government is going to impose on ~~people~~ ^{foreigners} like myself who earn no living in the country. Some Greeks regard me

as a drone who ought to be taxed heavily; others would "encourage" me in view of the fact that I am spending money here and giving employment to Greeks. It still remains to be seen what the decision will be.

My stay in Mitylene has cut me off from knowing men like Bertram Thomas & St. John Philby though I hear of them from friends. So also I had not heard of Van der Meulen's book. Hadramaut is as you say a strange country and one ^{about} which I heard a good deal from my Arab friends in Singapore. Indeed I had trouble enough in the war to protect them from ignoramuses who put them down as "turks"

and "enemy subjects." On one occasion the Chief of the General Staff in India sent a telegram denouncing an Arab with whom the Inspector-General of Police and I were dining that very evening; and on another occasion I was discussing with the leading Arabs the terms of a loyal address by them to the King when our military Intelligence Officer sent a telephone message that they were planning a massacre of all the Europeans in Singapore! Actually they were very charming, intelligent & most unmilitarist; & one of them whetted my curiosity with his tales of Himyaritic ruined cities & inscriptions in the desert. Bertram Thomas has shown up the 'Ad legend but there may be true ruins in Hadramaut.

I often wish I could speak Arabic; it would have helped me in my work. But even my Malay was rendered quite useless when I was made Governor of Sierra Leone.

Thanking you again for your kind invitation and with all good wishes for the coming festive season of Christmas and the New Year,

Yours very sincerely

R. J. Wilkinson