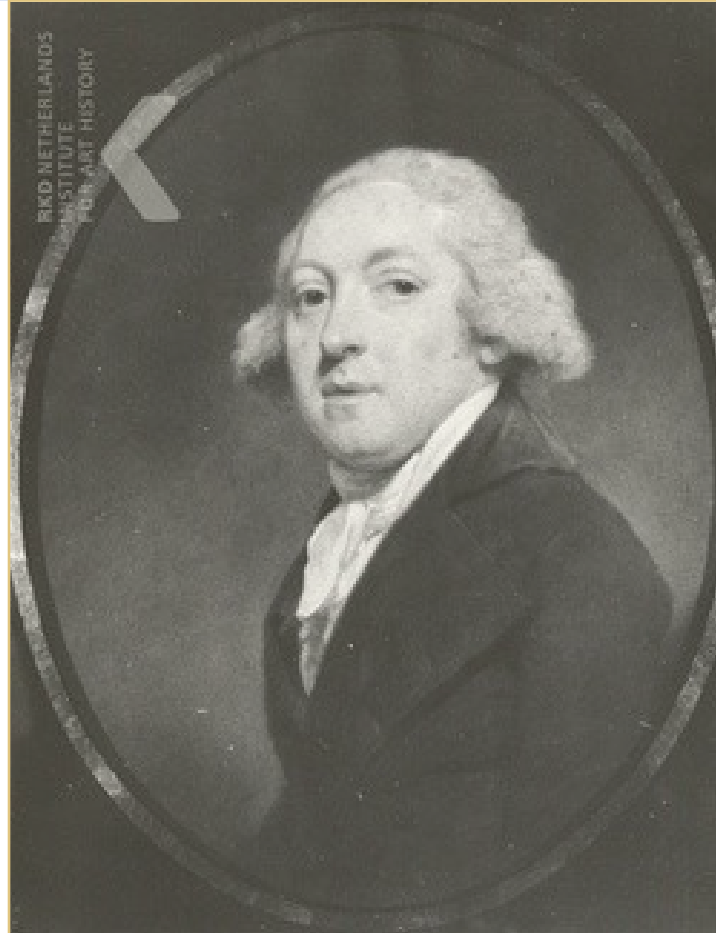


The codes of Willem Six van Oterleek



The codes of Willem Six van Oterleek

28 Drafts in Code

from the Archives of the Dutch legation in Russia,

1808 - 1810

The codes of Willem Six van Oterleek

Example of a draft

10^{te}
29 Aug

10^{te}
29 Aug. Zed. Nijwa

708. 152. 162 921. 159 559. 712 ✓
559. 713. 346 130 751 115 577 ✓
37A 118 810 578 - 509 924 ✓
996 857 835, 424, 13 58A 271. 737 ✓
667 890 7A0 - 857. 63A - 253 ✓
168 835 " 821. 739 655 237 ✓
1A1. 761 - 544. 91 739 605 883 ✓
830 - 97 133 8A6 11 146. (718 ✓
121 162 - 162 - 162 646 349 ✓
655 7) 27A 121 59A 216 - 91A ✓
188 950 81A 719 - 966. 222. 866 ✓
99 295 201 53 626 190 882 ✓
583. 655 - 812 - 773 91A 724 187 ✓
12A 978 838 13 11 761 557 ✓
806 65 - 7A2 146 16 767. 27A ✓
130 108 - 147 123 128 - ✓
209 98 579 - 938 117 147 176 - ✓
932 116 208 - 39 523 745 ✓
503 152 92 25A. 605. 253 255 ✓
7A1 170 7A2. 755 - 159. 898 123 ✓
770 655 953 810 138 - 712 578 ✓
12A 175 124 57 888 152 - ✓
669 816 789 962 793 570 - ✓
118 065 808 577 192 70 115 ✓
118 907 198 322 743 977 ✓
838 105 7A1 585 - 628 ✓
278 50. 131. 117 - 591 - 858 ✓
62A 810 582. 122 871 - 802. ✓
32A. 108 - 947 552 259, 789. ✓
379. 810. 591 - ✓

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What do we know so far?

(a) probable author: Willem Six van Oterleek (1761-1811):

Dutch emissary in Russia from 1808-1810

(b) likely to contain gossip from the Imperial court and/or intelligence about the movement of ships and troops.

(c) we have roughly 5300 code groups in sum total

The codes of Willem Six van Oterleek

What do we not know?

- (a) were these letters ever solved?
- (b) if so, do these solutions still exist and where to look for them?
- (c) which codebook was being used?
- (d) why were these drafts made in the first place?

The codes of Willem Six van Oterleek

Sheet of a codebook, issued by
S.E. Croiset for Dirk van Hogendorp
in August 1803 for his mission
to Saint Petersburg

The image shows a handwritten codebook sheet with multiple columns of text. The text is organized in a grid-like structure, with words and their corresponding codes or meanings listed in multiple columns. The handwriting is in black ink on aged paper. The columns contain words in Dutch and Russian, with some words appearing in multiple columns. The text is dense and fills most of the page.

Full view of
two pages
next to
each other

Karl de Leeuw

June, 2018

The codes of Willem Six van Oterleek

Detail

The table contains the following entries (representative of the data in the image):

430	en	421	h	427	by	490	c	504	cc	510	cc	520	d	65	door	657	dan	720	dat	734
	ek	3	il	2	en	500	w	6	k	6	kk	3	kl	2	l	2	ll	2	l	l
	re	4	ng	430	nd	1	nu	1	o	1	o	3	of	4	om	600	on	1	oo	2
	v	5	va	1	oh	2	se	8	u	8	u	4	ho	1	1	1	to	8	tt	0
	U	6	z	2	zal	3	zaten	2	z	2	z	4	z	1	1	1	z	3	z	2
	berck				berlag			510	berloten				berluet				besoen			730
	berpid				berpt			1	best				bestand				besteed			
	bestendig				bestier			2	bet				betaelen				betaam			
	betsken				betsigen			3	beur				beur				bevel			
	berensig				berredigen			4	berrieden		590	ber					bewaar			
	beruy				berurten			5	benyve				bez				bezelt			
	bezet				bezick			6	bi				bed				bie			
	beid			440	bein			7	belyk				beia			670	bind			
	bepaen				bedden			8	bedden				tetter				blam			
	ble				blid			2	blid				blind				blg			
	bloid				blig			520	blig				blig				blig			
	blucken				blucken			1	bl				bed				bes			750
	ben				benbard			2	ben				band				bendgenoot			
	ben				ben			3	beny				ben				benin			
	benen al				benen dera			4	ben			600	bra				braaf			
	ben				benid			5	ben x				braken				brag			
	ben				benic			6	benic				brief				bro			
	breeder			450	breederschap			7	brca				bru			680	bru			
	brugen				bruten			8	bruten dat				bruten dera				bruten hot			
	bruk				brugen			9	Burgen dera				Burgen				brut			
	by				by			10	by aldien		530		by de				by deise			
	by den				by hem			11	by hot				by hant				by my			760
	by na				by end			12	byetna				by hant				by my			
	by wa				by wa			13	by wa				by wa				by wa			

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June, 2018

The codes of Willem Six van Oterleek

The codebook above is a likely candidate, but we are not sure.

Main characteristics:

- (1) roughly 6400 code groups divided over 16 pages
- (2) 1-, 2-, or 3-digit numbers, in combination with a sign written above or under
- (3) the numbers following columns; their meanings following rows
- (4) every double page has a alphabet of its own, with additional groups for frequently occurring doubling of letters or syllables
- (5) can be used both for French and for Dutch

The codes of Willem Six van Oterleek

Solving strategies:

(1) trial and error

(2) ?

(3) are there any general rules ,making computation worthwhile?

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Oterleek, North Holland