EAST ASIAN STUDIES

by

E. ZÜRCHER

My first memories of Brill reach back to 1947, shortly after I began the study of Chinese at the Sinological Institute of Leiden University under Professor J. J. L. Duyvendak’s kind but absolute authority. In those days young students were expected to perform, as part of their training, a surprising variety of menial tasks, and it was in that quality that I occasionally had to run errands between the professor’s study and Brill’s premises on the Oude Rijn. On one of these visits I had the privilege of meeting a man who in his own way had become a celebrity among orientalists: Mr. Martijn, the master-typesetter who handled a dozen of the weirdest scripts of ancient and modern times. Sino-Japanese characters were his favourite (with Egyptian hieroglyphs as a close second), and he was ready to show me his skill in handling them. I shall always remember the impression he made on me, moving between his type cases like a Taoist priest performing a dancing ritual, and producing with incredible speed and accuracy any character from a collection containing nearly 8,000 signs, and all this without knowing the meaning of any of them. As he told me sadly, he actually was discouraged from learning more about them, as this was supposed to increase the number of his mistakes—a curious tale which, if it were justified, would disqualify any type-setter working in his own language.

At that moment I did not realize that in master Martijn I had been confronted with a living example of Brill’s great tradition of superb artisanship in the field of East Asian printing and publishing, the last member of a ‘filiation of masters’ that reaches back to the very beginning of Chinese and Japanese studies at Leiden University. His master had been a pupil of one of the type-setters who shortly after 1875 had learned the trade from Gustav Schlegel, the first professor of Chinese at our university, and the small leaden cubes he was fondling had been cast from the matrices made from the original set of Chinese characters that had been acquired by the Dutch government in 1858, at the initiative of the first Leiden professor of Japanese, J. J. Hoffmann. The acquisition of that set of ‘Chinese letters’ is a story in itself that illustrates the difficulties that beset the first beginning of East Asian typography in this country, Hoffmann’s energy in overcoming them, and the proverbial frugality of Dutch government authorities in those days. It needed several years of pleading, recommendations made by learned academies of three European centres, and a personal decision of the King to grant Hoffmann the equivalent of some $4,000.—for which he was able to buy a second-hand set from the London Missionary Printing Office in Hong Kong. It had, however, the distinction of having been used in printing the so-called ‘delegates’ version’ of W. H. Medhurst’s Chinese Bible translation (Shanghai, 1854–55).

In the sixties and early seventies a few works containing Sino-Japanese characters were printed and published by A. W. Sijthoff. The title-page of Hoffmann’s Japanesche grammatik (Japanische spraakleer, gedrukt met ‘s Rijks Chineesche en Japanse drukkeletters, 1867), however, still cryptically states that this important pioneer work was ‘available at E. J. Brill’s and A. W. Sijthoff’s’.

In 1875 Brill acquired this set and thereby became one of the very few Western firms able to print scholarly publications in the field of East Asian studies. Brill’s fame as a printer of Chinese and Japanese was immediately and firmly established by the printing and publication of Schlegel’s monumental Uranographie chinoise (a 929-page work on Chinese astronomy that has remained the most important handbook on that subject for nearly a century) in 1875; Hoffmann’s Japanische Studien in 1878; and his Japanese-Dutch dictionary of 1881. Thus Brill’s first publications ran parallel to the first humble beginnings of East Asian studies in this country and the first attempts to build up a collection of materials: Schlegel’s inaugural lecture On the importance of the Chinese language (1877) was produced by Brill’s, thus initiating a tradition that has been maintained till the present, and the fine fleur of European Oriental scholarship assembled at Leiden at the sixth Congress of Orientalists in 1883 were presented with Brill’s 28-page Catalogue des livres chinois qui se trouvent dans la bibliothèque de l’Université de Leiden—a courteous gesture that could hardly be repeated at present, considering that the collection since then has grown from ca. 600 to more than 180,000 volumes.

In the eighties scholarly publications on China clearly became concentrated at Brill’s. Between 1896 and 1898 a number of important pioneer works had been published in Batavia (present-day Jakarta), written by Schlegel and his successor J. J. M. de Groot and published in the famous Verhandelingen van het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen (Transactions of the Batavian Society for Arts and Sciences). Although throughout the nineteenth century there remained a close relation—in the selection of subjects as well as in the way they were treated—between Dutch Sinology and Dutch colonial rule in Southeast Asia, the shift from Batavia to Leiden is significant; it was no doubt the result of a close and
fruitful co-operation between Schlegel and the house of Brill. It produced, among many other works that now are only of antiquarian interest, two monumental publications that never have been superseded: Schlegel’s huge dictionary of the Changchow (Fukien) dialect (4 vols., 1862-1891), and J. J. M. de Groot’s Religious System of China (6 vols., 1892-1910).

In the meantime Schlegel and the illustrious French sinologist Henri Cordier had developed the idea to start a learned journal devoted to East Asian studies, and in spite of the commercial risks involved—for the prospective number of subscribers can hardly have exceeded a hundred—Brill’s was ready to realize it. *T’oung Pao*, started in 1890 with the rather ambitious sub-title ‘Archives pour servir à l’étude de l’histoire, des langues, de la géographie et de l’ethnographie de l’Asie Orientale (Chine, Japon, Corée, Indo-Chine, Asie Centrale et Malaisie)’, soon proved its worth; especially under the editorship of Paul Pelliot it was to become what not undeservedly has been called ‘the most prestigious journal in Chinese studies’.

Some interesting information on the circumstances under which *T’oung Pao* was conceived and born are found in Henri Cordier’s amazing account of the eighth Congress of Orientalists held at Stockholm in 1889. ‘To those accustomed to the rather modest entourage of present-day international conferences of Oriental studies Cordier’s account reads like a chapter from Rabelais. The city of Stockholm was adorned with flags and banners and in the evenings splendidly illuminated. The participants (including two Chinese and an’Arabian prince’) were treated to fireworks, a parade of the Royal Guards, and a whole sequence of parties and dinners, culminating in a royal banquet presided by King Oscar II, who honoured them with a lengthy address that combined literary elegance with singular lack of content. Cordier made some scathing comments on the high percentage of outsiders whose interests were more gastronomical than scholarly; we do not know to whom he referred, but we may be sure that he did not object to the presence of two directors of Brill’s, Mr. F. de Stoppelaar and Mr. A. P. M. van Oordt, one of whom at that occasion was awarded the Wasa Cross on account of that firm’s ‘outstanding services rendered to Oriental typography’; During the conference they were approached by Cordier and Schlegel, with whom they discussed the plan to start the journal. During the journey back the title and sub-title were invented by Cordier in the train between Stockholm and Göteborg; final agreement between the two parties was reached in a gloomy room in Hotel Victoria in Oslo. It was the beginning of a major scholarly operation, and also of a tradition, maintained during the major part of the journal’s existence so far, of entrusting the *T’oung Pao* to a joint Franco-Dutch editorship. In almost all other respects *T’oung Pao* has changed in the course of its near-centennial existence. In fact, it constitutes a fascinating mirror that reflects the main trends of East Asian studies from the late nineteenth century till the present.

The first thing that strikes us is the gradual narrowing of the geographical area covered. Though from the beginning China has ever been the focal point, till well into the twentieth century the interest was largely (and, from a contemporaneous point of view, excessively) focused on ‘les régions limitrophes’ and China’s historical relations with other countries. A typical early *T’oung Pao* volume would at least for two-thirds be devoted to subjects like Chinese proverbs used on Java, Sino-Thai relations, early French contacts with Burma, Chinese texts dealing with other nations, and the identification of Marco Polo’s garbled renderings of Asian geographical names. We recognize a general tendency to avoid the central issues of the great East Asian civilization per se, and to approach the area from the outside—an orientation that was partly due to the general international situation, and in the case of *T’oung Pao* also reflected Cordier’s special interest in Sino-Western relations. After Schlegel had passed away (1903), Southeast Asia virtually disappeared from the editors’ range of vision, and in the course of the next two decades contributions on Japan became less numerous. The special attention to the peripheral areas and foreign relations of China remained in force as long as Cordier—alone or in conjunction with Edouard Chavannes—remained editor. Under his successor, the illustrious Paul Pelliot, who between 1926 and 1945 completely dominated the journal by his tremendous learning and huge and many-sided productivity, the increasing concentration on Chinese subjects, often treated in astonishing detail, with an overwhelming display of philological erudition, reflected both the ongoing process of specialization in Chinese studies of that period and the emphasis on philological method applied to Chinese textual materials. The process of geographical concentration was finally formalized under the present editors, when in 1970 the original sub-title was changed into ‘Revue internationale de sinologie’.

A similar process of narrowing the range covered by the journal took place in the chronological dimension. To a contemporary *T’oung Pao* editor, who in principle only accepts contributions dealing with pre-modern China and is not prepared to admit topical articles on ‘current events in the Far East’, it comes as a surprise to see how his earliest predecessors were willing to fill their pages with decidedly non-academic information. We find, especially in the ‘mélange’ and the ‘chronique’, a rich variety of contributions and comments on trade conditions in Yunnan and Tonkin, railroad building in China, the first session of the
Japanese parliament (1891), executions in Canton, the rapid growth of Japanese banking capital, the disastrous earthquake in Japan in October 1891, and the rumour that ‘le Japonais qui a essayé de massacrer le Tsaristie est mort de pneumonia dans la prison’. The inclusion of contemporary topics has, by and large, lasted till the end of the First World War; the gradual reduction to pre-modern subjects and the rejection of ‘sordid reality’ as unfit to be touched upon in a scholarly journal probably reflects the formation, around the early twenties, of a new type of orientalist establishment of academic origin, different from their predecessors who often had started their career ‘in the field’, as missionaries or consular officers.

Apart from the sixty-eight T’oung Pao volumes that have appeared so far, Brill’s major publications in the field of East Asian studies have in the post-war period appeared in two well-known series: the ‘Monographies du T’oung Pao’ (12 volumes, 1950-) and ‘Sinica Leidensia’ (15 volumes, 1931-). It would hardly fit the occasion to present lists of titles; like T’oung Pao they reflect the main trends and shifts of interest, a predilection for pre-modern subjects, and, especially in the case of the ‘Sinica Leidensia’ volumes, the evolution of Dutch sinology over the last fifty years. For the purpose of the present volume I should rather stress two facts. In the first place, Brill’s constant effort, also in this extremely specialized and exacting field of printing and publishing, to maintain the highest standards of technical quality. And, secondly, a tradition of pleasant, candid and informal co-operation with authors and editors. Eighty years ago Henri Cordier wrote about the spirit in which T’oung Pao was started, in that hotel room in Oslo: ‘Aucun papier n’avait été échangé entre directeurs et éditeurs; de simples paroles, beaucoup de bonne volonté et un travail constant ont suffi à créer et à faire vivre la nouvelle revue’ (T’oung Pao, vol. 4 (1903), p. 408). In spite of all changes that have taken place since the heroic years of Hoffmann, Schlegel, de Groot and Cordier, and even if the Chinese characters that I saw in master Martijn’s hands have been melted down several years ago, to be replaced by a more elegant but less hallowed set, the atmosphere of mutual trust and co-operation has persisted. Cordier’s words may be used as a motto for the present, and for the future rôle of the house of Brill’s in the field of East Asian studies.

CLASSICAL STUDIES

by

L. F. JANSSEN

For a brief and succinct account of Brill’s activities in the field of classical studies, it will be useful to start with an outline of the historical background of these studies.

The rediscovery of the delicate beauty and the vigorous style of Latin classical literature by Petrarca (1304-74) and his fellow humanists inspired them with such an enthusiasm, that they strived to emulate the ancient examples like Vergil, Cicero, Livy and Seneca in writing poems, histories and letters. At the same time they set out in search of more and better manuscripts and became interested in the philosophical ideas of their cultural ancestors; the studies of antiquity, the studia humanitatis were revived in a way that was to be decisive not only for the period of the Renaissance, but for many centuries to come. At the end of the fifteenth century Latin literature had been almost completely recovered and put into print; while the first humanists had to copy the manuscripts themselves, the invention of mechanical printing furthered the knowledge of ancient literature immensely; moreover, many scholars now proceeded, in imitation of Boccaccio, to supply the interested reader with encyclopaedic surveys of mythology, ancient geography, history and philosophy. The same fifteenth century saw the arrival of many Greek scholars in Italy and France some time before and after the collapse of the Byzantine Empire and the capture of Constantinople by the Turks (1453). Consequently, hundreds of Greek manuscripts, varying from Homer to late Byzantine anthologies, were brought to safety in the West, where a remarkable shift in scholarly interest from Latin to Greek followed. For a long time the humanists had been very anxious to be brought into direct contact with those Greek texts they found quoted, imitated or alluded to so often by Latin authors. In addition, there were the theological quarrels between the Catholic clergy and the Reformers, who required a truer understanding of the teachings of Jesus and demanded a fresh and careful interpretation of the Greek New Testament.

The problems met in penetrating the real meaning of Greek words, syntax and idiomatic peculiarities were, however, much greater than had ever been imagined. The first things to be done were: (1) a tentative selection of manuscripts available, (2) the shaping of an easily
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FOREWORD

Strange though it may seem, the history of Brill’s, a publishing house with one of the longest histories in the Netherlands, has been poorly looked into. Apart from a couple of short surveys published after the middle of the last century this subject only in fact began to receive more serious treatment around the middle of this century—Th. Folkers’ article ‘De geschiedenis van de oostersche boekdrukkerij te Leiden’, in Cultuural Indië, vol. 3 (1941), pp. 53-68 can be regarded as the first coherent treatment of this topic. Nor until this period was a start made to build up an archive of Brill’s own publications. The reason for this apparent paradox is without doubt the preoccupation of the firm with the present—production and sales—rather than with the past. We are happy to let others decide whether it is the same mental attitude which has made possible the long and unbroken existence of the firm.

Whatever the precise truth of the matter may be, various circumstances have contributed to a growth of interest in the firm’s history within the company itself in recent years. And it was also in the context of this renewed interest that the idea was conceived of seeing whether a new contribution to our knowledge of the company’s history might be made ready in time for the celebration of its three-hundredth birthday.

The firm, which was founded by the Luchtmans family and taken over in 1848 by Evert Jan Brill, has always been a scholarly publishing house. However, it was not until the second half of the last century that the firm stepped to any great extent beyond its own national boundaries and began to operate on an international scale. It seemed therefore a good idea to ask experts in the various subject-areas in which Brill’s specialise to throw some light on this development.

The firm would like to take this opportunity to express its thanks to the various authors who have been kind enough to contribute articles. They have more than deserved it in view of the often great enthusiasm with which they accepted and completed their tasks.

It only remains for us to explain to the curious reader that the title of this volume, which is also the motto of the firm and which was first used at the beginning of the eighteenth century on the title-pages of its publications, has—alas—yet to be given a satisfactory historical explanation. It seems to be the case that the motto, even if in variant forms (‘Tuta aegide Pallas’, ‘Tuta est aegide Pallas’), first appears in the course of the history of the University of Leiden, and was apparently adopted by the firm, probably as an expression of the ties which were felt to bind it to the scholarly world.