

IN MEMORIAM J. J. L. DUYVENDAK

1889-1954

With the death on 9 July, 1954, of Jan Julius Lodewijk Duyvendak, Professor of Chinese at the University of Leyden, we mourn an outstanding scholar, an able organizer, and a personality of human warmth and sympathy who has made a lasting contribution to Chinese studies.

Duyvendak's tenure of office marks a turning-point in the history of Dutch Sinology. Up to this time, interest in China had been chiefly a result of the Dutch position in the East Indies, where the Chinese are an important element in the population. The colonial administration had been responsible for sending a number of specialized officials to China, mainly to Fukien, in order to study the local dialects and customs. While Holland could thus boast several experts who knew the language perfectly and who in Schlegel and de Groot reached academic distinction, it cannot be held that their work had all the qualities of critical scholarship. Schlegel's indiscriminate assembling of material and de Groot's attack on the systematic study of Chinese phonology are well remembered. The weakness of their scholarly equipment is best illustrated by the pitiable stock of Chinese books then available at Leyden. In common with most of their European colleagues, the Dutch tended to rely on secondary evidence, notably from the great encyclopaedias. On the credit side should be entered the emphasis the Dutch school has always laid upon correct translation as not to be taken for granted or to be acquired by a pretentious grammatical theory, but only by constant reading and practice. Another fortunate circumstance was the international collaboration inaugurated in 1890 by the publication at Leyden of the *T'oung Pao*. Duyvendak was able to turn both of these assets to advantage.

In contrast to his predecessors, Duyvendak did not begin his career in Indonesia. After having studied Dutch philology for some time at Leyden University, he began to read Chinese under de Groot. This was followed by two years of study at Paris and Berlin. He was then, in 1912, appointed at the Netherlands Legation at Peking to serve as an interpreter. With how much vivid concern he had in that capacity followed political and cultural developments in China is clear from the inaugural lecture which he delivered in 1919, when he took up a Readership in Chinese at Leyden. This lecture,

entitled *On Chinese Wargods*, betrayed at the same time an interest, no doubt under the original impulse of de Groot, in Chinese religion and a keen sense of what was topical. This latter quality is brought out fully in many of his subsequent publications, particularly when the world headed for another war and the totalitarian State began to show the same sinister disregard of human values and moral considerations as were familiar to Duyvendak from his study of ancient Chinese ideologies. Although at one time a pacifist, this supreme danger to humanity stirred him to a vigorous reaction and made him one of the leaders of the resistance against Nazi attempts on his university.

Leyden was indeed dear to his heart. He was happy that his appointment, in 1930, to a professorship made it possible for him to remain there and to decline a chair at Columbia University. He had, however, many connections abroad and enjoyed travelling. As a frequent Visiting Professor at Columbia he had useful contacts with his American colleagues, and with his command of languages and personal charm he made many friends in Europe and Asia. By his organizing ability he was able to influence developments in teaching and research. While not insensitive to the honours that were bestowed upon him, he remained accessible to even the youngest of his students and colleagues, and would take immense trouble to help them in their work and in their career.

It was not only in the academic world that Duyvendak made his influence felt. He followed with an active interest diplomatic developments in the Far East. In lectures, articles and books he did much to bring up-to-date knowledge of things Chinese to a wider public. The popularizing works which he published in Dutch, including a comprehensive History of China, show not only his wide range of interests and capacity to generalize, but also a mastery of expression and style. Under the pseudonym Jan Lodewijks he wrote a number of poems.

Duyvendak called himself a Sinologist, emphasizing that the task implied in that name is a Herculean one. Although he admitted that it is impossible to master all the disciplines that should be applied to the study of Chinese civilization, he not only was well informed about many aspects of Sinology, but was able to transmit his experience to others and to publish a great deal on subjects as far apart as Ancient Chinese Philosophy, Modern Political History and Literature, various studies on the Han Dynasty, the overseas relations of the Ming and Ch'ing periods, etc. Glancing over the long list of his works, a superficial observer might be reminded of those European Orientalists of the previous generation who ambitiously took the whole of China's past and present in their scholarly stride, but either miserably failed through the inadequacy of their technical equipment, or heroically succumbed to the abundance of their material. Where Duyvendak surpassed those pioneers was in his intelligent application

of methods evolved in other schools, as well as in the moderation of his conclusions and interpretations. His study of *The Book of Lord Shang* (1928), for which Leyden conferred on him the Degree of D.Lit., was noted for the vivid picture it drew of the rise of the state of Ch'in against the background of Legalist ideology, but commanded no less respect because of its painstaking analysis and translation of the original text. His researches into the maritime expeditions organized by Ch'eng Ho in the early fifteenth century not only stimulated other scholars to fill in the gaps he left, but were also the starting-point for his richly documented study of the concept of Hell as a literary theme in the novel *Hsi yang chi*. In this work Duyvendak showed himself an indefatigable detective, with a flair for sifting material drawn from an astonishing number of sources in East and West. He was also an enthusiastic student of the history of Sino-Dutch relations, about which he wrote articles that are full of interest, not only to his compatriots, based as they are on information assembled with great energy in many parts of the world. His last book, a critical translation of the *Tao tê ching*, published in Dutch, French and English, gives a consistent interpretation of *Tao* as a formal notion, the "never ending change" of all phenomena. Thanks to this clear standpoint, our libraries have been enriched by a translation that will challenge scholarship for many years to come.

Such a challenge was what Duyvendak himself was always eager to take up, as is testified by his numerous book reviews. Unflinching, although invariably courteous, in his criticism, his first concern was the faithfulness of translation and the reliability of sources used. He often campaigned against dilettantism, which he had reason to regard as a great danger to our studies. It was this danger, even more than his ideal of opening up to mankind the world's largest unexploited storehouse of historical experience, that made him insist on the need of large-scale and integral translation of Chinese sources.

It is thus clear that Duyvendak's versatility was of a different order from that of the unrestrained polygraphs among the early European Sinologists. Following the great example of Maspero, he regarded the whole cultural heritage of China as the domain of the historian, who should, even when studying the remotest detail, never lose sight of the framework into which it would eventually fit. Chinese philosophy, law and literature should not be studied on their own, but all contribute to the reconstruction of the historical picture. The influence of Granet can readily be discerned in some of his work, but his philological conscience was too strong for him to accept a sociological analysis without putting it to the test of the historical method. He viewed with suspicion the modern tendency to rely on a pseudo-scientific approach to the detriment of the infinite variety of problems as revealed in the sources. Although he recognized the importance of specialization, and advised his graduates to gain experience in another discipline,

such as Ethnology, Law or History of Art, the thread that runs through his own work is his veneration of Chinese texts, which he saw so often neglected or maltreated. "Back to the Scriptures" was his watchword to the students whom he guided, impressing on them the need to exert themselves to understand even apparently insignificant passages, and to confront all the available evidence, before hasty generalization spoke its arrogant Q.E.D.

This influence on his pupils was perhaps the most endearing side of his life as a scholar. He was an excellent teacher and a supreme *raconteur*, who enjoyed diverting his listeners by well-told stories. Lighting his pipe, he would begin to tell of that seventeenth century Leyden professor, Golius, who succeeded in snatching a brief interview with the Jesuit Martini, fresh from China and passing by tow-boat through the town. Or of the giraffe from Africa that was brought to the Ming court as a happy portent, because it was identified with the fabulous *ch'i-lin*. When, during the war, after years of exile, he was able to collect ten of his advanced students around him for a few months of secret lecturing somewhere in Amsterdam, it was still the same old Duyvendak who would, in that characteristic way of his, adjust his spectacles while elucidating a passage from the *Han shu*. The enemy occupation of Holland was to go on for another year, but when liberation came, the master's days of retirement were over, and the moving translations of T'ang poems which he had made as a *chü-shih* were laid aside. The Sino-logical Institute at Leyden, which he had founded in 1930 and in which he had systematically built up a Chinese library, once again welcomed scholars from far and wide. May it long thrive as a memorial to one whom his pupils and friends will always remember for the inspiration and guidance he gave to their work and for the resourcefulness he was ever ready to draw upon for their benefit!

PIET VAN DER LOON