EARLY CHINESE STUDIES IN HOLLAND

BY

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Much may be added to the brief preliminary sketch which I wrote in connection with the XVIIIth Congress of Orientalists held at Leyden in 1931 1).

The new knowledge of China which in the course of the 17th century came to Europe through the activities of navigators, travellers and missionaries did not fail to awaken a certain amount of interest among the academic scholars of the day. Not only did theologians become deeply interested, especially as the controversy on the Rites developed, but oriental scholarship, then often connected with mathematics and astronomy, was curious about certain matters of Chinese chronology.

Arabic and Persian studies had given the first notions of what was then called the "Catayan" system of chronology. The scholarly statesman from the house of the Timurides, Ulugh Beg (Muḥammad Ṭūrğāy) (1393—1449) who governed Samarkand, had, aided by a staff of scholars, compiled in 1437 a great work on the different systems of calendars, on chronology, on the course of the stars and the position of the fixed stars, called Züld-i dżadid-i sultanî. In this he had largely made use of the work done by

the Persian scholar Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (Febr. 18th 1201—June 26th 1274) 1). The latter, being a favourite of the Mongol Khan Hulagū (brother of the Great-Khans Muḥāka and Ḥubilai), who conquered Bagdad in 1258 2), had unusual opportunities to become acquainted with the Chinese ("Catayan") system of chronology. He gave in an Arabic transcription the pronunciation of the Chinese ("Catayan") cyclical characters and other time-divisions. Through Ulugh Beg's work these became known to the Western Orientalists of the late 16th and early 17th centuries.

It was the great Joseph Scaliger 3) who first became acquainted with the "Catayan" twelve "branches". He himself tells us 4) that he owed this knowledge to his correspondence with Ignatius, the patriarch of Antioch. This Ignatius, the XVIIth of the name, had fled to Rome, according to some, in order to escape from the persecution of the Turks, according to others, in order to do penance for his defection from the Christian faith, having even gone so far as to embrace Mohammedanism. He assisted the pope Gregorius XIIIth in his reform of the calendar 5). In 1581 he sent Scaliger a list of the twelve animal names by which the cycle of twelve years was called in Syriac, Arabic, Turkish, Persian and "Chatai" (and Uigur, identical with the latter) which Scaliger published 6). The "Chatai" words were written in Arabic letters, and although there are some errors in the transcription, they represent

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4) Cf. *De emendatione temporum*, most complete ed. 1629, p. 100.
6) *De emendatione temporum*, loc. cit.