Michela Catto (ed.)

Enlightened by China

Representations and Myths in 18th-Century Europe

VIELLA

Viella Historical Research
32

Enlightened by China

Representations and Myths in 18th-Century Europe

edited by
Michela Catto

viella

First edition: November 2025
ISBN 979-12-5701-093-5
ISBN 979-12-5701-099-7 (pdf)
DOI https://doi.org/10.52056/9791257010997

This study was carried out within the project Images of China from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment and received funding from the European Union Next-Generation EU - National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) – MISSION 4 – COMPONENT 2, INVESTIMENT 1.1 Fondo per il Programma Nazionale di Ricerca e Progetti di Rilevante Interesse Nazionale (PRIN) – CUP: D53D23021390001 - P2022RWWHN.

Cover illustration: William Alexander, "A group of trackers of the vessel at dinner", in *The Costume of China*, London, W. Miller, 1805, Archive.org.

viella
libreria editrice
via delle Alpi, 32
I-00198 ROMA
tel. 06 84 17 758
fax 06 85 35 39 60
www.viella.it

Contents

Michela Catto

Introduction

In European Enlightenment culture, the Celestial Empire was at once interlocutor and pretext, a source of both fascination and unease, an exemplary model and a polemical counter-image. By looking at China, 18th-century Europeans were in fact speaking about themselves: their religious conflicts and political anxieties, their colonial ambitions and reform projects, their reflections on alterity, and their attempts to define what constituted civilization and, ultimately, modernity. The volume presented here, which grew out of the conference "Enlightened by China. Representations and Myths in 18th-Century Europe" (Turin, 19-20 June 2025), gathers and amplifies that collective discussion. It brings together essays that, with different yet complementary approaches, explore the plurality of images, representations, and myths of China in European culture. Taken together, they offer a collective reflection on how Europe constructed – and staged – the Chinese myth, making it one of the central devices of its self-representation.

The roots of the European myth of China are closely tied to the presence of the Jesuits. From the end of the 16th century, beginning with Matteo Ricci, the Society of Jesus crafted an image of China as a land of ancient wisdom and civilization governed by natural reason. This idealized vision began to fracture in the 17th century with the onset of the Chinese Rites Controversy, as tensions within the mission and conflicts with Rome grew. Irene Gaddo shows how, between the 17th and 18th centuries, missionary reports were carefully constructed: they emphasized edifying aspects while concealing daily difficulties, failures, internal conflicts, and the many grey zones of accommodation to Chinese culture. *Litterae indipetae*, annual reports, and correspondence with Propaganda Fide or European courts contributed to a narrative portraying China as the privileged field of Jesuit mission – a land of martyrdom and heroism, but also of remarkable success in cultural adaptation. Daily missionary life, however, was much more fragile, marked by precariousness, political mediations, and continuous adjustments that the Jesuits sought to mask.

From European missionaries in China we turn to Chinese people in Europe. Figures such as Shen Fuzong, Arcade Huang, Fan Shouyi, or Xie Qinggao – scholars, interpreters, or travellers – demonstrate that in the 18th century there was a tangible Chinese presence in Europe, though often forgotten and difficult to trace. Apart from a few well-known cases, most of these individuals fell into

anonymity. The reasons are varied: subordination to Europeans, changes of name, or the marginal positions they occupied in European society. Monica De Togni reconstructs their traces – in library catalogues, diaries, portraits, and textual mediations – revealing a dialogue less one-sided than often assumed, and showing that the myth of China was nourished not only by "distant images", but also by lived encounters and personal relationships.

Among the great vehicles of European representation were the *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses* (1702-1776) and Jean-Baptiste Du Halde's *Description de la Chine* (1735). Through multiple translations and the scientific value of their ever-updated contents, these works became indispensable sources for the construction of "French-style" knowledge of China. Michela Catto analyses Du Halde's work, highlighting both its encyclopedic ambitions and its tensions with Rome. Beneath the wealth of geographic, ethnographic, and political information lay clear ideological choices: to exalt Confucian rationality and imperial stability, to emphasize affinities between Confucian morality and Christianity, and to promote a Jesuit image of China that had become particularly problematic in the midst of the Rites Controversy. Unsurprisingly, the *Description* was celebrated by 18th-century intellectuals. At the same time, it was viewed with suspicion by the Holy Office, which demanded revisions and forced the Society of Jesus to issue a public apology. Pierre Antoine Fabre and Sabina Pavone show how the *Lettres édifiantes* functioned as a bridge between religious edification and ethnographic curiosity, transforming missionary letters into a powerful European publishing enterprise that shaped public perceptions of China. Virgile Pinot had already underscored the radical editorial rewriting carried out in Paris before their publication; new research now continues to reveal why this enterprise was so successful, showing how a European readership – both Catholic and Protestant – was hungry for travel accounts, cultural taxonomies, and marvels of nature and politics from afar.

The Chinese myth entered the very heart of European philosophical and theological debates. Already in the early decades of the century, as Francesco Borghesi and Daniel Canaris show, Paolo Mattia Doria (1667-1746) looked to China as a kind of "real utopia": a political model in which moral philosophy, embodied by Confucian mandarins, was able to limit despotism and guarantee stability and prosperity. In this sense, the Neapolitan thinker reworked the Jesuit vision of China in a Platonic and Enlightenment key, while at the same time maintaining polemical distance from the missionaries. Canaris also reconstructs the pioneering work of the Jesuit François Noël (1651-1729), who attempted a systematic reading of Confucian ethics through the framework of scholastic Aristotelianism. At a time when comparative philosophy did not yet exist, Noël placed categories such as virtue, passions, and reason in dialogue, showing that the Confucian tradition could be interpreted not as exotic moralism, but as a coherent system, translatable into the European philosophical lexicon. His work, however, was silenced by censorship linked to the Rites Controversy – an emblematic fate, where theology and politics were tightly interwoven.

Bento Machado Mota, in turn, explores the question of "Chinese atheism", a battleground between rigorists and advocates of accommodation. Political atheists

among the Confucians, idolatrous Buddhists, skeptical mandarins: missionaries and theologians used the Chinese case (alongside that of the Tupi in Brazil) to reflect on the salvation of unbelievers, the notion of philosophical sin, and the possibility of virtue without faith. China thus became central to European debates on atheism and natural morality, on the necessity (or otherwise) of religion, and on whether ethics could exist independently of faith.

The 18th century was also the age of comparative linguistics and the search for original languages, an attempt to recover a unitary root of humanity. Valentina Bottanelli and Anna Giazzon focus here on Philippe Masson's 1713 work, which advanced the bold hypothesis of a Hebrew origin of the Chinese language. In a context shaped by the République des Lettres and biblical debates, Chinese became precious material for tracing universal linguistic genealogies, poised between sacred philology and emerging comparative studies. In parallel, Paolo De Troia analyses the geographical and cartographic works of Ricci and Giulio Aleni, showing how the Jesuits offered Chinese readers an idealized image of Europe, capable of arousing curiosity and admiration and of legitimizing the missionary project among elites. Thus, not only China as a myth for Europe, but also Europe as a myth for China: a mirror game in which each civilization both saw and redefined itself through the other, mediated by Jesuit exchanges.

The reception of China in European literature is exemplified by the case of Oliver Goldsmith. As Chen Cui shows, his *The Citizen of the World* (1762) is built around a fictional character – the Chinese philosopher Lien Chi Altangi – who observes and critiques English society. Once again, China becomes a literary device that enables Europe to look at itself through the eyes of another. Behind this narrative artifice lies Jesuit mediation: translations of Confucian classics, Du Halde's *Description*, and, more broadly, a European tradition which, from Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* (1721) to the *Lettres chinoises* of the Marquis d'Argens, had learned to view Europe through the gaze of others. China thus served as both a laboratory of cosmopolitanism and a site of social critique, as well as evidence of the transnational circulation of ideas in which missionary texts, philosophical treatises, and novels shared the same cultural space.

The Chinese myth also played a crucial role in political debates. Niccolò Guasti shows how, in mid-18th-century Naples, Antonio Genovesi and Gaetano Filangieri discussed China with a mixture of admiration and criticism: on the one hand, the mandarins' meritocracy, prosperous agriculture, and Confucian civil religion as instruments of reform; on the other, commercial isolation, instability, and despotism as insurmountable limits. Giulio Talini shifts attention to the Caribbean colonies in the aftermath of the Haitian Revolution, where the "Chinese model" was reinterpreted by white planters as a paradigm of order and industriousness founded on forced labour – a reading that reveals how the myth could be bent to legitimize colonial exploitation. Paolo Bianchini examines the period of the Jesuit suppression (1773) and the "Beijing Schism". In the midst of the Society's crisis, the Chinese mission became a field of renegotiation of loyalties between Rome, Catholic monarchies, and the imperial court, but also a cultural space through which Jesuits sought to preserve visibility and legitimacy in Europe.

Alongside words came images. Guido Abbattista reconstructs the long trajectory of visual representations of China, from 17th-century Jesuit engravings to illustrated collections of the early 19th century. The iconography of the benevolent sovereign, the diligent farmer, and the virtuous mandarin helped consolidate the sinophile myth. With the Macartney Embassy (1792-1794) and the opening of Chinese ports, however, that image began to fracture: China appeared "stagnant", closed to innovation. Illustrated publishing, increasingly aimed at a mass readership, accentuated exoticism and reinforced stereotypes that would later accompany the age of imperialism.

The thread running through these essays is the trajectory of the Chinese myth in the 18th century. In the early decades, the empire appeared as a political and moral model: Confucius as legislator, meritocratic bureaucracy, harmony between nature and society. By mid-century, doubts emerged with Montesquieu's critiques and Genovesi's ambivalence; by the century's end, these doubts deepened into a crisis of the myth. China was perceived as immobile, closed to commerce, incapable of innovation. In this sense, it became a privileged laboratory for thinking alterity. This trajectory mirrors that of the Enlightenment itself, torn between cosmopolitanism and colonialism, between admiration for the Other and reaffirmation of European superiority through the idea of progress.

This volume shows how, for 18th-century Europeans, China was at once mirror and screen: mirror of a Europe questioning itself, screen on which to project desires and fears. The interdisciplinary approach gathered here demonstrates how central the "Chinese question" was to Europe in the 18th century, and confirms that the history of representations and myths is not a minor chapter, but a key to understanding the deeper fabric of an entire age – an age truly "Enlightened by China".

Irene Gaddo

The Fragile Empire of Faith. Representations and Realities of the Jesuit China Mission (17th-18th centuries)

1. *Celebrating China*

A century after entering China, the Jesuits' missionary enterprise was celebrated as a success. Following turmoil and restrictions, the pacification of the populous and vast Chinese empire under the new Qing dynasty had reopened the country's doors to European religious orders, with the members of the Society of Jesus as the most influential group. Their presence at court was pivotal in securing the Jesuits a privileged (and highly envied) position within the Celestial Empire. As the *litterae indipetae* (petitions for the Indies) demonstrate, the Far East, and particularly China, was one of the most appealing destinations for aspiring missionaries.[1] These fascinating documents revealing the Jesuits' spirituality and mission policy derived also from the knowledge, aspirations, and imagination of the candidates: they were able to draw on a variety of sources, including images, letters, and reports, as well as the edifying stories of apostolic zeal and martyrdom they had heard in college classrooms or refectories or learned during the periodic visits of mission procurators.[2]

1. Camilla Russell, *Being a Jesuit in Renaissance Italy. Biography Writing in the Early Global Age*, Cambridge, MA-London, Harvard University Press, 2022, pp. 52-85. For a quantitative analysis of the applications to work in China, see Elisa Frei, *"Sfoghi di un cuore infiammato". Il desiderio dei gesuiti italiani per le Indie orientali (1687-1730)*, PhD dissertation, Università di Trieste e Udine, 2017, pp. 139-212, 323-324; Elisa Frei, *Early Modern* Litterae Indipetae *for the East Indies*, Leiden, Brill, 2023 (It. tr. *Bussar ben forte per aprirsi la porta nell'Indie. Negoziare la missione nella Compagnia di Gesù, XVII–XVIII sec.*, Alessandria, Edizioni dell'Orso, 2023), pp. 114-148; Emanuele Colombo, *Quando Dio chiama. I gesuiti e le missioni nelle Indie (1560-1960)*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2023, pp. 7-22, 160-165.

2. Emanuele Colombo, Coralys Munoz-Feliciano, and Antonio Taiga Guterres, "Le *Indipetae* dell'Antica Compagnia (1540-1773). Breve guida alle fonti e aspetti quantitativi", in *Cinque secoli di* Litterae indipetae. *Il desiderio delle missioni nella Compagnia di Gesù*, ed. by Girolamo Imbruglia, Pierre Antoine Fabre, and Guido Mongini, Rome, Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 2022, pp. 23-42: 27-28. For a broad overview of the *indipetae* letters with full bibliography, see the introductory essays by Emanuele Colombo and Guido Mongini in *The First Italian* Indipetae. *Jesuit Petitions for the Indies (1557-80)*, ed. by Emanuele Colombo, Irene Gaddo, and Guido Mongini, Boston, Institute of Jesuit Sources, Boston College, 2024, pp. 13-36 and 37-59, respectively.

After a century of Jesuit ascendancy in the East, the number of sources and channels for information multiplied, as did public interest in non-European societies. Thoroughly edited news and reports by Jesuit missionaries circulated in the annual letters, histories, and cosmographies to obtain support for their missions, contributing to spreading the idea of the vast and remote Chinese empire and its fascinating, centuries-long culture.

A selective portrait of China was painted for the sake of the mission, and this depiction proved particularly compelling to those who wished to follow in the footsteps of Francis Xavier (1506-1552), the great apostle of the Indies whose ambition to enter China was thwarted at the gates of the great empire on the island of Sancian.[3] Notices, circular letters, and announcements from the Indies stirred expectations and desires, celebrating the Society's results in China in terms of personnel and method, rooted firmly in the specificity of the Jesuit identity.[4]

Under the generalate of Tirso González (in charge from 1681 to 1705), China occupied a privileged position in the Order's missionary strategy. During a period of internal conflict and shifting European alliances and geopolitics, General González reinvigorated the missions and expanded them from the West Indies (including the establishment of the Quito province and California) to Turkey and Lebanon, Syria, and Armenia in the East. Himself a successful missionary known as the "Apostle of Spain", González paid particular attention to China in his official letters, thereby inspiring candidacies for that mission.[5] By the end of the 17th century, the Jesuit apostolate in China was flourishing, particularly under Emperor Kangxi (1654-1722). An admirer of the diplomatic skills and technical-mathematical expertise of the European missionaries, Kangxi made numerous concessions to Christians and granted tolerance to the teaching of Christianity in 1692.[6]

Shifting the focus beyond the propaganda-oriented and unified representations of the Jesuit endeavour in China to those involved in the arduous work of evangelization, however, reveals a much more fragmented picture and a less neat and optimistic impression. Living between geographically and culturally distant

3. On the relevance of Francis Xavier for the candidates to the Indies, in a long-term perspective, see Emanuele Colombo, "Francesco Saverio nelle *Indipetae*", in *Cinque secoli di* Litterae indipetae, pp. 367-383.

4. Thomas M. Cohen and Emanuele Colombo, "Jesuit Missions", in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern History, c. 1350-1750*, ed. by Hamish Scott, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2015, vol. II, pp. 254-279. On the roots of *accommodatio* in Jesuit spirituality, see Guido Mongini, *"Ad Christi similitudinem". Ignazio di Loyola e i primi gesuiti tra eresia e ortodossia*, Alessandria, Edizioni dell'Orso, 2011, pp. 131-154; Stefania Tutino, "Jesuit Accommodation, Dissimulation, Mental Reservation", in *The Oxford Handbook of the Jesuits*, ed. by Ines G. Zupanov, New York, Oxford University Press, 2019, pp. 216-240.

5. Emanuele Colombo, "Vocazione missionaria nel generalato di Tirso González de Santalla (1687-1705)", in *Cinque secoli di* Litterae indipetae, pp. 168-178.

6. Nicolas Standaert, "The 'Edict of Tolerance': A Textual History and Reading", in *In the Light and Shadow of an Emperor: Tomás Pereira, SJ (1645-1708), the Kangxi Emperor and the Jesuit Mission in China*, ed. by Artur K. Wardega SJ and António Vasconcelos de Saldanha, Cambridge, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012, pp. 308-358.

worlds and driven by a felt need for urgent action and the spirit of obedience, Society of Jesus missionaries experienced a reality marked by uncertainty and apprehension while carrying out their apostolate at a time when their missionary model and the Society as a whole were under massive, disruptive attack.

2. *Orienteering between Rome and China*

In spring 1681, Vice Provincial Gian Domenico Gabiani seized the moment in Beijing to invite the Jesuit communities in China to celebrate the centenary of Matteo Ricci's arrival. He urged everyone to read two texts in particular: the 1583 letter "De renovatio spiritus" (On the renovation of spirits) by General Acquaviva; and the 1639 letter "De Anno saeculari Societatis" (On the centenary of the Society) by General Vitelleschi. Both letters were exhortations to reinvigorate apostolic zeal and reinforce obedience to the Holy See. Following the exile of Christian agents in Canton and the definitive pacification of the empire under the Qing dynasty, the superior called for strengthening the bonds of union and renewed apostolic commitment, significantly recalling the confrères to the principles of Ignatian spirituality. Alongside the recommended readings, Gabiani also expressly invited everyone to practice the Spiritual Exercises "for eight or ten days with extraordinary fervour".[7]

This reference to the roots of the Jesuit vocation and the Order's constitutive bond with papal authority was significant because it addressed issues that were sensitive for the apostolate in the East at the turn of the century. Meanwhile, Provincial Francesco Saverio Filippucci reported on this situation from Macau, dramatically appealing to Rome and admitting that "I would much rather see myself dead than be placed in such an intricate labyrinth and tangled thorny bush".[8] The arrival of regular and secular emissaries caused perceived upheaval in the Chinese missionary field that gave rise to a sense of confusion and danger. This expansion of missionary personnel was a consequence of the new Roman policy towards the East, inaugurated by the 1622 establishment of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (Propaganda Fide), the curial body aimed at defending and asserting papal prerogatives globally.[9] To this end, the position of vicar apostolic was created to represent the Holy See in foreign lands. The introduction of this figure, which had the title of bishop *in partibus infidelium* and

7. Gian Domenico Gabiani, Pekin, 12 March 1681, Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (hereafter ARSI), *Jap. Sin.* 163, ff. 116r-118r: 117r. Like other missionaries, Gabiani (1623-1694) was exiled in Canton (1665-1671), later returning to the missions as vice provincial (1680-1683 and 1689-1692). See *ad vocem*, in *Diccionario histórico de la Compañia de Jesús* (hereafter DHCJ), ed. by Charles E. O'Neill and Joaquín M. Domínguez, 4 vols, Rome-Madrid, Institutum historicum Societatis Iesu, Universidad Pontificia Comillas, 2001, vol. II, p. 1545.

8. Francesco Saverio Filippucci, Macau, 10 October 1681, ARSI, *Jap. Sin*. 163, ff. 127r-136v: 127r. Filippucci was superior in Canton and provincial of Japan (1680-1683), then visitor (1688-1691) and again provincial (1690-1692). See *ad vocem*, DHCJ, vol. II, p. 1429.

9. Giovanni Pizzorusso, *Governare le missioni, conoscere il mondo nel XVII secolo. La Congregazione pontificia De Propaganda Fide*, Viterbo, Sette città, 2018.

was assisted by clerics and pro-vicars, affected the existing balance of privileges and rights in the system of *padroado régio*.[10]

The arrival of Propaganda Fide personnel caused great concern among the leaders of the Jesuit community, as the slowness of communication between Rome and the eastern outposts heightened uncertainty. Letters between local superiors and the Jesuit Curia could take over two years to reach their destination – or worse, become lost in transit – and this risked rendering instructions and information obsolete, thus increasing doubts and wariness. Additionally, suspicions that orders and mandates from abroad might be forged or outdated threatened the operational life of the mission, forcing missionaries to exercise caution and examine them carefully before accepting them and making decisions. As Filippucci pointed out, these conditions made governance a highly complicated affair. On the one hand, it was difficult to run the government based on documentation that the Roman emissaries carried with them or referred to, with no proof of its authenticity.[11] On the other hand, it was also difficult to validate Chinese documentation in a way that would render it legally unassailable, particularly when it was required to correct the inaccurate or false information on which the Roman authorities based their mission-related decisions.[12]

Due to this slowness of communication, particularly instructions crucial to the functioning of the missions, the local personnel acted cautiously. They tried to juggle local contingencies and resolutions coming from decision-making centres where "they [officials in Rome] do not know what is happening here or a very different picture from the original is painted".[13]

One of the most urgent issues was the oath of obedience to the vicars apostolic that missionaries were required to swear when working within the *padroado* system. This is what Filippucci tried to explain to his Roman superiors, being careful to emphasize that papal authority itself was not in question:

> [Those] of us here who had any doubts about the Bulls and Orders that came from Rome, it was only *dubium facti, non iuris*, about the true and primary intention of the Supreme Pontiff, as it actually was, and not about his very broad, unlimited, and independent authority, about which no doubt was held, either in shadow or in dream. Moreover, by the grace of the Lord, we have always been, are, and will remain most willing (as far as we are concerned) to humbly accept all the doctrines (*etiam extra fidem*) He taught to us and to carry out all the orders sent to us by the Most Holy Father and his sacred Tribunals.[14]

Meanwhile, the arrival of the vicars apostolic and Propaganda Fide members, independent of Iberian patronage limitations, was bound to alarm a community that mostly considered the decision about obligatory oaths to be an imposition and a way of weakening the Jesuits' prominent position in China. The flow of information

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 62-74, 106-114.

11. Filippucci to Father General, Macau, 22 November 1681, ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* 163, ff. 152-155v: 153v.

12. *Ibid.*, f. 155v.

13. *Ibid.*, f. 153v.

14. Filippucci to Father General, Macau, 10 October 1681, ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* 163, ff. 127r-136v: 129r.

between the East and Europe seemed to serve the same purpose. Failure to promptly comply with the submission demanded by the apostolic emissaries was regarded as insubordination, and the Jesuits were portrayed as "rebellious and averse to the Holy See". This was a blatant assault on their "fame and good name throughout the world" and, more alarmingly, an offence in relation to papal authority.[15] For Jesuits in general, defending and explaining the reasons for the missionaries' actions took on a broader meaning. And yet, Filippucci asked himself disconsolately, how should they respond to those invested with apostolic functions by a pontifical congregation who asserted their authority over the missions and considered the *Monita secreta* to be the true constitutions of the Ignatian Order? How should they react to these individuals who accused the Society of being "schismatic and disobedient to the Holy Apostolic See" and of promoting misconduct "through its constitutions, rules, and current government?"[16] Most Jesuits were aware that anti-Jesuit criticism was becoming increasingly acrimonious and widespread, gaining support from both lay and religious groups. The superiors were aware of the threats to their mission and called for unity and caution, although this was difficult to maintain amid growing rivalries and misunderstandings.

3. *The perils of success*

The Jesuits' engagement with Chinese traditions and their relationships with imperial elites and local communities across several provinces of the vast territory favoured their achievements from Ricci's time onwards. A century later, their established presence in China further complicated matters in a more varied and "crowded" missionary world, where the arrival of Jesuit contingents from France, outside the Portuguese patronage system, exacerbated internal rivalries.[17] On observing the situation, Filippucci shared his gloomy thoughts with Father Grimaldi, who was in Europe at the time acting as the procurator of the China mission:

> Such a flood of missionaries, each going their way, wary of having their plans discovered, which they want to hide and yet are clearly visible, I fear will ruin the mission in China, which essentially requires operating *tamquam aliud agens*, with great foresight and respect; by going about with fury, which they call fervour and zeal, everything will be lost, as that holy man Father Matteo Ricci foresaw and predicted, as shown in Father Bartoli's China, but the world has already such an idea that to expose this sound truth is ascribed to our pride, ambition, and desire to reign alone.[18]

15. *Ibid.*, ff. 127r-v, 128r.

16. Filippucci to Father General, Macau, 20 October (but signed 30 November) 1682, ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* 163, ff. 189r-201r: 198r, 199r.

17. On the internal conflicts, see Liam Matthew Brockey, *Journey to the East. The Jesuit Mission to China, 1579-1724*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2007; Ronnie Po-chia Hsia, "Tomás Pereira, French Jesuits and the Kangxi Emperor", in *Tomás Pereira, S.J. (1646-1708). Life, Work and World*, ed. by Luís Filipe Barreto, Lisbon, Centro Científico e Cultural de Macau, 2010, pp. 353-374.

18. Filippucci to Alessandro Grimaldi, Canton, 31 March 1687, ARSI, *Jap. Sin*. 164, ff. 4r-5v: 4v.

More pressing concerns arose from the growing number of members of other orders and Propaganda Fide emissaries whose behaviour seemed to disregard the Jesuits' calls for prudence and caution, issued on the basis of their lengthy experience in China. On the contrary, suggestions and advice were recklessly ignored "as if we were enemies", and only in risky or extreme situations did they come to the Jesuits for aid.[19] Some cases in point were reported to the general. Although Jesuit superiors initially considered it better not to meddle in the newcomers' affairs and to remain "motionless as logs", they ultimately had to intervene because the Chinese authorities recognized them as being the representatives with whom to deal. In Xao Cheu (Chaozhou), therefore, Father Grelon helped the French clerics buy a house, only to later be accused of not taking their side with the local mandarins. In Canton, Filippucci was asked by Yves Le Hir du Brand-Carpon, a member of the Missions Étrangères de Paris (MEP), to help him purchase a building to be used as a church. The Jesuit later discovered that this was not the intended purpose of the building, a fact that could trigger an intervention by the local authorities. After all, he pointed out, "in China, it is shocking for a foreigner to own a house that is neither a church for preachers of the holy law nor a merchant's factory".

Ignorant of the local customs and unfamiliar with the language, the French cleric became embroiled in another unpleasant episode with a servant. The quarrel escalated into an open argument in which the former openly insulted and threatened his opponent with a half-scimitar in the middle of the street. News of the incident circulated until it reached the local governor who, according to Filippucci's report, summoned the Jesuit to criticize not so much the incident itself (as the unfortunate servant had emerged unharmed), but rather the public repercussions of such behaviour by a representative of the Christian religion. It mattered little that he was a member of the French clergy and not a Jesuit or friar; the incident discredited missionaries and the Christian presence as a whole, since few people were aware of, or understood, the differences between religious orders.[20] Other cases involved Father Turcotti, Filippucci's companion and successor as superior in Canton.[21] Disregard for the restrictions and laws imposed by the local authorities had caused further problems involving members of the MEP: they were charged with a series of violations of customs laws. Accusations included illegally withdrawing a large quantity of gold (valued at 7,000 taels), trading goods without an imperial licence, and illegally transporting and concealing European passengers. Furthermore, chests containing silver tableware and fabrics – which would otherwise have been seized – had been

19. Filippucci to Father General, Canton, 18 December 1687, ARSI, *Jap. Sin*. 164, ff. 24r-25v: 24r. The following quotations are from the same source.

20. Filippucci to Father General, Canton, 19 October 1688, ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* 164, ff. 78r-87r: 82r-83r.

21. Carlo Giovanni Turcotti (1643-1706) worked for over 25 years in the provinces of Guangdong and Guangxi, being in charge as superior of Canton and visitor (1698-1701). See *ad vocem*, DHCJ, vol. III, pp. 3846-47.

passed off as goods intended for well-known Jesuits, namely fathers Verbiest and Filippucci.[22]

In such circumstances, the customs officials summoned the Jesuits to explain the facts and act as guarantors. This avoided legal proceedings for the alleged offences and saved all the missionaries from disgrace given the threat that, in addition to imprisonment – as Turcotti complained – "notification would also have been given to the emperor and, by posting a notice on the door of the church in Canton, they all would have been declared transgressors of the laws of the kingdom and of royal rights".[23] The individuals involved seemed unconcerned by the danger and the potential discrediting of their missionary work among neophytes and gentiles. Shortly after the events had subsided, Turcotti voiced his concerns to Charles Maigrot, the recognized leader of the MEP newcomers.[24] The Jesuit reprimanded them in harsh tones for their behaviour, pointing out that it had repeatedly forced him to defend and excuse them before the authorities even to the point of resorting to false testimony and invented justifications. In return, he received nothing but ingratitude. Instead of appreciating his help or heeding the advice of those with "greater and better zeal and knowledge of Chinese affairs", Maigrot and his companions accused the Jesuits and damaged their reputation "here in China as in Europe". They blamed the Jesuits for all their misfortunes while demanding their support and flaunting "great friendship and brotherhood towards us, especially towards the court fathers, for purposes that only God knows, since their respect and harmony are false".[25] This outburst earned the Jesuit a serious reprimand from his superiors, as Maigrot had approached them to voice his complaints.[26] On the other hand, Filippucci himself, who had intervened to restore peace between the two parties, wrote to the general in similar terms, emphasizing the opportunism of the "Lord clerics" and "the astounding style with which they treat the Society":

> At the same time these people [the French clerics], who seek to discredit it [the Society of Jesus], oppress it, and extinguish it, or at least throw it out of all these missions, they

22. Filippucci to Father General, Macau, 31 January 1690, ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* 164, ff. 203r-205v.

23. Turcotti to Charles Maigrot, Foshan, 14 June 1690, in *In Barbaras Gentilium Terras. Epistolario del gesuita Carlo Giovanni Turcotti (1643-1706)*, ed. by Irene Gaddo, Gallo edizioni, Vercelli, 2018, pp. 95-100.

24. Charles Maigrot (1655-1730), MEP, left for the Far East in 1681 in the retinue of Monsignor Pallu. He was then elevated to bishop of Conon and vicar apostolic of the province of Fokien (Fujian) and was identified as one of the fiercest opponents of Chinese rites against the Jesuits' interpretation.

25. Turcotti to Maigrot, Foshan, 14 June 1690, in *In Barbaras Gentilium Terras*, pp. 95-100: 99. Turcotti did not forget the episode. More than 10 years later, the Jesuit recalled the incident in the context of the reprisal of the dispute over the rites: Turcotti to Maigrot, Canton, September 8, 1701, in *Ibid.*, pp. 339-354. See Claudia von Collani, "Charles Maigrot's Role in the Chinese Rites Controversy", in *The Chinese Rites Controversy: Its History and Meaning*, ed. by David E. Mungello, London, Routledge, 1994, pp. 149-183.

26. Maigrot to Filippucci, Canton, 9 December 1690, ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* 164, f. 367v; Filippucci to Maigrot, Macau, 21 December 1690, ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* 164, f. 367r.

> expect and want us to serve them, no matter rightly and wrongly, in what they desire and cannot obtain by their own; they expose us to dangerous, expensive and discrediting affairs; at every occasion they repel the mandarins and they want us to appease them and, furthermore, to get from them whatever they need.[27]

4. *Operational wariness and disputes*

Caution, prudence, knowledge, and experience were to be the guiding principles for all the young recruits who yearned to go to China. As the visitor of the Chinese vice province, Turcotti warned the superior general about the training of missionary personnel and objected to the College of Macao, where "our people are called nothing but bonzes, a dishonourable term among the Chinese".[28] He proposed a list of resolutions to restore the institution's standing as a centre for education and to acquire the specific knowledge and necessary skills to work effectively in the Chinese mission. His suggestions were in accordance with the path traced by Ricci, and indeed he suggested that an effigy of Ricci be displayed in the college hall. The main criticism he raised was the lack of staff who knew a single word of Chinese or anything about China or its rites.[29] As these considerations suggest, for the Jesuits language learning and cultural knowledge went hand in hand. However, linguistic engagement and expertise became somewhat of a "luxury" as the Jesuits' expansion led to a growing number of sacramental and administrative duties, thus reducing the time available for proper training and thorough study.[30] For the generation of missionaries arriving in China from the 1680s onwards, it was necessary to undergo rapid training and acquire basic communication skills in order to be quickly deployed for evangelization. Indeed, the Society had a dual and integrated need "for subjects who study books and others who conduct missions […] not idling away in this study which requires the whole man and many years".[31]

For most of the "vineyard workers", language skills and knowledge of Chinese society developed through practical experience in the field according to a tutor-student model in which younger apprentices learned from more experienced

27. Filippucci, Macau, 31 January 1690, ARSI, *Jap. Sin*. 164, ff. 203r-205v: 204v.

28. Turcotti to Father General, s.l., 1702, in *In Barbaras Gentilium Terras*, pp. 395-413: 403. On the Jesuits' relationship to Buddhism, see Michela Catto, "I gesuiti non sono bonzi e l'Europa non è l'India. I primi catechismi cinesi della Compagnia di Gesù", *Rivista storica italiana*, 129 (2017), pp. 137-155.

29. As a matter of fact, knowledge of Chinese was not a prerequisite for European personnel. Language skills and abilities constituted one of the most difficult and tiring obstacles for most missionaries, and rarely did those undertaking the mission already have these competencies. See Frei, *Early Modern* Litterae Indipetae, pp. 24-27.

30. As argued in Ronnie Po-chia Hsia, "Language Acquisition and Missionary Strategies in China, 1580-1760", in *Missions d'évangélisation et circulation des savoirs*, ed. by Charlotte de Castelnau-l'Estoile, Marie-Lucie Copete, Aliocha Maldavsky, and Ines G. Županov, Madrid, Casa de Velázquez, 2011, pp. 211-229.

31. Filippucci to Father General, Macau, 29 March 1682, ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* 163, f. 181r.

masters. Chinese readers among the catechists or paid literati helped them to understand and practise the spoken language. Turcotti, who arrived in China from the Far East in 1681, was assigned to Filippucci after only a few months of training in Macao.[32]

Turcotti repeatedly underlined the importance of guidance and expertise from senior, more knowledgeable figures, as well as the crucial role of direct experience for understanding indigenous culture. He used this argument primarily against Maigrot and his followers. As is well known, Maigrot openly challenged the Jesuit missionary method from his Fujian vicariate by prohibiting rites for ancestors and the cult of Confucius, branding them as superstitious and idolatrous. Without going into further detail, it is worth noting that Turcotti responded in both personal letters and reports addressed to Rome and his fellow missionaries, criticizing Maigrot for his lack of knowledge of Chinese culture and traditions, knowledge that was mostly second-hand and based on his recent arrival in China. The argument clearly implied a comparison with the Society's longer and more distinguished history in the country, portraying an image of cohesion and harmony without dissenting voices or disagreements among the Jesuits.[33] Turcotti described the same situation in his letters to Carlo Tommaso Maillard de Tournon, the Savoyard prelate who was sent to the East by Pope Clement XI as the first plenipotentiary legate tasked with settling the controversy over Chinese rites. The Jesuit used the expression "sine scientia et experientia sinica" ("without knowledge and experience of China") to criticize those who opposed the legitimacy of the rites in both China and Rome, noting that it was easier to deceive people in Rome due to a lack of "understanding of the language, letters, and customs of China".[34] Turcotti argued that the papal legate's presence on the ground would allow him to collect first-hand information that would be useful for formulating a fairer judgement on the controversial matter.

This was a last-ditch attempt by the Jesuits. The elderly and ailing Turcotti knew that a substantial amount of documentation had been gathered, and that his Order and its supporters had made efforts to refute the accusations in Rome. He had contributed to this endeavour by arranging for procurators to be dispatched and by collecting as many testimonial accounts and writings as possible in support of the

32. On the vicissitudes of Turcotti, who joined the China mission after an initial period in the Moluccas and three years of imprisonment by the Dutch, see Irene Gaddo, *Conflitti e controversie in terra di missione. Carlo Giovanni Turcotti in Cina tra Sei e Settecento*, Vercelli, Gallo edizioni, 2018, pp. 15-29.

33. Such as that expressed by Claude Visdelou (1656-1737), as acknowledged by Turcotti himself. See Turcotti to Claude Visdelou, Foshan, 9 May 1705, in *In Barbaras Gentilium Terras*, pp. 449-454. The case of Visdelou was well known within the Society; see Sabina Pavone, "Dentro e fuori la Compagnia di Gesù: Claude Visdelou tra riti cinesi e riti malabarici", in *Los jesuitas. Religión, politica y educatión (siglos XVI–XVIII)*, ed. by José Martínez Millán, Henar Pizarro Llorente, and Esther Jiménez Pablo, Madrid, Universidad Pontificia Comillas, 2012, vol. II, pp. 943-960.

34. Turcotti to Msgr de Tournon, Foshan, 5 September 1705, in *In Barbaras Gentilium Terras*, pp. 455-461: 459.

Chinese rites. Nevertheless, the daunting Turcotti admitted to procurator Kaspar Castner that he had lost heart at the arrival of the papal legate, "since he had come to China with such negative impressions that he did not even want to hear their defence, as if the matter had already been decided and condemned in Rome".[35] Although the final goal of the legation to China remained unclear, he had little doubt about its significant impact on the future of the mission.

However, in a subsequent letter to Monsignor de Tournon, who had now arrived in Beijing and was about to meet the Emperor, Turcotti continued to promote the Society's position, citing numerous testimonial statements in its favour. Once again, he aimed to assert the veracity of this position by appealing to his knowledge of China and its people gained over more than two decades of experience.[36]

Aside from his attempts to defend his own institution, a sense of dismay permeates the final letters of someone who had dedicated his life to the "greater glory of God and the salvation of souls". Turcotti was shocked and dismayed that the Jesuit method was now likely to be condemned, a decision that would make him "guilty of the damnation of countless souls".[37] A similar feeling of shock overwhelmed many of the converts after Maigrot's prohibition and the arrival of Tournon.[38] A combination of personal shortcomings, mistakes, and misunderstandings led to the failure of the first legation to China and the dramatic end of Nuncio de Tournon in Macao, leaving the controversy open until the definitive papal resolution in 1742.[39] In the meantime, a flood of documents stimulated European thought and contributed to the development of new epistemological approaches to China and its civilization.[40]

35. Turcotti to Kaspar Castner, Foshan, 8 December 1705, in *ibid.*, pp. 477-482: 479. The Bavarian Kaspar Castner (1665-1709) was originally meant to join the Tonkin mission from Macao (1697) but was eventually destined for China. He was sent as procurator to Rome in 1704, together with his confrère François Noel. See *ad vocem*, in Joseph Dehergne, *Répertoire des Jésuites de Chine de 1552 à 1800*, Rome-Paris, Institutum historicum Societatis Iesu, Letouzey & Ané, 1973, p. 49.

36. Turcotti to Msgr de Tournon, Canton, 8 December 1705, in *In Barbaras Gentilium Terras*, pp. 463-475.

37. Turcotti to Diego Vidal, Canton, 30 November 1698, in *ibid.*, pp. 145-157: 153.

38. Qui Sheng to Turcotti [1706], Ajuda Library, Lisbon, Jesuítas na Ásia, Codex 44-XII-40, pp. 158-159, in *Sinica Lusitana 1. Fontes chinesas em bibliotecas e arquivos portugueses*, Lisbon, Fundação Oriente, 2000, pp. 25-29. I am very grateful to Prof. Noël Golvers for bringing this document to my attention and for pointing out the correct recipient and date. On Qui Sheng and the involvement of Chinese converts in the issues of the rites, see Ronnie Po-chia Hsia, "Chinese Voices in the Rites Controversy: From China to Rome", and Nicolas Standaert, "Chinese Voices in the Rites Controversy", in *The Rites Controversies in the Early Modern World*, ed. by Ines G. Županov and Pierre Antoine Fabre, Leiden, Brill, 2018, pp. 29-49 and pp. 50-67, respectively.

39. Eugenio Menegon, "A Clash of Court Culture: Papal Envoys in Early Eighteenth-Century Beijing", in *Europe-China. Intercultural Encounters (16th–18th Centuries)*, ed. by Luís Filipe Barreto, Lisbon, Centro Cientifico e Cultural de Macau, 2012, pp. 139-177.

40. Daniela Piemontino, "Introduzione al manoscritto", in *"Con l'occhio fisso sulla origine delle questioni de' riti cinesi". La legazione di Carlo Tommaso Maillard de Tournon*

5. *Conclusion: Chinese misgivings and beyond*

Even from the limited scope of this essay, it is clear that the Jesuit correspondence from China at the turn of the 18th century is a rich source offering insights into several topics. The procedures and information on which the Roman authorities based their decisions, and the conduct of the papal representatives, contrasted with local agents' perceptions and interpretations of decisions that affected their work and communities. The aim of Roman politics to undermine the Iberian patronage system and take over the government of overseas missions caused uncertainty, incomprehension, and resistance to the implementation of resolutions targeting Roman Catholic universalism.

Unlike in the West Indies, the missionaries of the Society of Jesus had successfully advanced in the Chinese empire without the control (but also protection) of the colonial powers, thanks to the apostolic method inaugurated by Ricci; this model was based on gaining intellectual accreditation from the emperor, his court entourage, the social elites, and the population alike. By engaging with the Chinese intellectual tradition and linguistics, the Jesuits were able to disseminate Christianity effectively. However, they remained a religious minority viewed with suspicion and were considered potentially subversive by most members of the imperial elite. To avoid irritating the local authorities, Jesuits moved with intelligence and a keen sense of opportunity and thus were able to gain credibility and respect among the Chinese. This enabled them to preach the Christian creed and spread the Catholic faith *ad maiorem Dei gloriam* and for the salvation of souls. They perceived their situation as a delicate and precarious balance that was threatened by newcomers and their impact, their apostolic tasks, and their bias in relation to Chinese civilization and culture.[41]

The disparity in knowledge about, understanding of, and experience with China among the personnel sent from Rome highlights the complex issue of the transmission and production of reliable information and knowledge. The Jesuits played a leading role in expanding and disseminating ideas and views of China through a variety of studies, translations, and other intellectual endeavours that were relevant to Chinese culture itself.[42] As is well known, European intellectuals and scholars were interested in and studied the Middle Kingdom largely thanks

nella Cina del Settecento, ed. by Daniela Piemontino and Edoardo Tortarolo, Vercelli, Gallo edizioni, 2024, pp. 13-46; Alvise Renier, "La Cina e il pensiero europeo nell'Età dei Lumi. Viaggiatori, missionari, diplomatici", in *Peripli culturali. Viaggiatori europei e incontri con l'alterità in età moderna e contemporanea*, ed. by Giulia Iannuzzi, Rome, Carocci, 2024, pp. 54-78.

41. This condition also affected members of the Society who were "newly arrived and inexperienced […] ignorant of Chinese matters", as Prospero Intorcetta complained about the consultors and superiors in Macao who insisted on making decisions without knowing the situation on the mainland. Intorcetta to Father General, Ham cheu (Hangzhou), 22 February 1688, ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* 164, ff. 41r-42v: 41r-42r.

42. With particular regard to the linguistic sphere, see the recent article by Fangfeng Dong and Yang Yang, "The Cultural Accommodation and Linguistic Activities of the Jesuits in China in the 16th-18th Centuries", *Religions*, 16/4 (2025), available online.

to the works of the Jesuits, but the Society in turn lost control of their arguments and the use of their work, as it was often turned against them. The controversy surrounding Confucianism and the rites is a case in point. The missionaries themselves were aware of this risk. "The sparks risked setting the house on fire", cried Filippucci: the writings of renowned and appreciated authors such as Niccolò Longobardo, Athanasius Kircher, Prospero Intorcetta, and Philippe Couplet had unwittingly provided their opponents with an arsenal of subjects against the Jesuits themselves and their cause in China. Calls that what was written about China for a European readership ought to be evaluated with caution and carefully conveyed went almost unnoticed. As the superior from Macau had warned, the fire soon spread uncontrollably, destroying everything the Jesuits had pursued and achieved in the East.[43] Without lingering on the issue of the Rites Controversy – there are many excellent studies on this topic – it is worth stressing that the increase in channels and sources of information enabled what was initially an intense but limited theological debate within religious orders to expand beyond its original scope and take on a wider resonance in the development of Sino-European relations and the history of Christianity in China.[44] During the 18th century, the circulation of news and the availability of knowledge developed at an impressive pace, resulting in new impulses and unexpected ways of investigating and understanding China and the wider world.

43. Filippucci countered his criticism by citing Ricci, Pantoja, and Vagnoni as the "tria capita et columina" ("three heads and pillars") of the Chinese mission: Filippucci to Father General, Macau, 29 March 1682, ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* 163, ff. 180r-182r: 180r-181r. See also Filippucci to Grimaldi, Canton, 31 March 1687, ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* 164, f. 4v.

44. Eugenio Menegon, "Cina e Occidente dagli Han ai Qing", in *La Cina*, vol. II, *L'età imperiale dai Tre Regni ai Qing*, ed. by Mario Sabattini and Maurizio Scarpari, Turin, Einaudi, 2010, pp. 289-354, in particular pp. 309-320.

Monica De Togni

Are Ghosts Haunting Europe? Chinese people in 18th-Century Italy

Not only a 19th-century ideological spectre haunts Europe. Even earlier, in the 17th and 18th centuries, the physical presence of Chinese people in Europe revealed the circulation of something more intangible. Like an ectoplasm presence, knowledge about China drifted through Europe, often propelled by ulterior motives: offering possible solutions to specific European crises and supporting a desire to reassert a universalist mission for the Church of Rome, wounded by the Lutheran schism and internally fractured by conflicts among religious orders. These divisions came to a head, among other things, in the controversy over Chinese rites, a debate that was far from universalist or truly Catholic in spirit. Despite a growing European interest in China, the traces left by Chinese travellers from the Ming and Qing empires – even those who met sovereigns, rulers, and popes – seem written in dust rather than engraved in the firm ground of European memory. They appear to rest on a layer of neglect, as if these travellers attracted less attention than those who made that same journey but in the opposite direction, from Europe to China.

It almost seems that what draws our attention is not the journey itself, or its destination or the cultural exchanges it fosters, but rather the point of departure. In this view, the value of a journey appears to lie in the identity of the traveller. Encounters between cultures are not always acknowledged as mutually enriching, particularly when one party is not European. This imbalance is evident, for example, in the historical reluctance to grant full cultural and spiritual authority to individuals from China, as seen, for example, in the often fanatical opposition to the ordination of "indigenous" clergy.[1]

Of course, the traveller is important. In fact, there are numerous studies on Europeans, missionaries or not, in China, whose movements, thoughts, and interpersonal connections are investigated. There are proportionally far fewer studies on the Chinese who came to Europe, whether they later became missionaries or not. Yet they left traces, perhaps important ones, waiting to be discovered and explored.

1. An example can be found in Gianni Criveller, "The Chinese Priests of the College for the Chinese in Naples", in *Silent Force: Native Converts in the Catholic China Mission*, ed. by Rachel Lu Yan and Philip Vanhaelemeersch, Leuven, Ferdinand Verbiest Institute, 2009, p. 154.

Not all Chinese who arrived in Europe in the 18th century are entirely ectoplasmic. For instance, some attention has been paid to John Hu (1681?-?), Jean-François Foucquet's (1665-1741) problematic travelling companion, because Foucquet himself left a dossier in his own defence (*Récit fidèle*) concerning the relations between the two of them. Thanks to this *Récit* it is known that Hu had signed a contract with Foucquet in which he agreed to work for five years as a copyist for the Jesuit father, who returned to Europe with a considerable amount of Chinese works. At the end of his five years of work, Foucquet would also pay Hu for his return journey to Canton. However, upon arriving in France, Hu not only failed to fulfil the commitment for which he had already received cash advances, but he also behaved in a very eccentric and problematic manner. When Hu then refused to board the carriage to Rome, Foucquet handed him over to a few trusted persons who arranged for his admission to the asylum in Charenton in the hope that he might be "cured" there. He remained locked up from the spring of 1723 to the autumn of 1725, finally leaving for Canton at the beginning of 1726. Deposited in the 18th century, Foucquet's *Récit* remained largely overlooked until the late 20th century.[2]

Even the portrait of Michael Alphonsus Shen Fuzong (沈福宗, 1658-1691), commissioned by King James II and painted by Godfrey Kneller in 1687, should be more than a fleeting footprint in the dust of the steps Shen walked on European soil.[3] Unfortunately, most materials concerning Shen were lost when he died during an epidemic aboard the ship that was taking him back to China in 1691. Nevertheless, traces of his presence in Europe from 1683 are gradually being rediscovered and studied. These go well beyond his role as assistant of Philippe Couplet SJ (1623-1693) and his symbolic significance as "a living plea for the creation of a *Chinese clergy* and the use *of Chinese as a liturgical language*".[4] Shen's contribution to the early development of European sinology has garnered renewed interest, especially through recent studies of his cultural and epistolary exchanges with Thomas Hyde. Fluent in Latin, Shen collaborated with Hyde in Oxford in the summer of 1687, notably on the cataloguing of Chinese texts and

2. A biography of Jean-François Foucquet has been carefully compiled by John W. Witek, *Controversial Ideas in China and in Europe: A Biography of Jean-François Foucquet, S.J. (1665-1741)*, Rome, Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 1982. The events surrounding the relationship between the Jesuit father and John Hu are extensively covered by Jonathan Spence in a fictional, highly readable study with endnotes on documentary sources organized by page number: *The Question of Hu*, New York, Knopf, 1988.

3. See, for example, Kerstin Maria Pahl, "An Intersectional Likeness. Godfrey Kneller's Portrait of Michael Alphonsus Shen Fuzong (The Chinese Convert, 1687)", *Histoire de l'art*, 82 (2018), pp. 97-108, available online; Robert K. Batchelor, "Shen Fuzong [Michael Alphonsus] (c. 1658-1691)", in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2013, available online.

4. Noël Golvers, "The Chinese Assistants of the Jesuits Procurators from China in Europe: the case of (Dominicus and) Shen Fu-tsung", in *Silent Force*, p. 135. See, for example, Theodore N. Foss, "The European Sojourn of Philippe Couplet and Michael Shen Fuzong, 1683-1692", in *Philippe Couplet, S.J. (1623-1693): The Man Who Brought China to Europe*, ed. by Jeroom Heyndrickx, Nettetal, Steyler Verlag, pp. 121-142.

maps in the Bodleian Library and on extended discussions of Chinese culture.[5] It is to be hoped that he will receive further scholarly attention, particularly regarding his activities in Paris, about which our knowledge remains limited. We are relatively well informed about his ceremonial reception by Louis XIV, thanks in part to a detailed account in the *Mercure galant*, which also notes his participation in scholarly conferences.[6] However, his collaboration with Melchisédech Thévenot at the Bibliothèque Royale, his assistance in Couplet's translations, and his work cataloguing Chinese books in the Vatican Library and at the Collegio Romano still await thorough investigation. The archival evidence for these efforts, however, remains scarce.[7]

Likewise, Arcade Huang (Huang Jialue or Risheng 黄嘉略 日升, 1679-1716) worked for several years at the beginning of the 18th century to catalogue the Chinese books of the Bibliothèque Royale in Paris, while working with Nicolas Frèret (1688-1749) on the drafting of a Chinese grammar, together with a dictionary. He had come to Europe with Artus de Lionne (1655-1713) from the Société des Missions Etrangères, intending to be ordained as a priest, but then he realized that this was not his calling and married a young lady from Paris and had a daughter. Huang wrote various texts, including a diary in Chinese of his experience in Rome at the beginning of the century,[8] and another diary covering over a year of his life in Paris, in a French mixed with Latin and self-initiated transliterations of the Chinese language.[9] Two scholars in particular have notably engaged with Huang's legacy: Danielle Elisseeff (b. 1938), whose study has been criticized for its fictionalized tone, and Xu Minglong (许明龙, 1936-2023),

5. Isabel Murta Pina, "Shen Fuzong (Michale Alphonsus)", in *The Generation of Giants 2. Other champions of the cultural dialogue between Europe and China*, ed. by Luisa M. Paternicò, Trento, Centro Studi Martino Martini, 2015, pp. 47-52. On the contribution of Shen to the interest in Chinese studies in the United Kingdom, see, for example, Robert K. Batchelor, *London. The Selden Map and the Making of a Global City, 1549-1689*, Chicago-London, University of Chicago Press, 2014, pp. 218-223; Golvers, "The Chinese Assistants", pp. 138-141; Xin Liu, *Anglo-Chinese Encounters Before the Opium War. A Tale of Two Empires Over Two Centuries*, New York-London, Routledge, 2023, pp. 65-74; William Poole, "The Letters of Shen Fuzong to Thomas Hyde, 1687-88", *Electronic British Library Journal*, 2015, art. 9, p. 4, available online; Thomas Hyde, *Epistola de mensuris et ponderibus Serum sei Sinensium. A forgotten chapter in the history of Sinology*, ed. and translated by William Poole, Oxford, 2021.

6. *Mercure galant*, 1 September 1684, pp. 211-225, available online.

7. In the 1960s, Joseph Dehergne argued that Shen Fuzong had sparked curiosity in Paris, but had left no tangible imprint on the understanding of Chinese culture. More recent studies, however, suggest that his influence was deeper, though still only partially revealed. Joseph Dehergne, "Voyageurs chinois venus à Paris au temps de la marine à voile et l'influence de la Chine sur la littérature française du XVIII[e] siècle", *Monumenta Serica*, 23 (1964), pp. 375-376; Nicholas Dew, *Orientalism in Louis XIV's France*, Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, 2009, ch. V *passim*; Golvers, "The Chinese Assistants", pp. 136-138.

8. Miriam Castorina, "Luoma riji 罗马日记, *il* Diario romano *di* Arcadio Huang", in 文心 *Wen xin : contributi in onore di Alessandra Cristina Lavagnino*, ed. by Clara Bulfoni, Jin Zhigang, Emma Lupano et al., Milan, Franco Angeli, 2017, pp. 664-674.

9. Arcade Huang, *Journal domestique du chinois Arcade Hoang (Paris, octobre 1713-octobre 1714)*, available online.

who produced a more rigorous work grounded in solid documentary sources.[10] Nevertheless, Huang's grammatical manuscripts, long misattributed or conflated with Etienne Fourmont's papers, remain largely unexplored and continue to await more detailed scholarly examination.[11]

What about the 100 or so young Chinese who studied in Naples (Italy) at the Collegio della Sacra Famiglia, commonly known as the Collegio de' Cinesi, founded in 1732 by Matteo Ripa (1682-1746) to train young Chinese men for the priesthood?[12] Recently, an in-depth and lively study was published on the role of interpreters in diplomatic relations between the Qing and British empires, including the case of Giacomo Ly/Li Zibiao (李自標, 1760-1826), who was selected from the college to serve as an interpreter for the Macartney Embassy to the Qianlong court (乾隆) in the late 18th century. [13] Such scholarly attention, however, remains exceptional. Most research has focused on a few prominent alumni who later contributed to fostering Chinese cultural awareness in Italy. While Gianni Criveller has reconstructed brief biographical notes on the entire group, individual in-depth studies of each one are still lacking.[14]

How should we read this near-silence on the presence of Chinese in 18th-century Europe, even on two of them who left written records of their travel experiences: Fan Shouyi (樊守義, 1682-1753) and Xie Qinggao (谢清高, 1765-1821)? Why keep silent about these exchanges? Perhaps because they were simply considered servants of the missionaries who had brought them from China and were therefore ignored? Were they really servants? Or perhaps they were not spoken of because it was believed they had left no trace of their journeys and therefore we did not know how to give them a voice?

Let's proceed according to their chronological order of entry into Europe, first analysing the function of Fan Shouyi Luigi/Aloysious/Ludovico SJ, who lived in Italy for more than 10 years in the early 18th century. Scholars often think of the Chinese who accompanied missionaries returning from China as their servants. Perhaps some were indeed. Perhaps some were not, but they were presented as

10. Danielle Elisseeff, *Moi, Arcade interprète chinois du Roi-Soleil*, Paris, Arthaud, 1985; Xu Minglong 许明龙, *Arcadio Huang and the early stage of Sinology in France* (黄嘉略与早期法国汉学, Huang Jialue yu zaoqi Faguo Hanxue), Beijing, Shangwu yinshuguan, 2014.

11. Arcade Huang, *Papiers du chinois Arcade Hoange, interprète près la Bibliothèque du roi (1679-1716)*, available online.

12. The process of founding the college was not easy: photographic reproductions of the relevant documents can be found in "Il problema della fondazione del Collegio dei Cinesi a Napoli: promotori e oppositori. L'acquisto della sede e il breve *Nuper pro* del 7 aprile 1732 del Papa Clemente XVI Corsini", in *Matteo Ripa e il Collegio dei Cinesi di Napoli (1682-1869). Percorso documentario e iconografico*, ed. by Michele Fatica, Naples, Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale", 2006, pp. 232-252.

13. Henrietta Harrison, *The Perils of Interpreting. The Extraordinary Lives of Two Translators between Qing China and the British Empire*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2021; on Li Zibiao epistolary, see Henrietta Harrison, "Naples, China and the Cosmos: The Theology of an Eighteenth-Century Chinese Priest", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 75/3 (2024), pp. 480-498.

14. Criveller, "The Chinese Priests", pp. 147-182.

such because they were involved in controversies of a different nature, as was probably the case with the man who accompanied Martino Martini SJ (1614-1661). For instance, Domingo Fernandez de Navarrete (1618-1689), a Dominican firmly convinced of the incompatibility for Chinese people between adherence to the Christian faith and any form of participation in ancestral rites, in strong opposition to what the fathers of the Society of Jesus proposed,[15] discredited Dominicus Siquin, the Chinese who was accompanying Martini on his trip to Europe to plead the Jesuit point of view, claiming he was a mere servant boasted as a scholar.[16] The historical record of this Dominicus is so elusive[17] that some scholars have speculated he may have been Zheng Weixin/Manuo 郑惟信/玛诺 (1633-1673) or Manoel/Emmanuel de Siqueira.[18] However, this identification appears implausible: Zheng had already entered the novitiate of St Andrew's in Rome by 1651, while Dominicus arrived in Europe alongside Martini only on 31 August 1653. For his part, Zheng went on to study at the Collegio Romano, where he taught *grammatica* and *litterae humaniores* between 1657 and 1660. He later continued his theological education in Bologna and then in Portugal, where he was ordained priest in Coimbra in 1665. He returned to Macao in 1668, after a year-long stay in India. By then he was among the few priests who managed to escape the restrictions on movement in the empire after the trial of Schall von Bell, showing also in this the importance of training an indigenous clergy.[19]

A somewhat similar fate awaited Fan Shouyi, who sailed to Europe in 1708 alongside Antonio Giuseppe Provana SJ (1662-1720),[20] the envoy of Emperor Kangxi 康熙 (r. 1662-1722). Provana's mission was to address the theological and diplomatic tension sparked by the papal legate Charles Thomas Maillard de Tournon (1668-1710), particularly in relation to the Chinese Rites Controversy.[21] Fan soon found himself entangled in these disputes, which pitted the dominant Jesuit position – supported by the Qing court – against the perspective upheld by the other religious orders. The latter position was promoted by Charles Maigrot

15. See, for example, although littered with errors, but interesting for its thoroughly pro-Dominican and anti-Jesuit perspective, J. S. Cummins, *A Question of Rites. Friar Domingo Navarrete and the Jesuits in China*, Cambridge, Scolar Press, 1993.

16. See Poole, "The Letters of Shen Fuzong", p. 4; Golvers, "The Chinese Assistants", pp. 132-133.

17. Nearly the only trace of his activities in Europe is a sheet of paper with some characters handwritten by him in 1654, reproduced in Golvers, "The Chinese Assistants", p. 146.

18. Louis Pfister, *Notices biographiques et bibliographiques sur les Jésuites de l'ancienne Mission de Chine: 1552-1773*, Shanghai, Imprimerie de la Mission Catholique, 1934, vol. I, p. 391, n. 141.

19. For an accurate and well-documented reconstruction of Zheng Manuo's life, rectifying the errors made up to that point about the first Chinese Jesuit father, see Francis A. Rouleau, "The first Chinese priest of the Society of Jesus Emmanuel de Siqueira. 1633-1673. Cheng Mano Wei-hsin", *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu* (1959), pp. 3-50.

20. Eugenio Menegon, "Provana, Antonio", available online.

21. Kilian Stumpf, *The Acta Pekinensia or Historical Records of the Maillard de Tournon Legation*, ed. by Paul Rule and Claudia von Collani, 3 vols: vol. I, Rome, Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu-Macao, Ricci Institute, 2015; vol. II, Leiden, Brill, 2019; vol. III, Leiden, Brill, 2024.

(1652-1730) of the Missions Étrangères de Paris (MEP), with the support of figures such as Giovanni Iacopo Fatinelli (1653-1736), procurator of Tournon.[22] In 1693, Maigrot issued a *Declaratio seu Mandatum Provisionale Illustrissimi ad Reverendissimi Domini Caorli Maigrot, Vicarii Apostolici Fokienensis, nunc Episcopi Cononiensis* for the territory over which he had ecclesiastical jurisdiction as vicar apostolic of Fujian 福建. In that *Mandatum*, among other things, he forbade Chinese converts to attend rituals honouring Confucius and their ancestors. He also prohibited the use of the terms Tian 天 (Heaven) and Shangdi 上帝 (Supreme Deity) to refer to the Christian god: only the term Tianzhu 天主 (Lord of Heaven) was authorized. The document also expressly condemned the idea that Chinese philosophy, if correctly interpreted, could be reconciled with Christian doctrine.[23]

The reasons why Provana brought Fan to Europe remain unclear. According to Fatinelli, he was merely a salaried servant presented, perhaps opportunistically, as a man of letters. Even experienced scholars such as Giuliano Bertuccioli have adopted this biased view, shaped by the polemical context and ideological agenda of the time.[24] Joseph Dehergne likewise writes that Fan was a "domestique" of his Jesuit superior.[25] If Fan had truly been no more than a servant, it would indeed be difficult to explain how he was admitted to the Society of Jesus at the end of 1709, or how he was able to undertake formal theological training in Turin from 1715 to 1717. During this period, he entered the clerical state through *ad primam tonsuram* and received the *quatuor minores* by November 1715,[26] followed later on by the sacrament of priesthood.[27] These milestones suggest not only ecclesiastical recognition, but also a serious vocational commitment. Fan emerges as a dedicated Christian who discerned a call to the priesthood and prepared for it through rigorous study in Milan and Turin. After returning to China, he pursued this calling through a missionary life

22. Giovanni Iacopo Fatinelli's contribution took shape in the form of the *Apologia delle risposte date dal Procuratore dell'Eminent. Signor Cardinale di Tournon alli cinque Memoriali del P. Provana Contro Le Osservazioni fatte sopra di essa da un autore anonimo*, 1710, available online.

23. A translation of the *Mandatum* is in Claudia von Collani, "Charles Maigrot's Role in the Chinese Rites Controversy", in *The Chinese Rites Controversy: Its History and Meaning*, ed. by David E. Mungello, Nettetal, Steyler Verlag, 1994, pp. 152-154.

24. Giuliano Bertuccioli, "Fan Shouyi e il suo viaggio in Occidente", in *La missione cattolica in Cina tra i secoli XVIII e XIX*, ed. by Francesco D'Arelli and Michele Fatica, Naples, Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1999, pp. 341-419: 349-351.

25. Joseph Dehergne, *Répertoire des Jésuites de Chine de 1552 à 1800*, Rome, Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 1973, p. 86, n. 282.

26. Archbishop's Archives of Turin, Provvisioni 10.1.1713-1715, p. 319.

27. Fortunato Margiotti (*Il cattolicesimo nello Shansi dalle origini al 1738*, Rome, Edizioni "Sinica Franciscana", 1958) cites *Libro dell'ingresso delli novitij*, Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (hereafter ARSI), Rom. 175, f. 29, n. XXVII (p. 286, n. 15). Furthermore, he states he could not find the date of his ordination to the priesthood, but that the priestly ordination took place before 16 August 1717, since on that day a request was made for him to be exempted from celebrating the daily Mass of Our Lady ("ottenergli la dispensa di celebrare ogni giorno la Messa della Madonna": p. 286, n. 20).

aligned with Matteo Ricci's strategy of cultural "accommodation",[28] ultimately becoming a Jesuit spiritual coadjutor in 1730.[29]

Further evidence of Fan's clerical status is found in his actions following his return to China. This return was complicated by the limited credibility that Provana, as imperial envoy, held in Rome. Indeed, when Provana left the papal city in 1711, he was ordered not to continue on to China. In response, Emperor Kangxi issued the so-called "Red Manifesto" (Hongpiao 红票) on 31 October 1716, a brief declaration in Manchu, Chinese, and Latin, stating that no document from Rome would be accepted until his appointed envoys had returned.[30] Of these envoys, António de Barros and Antoine de Beauvollier, sent in 1707, perished before landing on the Iberian Peninsula (something Kangxi did not yet know). The second group, including Provana and José Raimundo de Arxo, was dispatched in 1708; Arxo died in 1711, and Provana would die at sea in 1720 during the return voyage. Despite the "Red Manifesto", however, the diplomatic weight of the imperial envoy was not fully recognized by the Holy See, which did not speak with him about the issues of Chinese ancestors' rites, but sent news through him of the arrival of a second papal legation, which was to be known as the Mezzabarba Legation.

Upon Provana's death on 15 March 1720, Fan ensured that his body was sealed in a coffin to be delivered to Qing authorities. Back in China, he was granted an imperial audience on 11 October 1720. He was tasked by Kangxi to produce a written report on the events of Provana's mission – an assignment carried out not on his own initiative, but under direct imperial command. This was not a text intended for publication. It is not surprising, therefore, that it remained shrouded in silence for more than 200 years. We learned of the existence of this text, *Eye-witness Account* (*Shen jian lu* 身見錄), from the missives of some missionaries, but only in the 1930s was it rediscovered by Chinese scholar Wang Zhongmin 王重民 in the National Central Library in Rome.[31] It is therefore not surprising that Fan's life and his presence in Europe received little attention for centuries – not least because he was unfairly associated with the failure of the Mezzabarba Legation.[32] His testimony, however, remains an invaluable record awaiting fuller historiographic recognition.

28. Pfister, *Notices biographiques*, vol. II, pp. 664-665, n. 310.

29. Fortunato Margiotti cites *Catalogus sociorum a. 1732* (ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* 134, ff. 440-441v) (*Il cattolicesimo nello Shansi*, p. 289, n. 36); Dehergne dates this to 2 February 1730 from ARSI, *Lus*. 24, 120 (*Répertoire des Jésuites de Chine*), p. 86, n. 282.

30. A photographic reproduction of the "Red Manifesto" with transcription and translation is available online at the Ricci Institute for Chinese/Western Cultural History at Boston College.

31. The discovery of the document is described in detail in Bertuccioli, "Fan Shouyi", pp. 341-343.

32. The attribution of this responsibility from the accounts of the Mezzabarba Legation is thoroughly illustrated in Giacomo Di Fiore, *La legazione Mezzabarba in Cina (1720-1721)*, Naples, Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1989. The lack of consideration towards Fan Shouyi, which sometimes borders on resentment, is evident in the words written in Margiotti, *Il cattolicesimo nello Shansi*, pp. 287-291.

The *Eye-witness Account* was first published with annotations in China in the early 1940s by Yan Zonglin 阎宗临,[33] at a time when the Second World War largely diverted scholarly attention. A second edition was printed in the early 1950s in Taipei by Fang Hao 方豪. It was only decades later, in 1994, that a partial English translation appeared, prepared by Paul Rule. The first complete Italian translation was eventually published by Giuliano Bertuccioli in 1999.[34] Therefore, there are a few clear footprints of Fan's journey awaiting further investigation in the cities where he lived the longest, being received in audience by the pope and by the king of Portugal twice, and studying according to the usual curriculum for Jesuits (Lisbon, Milan, Rome, Turin), or in those he travelled briefly to, where he was received in audience by the rulers (for example Bologna, Florence, Modena, Naples, Parma).

These events concerning Chinese individuals in 18th-century Europe, together with the ongoing debate on Chinese rites, reveal a Church still grappling with the universality it claimed to embody, and one that appeared hesitant to place full trust in its Chinese faithful.

We also observe a papacy intent on asserting its autonomy from secular powers, including the Manchu court, yet often dispatching diplomatic missions from Rome that lacked adequate understanding of the realities they were meant to engage with – a limitation that signals a limited grasp of the Church's global vocation.

Furthermore, there are a few Chinese who made the long journey to Europe not only for reasons of Christian faith.[35] A noteworthy example is Xie Qinggao (谢清高, 1765-1821), a native of Jiaying 嘉应 (present-day Mei county 梅县) in Guangdong 广东 province. At the age of 18, Xie set sail from Guangzhou 广州 to fish in the South Sea, but his boat was caught in a storm and wrecked. However, he did not die; instead, he was rescued by a European ship, which brought him all the way to Europe. Over the next decade, he journeyed across Asia, Europe, and the Americas. Upon returning to Guangdong, Macao in 1796 – now blind – he earned a living partly through trade negotiations with Europeans,[36] and partly by working as an interpreter, having acquired several languages during his travels.[37]

33. Yan Zonglin republished the *Shen jian lu*, punctuated and annotated, in 传教士与法国早期汉学 (Chuanjiaoshi yu Faguo zaoqi Hanxue, Missionaries and the early Sinology in France), Zhengzhou, 大象出版社 Daxiang chubanshe, 2003, pp. 228-238.

34. Bertuccioli, "Fan Shouyi", pp. 352-375; Paul Rule, "Louis Fan Shouyi and Macao", *Review of Culture*, 21 (1994), pp. 249-258.

35. The example of three people who lived in the United Kingdom for some years in the 18th century (the merchant who played music Loum Kiqua/Lin Qi Guan, the ceramic artist Tan Che-Qua/Chitqua, and the young Huang Yadong who became a page boy near London) is explored in depth in Liu, *Anglo-Chinese Encounters*, pp. 74-93.

36. Zhong Shuhe (钟叔河), "Preface: Accounts of the first Chinese men experiencing personally the West" (国人最早亲历西方的记述, Shulun: Guoren zuizao qingli Xifang de jishu), in Xie Qinggao (谢清高), *Records of Sea. With Three Addendum* (海录。附三种, Hailu. Fu san zhong), ed. by Zhong Shuhe (钟叔河), Zeng Deming (曾德明), and Yang Yunhui (杨云辉), Changsha, Yuelu Press, 2016, p. 19.

37. Most of the information relating to Xie Qinggao's biography comes from the "Introduction" written by Yang Bingnan himself: Xie, *Records of Sea*, p. 7.

Despite the scarcity of formal records, Xie left behind a scattered yet meaningful trail of his presence in Europe. The Portuguese National Archives in Lisbon, for example, hold documents relating to a legal dispute that Xie had around 1806 with some Portuguese concerning unpaid rent.[38] In 1820, he met Yang Bingnan 杨炳南, a scholar from his native region, and – as is common among compatriots in China – Xie recounted his memories to Yang and asked him to record them.[39]

The result of this encounter between travel memories and literary collaboration was the *Records of Sea*, a work I have recently started to analyse. The text references or describes nearly 90 countries across Asia, Europe, and the Americas. Among the European countries, the most detailed accounts concern the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Portugal. Italy is probably alluded to in a passage describing Rome: "There is a place called Rome [he uses Langma 朗马 instead of Luoma 罗马],[40] where a temple has been built by a multitude [of workers], when the faithful gather there, the crowd is so dense that the sun's rays cannot find a crevice to reach the ground" (有地名朗马，众建一庙，礼拜者日无隙晷 you di ming Langma, zhong jian yi miao, lipaizhe ri wu xi gui).[41]

The reception and influence of this text during its time merit further investigation. While some scholars suggest that the work did not circulate widely (partly due to the limited number of available copies),[42] it evidently was not entirely obscured: it is explicitly cited in a memorial to the throne written in 1839 by Lin Zexu (林则徐, 1785-1850), imperial plenipotentiary commissioner in Guangzhou. Far from being a marginal figure, Lin played a central role in opposing the opium trade from British India, an effort that ultimately triggered the First Opium War. His writings later inspired Wei Yuan (魏源, 1794-1857), who referenced the *Records of Sea* in compiling his *Gazetteer and Maps of the Maritime World* (Haiguo tuzhi 海国图志).[43] Continued analysis of the *Records of Sea* promises to shed further light on the mutual processes of cultural and intellectual exchange between Europe and China and how they enlightened each other.

Further research into the entangled histories of Europe and China – and of Europe's internal cultural dynamics – is essential to better understand the motivations behind presences and absences, and the varying degrees of welcome offered or withheld across the European continent.

38. Xie Qinggao (谢清高) and Yang Bingnan (杨炳南), *Records of Sea* collated and annotated (海录校释, Hailu jiaoshi), ed. by An Jing (安京), Beijing, Shangwu press, 2002, "Introduction" (绪论, Xulun) pp. 1-2.

39. Xie, *Records of Sea*, p. 7.

40. One probable explanation is provided in Kenneth Ch'en, "海錄: Fore-runner of Chinese Travel Accounts of Western Countries", *Monumenta Serica*, 7, 1/2 (1942), pp. 208-226: 219, n. 31.

41. "*Records of Sea* by Xie Qinggao" (谢清高海录, Xie Qinggao *Hailu*), in Xie, *Records of Sea*, p. 49.

42. Xie Qinggao (謝清高) and Yang Bingnan (楊炳南), *Records of Sea* annotated (海錄注, *Hailu* zhu), ed. by Feng Chengjun (馮承鈞), s.l., Shangwu yinshuguan, 1938, p. 1.

43. Liu, *Anglo-Chinese Encounters*, pp. 95-96; Rune Svarverud, *International Law as World Order in Late Imperial China. Translation, Reception and Discourse, 1847-1911*, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2007, pp. 75-77.

By studying these often unwitting ambassadors of Chinese culture – their journeys, their presence in Europe, and their contribution to cross-cultural understanding – we come to recognize that the world was, in many respects, already globalized. Their stories also challenge the enduring myth of a hermetically sealed Chinese empire, a notion that has persisted since the late 18th century.

Michela Catto

Jesuit China Challenges Rome. Jean-Baptiste Du Halde's *Description de la Chine* between Jesuit Knowledge and Roman Condemnation

Like many authors of major encyclopedic works devoted to distant civilizations, Jean-Baptiste Du Halde (1674-1743) had never been to China. His life unfolded entirely between the Jesuit college of La Flèche and that of Louis-Le-Grand in Paris, where he dedicated himself to teaching and study. It was only after Charles Le Gobien's death on 5 March 1708 that Du Halde took on a more active role. In 1711 he succeeded Le Gobien as editor of the series *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses, écrites des missions étrangères, par quelques missionnaires de la Compagnie de Jésus* (Edifying and Curious Letters Written from the Foreign Missions by Some Missionaries of the Society of Jesus), a position he held until his death. He was therefore responsible for a substantial portion of the series, namely from volume IX to volume XXV.[1] This privileged position granted him access to the most recent reports and translations arriving from Jesuit missions in China and enabled him, as Virgile Pinot has shown, to carry out an editorial undertaking – through processes of rewriting, omission, and careful selection – that quite literally shaped the image of China for the 18th-century European public.[2]

Du Halde adopted the same working method for his monumental work *Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique et physique de l'Empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie chinoise* (Geographical, historical, chronological, political and physical description of the Empire of China and Chinese Tartary), published in Paris by Le Mercier in 1735 in four volumes. As in his earlier work, the information derived almost exclusively from Jesuits active in China, and it underwent substantial revision, rewriting, and manipulation

1. On the *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*, published in 34 volumes between 1703 and 1776, I refer to André Rétif, "Brève histoire des *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*", *Neue Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft*, 7 (1951), pp. 37-50, and Adrien Paschoud, *Le monde amérindien au miroir des Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*, Oxford, Voltaire Foundation, 2008. See also Pierre Antoine Fabre and Sabina Pavone, "China in the *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses* (18th-19th centuries). New Approaches to a Famous and Little-known Publishing Phenomenon" in the present volume.

2. Virgile Pinot, *La Chine et la formation de l'esprit philosophique en France (1640-1740)*, Geneva, Slatkine Reprints, 1971.

to convey a specific representation of China:[3] namely, that of the Society of Jesus, and particularly of the French Jesuits, who had been driven by a sense of national identity since the time of the mission promoted by Louis XIV.[4] As Joseph Dehergne noted in the brief biographical entry dedicated to Du Halde,[5] the Jesuit acted both as editor, preparing the texts for publication, and as content supervisor, carefully selecting material to avoid any reference to themes that might reignite the controversy surrounding Chinese rites – a subject on which the 18th-century authors were explicitly encouraged not to write or publish.

This role of control and oversight contrasts with the discovery, in the archive of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, of an official act of censorship issued in 1739 against Du Halde's *Description géographique* by the cardinals of the Congregation of the Holy Office with considerable uproar. These inquisitorial documents offer a valuable new element for understanding the context of the work's publication and its reception in Rome. Despite the condemnation, the work enjoyed extraordinary success throughout the 18th century, proving that it was an essential source for reflecting – through the Chinese prism – on topics such as forms of government, deism, and natural religion, social organization, and more.[6] Voltaire called the *Description géographique* "la plus ample et la meilleure description de l'empire de la Chine qu'on ait dans le monde" (the fullest and finest description of the Chinese Empire available in the world);[7] Montesquieu, to cite another example, relied on it almost exclusively for everything he wrote about China.[8]

3. Pinot calls it "un ajustement des matériaux accumulés par les *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*": *ibid.*, p. 133.

4. On the national sentiment of the French mission, see Sabina Pavone, "Ricostruire la Compagnia partendo da Oriente? La comunità gesuitica franco-cinese dopo la soppressione", in *Missioni, saperi e adattamenti tra Europa e imperi non cristiani*, ed. by Vincenzo Lavenia and Sabina Pavone, Macerata, Eum, 2015, pp. 129-164, and Michela Catto, "Jean-Joseph Marie Amiot and the suppression of the Society of Jesus in China: a cultural mission within the border of the ancient mission", in *I Gesuiti nell'età della soppressione e della restaurazione. Religione, Educazione e società tra antica e nuova Compagnia (1773-1832)*, ed. by Niccolò Guasti, Michela Catto, and Maria Teresa Guerrini, Naples, FedOAPress-Federico II University Press, 2025, pp. 99-113.

5. Joseph Dehergne, "Du Halde, Jean-Baptiste", in *Diccionario histórico de la Compañía de Jesús: biográfico-temático*, ed. by Charles E. O'Neill and Joaquín María Domínguez, Rome and Madrid, Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu and Universidad Pontificia Comillas, 2001, vol. II, pp. 1152-1153.

6. On China's role in Enlightenment thought, see Jürgen Osterhammel, *Unfabling the East. The Enlightenment's Encounter with Asia*, Princeton-Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2018. On encyclopaedias in particular, see Georg Lehner, *China in European Encylopedias, 1700-1850*, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2011, and Silvia Eichborn-Jung, "Anthropologie et religion chinoises dans les Encyclopédies françaises et allemandes du XVIIIe siècle", in *Les Lumières européennes dans leurs relations avec les autres grandes cultures et religions*, ed. by Florence Lotterie and Darrin M. McMahon, Paris, Honoré Champion, 2002, pp. 164-190.

7. Voltaire, "Catalogue de la plupart des écrivains français qui ont paru dans le siècle de Louis XIV pour servir à l'histoire littéraire de ce temps", in *Oeuvres complètes*, Gotha, chez Charles-Guillaum Ettinger, 1785, vol. XX, pp. 49-195: 109.

8. Du Halde's work is cited 40 times out of the 72 references concerning China: Jacques Pereira, *Montesquieu et la Chine*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2008, pp. 317-336: 326-327, and Michel

The success of Du Halde's work is evidenced by numerous translations and reprints: into English (1736, 1739, and 1741),[9] German (1747 and 1756), and Russian (between 1774 and 1777). In French, beyond a second edition printed in The Hague in 1736 – considered a "pirated" edition lacking the original engravings and therefore cheaper and more accessible to a broader audience[10] – the work was never reprinted. Nevertheless, Du Halde's editorship of the *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses* and the European success of the *Description* made him the primary architect of the 18th-century image of China.

1. *1733: the printing privilege and the work's preview in periodicals*

In March 1733, news of the forthcoming *Description* was reported by the *Journal de Trévoux*, which presented it to its subscribers with a detailed index of topics.[11] The long article emphasized the most innovative nature of the editorial project: the reproduction of new maps of the Sinosphere, created in collaboration with the engraver Jean-Baptiste Bourguignon d'Anville (1697-1782), which reflected a significant technical and intellectual endeavour.[12]

Among the information and curiosities addressed to an academic audience, some points are particularly relevant to our discussion. The article assured readers of the work's reliability, noting that the manuscript had been read and corrected

Cartier, "Le despotisme chinois. Montesquieu et Quesnay, lectures de Du Halde", in *La Chine entre amour et haine*, ed. by Michel Cartier, Actes du VIIIe colloque de sinologie de Chantilly, Paris, Institut Ricci-Desclée de Brouwer, 1998, pp. 17-32. More generally on despotism see Joan-Pau Rubiés, "Oriental despotism and European Orientalism: Botero to Montesquieu", *Journal of Early Modern History*, 9/1-1 (2005), pp. 109-180.

9. Note that the English translation of 1736 was dedicated to the directors of the United Company of Merchants of England trading to the East Indies; see Ashley Eva Miller, "Your Beggarly commerce! Enlightenment European views of the China trade", in *Encountering Otherness. Diversities and Transcultural Experiences in Early Modern European Culture*, ed. by Guido Abbattista, Trieste, Eut, 2022, pp. 205-222. On the success of Du Halde's work, see David E. Mungello, "Confucianism in the Enlightenment: Antagonism and Collaboration between the Jesuits and the Philosophes", in *China and Europe. Images and Influences in Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. by Thomas H.C. Lee, Hong Kong, The Chinese University Press, 1991, pp. 99-127: 106-107.

10. Carlos Sommervogel, *Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jésus*, Brussels-Paris, O. Schepens-A. Picard, 1893, vol. IV, coll. 34-38: 35-37.

11. *Journal de Trévoux*, 1733, pp. 496-524. Reviews and reports had also appeared in *Clef du Cabinet* in June of the same year (pp. 379-395). For a detailed indication of editions and reviews, see Sommervogel, *Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jésus*, coll. 34-37; for a detailed overview, see Isabelle Landry-Deron, *La preuve par la China. La «Description» de J.-B. Du Halde, jésuite, 1735*, Paris, éditions de l'EHESS, 2002, pp. 367-376. On the *Journal de Trévoux*, see Alfred Desautels, *Les Mémoires de Trévoux et le mouvement des idées au XVIIIe siècle (1701-1734)*, Rome, Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 1956.

12. See Marco Caboara, *Regnum Chinae. The Printed Western Maps of China to 1735*, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2022, pp. 477 and ss.

by the Jesuit Cyr Contancin,[13] who, together with Father François Xavier d'Entrecolles, had never ceased sending valuable information from China to the Paris headquarters of the *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*. Unlike other missionaries, increasingly protective of their knowledge and critical of Du Halde's use (or misuse) of their writings, Contancin proved fully cooperative. His death in 1732 – as he was preparing to return to the mission – after spending 32 years in China made him a symbol of scholarly authority.

On 1 April 1733, the provincial of Paris also granted the *imprimatur* for publication, confirming that the work had been reviewed by three unnamed Jesuit theologians.[14]

The *Journal de Trévoux* article, the first of many,[15] presented a table of contents covering every aspect of Chinese knowledge: cities, form of government, the figure of the emperor, military organization, the arts, literature, and more. Chinese religions also found a place, with the announcement of a new classification. In the preface, Du Halde added a fourth religion to the three traditional Chinese "sects" – Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism – applying a fluid, strategic, and flexible taxonomy intended to bypass the sources of past controversy over the Chinese rites. In this framework, the term "atheism" was nearly erased from descriptions of modern Confucian philosophy. Du Halde distinguished sharply between the ancient Chinese cult and other doctrines, referring to a "fourth sect" of modern literati who followed a kind of new philosophy, more focused on commentaries that ancient text, and who believed they could "tout expliquer par les causes naturelles" (explain everything in terms of natural causes).[16]

The *Description* thus positioned itself as a new and authoritative work, the fruit of knowledge accumulated by the Jesuit Order alone, which claimed superiority over all other religious orders operating in China. This took place 25 years after Clement XI's 1710 prohibition, which reaffirmed the authority of apostolic visitor Charles-Thomas Maillard de Tournon (1668-1710) and banned

13. Cyr Contancin (1670-1732), superior general of the French residence in Beijing from 1716 to 1718 and of the French Mission; see Joseph Dehergne, *Répertoire des jésuites de Chine de 1552 à 1800*, Rome-Paris, Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu-Letouzey & Ané, 1973, pp. 59-60.

14. The imprimatur is cited in the Archives of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (hereafter ADDF), *Stanza Storica*, PP 4b, 754 v.

15. *Journal de Trévoux*, 1736, pp. 521-554, article 33; pp. 896-933, article 47; pp. 1299-1338, article 69 ; pp. 1362-1400, article 72 ; pp. 1859-1894, article 89.

16. *Journal de Trévoux*, March 1733, pp. 512-513. On this fluctuation in the number of sects, see Landry-Deron, *La preuve par la China*, p. 337. On the *Description*, see also Theodore N. Foss, "Reflections on a Jesuit Encyclopedia: Du Halde's Description of China (1735)", in *Appréciation par l'Europe de la tradition chinois à partir du XVII^e siècle*, Actes du III colloque international de Sinologie, Paris-Cathasia, Les Belles Lettres, 1983, pp. 67-77. More generally on the alleged atheism of the Chinese, see Michela Catto, "Atheism: A word travelling to and fro between Europe and China", in *The Rites Controversies in the Early Modern World*, ed. by Ines G. Županov and Pierre Antoine Fabre, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2018, pp. 68-88; Michella Catto, "Jesuits and Chinese Atheism: back and forth between Europe and China", in *Inexcusabiles: Salvation and the Virtues of the Pagans in the Early Modern Period*, ed. by Alberto Frigo, Switzerland, Springer, 2020, pp. 213-228.

all publication or debates on Chinese Rites without the prior approval of the Sacred Congregation:[17] a measure aimed at containing the explosive controversy surrounding the rites during the early decades of the 18th century.[18]

From the preface and the reviews in the *Journal de Trévoux*, Du Halde's intention is clear: he presented himself as a historian offering new, enriched knowledge on China. He emphasized the many discoveries brought by missionaries after Marco Polo. While the diversity of accounts had created contradictions ("ils ont pu se tromper, et par là nous tromper" [they may have made mistakes, and thereby deceived us]),[19] Du Halde claimed that after 25 years of gathering, comparing, and verifying sources, his work surpassed Athanasius Kircher's *China Illustrata*. He positioned himself as Kircher's successor, at least in terms of the volume of information he had been able to consult and the missionary origin of the material.[20] The work presented itself as the mature fruit of a Jesuit knowledge tradition rooted in the era of Louis XIV, when French missionary scientists and astronomers still resided at the Chinese imperial court despite the persecution of Christianity.[21]

What is perhaps most curious – given the heated climate of the Chinese Rites Controversy – is that Du Halde identifies the turning point in the understanding of the Chinese empire with the publication of the *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses* by the Jesuit Louis Le Comte.[22] That is, the very same author whose at least

17. George Minamiki, *The Chinese rites controversy: from its beginning to modern times*, Chicago, Loyola University Press, 1985, pp. 57-58.

18. There is an extensive bibliography on the Tournon legation: see Edward Malatesta, "A Fatal Clash of Wills: The Condemnation of the Chinese Rites by the Papal Legate Carlo Tommaso Maillard de Tournon", in *The Chinese Rites Controversy. Its history and meaning*, ed. by David E. Mungello, Sankt Augustin–Nettetal, Steyler Verlag, 1994, pp. 211-245 (Monograph Series XXXIII); Rui Zhang, *La missione del Primo Legato Pontificio Maillard de Tournon. All'origine delle relazioni tra Santa Sede e Cina (1622-1742)*, Rome, Urbaniana University Press, 2022; *"Con l'occhio fisso sulle origini delle questioni de' riti cinesi". La legazione di Carlo Tommaso Maillard de Tournon nella Cina del Settecento*, ed. by Daniela Piemontino and Edoardo Tortarolo, Vercelli, Gallo, 2024. More generally on the papal legations in Beijing, see Eugenio Menegon, "Culture di corte a confronto: legati pontifici nella Pechino del Settecento", in *Papato e politica internazionale nella prima età moderna*, ed. by Maria Antonietta Visceglia, Rome, Viella, 2013, pp. 563-600.

19. *Journal de Trévoux*, 1736, p. 528.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 533.

21. The mission had begun with the expedition of the king's mathematicians: see Isabelle Landry-Deron, "Les Mathématiciens envoyés en Chine par Louis XIV en 1685", *Archives for History of Exact Sciences*, 55 (2001), pp. 423-463. See also Catherine Jami, "From Louis XIV's court to Kangxi's court: an institutional analysis of the French Jesuit mission to China (1688-1722)", in *East Asian Science: Tradition and Beyond*, ed. by Keizo Hashimoto, Catherine Jami, and Lowell Skar, Osaka, Kansai University Press, 1995, pp. 493-499. More generally, see Nicholas Dew, *Orientalism in Louis XIV's France*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009. See also Rolando Minuti, *Orientalismo e idee di tolleranza nella cultura francese del primo '700*, Florence, Olschki, 2006.

22. *Journal de Trévoux*, 1736, pp. 534-535. On Le Comte, see Bianca Maria Rinaldi, *Ideas of Chinese Gardens: Western Accounts, 1300-1860*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015, pp. 74-78, available online.

14 letters, collected in the *Nouveaux mémoires sur l'état présent de la Chine* (1696), had been condemned by the Sorbonne in 1700 for their claims regarding the antiquity and morality of the Chinese.[23] This apparent contradiction becomes clearer when reading Du Halde's work, the ideological intent of which is obvious: the exaltation of Chinese "raison" – a natural, stable, and enduring reason, preserved in Chinese texts and never corrupted by superstition or idolatry – presented as the foundation of their exemplary morality. Just as Providence had allowed the Jews to preserve their faith, so too had it allowed the Chinese to preserve their "raison". The Chinese were thus presented as superior not only to the ancient philosophers (as Matteo Ricci had already claimed[24]), but also – and above all – to modern philosophers, a formulation that arguably referred both to contemporary Chinese literati and to European philosophers. Ancient Confucian doctrine offered a "pratique effective et soutenue qui fait l'homme solide et essentiel, l'homme tout court" (effective and sustained practice that makes man solid and essential, man as such).[25] According to this narrative, Chinese society was founded on reason and morality. In contrast, ancient Western civilizations had vanished, swept away by "passions" and war: some had emerged only later, formed haphazardly, and none had ever attained the stability of China. The origins of Chinese civilization were not as uncertain as those of other nations; they were untainted by idolatry and, like those of the Jewish people, were entirely pure, certain, and documented. Chinese doctrine had never been corrupted, unlike the "Philosophie des prétendus beaux esprits qui croyent que c'est inventer que d'altérer la verité ou la nature, à force d'art ou de fiction" (Philosophy of the so-called "beaux esprits" who believe that to invent means to alter truth or nature by means of art or fiction).[26] Passages such as this underscored the positive value of a kingdom that had remained static and immutable across the centuries, in contrast with the dynamism typically attributed to modern Europe.[27] The Chinese, Du Halde claimed, "sont peu inventifs, au gré des Européens qui croyent l'être beaucoup depuis Descartes dont ils sont les très respectueux Disciples" (are not very inventive, according to Europeans who believe they have been so ever since Descartes, of whom they are very respectful disciples).

23. On the condemnation of the works of some Jesuits dedicated to China by the Faculty of Theology of the Sorbonne, see Jacques Davy, "La condamnation en Sorbonne des *Nouveux Mémoires sur la Chine* du P. Le Comte", *Recherches de Science religieuse*, 37 (1950), pp. 366-397, and René Etiemble, *Les Jésuites en Chine (1552-1773). La Querelle des rites*, Paris, Julliard, 1966, pp. 54-59.

24. See Matteo Ricci, *Della entrata della Compagnia di Giesù e Christianità nella Cina*, ed. by Maddalena Del Gatto, Macerata, Quodlibet, 2000, p. 90.

25. *Journal de Trévoux*, 1736, pp. 1301-1302.

26. *Journal de Trévoux*, 1736, p. 1305.

27. On the idea of Chinese tradition against European progress and invention, see Guido Abbattista, "At the Roots of the 'Great Divergence': Europe and China in an 18th Century Debate", in *Cultural Transfers, Encounters and Connections in the Global 18th Century*, ed. by Matthias Middell, Leipzig, Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2014, pp. 113-162.

The arts created before the Flood, Du Halde asserted, had been preserved precisely in China,[28] as demonstrated by the compass and the clock. Thus, China's immobility began to emerge in opposition to European scientific dynamism,[29] and this appreciation applied not only to pagan philosophy but also to modern philosophical traditions.

Du Halde's *Description*, dedicated to Louis XIV, firmly aligned itself with the cultural tradition of the Jesuit mission in Beijing: it celebrated the antiquity of China and its bodies of knowledge, acknowledged the existence of a rational and natural morality, and constructed a chronology that – although six centuries shorter – still strained to fit within the biblical framework.[30] At the same time, the work presented itself as the most up-to-date compendium of knowledge on China, with the ambition – as Isabelle Landry-Deron has noted – of influencing the decisions of the Congregatio particularis, which, beginning in late 1735, was once again tasked with examining the question of the rites,[31] ultimately condemned by Benedict XIV in 1742.[32]

2. *1739: the Congregation of the Holy Office examines Du Halde's work*

In 12 August 1739, the superior general of the Society of Jesus, Franz Retz (1673-1750), sent a letter from the Novitiate of Sant'Andrea al Quirinale accompanying a document that expressed the Jesuits' official condemnation of what Du Halde had written in the third volume of his *Description*.[33] This act

28. *Journal de Trévoux*, 1736, pp. 1307-1309.

29. According to Virgile Pinot, this contrast became generalized from 1740 onwards: Pinot, *La Chine et la formation*, p. 418.

30. With numerous changes to approximate the chronology of the Vulgate: "du P. Martini au P. Couplet et du P. Couplet au P. du Halde, la chronologie Chinoise se trouvait réduite de six siècles", in Pinot, *La Chine et la formation*, p. 269.

31. Landry-Deron, *La preuve par la China*, p. 192.

32. Michela Catto, "Superstizione, monoteismo e unità della Chiesa: Benedetto XIV e la condanna dei riti cinesi (1742)", in *Storia, medicina e diritto nei trattati di Prospero Lambertini-Benedetto XIV*, ed. by Maria Teresa Fattori, Bologna, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2013, pp. 97-108.

33. ADDF, *Stanza Storica*, PP 4b, 716r, Letter from Franz Retz to the archbishop of Damascus, Cardinal Giuseppe Maria Ferroni. On Francesco Retz, see "Generales", in *Diccionario histórico de la Compañía de Jesús*, vol. II, pp. 1653-1654. Obviously, the letter in which Retz distanced himself, also in the name of the Society, from the third volume of the *Description* became one of the documents used by the anti-Jesuits. It also appears, for example, in a sylloge of documents that was immediately attributed to Urbano (Carlo) Tosetti (1714-1768), the Scolopian active in the violent attacks against the Society of Jesus at the dawn of their expulsion from Portugal (1759): *Riflessioni di un portoghese sopra il memoriale presentato da PP. Gesuiti alla Santità di Clemente XIII felicemente regnante. Esposte in una lettera scritta ad un Amico di Roma*, Lisbon [Rome], s.e., 1758, pp. 72-73. The pamphlet was translated into Portuguese, Spanish, French, English, and German. On Tosetti, see David Armando, "Tosetti Carlo", in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. XCVI (2019), available online. On the production of anti-Jesuit pamphlets in Rome at the beginning of Pombal's policy,

of disavowal fully aligned with Pope Clement XII's wishes, as confirmed by a letter dated 16 September from Giuseppe Maria Feroni, who had recently been appointed Assessor of the Holy Office.[34] Less than a year earlier, on 26 September 1735, the pope had issued a decree aimed at reaffirming the primacy of the Holy See in managing the Rites Controversy, with the goal of reclaiming a central role in the debate: "Moreover we reserve to ourselves and to the Apostolic See the power, after holding due (*maturam*) deliberation, of laying open to the faithful living in this empire our own mind and that of the aforesaid Holy See upon other matters that pertain to the same subject".[35]

The 1739 condemnation did not target the entirety of Du Halde's work but only certain sections of the third volume, which addressed Chinese religions and beliefs. It was, in fact, in these passages that Du Halde returned to the issue of the Chinese rites, thereby violating Clement XI's decree of 1710. The censure centred on two main demands: first, an explicit repudiation "in the name of the entire Society" of the content related to the controversy; second, the imposition upon Du Halde "under strict precept" to immediately remove all the incriminated passages, "to immediately have all the aforementioned points struck from his work, removing any cause or pretext whatsoever".[36] The pope also ordered that the Society's repudiation be printed and widely disseminated to ensure maximum diffusion.[37] In a draft prepared for publication on 27 August, General Retz reaffirmed the Society's customary obedience to the pope, describing such loyalty as the principal – indeed, the sole – foundation of its continued existence.[38] Since he did not know French, Retz had only read the excerpts provided by the bishop of Damascus in the dossier prepared by the Sacred College on 29 May 1739.[39]

What exactly were the passages that provoked the Holy Office to such a strong reaction?

The offending points, compiled in Latin[40] in a detailed dossier signed by Fortunato Tamburini,[41] qualifier of the Holy Office, highlighted numerous

see Franco Venturi, *Settecento riformatore*, vol. II, *La chiesa e la repubblica dentro i loro limiti*, Turin, Einaudi, 1976, pp. 3-29.

34. ADDF, *Stanza Storica*, PP 4b, 762, Letter from Ferroni to Retz dated 16 September 1739. On Ferroni, see Matteo Sanfilippo, "Feroni Giuseppe Maria", in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. XLVI (1996), available online.

35. Minamiki, *The Chinese rites controversy*, pp. 68-69.

36. ADDF, *Stanza Storica*, PP 4b, 737r, Letter from Cardinal Ferroni to Retz on 26 July 1739.

37. A copy of this document is reported by Markus Friedrich, "Between Curiosity and Edification: Printing and Editing the *Nouveaux Mémoires de la Compagnie de Jésus dans le Levant*", in *Reporting Christian Missions in the Eighteenth Century: Communication, culture of Knowledge and Regular Publication in a cross-cultural perspective*, ed. by Markus Friedrich and Alexander Schunka, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz Verlag, 2017, pp. 35-56: 38, n. 17.

38. ADDF, *Stanza Storica*, PP 4b, 733, Entreaty of Franz Retz to Clement XII.

39. *Ibid.*, 738r-745, Tamburini to the Sacro Collegio.

40. *Ibid.*, 717r-724v, Text of the Holy Office of Cardinal Fortunato Tamburini. Copy at cc. 727r-731r.

41. *Ibid.*, 738r. See Matteo Al Kalak, "Tamburini Fortunato", in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, XCIV (2019), available online.

problematic elements. Notably, Du Halde portrayed Confucianism as a rational system based on study, merit, and moral conduct, which granted access to imperial office. Confucius was depicted as a mere moral teacher, and the Confucian classics were not considered sacred texts but the foundation of Chinese ethics and knowledge.[42] In this framing, Confucianism appeared as a kind of state religion.

Although Du Halde professed an intent to remain historically neutral and to avoid reopening debates that had hindered the spread of Christianity in China, he nonetheless responded to what he called "la ligue générale d'un parti puissant et animé qui mit tout en œuvre pour jeter leur Compagnie [les Jésuites] dans un décri universel" (the general league of a powerful and lively party which did everything in its power to throw their Society [the Jesuits] into universal disrepute).[43]

Du Halde dedicated several passages to outlining the doctrinal and cultic practices of the ancient Chinese, particularly those tied to the first of the four traditional Chinese doctrines – a classification already introduced in the *Journal de Trévoux* in 1733 but completely ignored by Tamburini. According to Du Halde (as summarized by Tamburini), this doctrine had been brought to China 200 years after the Flood by the descendants of Noah, who founded the ancient monarchy and taught reverence for the "Sovereign Lord of the Universe" and adherence to the principles of natural law inscribed in the human heart. This teaching was preserved in the classical texts, considered the only authentic repository of Confucian truth. According to Du Halde, this ancient Chinese religion was monotheistic in essence, reserving worship for a Supreme Being, Lord and Sovereign Principle of all things, known "under the name of Chang Ti, that is, Supreme Emperor, and Tien, which according to the Chinese means the same thing – that is, the Spirit who presides over Heaven", although at times it could also be interpreted as "the material Heaven itself". To this *Chang Ti* or *Tien*, the Chinese attributed titles such as "Father of the peoples", "the only one independent who can do all things, who knows even the most hidden corners of the heart", and the sole source of all power, providence, knowledge, justice, goodness, and mercy: "For two millennia, the Chinese nation has known, respected, and honoured this Supreme Being, Sovereign Lord of the Universe under the names Chang Ti and Tien". Du Halde presented this as a natural religion, passed down from their ancestors and maintained thanks to institutions such as the Tribunal of Rites, even though many mandarins, in private life, practised superstition or a form of "atheism". Nevertheless, a robust system of oversight had ensured that emperors and national heroes received only commemorative honours, not divine worship. Tamburini reported that Du Halde blamed the corruption of Confucian doctrine on discredited literati and modern commentators who had fallen into "a thousand contradictions and a kind of atheism". Yet, he claimed, this had not tainted the core doctrine, because the classical texts continued to prevail over commentaries and glosses, preserving the original theological meaning of *Chang*

42. Pierre-Etienne Will, "Le mandarinat entre admiration et détestation. De Ricci à Magalhães à Du Halde", in *Rencontres et médiations entre la Chine, l'Occident et les Amériques. Missionnaires, chamanes et intermédiaires culturels*, ed. by Shenwen Li, Frédéric Laugrand, and Nansheng Peng, Québec, Presse de l'Université de Laval, 2015, pp. 153-187.

43. Du Halde, *Description*, vol. III, p. 144.

Ti and *Tien* as names for the First Being, the origin of all things, who sees into the depths of the heart, from whom nothing is hidden. The rhetorical method Du Halde employed in the pages dedicated to explaining these terms was the interrogative-negative mode, which subtly led the reader toward a conclusion without overtly asserting it.[44]

The doctrinal ambiguity surrounding *Chang Ti* and *Tien* was not the only source of concern, however. The censors also objected to Du Halde's account of the missionaries' request for clarification from Emperor Kangxi, and the highly favourable pronouncement by officials of the Tribunal of Rites affirming that the rites contained no elements of superstition or idolatry. These statements were so favourable in recognizing the absence of any superstitious or idolatrous elements that they were seen as a direct challenge to the pope's authority and intelligence. Tamburini wrote: "Everyone seemed astonished that there could be scholars in Europe who believed that the literati of China honoured an inanimate, lifeless being such as the visible, material heaven. And all declared that in invoking *Tien* and *Chang Ti*, they were invoking the Supreme Lord of Heaven, the author and principle of all things, the dispenser of all good things, who knows and sees everything, and whose wisdom and providence govern this universe".

In the eyes of the Holy Office, this reconstruction dangerously supported the Jesuit position and risked undermining not only papal authority but also the legitimacy of Rome's previous decisions. The statements reported by Du Halde appeared humiliating to the Holy See, suggesting that only the Jesuits had properly understood Chinese religion, while the popes – poorly advised – had misjudged it with superficiality and irrationality. Du Halde's reconstruction of the controversy itself was also problematic: he presented the conflicts among the religious orders as baseless and the Holy See's ruling as incomprehensible. As Tamburini concluded, the reader "would not have been able to grasp any of the reasons why the Holy See had condemned those ceremonies that the most enlightened and experienced missionaries considered to be civil and political".

In sum, the inquisitorial accusations pointed to a clear violation of Clement XI's decree. Du Halde's work thus emerged as a deliberate effort to revive, at a critical moment, the French position in the Chinese Rites Controversy – a strongly autonomous stance, based entirely on Jesuit sources, and further narrowed to those affiliated with the imperial court in Beijing.

Du Halde's *Description* was indeed presented as an independent attempt to play all available cards during these decisive years in the Chinese Rites Controversy, a time when, awaiting a definitive papal pronouncement, the French mission aspired to full autonomy and an exclusive relationship with China. It relied solely on Jesuit sources and, among them, only those stationed at the court in Beijing. It reframed the debate by emphasizing the moral authority of ancient Confucianism, downplaying Chinese atheism (restricted to a few mandarins willing to return to their origins when serving in the Tribunal of Rites), attributing interpretative errors to linguistic and cultural ignorance, and blaming part of the

44. Landry-Deron, *La preuve par la China*, p. 271.

misunderstanding on the powerful Jansenist faction. Tamburini, the qualifier, concluded that such a narrative would inevitably confuse readers, making it impossible for them to understand the reasons for the papal condemnation: for this reason, the work had to be either suppressed or publicly refuted.

Chronology matters here. The censorship demands arrived in 1739, by which point newspapers and journals had already widely publicized Du Halde's work, announcing its release and publishing extensive reviews.[45] Although few readers likely completed all four massive volumes, the work's content spread rapidly thanks to its scientific novelty and the veiled but forceful way it reintroduced topics previously banned by the papacy. The superior general of the Society Retz had not read the work, as he did not know French. It is likely that others had not read it either, even among the learned readers to whom the *Description* was addressed. It was the publicity generated in the periodicals of the time that gave the *Description* its cultural impact and brought it to Rome's attention. Tamburini himself confirmed this by citing the long review published in the *Observations sur les écrits modernes* of 17 November 1736,[46] announced early on 25 June,[47]as a major fact in the work's growing notoriety. The Holy Office's reaction was therefore prompted less by a direct reading of the text than by its wide circulation through the press.

Du Halde's work had nothing in common, either in form or in substance, with the hundreds of pamphlets and booklets flooding the early 18th-century book market. Its sources, intellectual rigour, and rich engravings marked it as a work for a cultivated academic audience. It aimed to summarize new research being conducted by the Jesuits in China,[48] and to influence the deliberations of the

45. Trude Dijkstra, '"It Is Said That…': The Chinese Rites Controversy in Dutch Newspapers and Periodicals in the Seventeenth Century", *Jaarboek voor Nederlandse Boekgeschiedenis*, 23 (2016), pp. 172-91; Edwin J. van Kley, "News from China. Seventeenth-Century European Notices of the Manchu Conquest", *The Journal of Modern History*, 45/4 (1973), pp. 561-582; Theodore N. Foss and Donald F. Lach, "Images of Asia and Asians in European Fiction", in *China and Europe: Images and Influences in Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. by Thomas H.C. Lee, Hong Kong, Chinese University Press, 1991, pp. 165-188.

46. The long account dated 17 November mentioned by the censor is in the 1736 volume (Paris, Chez Chauber à l'entrée du Quay des Augustins, du coté du Pont S. Michel à la Renommée et à la Prudence), Letter 91, pp. 13-23. Reviews of the work, often accompanied by important considerations by the reviewers, had appeared in *Mercure de France* (August, September, and October 1736), *Observations sur les écrits modernes* (1735, 1736 and 1737), *Lettres sérieuses et badines* (1733, t. VIII), *Le Pour et contre* (1733, 1736, 1737), and *Journal de Savants* (1735 and 1736). See Li Ma, *L'art de gouverner chinois dans les périodiques de langue française de 1750 à 1789*, Montpellier, Presses universitaires de la Méditerranée, 2019, in particular ch. 2: "La Chine dans les périodiques de langue française du XVIII[e] siècle", available online.

47. "Le grand Ouvrage du Pere du Halde Jesuite, sur l'Histoire de la Chine, paroit depuis quelques jours. Vous trouverez bon que je differe à vous entretenir d'un Livre, dont la lecture et l'examen demandent beucoup de tems, Paris 25 Juin 1735", in *Observations sur les ecrits modernes, Lettres* Quinzieme, Paris, Chez Chauber à l'entrée du Quay des Augustins, du coté du Pont S. Michel à la Renommée et à la Prudence, 1735, pp. 359-360.

48. See Sergio Zoli, *Europa libertina tra Controriforma e illuminismo. L'«Oriente» dei libertini e le origini dell'Illuminismo. Studi e ricerche*, Bologna, Cappelli editore, 1989;

Congregatio particularis, which had been convened at the end of 1735 and would soon rule on the rites.[49] Yet Du Halde's *Description* was never officially corrected in accordance with the censors' demands, nor was it ever reprinted in French.[50]

In 1742, Rome definitively condemned the rites. In 1743, Du Halde died. His *Description* now belonged to the past – no longer suitable for representing the Jesuit theological discourse on China – but its success remained undiminished. Even as Europe was gradually shifted from idealizing virtuous governance to viewing China through a lens of despotism, the *Description* remained central to 18th-century European scholarship.[51] It also took on new life in anti-Jesuit polemics, cited as evidence of missionary insubordination and used against the Society of Jesus in both the Rites Controversy and the broader campaign to suppress the Order.

Catherine Northeast, *The Parisian Jesuits and the Enlightenment, 1700-1762*, Oxford, Voltaire Foundation, 1991.

49. Landry-Deron, *La preuve par la Chine*, p. 192.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

51. Shi Zhan, "L'image de la Chine dans la pensée européenne du XVIIIe siècle: de l'apologie à la philosophie pratique", *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, 347 (January-March 2007), pp. 93-111, available online.

Pierre Antoine Fabre, Sabina Pavone

China in the *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses* (18th-19th centuries). New Approaches to a Famous and Little-known Publishing Phenomenon

1. *Introduction*

The title *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses* incorporates two terms that clearly reflect the publication's dual objective: on the one hand, a didactic goal aimed at fostering new missionary vocations; on the other, a more ethnographic-anthropological aim designed to spark the interest – and, indeed, the curiosity – of a broader readership extending beyond the specifically religious audience targeted by the first objective. The term "edifying", moreover, had been associated with missionary correspondence from its earliest use by Ignatius of Loyola and his secretary Juan de Polanco, the latter authoring numerous letters dispatched to the four corners of the world and often closely collaborating with the founder of the Society of Jesus. In a letter dated 13 August 1553 and addressed to Father Gaspar Barzeus, the provincial in Goa, Polanco wrote: "In the letters suitable to be shown, it will be said where members of the Society reside, […] referring to what *contributes to edification.* […] *And if there is anything that does not yield such edification, but is written in a way that can be clearly understood, it should not be omitted, but rather included in separate letters*".[1] This marked the distinction between public and private correspondence, wherein the decisive criterion was indeed the degree of edification the letters might engender in their readership.

> Some prominent individuals read the letters from the Indies *with great edification* and often *wish that something would be written about the cosmography of the regions where our people are active*. […] And since we have also sounded the opinion of people of high standing and intelligence, *who find such things even more edifying*, it would be good that, in the letters intended to be shown to those outside the Society, more attention be given […] to general matters.[2]

1. "En las letras mostrables se dirá en quantas partes ay residencia de los de la Compañía, […] y *en qué entienden, tocando lo que haze a edificación*. […] *Y si uviesse alguna cosa que no diesse aquella edificatión, siendo escrita en modo que se entendiesse bien, no se dexe de escrivir, pero en letras de aparte*". *P. I. de Polanco S.I. Ex Comm. P. Gaspari [Barzaeo] S.I. Goam*, Rome, 13 August 1553, in *Documenta Indica (1553-1557)*, ed. by Jan Wicky, Rome, Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu, 1954, vol. III, p. 16. Italics added. All translations into English are by the authors unless otherwise specified.

2. "Algunas personas principales, que en esta ciudad leen *con mucha edificatión suya* las letras de las Indias, *suelen desear,* y lo piden diversas vezes, *que se scriviese algo de la*

Alongside the focus on edification, these early testimonial accounts also reveal a "cosmographic" dimension – an aspect that went on to become central to the editorial project conceived by Father Charles Le Gobien and subsequently continued by fathers Jean-Baptiste Du Halde and Louis Patouillet. This dimension played a crucial role in establishing the *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses* (hereafter *LEC*) as a globally renowned publication.

This gives an idea of the immensity of the task we have set ourselves in the research programme whose broad outlines we will sketch in this essay.[3] Let us briefly recall the general aspects here before proposing some more specific research directions.

The publication of the *LEC* is a project of considerable scope. It consists of five major series between 1703 and 1776 (we will return to this date later), themselves comprising a large number of volumes in duodecimo format, which makes them easily transportable. This gives us a valuable indication of the intended audience for these *Lettres*: they were addressed by Jesuits "scattered throughout the world" to other Jesuits who edited (we have just seen a striking example of this) and published them. However, they were by no means restricted to a Jesuit readership; on the contrary, they formed part of a general context of curiosity, certainly edifying but not only – the curiosity was so great, indeed, that references to and traces of them can be found in numerous publications of that century, in Fontenelle, Voltaire, Abbé Raynal, and even the *Encyclopédie*.[4] One of the challenges of editing was precisely to make these accounts more readable,

cosmographía de las regiones donde andan los nuestros. […] Y porque tanbién hemos tomado el pulso a personas de mucha calidad y inteligentia, *que así les da más edification*, será bien que las letras, mostrables a gente de fuera de la Compañía […] se detenga […] más en las [cosas] generales". *P. I. de Polanco P. Gaspari [Barzaeo] S.I.,* Rome, 24 February 1554, in *Documenta Indica*, vol. III, p. 63. However, see also *P. I. de Polanco S.I. Ex Comm. P. Michaeli de Torres S.I, Prov. Lus*., Rome, 21 November 1555: "Scriviese una letra a nostro Padre Maestro Ignacio cada año. Y aunque el Rector de Goa o Provintial haga scrivir in una letra *lo que es de edificatión* major de todas partes de su provintia", in *ibid.*, p. 308. On these letters, see Paul Nelles, "Jesuit Letters", in *The Oxford Handbook of the Jesuits*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2019, pp. 44-72. On Jesuit letters, see also Markus Friedrich, "Government and Information-Management in Early Modern Europe: The Case of the Society of Jesus (1540-1773)", *Journal of Early Modern History*, 12 (2008), pp. 539-563. For a discussion of the *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*, see Markus Friedrich, *The Jesuits. A History*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2022, pp. 360-361, 567.

3. Programme designed in cooperation with Alix Lamé-Bergis, director of the Loyola Faculties Library in Paris, which holds numerous collections of letters that complement the digitized series on the Gallica website of the National Library of France and Internet Archive websites. This programme will also be conducted under a cooperation agreement between the University of Naples L'Orientale and the School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences, supported by the authors of this essay.

4. A remarkable doctoral thesis by Sébastien Brodeur-Girard, defended in 2004 under the supervision of Pierre Antoine Fabre but unfortunately unpublished, found that Jesuit letters – and sometimes Jesuit authors – appear in significant numbers in the *Encyclopédie*: *Influences et représentations des Jésuites dans l'Encyclopédie*, now available at the following link: https://papyrus.bib.umontreal.ca/xmlui/handle/1866/14825. We warmly thank the author for his work and for recently sending us this link.

favouring (and these Jesuits ended up being criticized for this, as we shall see) an almost picturesque approach to the countries and peoples they helped to make known in the various regions of the French empire and beyond.

The openness of the readership is reflected in the multiplicity of booksellers and publishers who handled these series of letters, not only in Paris but also in the provinces. Identifying each series is more difficult, because of both the increase in the number of letters from one series to another and the variation of their selection. Furthermore, they were organized differently over the decades. Initially arranged chronologically, they were later distributed according to geographical order, forming a kind of atlas of the regions inhabited by Jesuits in one way or another, whether sedentary or nomadic. This evolution also reflects the reception of the *LEC*, defined less by the edifying nature of the fathers' apostolic work than by public curiosity about a particular area, something booksellers were well aware of.

The fact remains that the publication of the *LEC* was a strong indicator of the Jesuits' presence in the public sphere and a powerful symbol of the Order in the 18th century, long considered the century of its decline following the apostolic, scientific, educational, and artistic golden age it enjoyed the century before. This presence was powerful enough – and this is one of the first revelations provided by our investigation: 1776 is the date of publication of the last modern-era series, shortly after the Society's suppression in 1773. New editions appeared as early as 1819, well before the Order actually resumed its activities in the old and/or new "mission lands" such as India.[5] These new editions then became new series, enriched with the addition of contemporary letters: in this sense, the revival of the *LEC* not only affirmed (especially in literary terms) the apostolic purpose of a Society that had been readmitted to France as a teaching order (and national congregation[6]), but it also helped to bring together the old and new Societies.[7] This union of old and new was symbolized by the mission in China, surviving for

5. See for example and in particular, Sabina Pavone, "The Province of Madurai Between the Old and New Society of Jesus", in *Jesuit Survival and Restoration*, ed. by Robert Maryks and Jonathan Wright, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2014, pp. 331-350; Sabina Pavone, "Ricostruire la Compagnia partendo da Oriente? La comunità gesuita franco-cinese dopo la soppressione", in *Missioni, saperi e adattamento tra Europa e imperi*, ed. by Vincenzo Lavenia and Sabina Pavone, Macerata, Eum, 2015, pp. 129-164; Sabina Pavone, "I gesuiti nel Madurai: dalla missione itinerante alla stanzialità delle istituzioni educative (sec. XIX)", in *I gesuiti oltre le frontiere. Una nuova storia della Compagnia di Gesù*, vol. I, ed. by Michela Catto, Gianni La Bella, Sabina Pavone, and Guido Mongini, Turin, Leone Verde, 2024, pp. 338-347.

6. Throughout the history of the Society of Jesus, the production of the *LEC* remained a specifically French phenomenon, inseparable from the equally specific balance between the Roman government of the Order and its allegiance to the monarchy, loyalty that ensured its political survival after its first expulsion in 1594. However, the Jesuits' activities in the framework of the French State and empire became decisive in the 19th century: the reflection of this role in the writing of the *LEC* is one of the issues addressed in this essay, as mentioned above.

7. Research on the *LEC* contributes to the historiography of the suppression, the restoration, and the articulation of modern and contemporary companies that has marked the last decade.

nearly 20 years after the suppression. As Xavier de Ravignan later noted in 1844, in his *De l'existence et de l'Institut des jésuites*: "Such was exactly the part played by the Jesuits in the question of Chinese ceremonies and Malabar rites. They died; their brothers of today, happy after sixty years to receive their inheritance, have taken up and will continue their work".[8]

It should be added that, in reality, the dissemination of edifying letters never ceased in that it was taken up by independent booksellers. These bookseller-publishers were all but official suppliers to the Jesuits at the beginning of the 18th century, then gradually became less and less so – much more systematic research remains to be done in this area, however. The Society of Jesus's expulsion from France and subsequent suppression did not put an end to this activity; it apparently continued to be lucrative until the end of the century.

This was a vast publishing enterprise, and one that was not widely known. As André Rétif noted in 1947 and remains true today: "There are few collections as famous as the *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses de quelques missionnaires des missions étrangères* (Edifying and Curious Letters of Some Missionaries of the Foreign Missions); there are few less widely read".[9]

Our project goes even further, however, in that it aims to place the published series within another series the scope of which has yet to be fully grasped. This latter series leads from the original letters (some of which were already destined for publication, as we shall see) to the published letters to fragmentary rewritings of some of these letters (for a sermon, to be read in the refectory – there is little certainty here) to their translations, as numerous as they are varied in terms of division.

To conclude these general remarks and confirm the extreme richness of the *LEC* in terms of illustrating the articulation and contemporaneity of the manuscript form and printed text in the "age of printing",[10] we must mention a very unusual archival object. At the Loyola Faculty Library there is a manuscript collection of all the prefaces to the successive series of letters from 1703 to 1776. This undated collection spanning several hundred pages and probably coinciding with the period in question, was compiled after the Society's suppression when a number of former Jesuits sought to preserve the heritage of their former Order (for example, by collecting various plays performed on college stages). How can we understand this object? One of the motives behind its creation was undoubtedly to affirm the diversity of the series, a diversity manifested in the renewal of the prefaces for each series.

8. See, for example, Xavier de Ravignan, *De l'existence et de l'Institut des jésuites*, Namur, A. Wesmaël-Legros, 1844.

9. See, for example, André Rétif, "Brève histoire des *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*", *Nouvelle revue de sciences missionnaires* (1947), p. 37. This article remains very useful today in terms of providing an overview of the series and editions of the *LEC* in the 18th and 19th centuries.

10. We are inspired here by the work of Roger Chartier, in particular *Inscrire et effacer: culture écrite et littérature (XIe–XVIIIe siècle)*, Paris, Seuil/Gallimard, 2005.

2. *The* Lettres édifiantes et curieuses *and their multiple uses*

An essential element for understanding both the production context and the subsequent popularity of the *LEC* is what could be termed their "nationalistic" dimension. All of the letters were written by French Jesuits, missionaries not only in China but also in the Ottoman Empire, India, Paraguay, and Canada. Indeed, the reports of missionary activity in this latter area served, in many respects, as a model for the *LEC*. Between 1632 and 1673, the *Relations de ce qui s'est passé en la Nouvelle France* were printed in France, based on accounts the missionaries of the Québec mission sent to Mission Superior Paul Le Jeune – himself the author of several of the reports – or Father Joaquinot, provincial superior of the French province.[11] These accounts, however, were dominated by miraculous tales of conversion and episodes of martyrdom.

The "national" character also shaped other contexts: between 1726 and 1771, for instance, a series entitled *Der Neue Welt-Bott* – a sort of German counterpart modelled on earlier French *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses* – was published, but it did not enjoy the same success or have the same impact on the imaginary of the Republic of Letters.[12]

The *LEC* themselves achieved remarkable editorial success, leading to a number of translations into other languages – translations that were not, however, always faithful to the original spirit of the collection. As noted, the richness of ethnographic detail made the letters a reliable source even for readers uninterested in their edifying purpose but curious to gain information about these distant lands. Ultimately, the letters could be read simply as travel accounts and consumed as such. A telling example is the 1743 English edition (reissued in 1762), edited by John Lockman and titled *Travels of the Jesuits, into various parts of the world: compiled from their letters*.[13] In this case, as Lockman himself makes clear in the preface, the aim was not merely to entertain European readers but also to provide the English government with a body of information concerning potential zones of colonial expansion – China in particular – about which the Jesuits appeared to be one of the few sufficiently reliable sources. Lockman's editorial work thus involved deliberately eliminating all passages referring to miraculous conversions or other edifying content:

11. Some of the fathers who wrote letters include Paul Le Jeune, Joseph Le Mercier, and Bathélemy Didon.

12. See Galaxis Borja González and Ulrike Strasser, "The German circumnavigation of the globe: missionary writing, colonial identity formation, and the case of Joseph Stöcklein's *Neuer Welt-Bott*", in *Reporting Christian missions in the eighteenth century: communication, culture of knowledge and regular publication in a cross-confessional perspective*, ed. by Markus Friedrich and Alexander Shunka, Boston-Leiden, Brill, 2017, pp. 73-92.

13. Charles Le Gobien and John Lockman, *Travels of the Jesuits, into various parts of the world: compiled from their letters: now first attempted in English: intermix'd with an account of the manners, government, religion, &c. of the several nations visited by those fathers*, London, 1743. In the 1762 edition, the title page was amended to include the phrase "particularly China and the East-Indies" following the word "world". The 1743 edition had been dedicated to Arthur Onslow, Speaker of the House of Commons.

> As the geographical and other particulars found in them, are intermix'd with a long detail of the miracles, as well as of the conversions which the Jesuits declare they make in their missions; it was necessary for me to expunge all incidents of this kind, (those excepted, here and there, which I presumed might entertain) such appearing quite insipid or ridiculous to most english readers; and indeed to all Persons of Understanding and Taste.[14]

Lockman had made every effort to identify the toponyms mentioned in the letters by consulting the maps available in England at the time. In this regard, he remarked – revealing a clearly polemical and nationalist anti-French stance – "I don't know any Nation who disguise[s] proper names more than the French, a circumstance which often is very perplexing to a translator".[15] Nonetheless, he could not help but acknowledge that:

> No men are better qualified to describe Nations and Countries than the Jesuits. Their education, their extensive learning; the pains they take to acquire the languages of the several regions they visit; the opportunities they have, by their skill in the arts and sciences, as well as by their insinuating address, to glide into courts, where access is often denied to all but themselves: Their familiarity with the inhabitants; their mixing with, and, often, very long abode among them; these, I say, must necessarily give our Jesuits a much more perfect Insight into the genius and character of a Nation, than others who visit coasts only, and that merely upon account of traffic, or from other lucrative motives. In case these mercantile travellers happen to go up a Country, and make some little stay in it, the most they are able to do is, to get a few of the most obvious customs; to describe habits, buildings, and whatever else comes under the notice of the eye.[16]

For this reason, "the Jesuits, to speak in general, have the best opportunity of furnishing us with valuable accounts of many far distant Countries".[17]

The English, however, were not the only ones to appropriate the *LEC* in a manner that diverged from their original intent. In 1749 in France, an anonymous *Recueil d'observations curieuses* was published containing extracts from the *LEC* volumes in which the term "édifiantes" was entirely omitted and no reference was made to the original collection. Although the material still concerned Asia, Africa, and the Americas, the clear focus of the letters was China, with considerable

14. *Ibid*., p. vi.

15. *Ibid*., p. vii.

16. *Ibid*., pp. viii-ix. Lockman also notes that certain passages from the *LEC* had appeared in the *Philosophical Transactions* of the Royal Society (p. xx). Indeed, a reference to volume X of the *LEC* can be found in the article on ginseng in China, published in issue no. 354 (November/December, 1717), p. 705; see *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses, écrites des missions étrangères, par quelques pères de la Compagnie de Jésus*, *X Recueil*, Paris, chez Nicolas Le Clerc, 1732, pp. 160-172: "Lettre du Père Jartoux au Père Procureur Général des Missions de la Chine et des Indes".

17. Le Gobien and Lockman, *Travels of the Jesuits*, p. ix. Later on, Lockman emphasizes that many of the Jesuits' detractors belonged to rival religious orders, driven in part by envy (pp. xvi-xvii). As for his selection of letters, he states that he reduced the translated material to approximately one third of the original. The first two volumes draw from the initial 10 books of the *LEC*; in the three subsequent volumes, he announces, he intends to cover the remaining 15 volumes (p. xix).

attention devoted to goods imported from that empire – most notably porcelain.[18] The author of the *Recueil* was Claude François Lambert, a former Jesuit who had spent very little time in the Society of Jesus and, after leaving it, pursued a career as a prolific polymath. The Jesuits were unsurprisingly displeased with this distorted use of their correspondence. Following Du Halde's death in 1743, the publication of Jesuit correspondence entered a period of stagnation which Abbé Lambert was quick to exploit. It was Patouillet who first condemned such conduct, in the "Épître" opening the 27th *Recueil* of 1749 – the first volume edited under his supervision. Revisiting one of the most significant reports contained in that volume, namely the account of the persecutions in China, Patouillet devoted ample space to describing the condition of the missionaries in the Celestial Empire and the martyrdom many of them might face, a fate clearly expressed in their letters. And yet, he concluded, even in the Christian Church there were those who did not share the desire to glorify the Lord by disseminating these documents:

> The anonymous individual, for example, who appropriated the twenty-six volumes of our *Lettres*, and who recently had them printed under the title *Recueil d'observations curieuses*, did not hesitate, in this mutilated edition, to systematically suppress everything related to religion, virtue, edification, and piety. As for us, far from embracing this new approach, we shall always consider it our duty, in this work, to unite the agreeable with the useful – to ensure that edifying content remains its true soul, while that which is merely curious serves only as an accessory, a kind of incidental accompaniment.[19]

Following in the footsteps of Patouillet, the well-known Jesuit journal *Journal de Trévoux* echoed the same criticism the following year, criticizing the publication: "It is said that this man's intention was merely to present the public with entertaining content and, by doing so, no doubt to earn money – the hidden motive behind so many literary thefts".[20]

Although not well received by the Jesuits, Lambert's edition still situated itself within what might be termed a "documentary" framework. However, the 1750s and 1760s in France also witnessed a significant rise in anti-Jesuit sentiment that inevitably affected the reception of the *LEC*. This did not, however, prevent them from continuing to circulate, albeit increasingly framed in a seemingly "defamatory" light. One notable example is the *Mémoires géographiques, physiques et historiques sur l'Asie, l'Afrique et l'Amérique tirés des Lettres édifiantes*, published anonymously by Jacques-Philibert Rousselot de Surgy just a few years after the 1764 Jesuit expulsion. In the "Préface", while reaffirming the reputation and relevance of the *LEC*, the author added that they were

> absurd accounts that can only be believed by imbecilic devotees or minds fanatically bound to the faction of the work's editors. Among the thirty-six volumes in 12mo that compose the collection, not a single one fails to offer a pompous narration of miracles, a daily enumeration, an exaggerated tally of conversions, baptisms, and other such sacred

18. *Recueil d'observations curieuses sur les mœurs, les coutumes […] des différents peuples de l'Asie, de l'Afrique, et de l'Amerique*, Paris, 1749.

19. *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*, *XXVII Recueil*, Paris, chez Nicolas Le Clerc, 1749, pp. xxxiv-xxxv: "*Épitre du p. Patouillet*".

20. *Mémoires de Trévoux,* Paris, Chaubert*,* January-February 1750, p. 113.

> works, allegedly accomplished through the ministry of various Jesuit missionaries – whom their pious *confrères* present to us as all being saints, assigning them at will the glorious status of confessors or martyrs.[21]

Rousselot de Surgy's editorial approach followed that of Lockman's English translation mentioned earlier. He similarly asked whether a project aimed at "suppressing the absurdities and prodigies which are so numerous therein could hope to be favourably received by the public"[22] and found that it could indeed, acknowledging that the missionaries had collected more information about the four parts of the world than any other travellers. He also expressed criticism of Lambert's *Recueil d'observations curieuses*, considering it jumbled and incoherent, not least because it was not organized geographically as his own edition was. In this regard Lambert had remained faithful to the original structure of the *LEC*, while Rousselot de Surgy reworked the available materials by expunging all letters related to China and Japan that had been included in earlier *LEC* collections, published prior to the works by Du Halde and Pierre-François-Xavier de Charlevoix.[23] He deemed that these two authors had already provided sufficiently detailed accounts of those two empires, largely based on the *LEC*, and that there was thus no need to further address the subject.[24]

Rousselot de Surgy's "geographical" model was also adopted by Father Maturin de Querbœuf in the 1780-1783 edition, a volume subsequently reissued several times during the 19th century (1810, 1819, 1829, and 1838). Querbœuf preceded his edition with a preface in which he reworked the original introductions. Another edition appeared between 1829 and 1832, published in two different locations: Paris and Lyon. Its title page claimed that the texts had been "collated with the best editions and supplemented with new notes"[25], although, in this case, no prefaces are included in the individual volumes. As for China – the undisputed star of the final volumes of the *LEC* – there were editions dedicated exclusively to letters concerning that region even in the 19th century. Such subject matter increasingly attracted European readers for both cultural and economic-colonial reasons. A *Choix de Lettres édifiantes écrites des Missions étrangères […]* was published by Abbé Jean-Baptiste Montmignon in 1808 and also reissued multiple times. In this instance, excerpts from the *LEC* were augmented with passages drawn from reports and letters by members of the Missions Étrangères

21. [Jacques-Philibert Rousselot de Surgy], *Mémoires géographiques, physiques et historiques sur l'Asie, l'Afrique et l'Amérique tiré des Lettres édifiantes et des Voyages des Missionnaires Jésuites*, Paris, Durand, 1767, 4 vols in-12°, vol. I, "Préface", pp. i-ii.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. iii-iv.

23. Jean-Baptiste Du Halde, *Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique et physique de l'Empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie chinoise*, Paris, P. G. Le Mercier, 1735; Pierre-François-Xavier de Charlevoix, *Histoire de l'établissement, des progrès et de la décadence du christianisme dans l'Empire du Japon*, Rouen, Guillaume Behourt, 1715.

24. See [Rousselot de Surgy], *Mémoires géographiques*, pp. vii-viii.

25. *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses, écrites par des missionnaires de la Compagnie de Jésus collattionés sur les meilleurs éditions et enrichies de nouvelles notes,* Paris, Imprimerie de Béthune, 1829.

de Paris (MEP), including material from the early years of the 19th century.[26] In this volume, the nationalistic dimension is particularly evident: "The civilized savage, the converted infidel, every new people they created by making them Christians, were all to become allies and friends of France".[27]

As this brief survey suggests, beyond the content of individual letters, this collection's bibliographical tradition raises a number of unresolved questions that scholars have yet to address systematically, due in part to the multidisciplinary expertise such work would require. The uses – and reuses – of the *LEC* highlight the rich character of this textual tradition; as mentioned above, it is a body of work that still awaits thorough scholarly attention, particularly with regard to the editorial processes that preceded and accompanied the first edition.

In 1932, Virgile Pinot (1883-1936) in *La Chine et la formation de l'esprit philosophique en France*[28] highlighted the gap between the letters sent by missionaries and those published in the *LEC*. Pinot argued that the credit for the engaging style of the printed letters was largely due to Le Gobien, asserting that their literary quality owed much to the French Jesuit. His successor, Du Halde, carried out even more substantial editorial interventions, not only summarizing passages from the original letters but also adding material of his own and composing letters that were, in fact, composites of material drawn from multiple authors. The key sign of this editorial practice, according to Pinot, was his discovery of a handwritten letter sent from China by Father Dominique Parrenin and held by the Bibliothèque Nationale de France among its French manuscripts. A comparison with the version published by Du Halde in the 21st *Recueil* of the *LEC* revealed a "mosaic" construction. According to Pinot, the editor had likely wanted to craft an image of China as a model of virtue – an image which, by the 18th century, had been firmly established in the European imagination. Pinot reappears in the conclusion, but it is important to note here that his approach – despite its polemical tone – produced rich insights that were not systematically explored in the following decades.

3. *From the missionaries' letters to the* Lettres édifiantes et curieuses

Analysing manuscript collections held at the Archives of the French Province of the Society of Jesus (particularly the Brotier collection), the Bibliothèque Loyola in Paris, and the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, it has become clear

26. *Choix de Lettres édifiantes écrites des Missions étrangères, avec des additions, des notes critiques et des observations pour la plus grande intelligence de ces lettres, précédé d'un tableau géographique de la Chine, et de la politique et des sectes religieuses, de la littérature et de l'état actuel du christianisme chez ce peuple*, par l'abbé J.-B. Montmignon, ancien archidiacre et vicaire général de Soissons, Paris, chez Marandon, 1808, 8 vols in-8°.

27. *Ibid.*, p. ii.

28. Virgile Pinot, *La Chine et la formation de l'esprit philosophique en France (1640-1740)*, Paris, Geuthner, 1932 (reprint: Geneva, Slatkine Reprints, 2011).

that Pinot's perspective opens up lines of inquiry still largely unexplored – due in part to the difficulty of accessing the relevant sources.

A foray into the *Nouvelles Acquisitions Françaises* collection[29] at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France has further strengthened the conviction that investigating the manuscripts later incorporated into the *LEC* could contribute significantly to a better understanding of the editorial workshop in which the collection took shape. Here we limit ourselves to a few examples in the awareness that only detailed, collaborative research can expand this line of investigation.

The first document is a copy of a letter from Father Pierre Martin to Le Gobien, dated 1 February 1701, describing a journey from Avur to Pondicherry. It features corrections and deletions in a different hand, most likely that of Le Gobien himself.[30] The changes are primarily stylistic, which would seem to confirm Pinot's hypothesis that Le Gobien's work consisted mainly of "literary" revision.

The second letter provides evidence of the global circulation of the *LEC*. Father Barbier, writing from the missions in Bengal to Du Halde (the second editor), refers to the preface of the ninth *Recueil* in which the Parisian Jesuit had expressed interest in collecting letters from missionaries – possibly in the hope that his own would be among them. This letter likewise contains deletions and stylistic modifications written in another hand, suggesting that it was at least considered for publication. Attached to the letter is a small note that appears to be an editorial memorandum about Barbier, describing his missionary work as being undertaken "with a zeal and fervor that reveal not only passion, but verging on madness".[31]

The third and final example is a letter sent to Du Halde by Father Jean Venant Bouchet from Pondicherry in 1716. In this case, the missionary promoted the work of a confrère, Father Florentin, who had written "une lettre édifiante et curieuse" which, Bouchet claimed, deserved to be included in the forthcoming volume of the collection.[32] As far as we know, Du Halde did not judge Florentin's letter worthy of publication, but the tone of Bouchet's letter is further evidence of the dense network of exchanges between missionaries and editors in Paris, as well as the fact that some letters were composed from the outset with the intention of being included in the series.

29. These manuscripts have been acquired by the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (hereafter BNF) through donations and acquisitions since the 19th century. *Manuscrits Indiens* also collect different letters used for the *LEC*, particularly by Father Mauduit. On Indian *LEC* see now also Ines G. Županov, *Missionary Enchantment in South Asia, 16th-18th Centuries: Catholic Histories and Fictions*, particularly ch. 8: "Science and Demonology: French Jesuits in South India", Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2025, pp. 289-316, https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.24215726.13.

30. *Copie d'une lettre du P. Pierre Martin… au P. Le Gobien…, sur un voyage d'Aour à Pondichéry*…, 1 février 1701, in BNF, MS Nouvelles Acquisitions Françaises (hereafter NAF), 11168, ff. 61-62.

31. *Lettre du P. C.-A. Barbier au P. Du Halde*, Bengala, 29 décembre 1714, in *ibid.*, ff. 98-99.

32. *Lettre du P. Bouchet au P. Du Halde*, Pondicherry, 19 février 1716, in *ibid.*, f. 129.

4. *China in the* Lettres édifiantes et curieuses

The February 1703 letter from Father Jean de Fontaney to Father François d'Aix de la Chaize, "confessor to the King", provides one of the very first accounts published by a "missionary of the Society of Jesus" in this new context. From this letter onwards China constitutes the central focus of the *LEC*, and is just as decisive in their historiography. Indeed, it was the pioneering work of Jesuits Joseph Dehergne and Donald Leslie, *Juifs de Chine à travers la correspondance inédite des jésuites du XVIIIe siècle* (Jews of China through the unpublished correspondence of Jesuits in the 18th century), published in Rome in 1980, that opened up a whole new perspective on the *LEC* (and yet, as we shall see in the end, a perspective that was not entirely unprecedented). In this work, Dehergne and Leslie compared the publication of the account of the discovery of a Jewish synagogue in 1703-1704 in the city of K'ai-Feng, located in the centre of imperial China in Henan province, with the original manuscript of this account and made a second discovery: letters sent from China by two Jesuits, one French and the other Italian, had been supplemented by their French publishers with various additions that were completely foreign to this account and sought to place this incongruous wonder in the context of European Catholic anti-Semitism. In the publishers' anti-Semitic framing, only these Chinese Jews' long-time ignorance of Christian revelation could explain the two Jesuits' fraternal emotion towards them. Such ignorance was obviously immediately dispelled by the Jesuits and, in a surprising reversal, thanks to the missionaries the K'ai-Feng synagogue regulars in turn *discovered* the revelation and were transformed by it. Dehergne and Leslie's investigation, which was more or less contemporary with Pope John Paul II's controversial statement about the Jewish people as the elder brothers of Christians,[33] opened up an abyss beneath the printed pages of the *LEC*.[34]

We also find confirmation of China's central place in all the letters in the collection of prefaces from 1703, 1749, and 1776:

> I am sharing with you some letters we have recently received from our Fathers in China and our other missions in the East Indies. Those to whom they were written have given me permission to do so. They even wished that I should do so in order to encourage you to praise God with them for the blessings He has bestowed on the holy work of our brothers at the other end of the world (1703).
>
> He had acquired such reliable and abundant knowledge of this subject that in 1735 he was able to publish a general description of the empire of China and Chinese Tartary in four folio volumes. This was a grand and magnificent work, the conception and execution

33. We should not forget Carlo Ginzburg's sharp and rigorous commentary on this statement in "Un lapsus du pape Wojtyla" (A slip of the tongue by Pope Wojtyla), in *A distance: Neuf essais sur le point de vue en histoire*, Paris, Gallimard/Le Seuil, 2001 [1998], pp. 181-186.

34. For an initial overview of this investigation, see Pierre Antoine Fabre, "L'usage catholique des juifs de K'ai-feng dans la 'querelle des rites chinois'. Notes historiques et historiographiques sur l'ouvrage de Joseph Dehergne et Donald Daniel Leslie, *Juifs de Chine à travers la correspondance inédite des jésuites du XVIIIe siècle*, Paris-Rome, 1980", *Cahiers du judaïsme*, 10 (Autumn 2001), pp. 34-45 (an initial approach suggested by Maurice Kriegel, coordinator of this issue, to whom the authors are once again very grateful).

> of which required nothing less than a mind that was broad, easy-going, well versed in languages, active and industrious, as Father Du Halde indeed was. He distinguished himself throughout his life by virtue of his refined and delicate taste for *belles-lettres*, his insight into the higher sciences, and his constant work, which added to the happy dispositions he had received from nature.

The signatory, after praising his predecessor,

> publishes this [new] volume: The first of the letters that comprise it is a curious account of the Emperor of China's house in Plaisance. The author, Brother Attiret[35], is a skilled painter who joined our Society only after travelling throughout Italy and perfecting his knowledge of the fine arts.
> This account provides a glimpse into the interior of the emperor's palaces, about which we had no previous knowledge. We also have the satisfaction of seeing the character of this prince in his domestic life and noting in his conversations his taste for the sciences, a laudable desire to know what is happening in the universe, and finally a character of kindness that tempers, so to speak, the splendor of his power.[36]

5. *Conclusion*

Not only was China a central focus of the *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*, as can be seen from the rest of these prefaces; it was also a place of controversy. In China more so than elsewhere, because the particular conditions attached to the royal missions overexposed the scientific objectives of the Jesuit enterprise; moreover, due to the need to inscribe the Order's apostolic purpose within this framework, the account or even grand narrative of the mission in the *LEC* was characterized by ambiguity.

The preface to the first 1703 collection praises a letter from Ferdinand Verbiest, a Jesuit mathematician active in China, for having encouraged the missionaries in China to undertake their expeditions and write their accounts (which flowed almost naturally as an extension of the action itself, as a form of "writing-action");[37] it likewise commends the same letter for having convinced Jean-Baptiste Colbert of the need for these expeditions in the first place by arguing that he

> was then working to perfect the sciences and the arts, and that he knew that the Chinese prided themselves on this knowledge more than any other nation in the world, [and that] he believed that nothing was more capable of giving science and the arts a new lustre than the communication of discoveries that might be made in China, and that nothing at the same time would be more conducive to the acceptance of the Gospel in China than sending there men who were equally zealous for the salvation of souls and skilled in the sciences of Europe.[38]

35. Jean-Denis Attiret, Jesuit painter (1702-1768).

36. *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses. Préfaces*, in Bibliothèque Loyola, Paris, MS C 20/021.

37. The concept of "action writing" comes from the work of the Interdisciplinary Research Group on the History of Literature at the School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences (EHESS).

38. *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*, *I Recueil*, Paris, chez Nicolas le Clerc, 1703, s.p.

However, in one of the first letters published in this collection – the one from Father de Fontaney mentioned above – he quotes another Colbert who is said to have "spoken these words, which I have never forgotten", referring to him as "the late Mr Colbert" and emphasizing the testamentary nature of these "words": "The sciences, Father, do not deserve that you should take the trouble to cross the seas". And it is "Saint Ignatius" himself, far beyond Father Verbiest, who imposes a kind of twist on the previous discourse:

> He wanted only those who showed the most spirit and natural talent and ability for the sciences to be admitted to this degree [of professed], and he would undoubtedly not have arranged things in this way, he who sought in everything the greatest glory of God, had he not been convinced that working for the conversion of infidels was a wholly divine work to which he had to devote at least part of the best and most select of his order […] You know how essential and universal in our Society is this zeal to carry the faith to the most distant countries, and that the greatest talents are no reason to keep in Europe those whom God truly calls to the missions.[39]

This is a surprising shift whereby the "settling of matters" grants primacy to zeal for the faith, a zeal which – through a kind of internal conversion within the discourse itself – did not emerge from "aptitude for the sciences".

It is particularly this ambiguity of the *LEC* – what do they ultimately bring to the fore? – that gave rise to the contestation surrounding them between the two wars, a period which, in France, was characterized by other areas of turbulence especially in relation to Rome, such as the tensions surfacing during the development of the *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique*.[40] Indeed, this role played by ambiguity is another finding of our investigation, like a kind of proto-history for the textual criticism of Dehergne and Leslie. Pinot, presented above, breaks open the monument of the *LEC* on three fronts: first, by comparing them with scholarly reports sent by the same authors or others to the Observatoire économique de Paris[41] and noting that these dissertations largely bypass the letters channel – at the risk, Pinot points out, of "losing some of their meaning". He then advances the hypothesis, confirmed almost half a century later, that the Marquis de Saint-Simon's opinion that the *LEC* were "artificial accounts"[42] may have been "formed […] on the basis of precise information provided by the memoirs on China supplied to him by the former Jesuit Foucquet[43] and which we are not familiar with".[44] We now know this was true thanks to the work of Hélène

39. *Ibid.*, p. 65, 74-75.

40. Pierre Antoine Fabre, "Une somme de spiritualité. Sur le *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* (1932-1995)", *Critique* (janvier-février 1998), pp. 1064-1073.

41. Pinot, *La Chine et la formation*, p. 142.

42. See, for example, Saint-Simon, *Mémoires*, XXV, p. 184 (cited by Pinot, *La Chine et la formation*, p. 159).

43. Pinot's enthusiasm may be a little excessive here, since Foucquet never actually broke his vows with the Society but merely pursued a scholarly and diplomatic career on the fringes of the institution.

44. Pinot, *La Chine et la formation*, p. 159.

Himmelfarb and Bruno Neveu,[45] and even more recent knowledge of the diversity of Foucquet's communication channels has been provided by the publication of letters he sent to his family from China.[46] Finally, and most similarly to the method that Dehergne and Leslie would later use, Pinot sketches a comparative reading of the published letters and preserved manuscripts. Let us consider two examples illustrating the extreme heterogeneity of ways the editors intervened, from ideological to rhetorical changes, including the criteria of "good taste".

The first example is from the 18th century. Pinot mainly interested himself in Du Halde's work up to the 1740s, and he did so with a certain mischievousness since Du Halde was better known (as indicated in the preface to the series launched in 1749) for his *Description de l'empire de la Chine* (1735) than for his editing of descriptions of China in the library of the Collège Louis le Grand, where he worked with Charles Le Gobien (1653-1708), Etienne Souciet, librarian (1671-1744),[47] Louis Patouillet (1699-1769), Yves de Querboeuf (1726-1797), and Gabriel Brotier (1723-1789).

In a letter from Father Parrenin, Du Halde's revision removed a description of the alcohol that "the Chinese" drink to become drunk as "stinking".[48] Why? Out of consideration for these "Chinese", some of whom were interlocutors or even direct collaborators of the first authors of these letters, and some of whom, as informants and translators, were becoming familiar with the French language? Out of consideration for the "good taste" of readers, both male and female, whom clerical writing had learned to take into account?

The second example takes us almost back to K'ai-Feng. Pinot writes:

> The Jesuits in Beijing sometimes took liberties that those in Paris could not accept. In order to reconcile the Chinese chronology as they understood it with the chronology of Scripture, the Jesuits in Beijing resolutely rejected the Vulgate, which they considered too short, and accepted the Septuagint version. This tolerance granted to them in China for the exercise of their mission […] was only grudgingly granted to them for the writings they published in France. And we find in the correspondence of the missionaries in Beijing exhortations not to force them to follow the chronology of the Vulgate: 'Dare I hope,' wrote Father Parrenin to Monsieur de Mairan,[49] 'that the Hebrew scholars will allow us to lengthen the duration of the world a little, despite the supposed good faith of the rabbis who took the liberty of shortening it in order to delay the coming of the Messiah […]'[50] Between the supporters of the Vulgate and the supporters of the Septuagint version, Father Du Halde tried to reach an agreement.[51]

45. Hélène Himelfarb and Bruno Neveu, "Saint-Simon, les Jésuites et la Chine. Correspondance inédite avec le P. Foucquet et le cardinal Gualterio sur les affaires chinoises", *Cahiers Saint-Simon*, 5-9 (1977-1980), pp. 26-36.

46. Isabelle Landry-Deron (with Jean-Marie Bourgoing and Pierre Antoine Fabre), *La mission chinoise de Jean-François Foucquet*, Paris, Editions du CNRS, 2022.

47. Pierre Antoine Fabre, "Etienne Souciet", in *Les jésuites. Histoire et dictionnaire*, ed. by Pierre Antoine Fabre and Benoist Pierre, Paris, Bouquins, 2022, p. 1057.

48. *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*, *XXIV Recueil*, Paris, Nicolas Le Clerc, 1723, p. 83.

49. Jean-Jacques Dortous de Mairan (1678-1771), mathematician, astronomer, and geophysicist, prestigious correspondent in France for the Jesuits in Beijing.

50. Letter of 20 September 1740, *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*, *XXVI Recueil*, 1741.

51. Pinot, *La Chine et la formation*, pp. 150-151.

In this second case, Pinot does not identify a rewriting of Father Parrenin's letter, but shows how the latter anticipates it through a kind of preventive censorship and by establishing a complicity to which the irony of the address to "Messieurs les hébraïsants" seems to contribute – a complicity to which Father Parrenin calls Dortous de Mairan as a witness, as if to exonerate himself by explaining its causes.

In two issues of *Revue d'histoire des missions* from the same year, 1932,[52] Alexandre Brou, certainly a great polygraph of the Society but a specialist in Asian missions, led the assault against Pinot's work and theses. His attack can be summarized in a single sentence. Brou quotes Pinot:

> We must not allow anyone to think that the Chinese are superstitious, that they believe in magic, spirits or demons. It must be made very clear that they are spiritualists, that they believe in a personal God, and that they have done so since the dawn of time, since the very origins of the Chinese nation. In short, even if the Jesuits in Beijing and Canton say the opposite, we must defend at all costs the ideas that have always been upheld by the Jesuits since the dispute over Chinese ceremonies began.

Brou continues: "Where did they get the idea that in Beijing and Canton they said the opposite of what was printed in Paris?".[53] This battle may seem ancient. However, it is worth noting that Brou's reaction occurred in the same period as another extremely virulent controversy between various members of the Society of Jesus on the subject of the possible role Alonso Sánchez, a Jesuit active in the Philippines at the turn of the 17th century, may have played in drafting the *Instructions on Prayer* produced by the government of Claudio Acquaviva in 1590. Could or could not, or should or *should not*, a Jesuit from the peripheries be made a trusted advisor to Rome?[54] The problem is the same: by rejecting the possibility of a discrepancy between the letters sent and the published versions, Brou also rejects the possibility of an *alternative voice*.

Especially from the perspective of China, the history of the *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses* therefore offers us the opportunity to traverse the global history of Europe from what is now often referred to as the "first modern globalization" to the last manifestations of the colonial era. Vast China, precisely because it was never colonized by European powers, can be seen as holding up a long-lasting mirror to reflect the cultural history of Western domination.

52. Alexandre Brou, "De certains conflits entre missionnaires au XVIIe siècle", *Revue d'histoire des missions* (1932), pp. 189-202; Alexandre Brou, "Les jésuites sinologues de Pékin et leurs éditeurs de Paris", *ibid.*, pp. 551-566.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 565.

54. Pierre Antoine Fabre, "Essai de géopolitique des courants spirituels: Alonso Sánchez entre Madrid, le Mexique, les Iles Philippines, les côtes de la Chine et Rome (1579–1593)", in *Strategie politiche e religiose nel mondo moderno: la Compagnia di Gesù ai tempi di Claudio Acquaviva (1581-1615)*, ed. by Francesca Cantù, Paolo Broggio, Pierre Antoine Fabre, and Antonella Romano, Brescia, Morcelliana, 2007, pp. 185-203.

Francesco Borghesi, Daniel Canaris

Paolo Mattia Doria's Image of China in *La vita civile* and his Neapolitan Manuscripts*

1. *Introduction*

By the 17th century, Italy had long passed its prime as a cultural, political, and economic centre. Yet as in the days of Giordano Bruno (1548-1600), Naples was still a cradle for daring and provocative ideas, hosting and forming the likes of Tommaso Cornelio (1614-1684), Leonardo di Capua (1617-1695), Gianvincenzo Gravina (1664-1718), Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), Paolo Mattia Doria (1667-1746), and Celestino Galiani (1681-1753). It was in this vibrant intellectual atmosphere that intellectuals in Naples came to reflect upon their city's political and socio-economic problems and make concrete proposals for reforms to lift it out of its quagmire. Just as Descartes, Gassendi, and the Royal Society loomed over their scientific and philosophical investigations, so Hobbes and Locke were pre-eminent reference points for many attempts to rethink the origins and nature of civil society. As much as Neapolitan thinkers drew upon and reacted to these foreign ideas, they consciously tried to work their own contributions within an Italian intellectual tradition. This essay will make some preliminary observations about the proposals for political reform made by a Genoese nobleman active in Naples in the early 18th century, Paolo Mattia Doria. It examines how Doria navigates Hobbesian realism with an idiosyncratic Platonic idealism in the third and final edition of his magnum opus of political theory, *La vita civile* (1729) and considers the special role of China in his intellectual system as a concrete instantiation of his political ideals.[1]

* This essay has been conceived and written jointly by Francesco Borghesi and Daniel Canaris as part of a research project titled "Images of China from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment" and funded by the Italian Ministry of University and Research (Research Project of National Interest, PRIN 2022 PNRR P2022RWWHN). For bureaucratic purposes only, sections 1 and 2 are to be attributed to Borghesi and sections 3 and 4 to Canaris.

1. Franco Venturi in the first volume of his seminal *Settecento riformatore* dedicates a section of the first chapter "Gli anni trenta del Settecento" to Doria, analysing his 1740 economic treatise *Del commercio del regno di Napoli*, of which Enrico Vidal had published an edition in 1953. Venturi, who considers this treatise Doria's most relevant and innovative contribution, states: "Il suo intervento sembrò inatteso e imprevedibile. Doria aveva più di settant'anni, nato com'era nel 1667. Era stato coinvolto nell'estrema difesa metafisica e religiosa degli anni venti

2. *The arrival of Doria in Naples*

The prodigal Paolo Mattia Doria arrived in Naples from Genoa in 1690 after a dissolute youth traversing the Italian peninsula to recover substantial debts that his family had in this city.[2] Originally making his fame amongst the Neapolitan nobles as an able duellist, he reinvented himself as "metaphysical philosopher", imbibing the philosophical culture of the *novatores* who would meet in the house of the Cartesian jurisconsult Nicolò Caravita (1647-1717), one of the most fervent opponents of the inquisitorial process against the Neapolitan "atheists" and a close friend of Vico.[3] Like Vico, Doria would later vehemently distance himself from Cartesian and Epicurean currents of the radicals for a revived Neoplatonism, but a few "radical" convictions remained.[4]

Firstly, he never shed his staunch anti-Jesuitism, which had been formed in response to his austere Jesuit education and no doubt reinforced by the key role

e dell'inizio degli anni trenta. Era uomo della generazione vichiana e platonica, antilockiana. Ed ora, nel 1740, scriveva un'ampia memoria *Del commercio del regno di Napoli.* […] In queste pagine parevano rifiorire ed allargarsi, in un'ampiezza e profondità prima ignote, le sue discussioni sui mali del Mezzogiorno che, in gioventù, egli aveva abbozzate nelle sue prime opere e scritture. […] Un grave errore gli pareva, per l'Italia meridionale, una politica mutuata dalle grandi potenze, con la formazione di grandi compagnie per il commercio internazionale, con grossi e rischiosi investimenti nel traffico internazionale e coloniale, col tentativo di accumulare il più possibile di oro: il mercantilismo insomma nella sua fase più cruda. […] A questo mercantilismo Doria contrapponeva quel che egli chiamava un 'commercio interno e reale del regno', fondato sull'esportazione dei prodotti del suolo (grano, olio, ecc.) e delle manifatture locali". See Franco Venturi, *Settecento riformatore. Da Muratori a Beccaria*, Turin, Einaudi, 1969, pp. 4243, and, for the edition of *Del commercio del regno di Napoli*, Enrico Vidal, *Il pensiero civile di Paolo Mattia Doria negli scritti inediti. Con il testo del manoscritto "Del commercio del regno di Napoli"*, Milan, Giuffrè, 1953, pp. 161-206.

2. For Doria's biography, see Pierluigi Rovito, "Doria, Paolo Mattia", in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. XLI, Rome, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1992, pp. 438-445. On his arrival in Naples, see also Raffaele Ajello, *Arcana juris. Diritto e politica nel Settecento italiano*, Naples, Jovene, 1976, pp. 400-406, in particular p. 400: "Egli era – come si definì – un petit maître alla moda, incline piuttosto al gusto leggiero dell'eleganza e della grazia, allora già diffuso in Francia fra i fautori di soluzioni 'moderne', che a quello severo e 'eroico' della virtù. La società napoletana influì subito sulla sua personalità, apportandovi elementi nuovi e motivi meno brillanti, forse più seri…: innanzitutto un puntiglioso ed eccessivo senso dell'onore".

3. Rovito, "Doria, Paolo Mattia", pp. 439-441. On Caravita, see Salvatore Fodale, "Caravita, Nicolò", in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. XIX, Rome, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1976, pp. 676-679.

4. Doria would systematically critique Descartes's meditations in Paolo Mattia Doria, *Discorsi critici filosofici intorno alla Filosofia degl'Antichi, e de i Moderni; ed in particolare intorno alla Filosofia di Renato des-Cartes con un progetto di una Metafisica*, Venice, 1724. In the introduction to this work, Doria, like Vico in his *Vita*, projects his anti-Cartesianism to the early 1690s. According to Harold Stone, this is clearly wrong because Doria "was enough of a Cartesian to accept the dedication of the 1713 Italian translation of Baillet's biography and account of Descartes' thought". Harold Samuel Stone, *Vico's Cultural History: The Production and Transmission of Ideas in Naples, 1685-1750*, Leiden-New York-Köln, Brill, 1997, p. 219. See also Giulia Belgioioso, "Philosophie aristotélicienne et mécanisme cartésien à Naples à la fin du XVIIe siècle", *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres*, 1 (1995), pp. 19-47.

of Jesuits such as Giovanni Battista De Benedictis (1622-1706) in attacking the atomism and Epicureanism of the "atheists" in the early 1690s.[5] Doria's anti-Jesuitism led him to adopt initially a very strong antagonism towards the Jesuits' missionary activities in China and their interpretation of Confucianism, accusing them of preaching idolatry and distorting their representation of China to Europe.[6]

Secondly, Doria embraced the "geometric" wave that swept over Europe in the wake of Descartes's *La Géométrie* (1637), even if he would come to reject his analytic geometry in favour of the synthetic geometry of Euclid. Like Vico, Doria insisted on the notion that true philosophical reflection must be built upon demonstrable postulates and concatenated axioms.[7] But whereas Vico, who admitted in his *Vita* to being "difettoso" in the subject of mathematics, merely used the geometric method to structure the *Scienza nuova*, Doria also cultivated mathematical skills, which he considered an integral part of his philosophic activity.[8] From the 1710s onwards, Doria published and republished a suite of works on motion and mechanics in which he employed a Platonic concept of an immaterial One as the epistemological basis of his critique of analytic geometry and infinitesimal calculus.[9] While Doria's antiquarian Platonism mirrored contemporary intellectual currents, his mathematical works were heavily criticized by his peers and largely ignored.[10]

5. See Giovanni Battista De Benedictis, *Philosophia peripatetica*, 5 vols, Naples, Ex Officina Typ. Jacobi Raillard, 1688-1692; Giovanni Battista De Benedictis, *Lettere apologetiche in difesa della teologia scolastica e della filosofia peripatetica*, Naples, Nella Stamperia di Giacomo Raillard, 1694. For an overview of the *Lettere*, see Stone, *Vico's Cultural History*, pp. 46-54. On De Benedictis, see Pierre Girard, «*Comme des lumières jamais vues». Matérialisme et radicalité politique dans les premières Lumières à Naples (1647-1744)*, Paris, Honoré Champion, 2016, pp. 20-24 and 202-211.

6. "Lettere di Paolo Mattia Doria al Reverendissimo Padre Generale della Compagnia di Gesù", in Paolo Mattia Doria, *Manoscritti napoletani di Paolo Mattia Doria*, ed. by Giulia Belgioioso, Galatina, Congedo, 1981, vol. I, p. 280. On Doria's anti-Jesuitism, see Mario Agrimi, "Le polemiche antigesuitiche di Paolo Mattia Doria", in *Paolo Mattia Doria fra rinnovamento e tradizione. Atti del Convegno di Studi, Lecce, 4-6 novembre 1982*, Galatina, Congedo, 1985, pp. 23-91. On Doria's scepticism of Jesuit claims concerning China, see John Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment: Scotland and Naples 1680-1760*, Cambridge-New York, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 336.

7. See David Lachterman, "Vico, Doria e la geometria sintetica", *Bollettino del Centro di Studi Vichiani*, 20 (1980), pp. 10-35.

8. "Però, osservando il Vico così da Aristotile come da Platone usarsi assai sovente pruove mattematiche per dimostrare le cose che ragionano essi in filosofia, egli in ciò si vide difettoso a poter bene intendergli; onde volle applicarsi alla geometria e inoltrarsi fino alla quinta proposizione di Euclide": Giambattista Vico, *L'autobiografia, il carteggio e le poesie varie*, 2nd ed., ed. by Benedetto Croce and Fausto Nicolini, Bari, Laterza, 1929, p. 11.

9. Paolo Mattia Doria, *Considerazioni sopra il moto e la meccanica de' corpi sensibili e de' corpi insensibili*, Augusta, Daniello Höpper, 1711; Paolo Mattia Doria, *Giunta di P. M. Doria al suo libro del Moto e della Meccanica*, Augusta, Daniello Höpper, 1712. See Vincenzo Ferrone, *Scienza, natura, religione: mondo newtoniano e cultura italiana nel primo Settecento*, Naples, Jovene Editore, 1982, p. 537.

10. Vittorio Conti, "Le polemiche matematiche di Paolo Mattia Doria", *Bollettino del Centro di Studi Vichiani*, 11 (1981), pp. 185-198: 192.

Doria's geometric epistemology problematized the reception of Renaissance humanism in his hierarchy of thought. He extolled Dante, Petrarch, and Ficino for having "reawoken" Italy's intellectual consciousness with the revival of the study of Plato and Aristotle in the original Greek.[11] But, anticipating the so-called "Renaissance shame" that tinged much of the reception of the Renaissance in Italy throughout the 19th and 20th centuries,[12] Doria was hesitant to call any of them "philosophers" as they lacked that geometric method whereby maxims and abstracts truths are systematized and reduced to their principles. At most, Machiavelli was a philosopher "without knowing it" ("senza ch'egli stesso sapesse di esserlo") insofar as he establishes general maxims from the observation of particulars.[13] In *La vita civile*, first published in 1709, revised in 1710, and significantly expanded in 1729, Doria proposed an ambitious undertaking that sought to rehabilitate the Platonism of the Italian Renaissance with the cutting-edge geometric method and to take stock of the forceful arguments of Hobbesian realism and Lockean sensism. The geometric flavour of his work derives from the insistence upon founding his conception of society on the demonstration of first principles of sociability.[14]

At the heart of his project was the conviction that philosophy and politics need to recover their symbiosis in Plato's *Republic*. For Doria, philosophy removed from practical application is mere sophistry and idle speculation.[15] The divorce of philosophy and politics was not merely due to unscrupulous princes and philosophically illiterate magistrates: philosophers themselves had eschewed theoretical-practical aims due to their inherent difficulty.[16] At the same time, the testimony of history affirms that a well-functioning state requires the guidance of a philosopher. Surveying antiquity and modern times, Doria declares that all monarchies were founded and directed by philosophers, from Zoroaster, who founded the monarchy of the Assyrians and Chaldeans, to Philip of Macedon and

11. Paolo Mattia Doria, *La vita civile con un trattato della educazione del principe*, 3rd ed., Naples, Angelo Vocola a Fontana Medina, 1729, pp. 311-312.

12. The question of overcoming the "Renaissance shame" is the subject of the first chapter of Rocco Rubini, *The Other Renaissance: Italian Humanism Between Hegel and Heidegger*, Chicago-London, The University of Chicago Press, 2014, pp. 30-111, and, more specifically, on pp. 61-84. On Rubini's study, see Daniel Canaris, "Italian Humanism between Hegel and Heidegger", *Bollettino del Centro di Studi Vichiani*, 48 (2018), pp. 231-238. On Doria's admiration for Renaissance culture and possible borrowing of the title of his *Vita civile* from Matteo Palmieri, see Paola Zambelli, "Il rogo postumo di Paolo Mattia Doria", in *Ricerche sulla cultura dell'Italia moderna*, ed. by Paola Zambelli, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 1973, pp. 166-167.

13. Doria, *La vita civile* (1729), p. 312.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

15. "In somma, la filosofia da' governi, e dalle civili cose sbandendo, la confinano senza frutto a vaneggiar fra le stelle, e con inutile sforzo a tentare gli occulti segreti della natura: ed al solo lume naturale, dalla pratica ajutato, commettono il governo del mondo, la direzione della vita civile, e la condotta degli eserciti e delle cose tutte": Doria, *La vita civile* (1729), pp. 1-2.

16. "Ed in somma vogliono la Filosofia una scienza puramente sofistica e non una scienza teorica-pratica, come ella è di sua natura. e in questa guisa pensano conseguire quel fine, che l'ambizione loro fa amare senza darsi briga della fatica, che si richiede per arrivarvi": *ibid.*, p. 2.

Numa Pompilius in Rome.[17] He compares the State to a body in which the head represents the philosophers, who direct the limbs or the common people (*volgo*). He agrees with Plato that those who govern, including the prince (*il principe*) and magistrates (*i magistrati*), cannot be endowed merely with practical knowledge, but have to govern as true philosophers (*veri filosofi*) who understand the very essences (*essenze*) of polity.[18]

While Doria presents these rulers within the tradition of Plato's philosopher king,[19] they would seem to emerge out of a condition resembling the Hobbesian state of nature. Doria describes humanity's natural condition as a "miserable chaos of confusion and of horror" ("un miserabile caos di confusione, e di orrore") in which men and women, blinded by their passions, engage in conflict as they seek to strive for supremacy by suppressing their peers. Nevertheless, nature furnishes a remedy by which this bleak portrait of humanity is overcome. As men in this condition lack the means to overcome the irrational impulses of the passions, like in Hobbes, they come to elect a strongman, who with wisdom and prudence is able to ensure the security of civil life (*la vita civile*).[20] But whereas Hobbes grounds this social contract as a necessary corollary ensuing from the instinct for self-preservation, Doria places it in the "innate idea" ("l'innata idea") of truth (*il vero*) and probity (*l'onesto*) that abides in humanity, albeit corrupted and confused.[21] Effectively, Doria reinterprets Hobbes within the framework of Platonic innatism.

Doria's appeal to "philosophy" as society's foundation and guide takes stock of the irrational and human impulses underlying human behaviour, which was at the heart of realist approaches to political philosophy. Doria recognized the profound transformation of discourse ushered in by Machiavelli and his heir Hobbes in early modern political philosophy. For Doria, Machiavelli's popularity made it impossible for a political theorist to advocate the regulation of human activity according to the norms of virtue without being criticized as being a naive

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4. See Vincenzo Ferrone, "Seneca e Cristo: La *Respublica Christiana* di Paolo Mattia Doria", in *Paolo Mattia Doria fra rinnovamento e tradizione*, pp. 267-272, where on pp. 268-269 Ferrone states: "Gli echi ermetici nella cultura settecentesca, benché a volte nascosti nelle vesti più insospettabili, sono assai più numerosi di quanto si sia potuto osservare sin ad oggi. […] Il Doria della vecchiaia fu tra i più sensibili agli sviluppi ermetico-magici del pensiero neoplatonico esposto da Ficino. In particolare egli approvò senza incertezze l'idea chiave, diffusa dai riformatori religiosi rinascimentali, circa l'esistenza di un'antichissima *pia philosophia*, patrimonio da sempre di tutta l'umanità. Le affermazioni di Ficino, Bessarione, Pico e Patrizi vennero utilizzate da Doria per rafforzare questa ipotesi di una tradizione teologica ininterrotta da Ermete a Mosè a Platone a Numa Pompilio a Cristo a sant'Agostino sino a Ficino. […] Il cristianesimo insomma finiva col risultare l'ultimo e certamente più esaltante attimo di un grandioso e progressivo discoprimento del disegno divino, iniziato nella notte da figure misteriose e affascinanti come 'Ermete tre volte grande', Zoroastro e i bramini indiani".

18. Doria, *La vita civile* (1729), p. 4.

19. On this tradition, see Haig Patapan, *Modern Philosopher Kings: Wisdom and Power in Politics*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2023.

20. Doria, *La vita civile* (1729), pp. 34-35.

21. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. by Richard Tuck, Cambridge-New York, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 117.

idealist.[22] Doria's attitude towards Machiavelli mirrored that of his contemporary Vico: he was outwardly scathing of how Machiavellian realpolitik had destroyed virtue as a higher idea while surreptitiously appropriating and adapting central planks of Machiavelli's realism. Such hidden influences can be traced even in Doria's earliest political writings, the lectures which he delivered as part of the Academy of Medinaceli.[23]

For Doria, it was not surprising that Machiavellianism was popular because it played to the baser passions: rather than exhorting the prince to transcend self-love, it revealed that the ideal of a "passionless" and purely rational philosophy was a ruinous and fundamentally flawed delirium of the Stoics. To begin, it was utterly unrealizable because the passions underlie all human activity. To deprive people of the passions would therefore be to deprive them of the faculty to act. Such a passionless philosophy would therefore be rendered useless for the civil life. Secondly, the passions are not inherently incompatible with reason. Provided that they are well directed in accordance with reason, the passions alone have the integrative capacity to inculcate the requisite virtues of a hero.[24] It is evident here that Doria does not place his Platonic antiquarianism in rigid opposition to the moderns, despite his polemic against Hobbes and Machiavelli.[25] Indeed, he recognizes that since not all men and women have the philosophic aptitude to arrive at a true understanding of the essences of polity (indeed, in his remarkable 1716 treatise on the equality of women and men, Doria concedes that most women lack that creative ability necessary to craft new legislation),[26] the managing and moderating of even the baser passions was a necessary fixture of politics. A

22. Doria, *La vita civile* (1729), pp. 5-6.

23. Vittorio Conti, "Paolo Mattia Doria e l'accademia di Medinacoeli", *Il Pensiero Politico*, 8/2 (1975), pp. 203-218: 208-210.

24. For Doria's interpretation of the passions, see Maurizio Torrini, "Le passioni di Paolo Mattia Doria: il problema delle passioni dell'animo nella *Vita Civile*", in *Paolo Mattia Doria fra rinnovamento e tradizione*, pp. 433-454.

25. Doria's criticism of Machiavelli is analysed (along with that of Tacitus) by Paola Zambelli, who writes: "Il rimprovero fatto a Machiavelli ricorda quello che è rivolto altrove a Descartes e alla morale provvisoria: questa e ogni lacuna nei sistemi viene ad avere un significato conformistico…. In quest'impostazione che propugna il 'dover essere' sta quel carattere utopistico della *Vita civile* che l'autore scorgerà in vecchiaia e si proporrà di correggere". See Zambelli, "Il rogo postumo di Paolo Mattia Doria", p. 175, but the section at pp. 169-178 is relevant to better understand Doria's reading of Machiavelli. Vincenzo Ferrone will later note: "Una componente generalmente trascurata nella valutazione del pensiero politico di Doria è quella agostiniana. […] le affermazioni della Zambelli […] circa un tentativo doriano di interpretare Machiavelli attraverso Platone dovrebbe forse essere approfondita [sic] tenendo conto anche del filone neoplatonico agostiniano". See Ferrone, "Seneca e Cristo", p. 250, n. 62, in which the author is referring to pp. 174-176 of Zambelli's paper mentioned above.

26. Paolo Mattia Doria, *Ragionamenti […] ne' quali si dimostra la donna, in quasi tutte le virtù più grandi, non essere all'uomo inferiore*, Frankfurt [Naples], 1716, pp. 342-344. See "Soluzione di un problema nel quale si cerca d'indagare la cagione per la quale le donne […] non hanno mai avuto alcuna parte nel governo politico", in Paolo Mattia Doria, *Manoscritti napoletani di Paolo Mattia Doria*, ed. by Adele Spedicati, Galatina, Congedo, 1980, vol. III, pp. 53-124.

legislator must have an intimate understanding not only of philosophy, but also of human nature. Only by knowing the motives which induce people to vice can the ruler lead them to virtuous activity. Only by knowing the source of the passions can the ruler craft laws which are effective in restraining them.[27]

3. *China, Confucianism, and Doria's republican ideals*

Although Doria was steeped in the Neoplatonism of the Italian Renaissance, he was acutely aware that the urgent political reform required in Naples could not rest upon the resurrection of ancient solutions. In line with the quest for novelty that typified the Neapolitan academies, new models needed to be sought. In his writings, Doria surveys the political institutions of many nations, including newly discovered peoples unknown to the ancients. Among these peoples, the Chinese held a special place, in part owing to the assimilation of Chinese political thought to Platonism that had been popularized by Jesuit missionaries at least since Matteo Ricci (1552-1610). China furnished a living example of a nation organized according to the principles of Doria's Neoplatonic political ideals. But given his anti-Jesuitism and the almost inseparable link between adulation of China and sympathy for the Jesuits, China also holds an uneasy position in Doria's thought, rendering the epithet of "Sinophile" that some scholars have attributed to him rather inappropriate.[28] In this section, we will trace the development of Doria's views on China and examine how he wrestles with this contradiction and comes to integrate China as a model for political reform.

At the turn of the 18th century, China was all the rage in Naples. On 4 December 1698, the Neapolitan globetrotter Giovanni Francesco Gemelli Careri (1651-1725) returned home with arresting stories about his travels to the Middle East, the Far East, and the New World, which he quickly published in a collection of six volumes entitled *Giro del mondo* (1699-1700).[29] Whatever the value of Gemelli Careri's account, he received a rapturous welcome with many of the leading intellectuals, jurists, and clergy coming to greet him.[30] Among these was the distinguished jurist and reformer Amato Danio (1619-1705), with whom Gemelli Careri had maintained correspondence. At a meeting of the Academy of Medinaceli, Giuseppe Valletta (1636-1714), an intimate friend and patron of both Vico and Doria, cited one of Gemelli Careri's letters sent to Danio from Persia.[31]

27. Doria, *La vita civile* (1729), pp. 4-5.

28. Michele Fatica, "Il canto funebre in caratteri cinesi per la morte di Gaetano Argento e la sinofilia di Paolo Mattia Doria", in *Filosofia, storiografia, letteratura. Scritti in onore di Mario Agrimi*, ed. by B. Razzotti, Lanciano, Itinerari, 2001, pp. 718-754.

29. Giovanni Francesco Gemelli Careri, *Giro del mondo*, 6 vols, Naples, G. Rosselli, 1699-1700. For Gemelli Careri's life, see Piero Doria, "Gemelli Careri, Giovanni Francesco", in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. LIII, Rome, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1999, pp. 42-45.

30. Giovanni Francesco Gemelli Careri, *Giro del mondo. Parte quarta contenente le cose più ragguardevoli vedute nella Cina*, 2nd ed., Naples, G. Roselli, 1708, pp. 227-278.

31. Stone, *Vico's Cultural History*, p. 80.

While it is not known to what extent Danio owes his own views on China to Gemelli Careri, in 1701, in the heat of the Chinese Rites Controversy, he penned a thoughtful defence of Jesuit accommodationism which echoed Gemelli Careri's own stance that would be explicated more fully in the second edition of the *Giro del mondo*.[32]

The *Giro del mondo* was an instant bestseller. After the 1699-1700 Roselli edition, it was published in Venice in 1700, Naples in 1708, Venice in 1719, Naples in 1721, and Venice in 1728. In addition, it was translated into English in 1704 as the most significant section of the fourth volume of Awnsham and John Churchill's *A Collection of Voyages and Travels*, into French in 1719, and finally into German in 1749.[33] Gemelli Careri conveyed to his readers an image of China as an empire of unprecedented size enriched by its trade and political system, which knew how to optimize agricultural production.[34]

Although his immediate circles exhibited great interest in China in spite of their antipathy for the Jesuits, Doria's earliest writings afford a negligible role to China and Chinese political philosophy in general. In the first two editions of the *Vita civile*, published in 1709 and 1710 respectively, China is introduced in rather ambivalent terms. For Doria, while the Chinese may have seemed refined and cultivated, their softness has turned them into weak pacifists who are too easily invaded. While it would seem that the cycle of invasion has halted under the present "Tartar" (i.e. Manchu) regime, which itself has become inured to Chinese luxury, this is only because there is currently no nation which has the strength to overthrow the Tartars and the Chinese.[35]

Elsewhere, Doria issues measured praise for the examination system by which mandarins obtained their positions as political administrators. Paradoxically, however, he does not discuss it with reference to the Chinese political system, but rather to Cochinchina or Vietnam which, as a kingdom formally part of the Chinese empire, had conserved intact Chinese wisdom (*sapienza Cinese*).[36] It is not clear which particular features of the Vietnamese examination system led Doria to choose it over the Chinese system as a model for pedagogical reform. Given the copious European sources on the Chinese political system readily available to Doria, it would seem that paucity of information could not have been a factor. One possibility is that it reflected Doria's ambivalence about China at this stage of his intellectual career and possibly a desire to distance himself from a position that would make him appear sympathetic to the Jesuits. In a series of unpublished letters addressed to the superior general of the Society of Jesus,

32. Amato Danio, *Riflessioni sopra un trattato che hà per titolo "Conformità delle Cerimonie Cinesi coll'Idolatria Greca, e Romana"*, Palermo, Agostino Epiro, 1701.

33. For a description of the various editions, see Nathalie Hester, *Literature and Identity in Italian Baroque Travel Writing*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2008, pp. 157-158, nn. 5-6.

34. Stone, *Vico's Cultural History*, p. 81.

35. Paolo Mattia Doria, *La vita civile distinta in tre parti, aggiuntovi un trattato della educazione del principe*, 2nd ed., Augusta, Daniello Höpper, 1710, pp. 254-256.

36. Doria, *La vita civile* (1710), p. 310.

Doria lambasts the Jesuits' missionary policy in China as heretical.[37] Rehearsing the standard jibes levelled against the Jesuits by the Dominicans and Jansenists, he claims that by allowing Chinese converts to incense and kneel before statues of Confucius the Jesuits were preaching idolatry. Furthermore, the Jesuits obscured the idolatries of Confucianism by calling it a "civil cult" ("Culto Civile") and permitting the Chinese to adore God under the name "Tian" (i.e. *Tian* 天, literally "Sky or Heaven") and "Xam-ti" (i.e. *Shangdi* 上帝, meaning "Supreme Deity").[38]

But at some point Doria sheds his reticence. In the unpublished "Lettera Critica, metafisica, e Istorica fatta a fine di esaminare qual sia stata la Filosofia di Confugio Filosofo Cinese",[39] which was intended as a supplement to the *Filosofia* printed in 1728 and the *Difesa della Metafisica degli Antichi contro il Signor Giovanni Locke* printed in 1733 (and hence written sometime after 1733), Doria embraces Confucius as a Platonic philosopher who worshipped a transcendent God, endowed this deity with intelligence and providence, believed in the immortality of the soul and judgement after death, and, like Plato, believed that all sensible forms are governed by divine providence through intermediary intelligences.[40] What is striking about Doria's Platonic reading of Confucianism is its complete absence of any reference to the Jesuits or Jesuit sources on China, despite the general concordance of his views with Ricci's accommodation of Confucianism. Instead, Doria builds his case by deconstructing the arguments of the Dominican missionaries who considered Confucianism to be an atheistic philosophy akin to Spinozism.

Doria begins his analysis with a discussion of the injunction to worship Heaven (*Tian*) which he attributes to Confucius. Doria's phraseology ("che Confugio ha insegnato, che si presti al Cielo culto, et adorazione") seems less a paraphrase of a Confucian saying than a recollection of the controversies surrounding the Kang Xi Emperor's gifting of the calligraphy *jingtian* 敬天 to the Jesuit fathers at the Nantang Church in Beijing on 12 July 1675.[41] Even if Doria was unfamiliar with

37. "Lettere di Paolo Mattia Doria al Reverendissimo Padre Generale della Compagnia di Gesù nelle quali dopo narratagli una nera Calunnia praticata contro l'Autore da i Gesuiti di Genova, se gli mostra come sì fatte calunnie usate da i Gesuiti di Genova siano caggionate da i gravissimi difetti di tutta la Compagnia di suo governo, e si prega di emendargli in questi Dialoghi poi si dimostra che i RR. PP. Gesuiti sono stati di danno ugualmente alla Repubblica che a S. Chiesa (cc. 159)": Doria, *Manoscritti napoletani*, vol. I, pp. 231-400.

38. *Ibid.*, pp. 280, 376.

39. Paolo Mattia Doria, "Lettera Critica, Metafisica, e Istorica fatta a fine di esaminare qual sia stata la Filosofia di Confugio Filosofo Cinese", in *Manoscritti napoletani di Paolo Mattia Doria*, ed. by Pasquale De Fabrizio, Galatina, Congedo, 1981, vol. IV, pp. 31-90.

40. On Doria's attitude towards John Locke, see Paolo Casini, "Doria, Locke e il sensismo", in *Paolo Mattia Doria fra rinnovamento e tradizione*, pp. 203-211, where, at p. 204 Casini recalls Eugenio Garin's observation on Doria: "Nel Doria è evidente il viaggio di ritorno compiuto da parte del pensiero italiano dal cartesianesimo al platonismo della tradizione rinascimentale", quoted from Eugenio Garin, *Storia della filosofia italiana*, Turin, Einaudi, 1966, vol. II, p. 895.

41. Joâo de Deus Ramos, "Tomás Pereira, Jing Tian and Nerchinsk: Evolving World-View during the Kangxi Period", in *Tomás Pereira, SJ (1654-1708), the Kangxi Emperor and*

the Jesuit literature on this prestigious imperial gift, he would have at least known about it through his close association with the missionary Matteo Ripa (1682-1746), who returned to Naples in the mid-1720s to establish a seminary for the training of indigenous Chinese clergy. In his posthumously published diaries, Ripa recounts how the scandal which resulted from this imperial gift led to the papal condemnation of the Jesuits' missionary practice. According to Ripa's account, in order to remedy the situation, the Portuguese Jesuits entreated the emperor to replace the *jingtian* calligraphy with the phrase *wanwu zhen yuan* 萬物真元 ("the true origin of all things"), but apparently he changed the character *wu* 物 (things) into *you* 有 (to have), with the resulting meaning of "all [things] have a true origin". For Ripa, despite their apparent compatibility with Christian theism, all these expressions were ultimately idolatrous or atheistic because they had to be understood within either the polytheism practised by many in China, including the emperor, or the atheistic materialism of Song dynasty neo-Confucianism.[42]

In determining whether the philosophy of Confucius is more akin to Spinozism or Platonism, Doria makes deductions based upon what he perceives as necessary logical corollaries inherent to Chinese religious and philosophical doctrines. Key to his reconstruction is whether in the Confucian system God possessed the attributes of intelligence and providence. According to Doria, Spinoza had denied these attributes in his *Ethics* because they constituted a humanization of the Divine.[43] Doria believes that if it can be proved that Confucius taught that there are forms or souls in the world which possess an abstract intelligence, it would follow that he shared Plato's understanding of God as intelligent or provident. According to the missionaries, Confucius taught that all sensible and visible forms are governed by gods that inhabit Heaven and by genii, which "inspire, and move sensible forms".[44] Doria likens these concepts to the role attributed by Plato to the gods in the governance of the cosmos (*il mondo*), and that of the genii, the motor intelligences, and demons in prompting the movements of men and governing the earth (*la terra*). For Doria, these forces necessarily transcend the world of sense insofar as they are intelligent and spiritual souls, which partake of divine intelligence. Doria infers that it would have been impossible for Confucius to have attributed intelligence to the gods, the genii of the mountains and of the rivers without recognizing in God an abstract intelligence, separate from forms and providence, and without attributing to the human soul innate ideas. At the same time, it would be absurd to suggest that these lower spiritual entities possess intelligence and providence without recognizing in God intelligence and providence, as this would have implied that particular forms have a higher degree of perfection than God Himself. On this basis, Doria confidently concludes without citation of any Chinese religious text that Confucius "had the same abstract and

the Jesuit Mission in China, ed. by Artur K. Wardega and António Vasconcelos de Saldanha, Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012, pp. 518-531.

42. Matteo Ripa, *Giornale (1705-1724)*, ed. by Michele Fatica, 2 vols, Naples, Istituto universitario orientale, 1991-1996, vol. II, pp. 27-28.

43. Doria, *Manoscritti napoletani*, vol. IV, p. 36.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

metaphysical Religion, that Plato had, and that consequently he was similar to Plato and completely different from Spinoza".[45]

After a lengthy digression on Platonic metaphysics, Doria returns to reinforce this assimilation of Confucianism with Platonism by resolving the controversy over whether the Confucian *tian* was transcendent or immanent. Despite his previous scathing condemnation of Jesuit missionary practices, Doria effectively adopts the Jesuit position without ever acknowledging it as such. As in the discussion of providence and intelligence, his discussion does not rest upon Chinese sources but rather inferences drawn from Christian tradition. Doria protests that the reference to Heaven as the Lord's dwelling place in the Lord's Prayer ("Pater noster qui es in Coelis") does not necessarily imply that God only abides in Heaven. Moreover, the Old Testament is full of corporeal metaphors for God which cannot be used to suggest that the Israelites had a material understanding of God. Doria concludes that Confucius's exhortation to worship "Heaven" as opposed to an abstract divinity was due to his desire to provide an accessible representation of divine beauty and divine perfection that could be understood by the people.[46]

Although Doria betrays a rather sketchy knowledge of Chinese political philosophy, from at least 1729 onwards, when he publishes the revised edition of the *Vita civile*, it assumes greater importance in accounting for the success and longevity of the Chinese political system. What China provides, as Jonathan Israel points out, is "a crucial and inspiring exception to the usual dismal story of human brutality, aggression, self-deception, and failure and that for political stability, cultural cohesion, and the excellence of its moral system, the Chinese had indeed set an unparalleled example to the world".[47] Whereas in the *Vita civile* Doria is able to schematize a theoretical proposal for a political system grounded on rational principles with allusions to distant historical examples, in the unpublished treatise *Il politico alla moda*, penned in 1739,[48] China serves as immediate and incontestable proof of the singular power of philosophy to curtail despotic tendencies of monarchs. In his critical treatment of the preceptor and minister of Louis XV, Cardinal André-Hercule de Fleury (1653-1743), Doria lambasts the French politician for having turned the king of France into a Machiavellian tyrant by inuring the French to luxury and making the people completely dependent upon the king's authority.[49] In the sweep of despotic nations, China emerges as the sole despotic regime which is able to withstand the descent into tyranny due to the cultivation of Confucian moral philosophy among the mandarin administrators. By restraining the passions of the emperor with their sage advice and virtue and the enactment of sound laws, the mandarins have ensured that the Chinese empire has enjoyed political continuity, economic prosperity, productivity, humane

45. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 89.

47. Jonathan Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man, 1670-1752*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 689.

48. Paolo Mattia Doria, "Il politico alla moda di mente adequata e prattico", in *Manoscritti napoletani di Paolo Mattia Doria*, Galatina, Congedo, 1982, vol. V, pp. 25-131.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

punishments, low levels of "bloody crime" ("sagnuinosi delitti"), the largest population in the world, and, above all, unparalleled felicity. That such advisors educated in moral philosophy have not been employed in the West, conversely, is precisely the reason why despotism in Europe is "the cause of misery" ("la cagione della miseria").[50]

4. *Conclusions*

In this essay, we have provided observations on Doria's Neapolitan intellectual context, the principal contours of his political philosophy, and a brief outline of his Sinological interests. We have also offered some preliminary remarks on the relationship between Doria's treatment of Confucianism and his political philosophy as well as on the political and intellectual factors that brought him to consider the Chinese empire as the closest living instantiation of his cherished Platonic Republic.

Although both need to be investigated in greater detail, we can conclude by suggesting that Doria's interest for the Chinese empire may be connected to his appreciation for the Ficino-inspired *pia philosophia* and *prisca sapientia*.

As Giulia Belgioioso has noted:

> Doria […] sought to demonstrate, first to his contemporaries and, following their misunderstandings, to his posterity, that Ficino's compromise of Hermetic tradition, magic, Christianity and Platonism was still possible and necessary in the 18th century. Possible because knowledge could be traced back to unity, as had happened with the *prisca theologia*, and necessary to curb mercantile political models based not on the harmony of the social body but on the pursuit of individual profit. Doria, as a convinced Platonist, believed that harmony should be constructed on the model of that which reigns in the universe, as a guarantee of the harmonious development of society and not, as Mandeville maintained in those same years, as a result of social disharmony or conflict. Doria was therefore an 18th-century "Ficinian".[51]

And she adds that:

> In his works, Doria seeks to demonstrate, through commentary on Plato's commentaries by Ficino, Fox Morcillo, and Rudolf Agricola, that *prisca sapientia*: 1) is a cultural model that is still valid and capable of encompassing the positive aspects of modern methods and

50. *Ibid.*, pp. 107-115.

51. Giulia Belgioioso, "Note sul Doria inedito", in *Paolo Mattia Doria fra rinnovamento e tradizione*, p. 149: "Doria […] pretese di dimostrare, prima ai suoi contemporanei e, a seguito delle loro incomprensioni, ai suoi posteri che il compromesso ficiniano di tradizione ermetica, magia, cristianesimo, platonismo era ancora, nel secolo XVIII, possibile e necessario. Possibile perché il sapere poteva essere ricondotto all'unità come era avvenuto nella *prisca theologia*, necessario per mettere argine ai modelli politici mercantili, fondati non sull'armonia del corpo sociale, ma sulla ricerca dell'utile individuale. Il Doria, da convinto platonico, crede, insomma, che l'armonia debba essere costruita, sul modello di quella che regna nell'universo, come garanzia di uno sviluppo armonico della società e non, come negli stessi anni teorizza ad esempio il Mandeville, come risultato della disarmonia o conflittualità sociale. Il Doria dunque è un 'ficiniano' del XVIII secolo".

> content; 2) is the only universal and unified model of knowledge; 3) is the foundation of virtuous republics, due to the unification of knowledge and religion that it advocates; 4) is the test case for the impossibility of modern knowledge to become unified knowledge.[52]

It is possible that China became for Doria one aspect of a utopian society that could be conceived through and constructed with the help of the *prisca sapientia*, as he intended it.

Eugenio Garin wrote that, in early modern European culture, the "East" (along with the American "New World") would suggest a new vision of humankind, of human societies, and of the diversity and multiplicity of cultures, on the basis of which Europe will gradually – between the 16th and the 18th centuries – see its claims to centrality and hegemony undermined. China, thus, becomes one of the "'unbiased spectators' of a Europe that believes itself to be at the forefront of civilization, but which is ultimately barbaric and oppressive, and which is invited to confront itself, to see other civilized worlds, other people".[53]

The situation will change in the second half of the 18th century, when the Sinophilia of the early 18th century will shift to Sinophobia, both becoming established categories to describe different attitudes towards China as well as the evolution of the Western view of China during the same century.[54]

When Doria was writing about China, however, other worlds – ancient, pure, and civilized – could still represent virtuosity, order, and tolerance in opposition to European "intolerance, oppression, and robbery".[55]

52. Belgioioso, "Note sul Doria inedito", p. 151: "Il Doria vuole dimostrare nelle sue opere, attraverso il commento dei commenti a Platone di Ficino, di Fox Morcillo, di Rudolf Agricola, che la prisca sapientia: 1) è un modello culturale ancora valido e in grado di contenere quello che di positivo, sul piano dei metodi e dei contenuti, c'è tra i moderni; 2) è l'unico modello universale e unitario di sapere; 3) è il fondamento delle repubbliche virtuose, per l'unificazione di sapere e religione che propugna; 4) è il banco di prova della impossibilità che il sapere dei moderni ha di divenire sapere unitario".

53. Eugenio Garin, "Alla scoperta del 'diverso': i selvaggi americani e i saggi cinesi", in Eugenio Garin, *Rinascite e rivoluzioni. Movimenti culturali dal XIV al XVIII secolo*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 1975, p. 354: "I cinesi sono gli 'spettatori imparziali' di un'Europa che si crede all'avanguardia della civiltà, che è in fondo barbara e sopraffattrice, e che è invitata a confrontarsi, a vedere gli altri mondi civili, gli altri uomini".

54. Guido Abbattista, "European perspectives on China: a prescriptive turn", *Diciottesimo Secolo*, 7 (2022), p. 38.

55. Garin, "Alla scoperta del 'diverso'", p. 354.

Daniel Canaris

François Noël's Scholastic-Aristotelian Reading of Chinese Ethics: Critiquing Stoicism Through Neo-Confucianism

1. *Introduction*

Long before comparative philosophers in the late 20th century noted the striking resonances between Aristotelian and Confucian ethics, in 1711 the Flemish Jesuit François Noël published a pioneering reconstruction of Chinese ethics as the third treatise of his Philosophia Sinica, a monumental three-part study of Chinese philosophy.[1] Noël's treatise on Chinese ethics constituted the first systematic attempt to compare Aristotelian and Confucian ethics and signalled a decisive shift from the Stoic frame with which earlier Jesuits predominantly approached Confucianism. Unfortunately, it was suppressed because of the Chinese Rites Controversy and exerted almost no influence over the Enlightenment, and it remains largely unknown. In contemporary sinology and comparative philosophy, the Jesuits are often criticized for their tendentious interpretations of Chinese philosophy. However, this essay argues that, despite their limitations, Jesuit writings such as Noël's Philosophia Sinica can serve as a methodological corrective to some of the pitfalls found in comparative philosophy today.

As a case in point, let us consider the work of Yu Jiyuan 余紀元, one of the most prominent philosophers comparing Confucian and Aristotelian ethics.[2] For Yu, the received Confucian corpus is a Song-dynasty construct, and so in order to understand Confucian ethics, one must read all of the Four Books canonized by Zhu Xi (1130-1200), namely the *Analects*, *Great Learning*, the *Doctrine of the Mean*, and the *Mencius*. In Yu's mind, reading the *Analects* in light of the other three of the Four Books can help us to "grasp the unified and systematic *dao* that Confucius claims he has, but does not deliver in the *Analects*".[3] Assuming that all four texts present "the

1. François Noël, *Philosophia Sinica tribus tractatibus, primo cognitionem primi entis, secundo ceremonias erga defunctos, tertio ethicam, juxta Sinarum mentem complectens*, Prague, Typis Universitatis Carolo-Ferdinandeae, 1711. For an English translation of the First Treatise on metaphysics, see François Noël, *From Confucius to Zhu Xi: The First Treatise on God in François Noël's* Chinese Philosophy *(1711)*, ed. by. Thierry Meynard and Daniel Canaris, Turnhout, Brepols, 2023.

2. Yu Jiyuan, *The Ethics of Confucius and Aristotle: Mirrors of Virtue*, New York, Routledge, 2007.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

same framework and same dominant concerns central to Confucius", Yu continues that "the other three texts shed a great deal of light on the *Analects* and help make sense of its many concepts and the relations between these concepts".[4]

These cross-textual interpolations are naturally quite helpful for Yu's comparative aim: since the *Analects* is laconic in its explanation of concepts and never elaborates a definition of human nature, Yu refers to the *Mencius* under the assumption that its theory of human nature as innately good is already implicit in the *Analects*. Although this assumption is philologically problematic and anachronistic, it was at least shared by the neo-Confucian commentarial tradition, in particular Zhu Xi, and thus Yu's claims would seem to be sanctioned by tradition. However, Yu does not claim to be providing an account of the neo-Confucian reception of the Confucian classics, but rather of the thought of Confucius and Mencius themselves. Yu hardly refers to neo-Confucian commentaries and bases his arguments almost entirely on citations from the classical texts themselves.

Noël's approach is very different: his analysis of Confucian ethics is grounded upon extensive reading of neo-Confucian commentaries. Similarly, even though he claims to be systemizing Confucian ethics according to an "Aristotelian order" ("ad hunc Aristotelicum ordinem"),[5] his Aristotle is very much the product of the scholastic tradition: his structure and definitions are taken from a commentary on Aristotelian ethics by the French Sorbonne theologian Pierre Barbay (d. 1664).[6] Unlike Yu, Noël is not interested in reconstructing the thought of particular thinkers but rather how both the Confucian and scholastic-Aristotelian ethics are refracted in dynamic and evolving commentarial traditions.

To explore the significance of Noël's contribution to Sino-Western comparative philosophy, this essay first traces how the first Jesuits writing on Chinese thought sought to use Stoicism as a point of contact between Chinese and Western value systems. It is argued that despite the resonances between Stoic and Confucian ethics, the Stoic emphasis on *apatheia* (freedom from emotional disturbance) limited the Jesuits' ability to take stock of the fundamental role of the emotions in the Confucian understanding of moral consciousness. By reading Confucian ethics in light of early modern moral theology and neo-Confucian commentaries, Noël develops a richer and philologically more coherent account of the positive moral function of the emotions in the neo-Confucian tradition and its resonances with scholastic critiques of Stoicism.

2. *Confucian ethics in Jesuit writings prior to Noël: from Epictetus to Aristotle*

From the beginning of their mission to China in the late Ming, the Jesuits were attracted to Confucian ethics, which they promoted as an interlocutor and propaedeutic for Christian theology. In their earliest writings on Chinese thought,

4. *Ibid*.

5. François Noël, "Tractatus III: De Ethica Sinensi", in *Philosophia Sinica*, p. 3.

6. Pierre Barbay, *Commentarius in Aristotelis Moralem*, Lyon, Apud J. Bapt. De Ville, 1692.

both Michele Ruggieri (1543-1607) and his confrère Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) expressed the view that contemporary China had no concept of religious worship, that is to say, of a supreme, transcendent divinity.[7] Evocatively, in an early letter to the Jesuit Superior General Claudio Acquaviva (1543-1615), Ricci compares his contemporary neo-Confucians to "Epicureans", apparently in reference to their lack of belief in the afterlife or the immortality of the soul.[8] Over time, however, Ricci formed the view that ancient China had a form of monotheist worship, and claimed that ancient Confucians understood their moral maxims as having a heavenly origin.[9]

For Ricci, this monotheism had been lost in the Song dynasty with the arrival of atheist neo-Confucians, who had corrupted Confucianism with Daoist and Buddhist error. Hence, when constructing an ethical dialogue with his contemporary Confucians, Ricci de-emphasized these spiritual concerns, comparing the books of Confucianism to the works of Greco-Roman philosophers.[10] For Ricci, as for Ruggieri, moral philosophy was the most conspicuous domain of philosophy to which the Chinese had contributed, but in the end it was not ordered "scientifically" ("in modo scientifico") as in the West, "but confusedly, by various opinions and topics, following what they could understand with natural reason" ("ma confuso, per varie sententie e discorsi, seguindo quanto col lume naturale potettero").[11] Hence Ricci's favoured point of comparison was not scholastic Aristotelianism, but Stoicism, which was diffused through commonplace books containing maxims and anecdotes similar to those found in the *Analects*, the *Mencius*, and other Chinese ethical writings.

In Europe at the time, Stoicism was undergoing a revival, led by scholars such as the Flemish humanist Justus Lipsius (1547-1606), who in 1584 published *De constantia in publicis malis* (On Constancy in Times of Public Calamity). In this work, Lipsius called for the extirpation of emotions from the soul and the strengthening of mental fortitude with reason. His teachings had particular influence over the Jesuit Order, with which he had a close affinity as a former pupil of a Jesuit school in Cologne and possibly a short-lived novice.[12] Ricci compared Confucius's writings to Cicero's letters,[13] and Confucius himself to Seneca.[14]

7. Ruggieri, Letter to Everardo Mercuriano (12 November 1581), in *Opere storiche del P. Matteo Ricci, S.I.*, ed. by Pietro Tacchi Venturi, 2 vols, Macerata, F. Giorgetti, 1911-1913, vol. II, p. 402. Ricci, Letter to Juan Bautista Román (13 September 1584), in *ibid.*, pp. 48-49.

8. Ricci, Letter to Claudio Acquaviva (20 October 1585), in *ibid.*, p. 57.

9. Pasquale M. D'Elia, *Fonti Ricciane: documenti originali concernenti Matteo Ricci e la storia delle prime relazioni tra l'Europa e la Cina (1579-1615)*, 3 vols, Rome, Libreria dello Stato, 1942-1949, vol. I, pp. 108-109.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

11. *Ibid.*; Ruggieri, Letter to Mercuriano (12 November 1581), in *Opere storiche*, vol. II, p. 401.

12. According to some accounts, Lipsius had even briefly entered the Jesuit Order as a novice: Jacques Kluyskens, "Justus Lipsius (1547-1606) and the Jesuits: With Four Unpublished Letters", *Humanistica Lovaniensia*, 23 (1974), pp. 244-270.

13. Ricci, Letter to Lelio Passionei (9 September 1597), in *Opere storiche*, vol. II, p. 237.

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 117-118.

The appeal of Stoicism as a point of contact with Confucianism would seem rather obvious for a classically trained Jesuit. Like Confucianism, Stoicism had a practical focus. In Lipsius's *De constantia*, virtue was not defined in relation to the acquisition of speculative truths but by concrete insights and know-how for handling real-world problems. This person-centred approach to virtue takes stock of our resources and limitations: our moral task is to know and to control what is properly in our power. This more accessible ethic seemed to resonate with the pragmatic ethos of Confucianism. Similarly, just as in *Great Learning* which made good governance contingent on personal cultivation, so Lipsius in his *Politicorum sive Civilis doctrinae libri sex* (Six Books on Politics or Civil Teaching, 1589) argued that a ruler must first learn to subdue his passions to govern well.

Ricci, however, never developed a systematic Stoic reading of Confucianism, but the connections that he drew between Stoic and Confucian ethics were explored through his adaptation of Stoic sources in his Chinese writings. Other than his catechism, *Tianzhu shiyi* 天主實義 (True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven, 1603), Ricci's most famous Chinese-language work was the *Jiaoyou lun* 交友論 (On Friendship, 1595), which was based on the *Sententiae et exempla* (Wise Sayings and Illustrative Anecdotes), an anthology of predominately Stoic commonplaces compiled by the Portuguese scholar Andrea de Rèsende (1498-1573). A more exclusively Stoic approach can be found in Ricci's *Ershiwu yan* 二十五言 (Twenty-five Sayings, 1605), which was an adaptation of the *Encheiridion* by the Greek Stoic philosopher Epictetus (c. 50–c. 135 AD).[15] Whereas the *Tianzhu shiyi* which Ricci had published two years earlier stirred some controversy due to its pointed criticisms of Buddhism, the *Ershiwu yan* was an unqualified success. As Ricci relates in a letter of February 1605, the work is aimed at presenting virtue and the art of living well as a "Christian natural philosopher" ("filosofo naturale ma christiano") without engaging in any polemic with Chinese religion.[16] This virtue, Ricci would qualify in a letter sent in May of the same year, was explained "somewhat Stoically but in a way accommodated to Christianity" ("un puoco stoicamente, ma tutto accomodato alla christianità").[17]

The Stoic flavour of Ricci's Christianized Confucianism was elaborated in later Jesuit writings on Chinese ethics. In 1636, the Italian Jesuit Alfonso Vagnone (1568-1640), together with the Chinese literatus Han Yun 韓雲 (d. 1639), published *Dadao jiyan* 達道紀言 (Recorded Sayings for Reaching the *Dao*), which contained a collection of *chreia* or commonplaces predominantly from Stoic sources, such as Plutarch's *Moralia* and the writings of Seneca. Notably, the *chreia* were categorized according to the *wulun* 五倫 (five fundamental relationships), thus showing an attempt to relate Stoic precepts to Confucian ethics.[18]

15. Christopher A. Spalatin, *Matteo Ricci's Use of Epictetus*, Waegwan, Pontifical Gregorian University, 1975, p. 61.

16. *Opere storiche*, vol. II, p. 257.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 263-264.

18. Sher-Shiueh Li and Thierry Meynard, *Jesuit Chreia in Late Ming China*, Bern, Peter Lang, 2014, p. 131.

Between 1637 and 1638, Vagnone also published three other ethical treatises on Western ethics which corresponded to the order of moral cultivation codified in the *Great Learning*: self-cultivation (*Xiushen xixue* 修身西學), management of the family (*Qijia xixue* 齊家西學), and political pacification (*Zhiping xixue* 治平西學). At the same time, Vagnone's trilogy also reflected the conventional tripartite division of Aristotelian ethics into *monastica* (individual), *oeconomica* (familial), and *politica* (political). This division had first been suggested by Aristotle in his *Eudemian Ethics* (1.8, 1218^{b} 13-14) and codified by medieval commentators. From the 13th century up until the Enlightenment, this triad provided the standard structure for the moral philosophy curriculum.[19]

In this way, Vagnone signalled an initial shift from Stoicism to scholastic Aristotelianism as the vehicle for promoting cross-cultural ethics. Of Vagnone's three works on ethics, *Xiushen xixue* was the most Aristotelian, insofar as it was based on the Coimbra commentary of the *Nichomachean Ethics*, Thomas Aquinas's *Summa theologiae*, and the *De iustitia et iure caeterisque virtutibus cardinalibus* (On Justice and Right, and the Other Cardinal Virtues, Leuven, 1615) by the Flemish Jesuit Leonard Lessius (1554-1623).[20] However, Vagnone's two other works, despite being subordinated to the same tripartite division of ethics, were primarily of a humanistic and Stoic inspiration, containing anecdotes and exempla similar to those found in the *Dadao jiyan*.[21] This reflects a tendency in 16th-century and early 17th-century moral philosophy to treat the general principles of ethics on a theoretical level in the *monastica*, while considering on a primarily practical level the application of these principles to the household and the State in the *oeconomica* and *politica* respectively.[22]

Compared with Ricci's ethical writings and Vagnone's other more Stoic works, the *Xiushen xixue* was relatively unsuccessful. Perhaps for this reason, later Jesuit writings on Western ethics, such as the *Qiuyou pian* 求友篇 (Treatise on Making Friends, 1661) by Martino Martini (1614-1661), reverted to Ricci's humanistic model of philosophical dialogue through maxims and anecdotes.[23] Evidently, the Jesuits thought that Stoic ethics, which in the Renaissance was transmitted primarily through commonplace books and humanistic treatises,

19. For the history and medieval diffusion of these terms, see Alessandra Petrina, "The Use of the Word *Monastica* in the Division of Moral Philosophy in Thirteenth-century Paris and Fifteenth-century England", *Studia Neophilologica*, 76/2 (2004), pp. 165-175. See also Jull Kraye, "Moral Philosophy", in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. by C. B. Schmitt, Quentin Skinner, Echardt Kessler, and Jull Kraye, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp. 301-386.

20. Alfonso Vagnone, *Xiushen xixue jinzhu* 修身西學今注, ed. by Thierry Meynard, Tan Jie 譚杰, and Tian Shufeng 田書峰, Beijing, Shangwu Yinshuguan, 2019, p. 23.

21. Thierry Meynard, "Aristotelian Ethics in the Land of Confucius: A Study on Vagnone's *Western Learning on Personal Cultivation*", *Antiquorum Philosophia: An International Journal*, 7 (2013), pp. 145-169: 153.

22. Kraye, "Moral Philosophy", p. 305.

23. Giuliano Bertuccioli, "Il trattato sull'amicizia di Martino Martini (1614-1661)", *Rivista degli studi orientali*, 66, 1/2 (1992), pp. 79-120.

provided a more accessible analogue for drawing Christianity and Confucianism closer together and was well received by the Chinese public.

Arguably, this failure to build on Vagnone's foray into a scholastic-Aristotelian engagement with Confucian ethics represented a setback for comparative philosophy. First, while Stoicism was a conspicuous part of Renaissance humanist culture, it was marginal to the university curriculum, which was wedded to scholastic-Aristotelian texts, including in Jesuit colleges. Stoic texts were mainly studied in lower classes of grammar and rhetoric as models of Greek and Latin style for emulation. It was presumed that mere memorization of these commonplaces could instill moral character in young students, but these texts were generally not employed for sustained reflection on moral philosophy.[24]

Second, the Jesuits' recourse to Stoicism was predicated upon the assumption that Confucian ethics was undeveloped and disorderly and thus incompatible with the rigour of the scholastic method. Such an assumption lends itself to an eclectic engagement with Chinese thought that merely considers resonances and apparent agreement without regard for the rational and metaphysical presuppositions underlying Confucian values. For instance, as much as Ricci's *Ershiwu yan* and Vagnone's *Dadao jiyan* evoke Confucian virtues and Chinese social norms in their accommodation of predominantly Stoic ethics to the Chinese idiom, they do not develop these insights to the extent that they can be considered works of comparative philosophy.

Third, while there are obvious points of resonance between neo-Stoic and Confucian ethics, the comparison can also be quite limiting. Lipsius argued that all passions (*adfectus*) disturb the equilibrium of the soul and impede constancy, including desire, joy, fear, and pain. But in Confucianism, and especially in the *Mencius*, the passions or emotions (*qing* 情) are in fact foundational for one's ethical consciousness. For Aristotle, too, the passions play an epistemic role in the shaping of judgements and are not necessarily causes of moral decay. For example, in Aristotle's ethics shame is what Marta Jimenez terms a "protovirtue" that guides those aspiring to be good to the acquisition of virtue, whereas fear is necessary for maintaining order among those without such a predisposition.[25] Hence virtue and political order cannot be attained purely through rational means. Other commonalities such as virtue defined in terms of practice and the mean suggest that Aristotelianism could provide an intellectually more profitable point of comparison with Confucianism.

3. *Noël's Third Treatise: Method and Textual Model*

In a certain sense, Vagnone's plan would find its realization in the Third Treatise of Noël's *Philosophia Sinica*. Unfortunately, however, the *Philosophia*

24. David A. Lines, *Aristotle's Ethics in the Italian Renaissance (ca. 1300-1650): The Universities and the Problem of Moral Education*, Leiden, Brill, 2002, p. 12.

25. Marta Jimenez, *Aristotle on Shame and Learning to Be Good*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2020.

Sinica was condemned to oblivion because of its inauspicious time of publication. Born at Hestrud in the Hainault on 18 August 1651, Noël entered the Jesuit novitiate at Tournai, which was part of the French-Belgian province.[26] After studying scholastic philosophy and theology at the Jesuit College d'Anchin, he departed for China in 1684. Here he would work as a missionary until 1702, when, together with the Bavarian Jesuit Kaspar Castner (1665-1709), he was appointed procurator and sent back to Europe. Their mission was to defend the Jesuits' position in the Chinese Rites Controversy, a decades-long theological debate over whether Chinese Christian converts could continue to practice rituals in honour of Confucius and ancestors. Yet their efforts would come to nought. On 20 November 1704, Pope Clement XI (r. 1700-1721) secretly issued the anti-Rites decree *Cum Deus optimus*, which was pronounced in Nanjing on 17 February 1707 by Charles-Thomas Maillard de Tournon (1668-1710). With the official promulgation of *Cum Deus optimus* by Pope Clement XI on 25 September 1710, all publications on the Rites Controversy were banned.

To evade this prohibition, in the following year Noël published two works relating to the Chinese Rites Controversy in Prague: the above-mentioned *Philosophia Sinica* and the *Historica notitia rituum ac ceremoniarum Sinicarum in colendis parentibus ac benefactoribus defunctis* (Historical notice of the Chinese rites and ceremonies used in honour of deceased parents and benefactors, 1711).[27] Although Noël claimed to have obtained a "special license" ("de speciali licentia") from Pope Clement XI and the permission of his superiors to publish these works, both texts were almost immediately suppressed. It is unfortunate that Noël decided to publish his comparative study of Aristotelian and Confucian ethics, which was not theologically controversial, as part of the *Philosophia Sinica*: as a result of the suppression, it exerted almost no influence over Enlightenment readings of Confucian ethics and has continued to be ignored even with the resurgence of comparative studies in Aristotelian and Confucian ethics in the late 20th century.

Like Vagnone, Noël followed the same tripartite division of ethics and divided his treatise into three parts. Unlike Vagnone, however, Noël sought not to translate scholastic-Aristotelianism into Chinese but Chinese philosophy into Latin. Hence whereas for Vagnone comparison was incidental to his main task of translating and paraphrasing Aristotelian ethics, Noël explicitly positioned the Third Treatise as a work of comparative philosophy whereby scholastic categories are used to explain more coherently Confucian ethics:

> Like Aristotle, the Chinese divide ethics into three parts: individual (*monastica*) [ethics] guides man as a private person towards his own private good; economic (*oeconomica*) [ethics] guides man as a member of a family towards the good of the household; and political (*politica*) [ethics] guides man as part of a state towards the public good. We will consider here Chinese ethics in comparison with Aristotelian ethics, that is, the ethics of

26. For a more detailed biography, see Yves Vendé, "Intellectual Biography of François Noël", in *From Confucius to Zhu Xi*, ed. by Thierry Meynard and Daniel Canaris, Turnhout, Brepols, 2023, pp. 17-32.

27. François Noël, *Historica notitia rituum ac ceremoniarum Sinicarum in colendis parentibus ac benefactoribus defunctis*, Prague, Kamenicky, 1711.

> the Chinese pagans in comparison with the ethics of the pagan Aristotle. But it should be carefully noted here that the Chinese differ greatly from Aristotle in how they relate the three parts of ethics, for the Chinese discuss these three parts without order or method, and through maxims (*sententiae*) alone, and when the occasion presents itself. Therefore, it was quite difficult to reduce all those unconnected branches to this Aristotelian order.[28]

As can be seen from the above quotation, Noël shares Ruggieri's and Ricci's view that Chinese ethics is devoid of order and method, instead relating its concepts in maxims (*sententiae*). In this respect, Chinese ethics differs significantly from that of Aristotle. Nevertheless, beneath this disorderly veneer are ethical concepts and commitments that can, if reordered according to their underlying logic, be understood as commensurable with their Aristotelian equivalents. At first glance, the approach that Noël signals in the preface resembles that proposed by comparative philosophers such as Yu Jiyuan after him. The terms of comparison are "Aristotle" and "Chinese Ethics", which we can take to mean "Confucian Ethics".[29] But closer inspection reveals that Noël is doing something quite different. He works with traditions, not individual authors.

Let us first unpack Noël's Aristotle. Although Noël professes to be focussing on the "pagan Aristotle", like Vagnone, he structures his presentation of moral philosophy with a popular textbook that filters Aristotelian thought through a Christian scholastic frame. However, instead of the Coimbra commentaries which were no longer popular in the latter half of the 17th century, Noël opts for the *Commentarius in Aristotelis Moralem* (Commentary on Aristotle's Moral Philosophy, 1675) by the Sorbonne philosopher Barbay.[30] A chapter-by-chapter examination of the Third Treatise confirms that not only Noël's structure but also his quotes and definitions have been lifted directly from Barbay's textbook without any attribution.

Although mostly forgotten today, Barbay was one of the most prominent French philosophers and pedagogues of the mid-17th century. His biography is somewhat obscure. He was born in Abbeville and died in 1664, as confirmed by his epitaph at Saint-Étienne-du-Mont, which also states that he taught philosophy for 14 years. He was not, as is sometimes alleged, a Jesuit,[31] and in fact we learn from a dispute that he apparently married, so he was extremely unlikely to have even been ordained. He is reputed to have attended the courses of the Jansenist theologian and mathematician Antoine Arnauld (1612-1694) when he was teaching philosophy in the Collège du Mans at the University of Paris between October 1639 and Pentecost 1641.[32] His own teaching career was developed at other colleges of the University of Paris. In July 1652, he was teaching philosophy at the Collège de Reims-Rethel, and then he taught at the Collège des Grassins

28. Noël, "Tractatus III", p. 3.

29. See Noël, *From Confucius to Zhu Xi*, p. 168.

30. This article refers to the 1692 edition.

31. Jean-Baptiste Du Bos, James O. Young, and Margaret Cameron, *Critical Reflections on Poetry and Painting*, Leiden, Brill, 2021, vol. I, p. 593, n. 36.

32. Jean-Robert Armogathe, "Pierre Barbay, élève d'Arnauld", in *Études sur Antoine Arnauld (1612-1694)*, Paris, Classiques Garnier, 2018, pp. 35-43: 36.

before being called to the Collège de Dormans-Beauvais. None of his writings were published in his lifetime, but his course on philosophy was published posthumously by his students in five volumes (Logic, Physics, Metaphysics, Morals, and an introduction). This philosophy course met considerable success, with over six editions published in Paris and Lyon between 1675 and 1692, and his general introduction was republished in 1707, 1712, and 1735.[33] This success may explain in part why Noël felt no need to acknowledge his debt: any early 18th-century reader, particularly one based in France, would have immediately recognized his source.

While Barbay cannot be regarded a Jansenist as Arnauld was, there are, however, some commonalities that suggest some possible influence from Arnauld and Cartesianism. Like Arnauld, Barbay has a strong preference for patristic authors, in particular St Augustine. While these patristic authors were also commonly cited by Barbay's contemporaries, Jean-Robert Armogathe notes that these citations are far more frequent than in other contemporary textbooks, such as those of André d'Abillon (1606-1664).[34] Other points in Barbay's *Metaphysica* which may have drawn from Arnauld include his theory of immediate concurrence, frequent passage from philosophy to theology, and articulation of subsistence. Notably, when enumerating the three "most convincing" ("magis convincentes") proofs for the existence of God, Barbay includes Descartes's ontological argument and details his geometric analogy of the triangle.[35]

Noël's choice of Barbay was most likely dictated by practicality: Barbay's writings were readily available and provided a comprehensive overview of Aristotelian philosophy as taught in Paris in the latter half of the 17th century. Whereas previous textbooks, including those prepared by the Coimbra commentators, were often buried in citations and debates, Barbay avoids extensive reference to debates among different scholastic authorities, and instead prefers clear definitions of philosophic terms and focusses on the absolute essentials for a schematic understanding of Aristotelian philosophy. The clarity of Barbay's definitions and concision of his explanations facilitated cross-cultural comparison, which is often made more difficult when one is lost in minutiae. Yet Barbay's exposition is clearly and unapologetically conducted within the scholastic tradition and seeks to cohere with Christian orthodoxy.

On the other hand, by Chinese ethics Noël means the ethics of *Rujiao* 儒教. However, for Noël the term assumes special significance because he focusses not on a reconstructed body of doctrine that is to be attributed to a historical Confucius, but rather on a living and breathing tradition. In addition to the pre-

33. Armogathe, "Pierre Barbay, élève d'Arnauld"; Jacob Schmutz, "Barbay, Pierre", in *The Dictionary of Seventeenth-Century French Philosophers*, ed. by Luc Foisneau, 2 vols, London, Thoemmes Continuum, 2008, vol. I, pp. 81-82.

34. André d'Abbilon, *Nouveau cours de philosophie en françois, divisé en quatre parties contenant la logique, physique et morale, suivant la doctrine des plus célèbres auteurs*, Paris, Sébastien Piquet, 1643.

35. Pierre Barbay, *Commentarius in Aristotelis Metaphysicam*, 5th ed., Lyon, Apud J. Bapt. De Ville, 1692, p. 357.

Qin Confucian corpus preferenced by Ricci, Noël cites from a wide range of neo-Confucian commentaries, especially recent commentaries of the early Qing that reflected mainstream or imperially sanctioned readings of the Confucian classics. In this way, Noël sought to emphasize the continuity of ancient Confucianism and its contemporary expression.

4. *The emotions in Augustine and Barbay*

As mentioned above, the transition from Stoicism to scholastic-Aristotelianism as a point of contact in the cross-cultural comparison with Confucian ethics facilitated greater appreciation of the role of the emotions in the formation of virtue. Yet in adapting Barbay's structure to explain neo-Confucian ethics, Noël had to make adaptations to reflect the even greater centrality of the emotions in the latter. To this end, let us first see how Barbay builds upon Augustine and Aquinas to critique Stoic *apatheia*, and then consider how Noël adapts these discussions in light of his neo-Confucian sources.

Perhaps the most important authority in Latin Christianity on the positive role of the emotions was St Augustine. In books IX and XIV of *The City of God*, Augustine devotes several chapters to discussing the emotions and to critiquing the Stoic ideal of *apatheia*, a state of freedom from emotional disturbance, passionlessness, or equanimity to which the Stoic philosopher aspired. On the whole, Augustine's treatment of Stoicism is sympathetic yet critical. In book XIV, although Augustine admits that the idea of shielding oneself from irrational emotions is "obviously good and most desirable", he does not consider it possible in this life, and in fact if *apatheia* is to be understood as a purely emotionless state, it is also not possible in the afterlife as in Heaven we will experience joy and love. Only if understood as freedom from fear or sadness can this impassibility be considered compatible with the afterlife. Similarly, in book IX, Augustine surveys all the different expressions for the emotions, such as *affectus*, *affectationes*, *passions*, and *perturbationes*. He concludes that ultimately these terms are synonymous, and that the dispute among the Stoics, Aristotelians, and Platonists over the nature of the passions is primarily verbal and masks a basic agreement on the need to subject the passions to reason and external goods, which the Stoics consider merely bodily advantages, to virtue.

To illustrate this point, Augustine cites an anecdote from Aulus Gellius's *Attic Nights*: a Stoic philosopher travelling from Corfu to Brundisium finds himself in the midst of a storm. The philosopher's face goes pallid from fear, causing another passenger to banter him for betraying his philosophic principles. The Stoic defends himself by citing Epictetus: it is not within the power of the soul to control the impressions of external objects or *phantasiae* that are made on the soul. It is only natural that these impressions provoke a physiological response. The key is to ensure that the mind does not accept or approve these evil impressions: only this mental assent is within our soul's power. Augustine comments: "In view of these things, then, there is no difference, or almost none, between the opinion of the Stoics and that of the other philosophers concerning the passions and disturbances

of the mind; for both sides maintain that the mind and reason of the wise man are not under the dominion of the passions".[36]

Despite this common ground, Augustine still finds the Stoic treatment of the emotions limiting. For Christians, a passion in and of itself is morally indifferent. What determines whether a passion is virtuous or vicious is the reason for which a person is subject to it. Some passions can produce virtues. For example, Augustine raises the question of compassion or *misericordia*. He laments that this Stoic philosopher should not have allowed himself to be disturbed by fear of the shipwreck but rather have been moved by the feeling of compassion to help his fellow travellers. But according to Augustine, the status of compassion in Stoicism was ambiguous: many Stoics considered it a vice insofar as it was an emotion, whereas some like Zeno and Chryippus did not consider it a vice provided that it did not cause the wise man to lose his composure and to act against reason and virtue.

Barbay's discussion on the passions is in essential agreement with Augustine's but, following Aquinas, he reframes it through the peripatetic lens of the sensitive appetite. Like Augustine, Barbay regards the passions in and of themselves as morally indifferent and presents the disputes between the peripatetics and the Stoics as essentially linguistic (*secundum verba, quam secundum rerum sententias*): all schools of thought believe that immoderate passions, or passions contrary to reason, are vicious, whereas moderate passions are not. The difference was that the Stoics did not consider moderate passions as passions but rather as *constantiae*, and those which prevent reason as *phantasia*.[37]

Barbay lists various reasons why the passions cannot be considered bad per se, including scriptural passages showing how Christ Himself was subject to them. He compares the passions to physical phenomena, such as the quality of hot and cold and dry and wet: when these qualities are in moderation, they are conducive to bodily health; when they are excessive, they bring sickness. Barbay agrees with Augustine that *apatheia* seems good and desirable, but only in relation to those motions that undermine reason. However, if *apatheia* is understood as not allowing any affect (*affectus*) to touch the mind, this would produce a stupor that is worse than all the vices, insofar as we would be lowered to the level of insensitive things. Third, *apatheia* cannot be understood as the absence of pain or happiness because we are called to weep with the crying, to grieve for sin, and rejoice for good works. Hence Barbay extols as the ideal *eupatheia*, another expression used in Stoic literature (and cited by Augustine), which allows the wise man to entertain those positive emotions that do not undermine reason.[38] Somewhat confusingly, however, Barbay includes as a synonym for *eupatheia* the

36. Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, ed. and trans. by R. W. Dyson, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, 9.4.

37. Barbay, *Commentarius in Aristotelis Moralem*, p. 407.

38. For *eupatheia*, see Christopher Gill, "Positive Emotions in Stoicism: Are They Enough?", in *Hope, Joy, and Affection in the Classical World*, ed. by Ruth R. Caston and Robert A. Kaster, New York, Oxford University Press, 2016, pp. 143-160.

term *eutheopatheia*, which he seems to have invented to indicate a theologized conception of well-regulated emotions.

5. *Affect in Noël's treatment of neo-Confucian ethics*

Noël discusses the passions in the final section of the *Ethica Monastica* and follows closely Barbay's logic and structure: the nature and properties of the passions, the cause of the passions, the non-moral nature of the passions, the different types of passions, their effects, and how to remedy against their corruptive influences. Noël's conclusions are essentially compatible with those of Barbay but illustrated with examples from the Chinese classics and their neo-Confucian commentaries: in this section, he translates the Chinese character *qing* 情 variously as *passiones* and *affectiones* (apparently without much difference in meaning), and places the operation of *qing* in the sensitive appetite, which he identifies with the heart-mind (*xin* 心). The passions are stirred through the perception of an object which causes an unnatural transformation of the body. The passions are in and of themselves morally indifferent but become good or bad according to how individuals use or respond to them. If they cause our mind to act against reason and justice, then they are evil; if our mind is moved by them without exceeding the limits of moderation there comes about a "perfect harmony of passion with reason" which is the source of right action that is common to all. One important difference between Barbay and Noël is that the former is highly conscious of the effects of original sin on the operation of the passions, whereas Noël makes no reference to original sin and predicates his account of the passions on Mencius's theory of the original goodness of human nature. Noël thus presents a much more optimistic account of how the passions can be managed or controlled by right reason to produce virtue:

> And so he explained to him in great detail, the primitive goodness of human nature, which is infused by Heaven and found in all men before it is disfigured by growing age or by vices or embellished by virtues. This goodness precedes every movement of the passions and is found in each one by nature, and it is a certain innate and right sense of benevolence (*pietas*) and justice (*aequitas*). But if these passions, the motions of which begin to arise as we get older, are moderated and governed according to the right reason (*recta ratio*), this goodness is perfected; if not: it will be damaged; and from this arises a man's moral integrity (*probitas*) or depravity (*improbitas*).[39]

This anthropological optimism informs Noël's treatment of the passions in other sections of the *Ethica Monastica*. Here he prefers to denote the emotions with the terms *affectus* and *affectiones*, which are considered synonyms of *passiones* but are more frequently employed with positive connotations denoting the emotions giving rise to virtue and the affective bonds of friendship and society. Unlike in the section discussed above where Noël implies an equivalence between *qing* and *passiones*, *affectus* and *affectiones* are used to translate a variety of different

39. Noël, "Tractatus III", p. 127.

expressions which do not always include a character denoting specifically the passions but have been understood in the neo-Confucian tradition as doing so.

Let us take for example Noël's rendering of *siduan* 四端 or "four principles", which according to Mencius were innate to all humans like our four limbs. For Mencius, our moral compass was rooted in these innate impulses, namely the heart-mind of commiseration (惻隱之心), the heart-mind of shame and dislike (羞惡之心), the heart-mind of modesty and complaisance (辭讓之心), and the feeling of approval and disapproval (是非之心). These impulses formed part of his definition of what it meant to be human.[40] To lack these impulses would mean to lose our humanity, just like for Augustine and Barbay to pursue a literal Stoic *apatheia* would reduce us to the level of beasts. These Mencian concepts overlap somewhat with what we would conventionally call the emotions, but there are some notable differences: while we would consider commiseration and shame as emotions, modesty and approval would seem to be more related to acts of the will.

Noël consistently translates these *siduan* as "the four natural affects" ("quadruplex naturalis affectus"). But the relationship between these affects and virtue is very different from that proposed by Augustine, Aquinas, and Barbay. For these scholastic authors, the positive moral role of the passions is contingent upon their regulation and moderation with reason. There is the sense that if the passions were left unchecked, they would wreak a destructive force on humanity. Undoubtedly, this is a result of original sin.

But for Mencius, who believed that human nature was good, these affects produce their positive role not by being moderated but by being developed and fulfilled (*chong* 充). They are like flames or springs of water that, once unleashed, produce an unstoppable impulse to right living and perfection. They do not merely prompt us to virtue but are its very source, or, as Noël translates somewhat Neoplatonically, "the seeds of virtue" ("virtutum … semina").[41] Human corruption comes from the failure to pay heed to these innate affects, or, as the neo-Confucians such as Zhu Xi and Zhang Juzheng commented, being bound or transfixed by material desires (*wuyu* 物慾). Hence corruption comes not from within, but from without.

The authorities that Noël uses to interpret this Mencian term include the *Sishu zhijie* 四書直解 (Explanation of the Four Books) by Zhang Juzheng 張居正 (1525-1582), chancellor of the Wan Li Emperor, the *Xingli daquan huiyao* 性理大全匯要 (Compendium of the Encyclopedia on Nature and Principle), which cites in turn Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi, the *Shujing jizhuan* 書經集傳 (Collection of Commentary on the Shujing) by the Song-dynasty scholar Cai Chen 蔡沈 (1167-1230), and the *Rijiang sishu* 日講四書 (Daily Commentaries on the Four Books), which were published in the early Qing dynasty for the education of the Kangxi Emperor.

Crucially, these neo-Confucian works discuss *siduan* not only in relation to the *Mencius* but also in relation to other classical texts, in particular the opening

40. See Mencius 2A:6, trans. by James Legge, in *The Chinese Classics*, vol. II: *The Works of Mencius*, 2nd edition, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1895, pp. 201-204.

41. Noël, "Tractatus III", p. 51.

passage of the *Doctrine of the Mean*, which describes how *xing* 性 (nature) is conferred by Heaven and should guide our actions. In fact, there is no reference to the *siduan* in the *Doctrine of the Mean*, which at best mentions the notion of *liangduan* 兩端, used in the very different context of finding the mean between two extremes. To further develop his reading of *siduan,* Noël reports how Cai Chen comments on the "Great Speech" or *Taishi* 泰誓 chapter of the ancient *Book of Documents* by linking human excellence (*xiu* 秀) to the fact that his spiritual nature (*ling* 靈) uniquely possesses the *siduan*, which he elaborates as "the natural affects of compassion, modesty, reverence, and rectitude".[42] But just as in the case of the *Doctrine of the Mean*, the *siduan* is not mentioned in the *Taishi* chapter, which only vaguely refers to the uniqueness of man's spiritual nature among all creation.

6. *Conclusions*

To read the reference to *xing* 性 in the *Doctrine of the Mean* or to the *ling* in the *Taishi* through Mencius's *siduan* obviously constitutes a philologically problematic and anachronistic interpolation, but it reflects the exegetic principles employed in the neo-Confucian tradition through which Noël approached the Chinese classics. The neo-Confucians assumed the philosophic cohesion of the Confucian corpus and felt at liberty to draw connections between texts from different periods and authors without solid textual evidence, and on this basis constructed elaborate metaphysical systems. In following the textual connections made by the neo-Confucians, Noël is in fact employing a methodology similar to that of Yu Jiyuan, who assumed the continuity of Mencian and Confucian views on human nature and drew freely upon the *Mencius* to develop his reading of the *Analects*. But whereas Yu does this with the intent of reconstructing the philosophic systems of particular thinkers, namely Confucius, Mencius, and Aristotle, Noël seeks to show how ideas were received and redeveloped in living traditions: *Rujiao* and scholastic-Aristotelianism with a heavy dose of Augustine. In this respect, Noël offers a contextualist model for comparative philosophy that eschews revisionism and ahistorical reconstructions, instead respecting the concrete meanings that ancient philosophic ideas had for the communities that lived them.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

Bento Machado Mota

The Confluence of Atheisms: Early Theological Debates on the Supposed Atheism of the Natives from China and Brazil

1. *Introduction*

Until recently, historiography considered the genesis of atheism exclusively from a European perspective. However, throughout the early modern period, many missionaries and travellers wrote about the supposed absolute absence of religion among various peoples, in some cases explicitly using the term "atheism" to describe them. In the early 20th century, and more recently, some studies have pointed to a significant number of peoples considered atheists prior to their contact with Europeans. The group that received the most attention in this regard were the Chinese. From Matteo Ricci to the mid-18th century, many missionaries debated whether the Chinese could be considered atheists, particularly with reference to Confucianism, and especially neo-Confucianism.

On the one hand, beginning in the last quarter of the 17th century, there was an extensive theological debate surrounding the possibility of the salvation and conversion of the Chinese. In addition to controversies regarding whether certain funeral rites and ethical principles of Confucianism were compatible with Christianity, the supposed Chinese atheism came to be discussed as a minor evil in the conversion process compared to idolatry. This set of discussions, as is well known, became associated with the so-called Chinese Rites Controversy.

On the other hand, the problem of the Chinese rites had significant effects on philosophical debates about atheism, especially in France. Such debates included the discussion about the virtue of pagans, the classification of different types of atheism based on the Chinese example, reflections on the relationship between atheism and a strong State, and the question of tolerance. The issue of the supposed Chinese atheism in all its facets was fundamental in shaping the development of certain philosophical ideas throughout the 18th century. As many scholars have shown since at least Virgile Pinot, through David Mungello, Joan-Pau Rubiés, and Michela Catto, these debates crucial to understand the Enlightenment discussions about atheism.[1]

1. Virgile Pinot, *La Chine et la formation de l'esprit philosophique en France (1640-1740*), Paris, Geuthner, 1932; David E. Mungello, *Curious Land: Jesuit accommodation and the origins of Sinology*, Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1989; Joan-Pau Rubiés, "From

Despite the greater weight given to the Chinese rites, in my previous research I found numerous mentions of the supposed atheism of the main indigenous group along the Brazilian coast in the 16th century: the Tupi people. It is important to note that these references were not made casually or imprecisely. The term "atheism" was used explicitly and clearly as an ethnographic description for peoples who, in the perception of these missionaries, had neither idols nor temples. Many of them did not even recognize the notion of belief itself – much less belief in a God – as we will detail later. Unsurprisingly, many considered them unique in the world, a view that stood out from the more common statements that simply noted the "absence" of God among certain indigenous groups. This point was noted by some ethnologists, such as Helene Clastres and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro.[2] Other studies have pointed out the French sources that considered some pre-Columbian natives as atheists or unbelievers, such as Sergio Landucci.[3] However, in my earlier research, I have identified several important yet unexplored theological treatises that examine this exceptional "case", produced by the first generation of prominent Jesuit theologians and situated within the major theological controversies involving the Society of Jesus.

My proposal is to investigate the moment when theological reflection on these two peoples converges in late 17th-century theology. A very small number of studies have addressed the interface between the Chinese, pre-Columbian peoples, and atheism in the theological controversy surrounding the Chinese rites. Pinot even addressed how the problem of the Americans and the Chinese was interconnected within certain conceptions that defended the salvation of the ignorant and the atheists. However, he does not distinguish the specific role of the Brazilians in this process.[4] Pedro Achútegui mentions the problem, but his analysis only extends to 1648. Alan Kors notes the confluence between Chinese and "Native American" atheism; however, he focuses solely on English and French sources, overlooking the crucial contributions of Jesuit observers and scholastic thinkers.[5] Therefore, this represents an original effort to understand to what extent the problem of atheism was discussed in relation to these two groups.

Before beginning, two caveats are necessary. The first is that this research is not comparative. Its aim, in fact, is the opposite: to study the precise moment

idolatry to religion: the missionary discourses on Hinduism and Buddhism and the invention of Monotheistic Confucianism, 1550-1700", *Journal of Early Modern History*, 24 (2020), pp. 499-556; Michela Catto, "Chinese Atheism in the *Mémoires de Trévoux:* a Cultural Project against the Existence of a Perfect Atheism", *Journal of Jesuit Studies*, 6 (2019), pp. 416-438.

2. Hélène Clastres, *La Terre sans Mal: Le prophétisme tupi-guarani*, Paris, Seuil, 1975; Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *O mármore e a murta: a inconstância da alma selvagem e outros ensaios*, São Paulo, Cosac & Naify, 2002.

3. Pedro Achútegui, *La universalidad del conocimiento de Dios en los paganos según los primeros teólogos de la Compañía de Jesús (1534-1648)*, Madrid, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas, Delegacion de Roma, 1951; Sergio Landucci, *I filosofi e i selvaggi. 1580-1780*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 1972.

4. "Dans ce paradis où pénétreront les Chinois entreront aussi les Américains et autres «Barbares» à qui la loi religieuse n'a pas été prêchée": Pinot, *La Chine et la formation*, p. 401.

5. Alan Charles Kors, *Atheism in France (1650-1729)*, vol. I, *The Orthodox Sources of Disbelief*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1990.

when the two cases enter into confluence within a broader context of debates about atheism found either in or beyond Europe. The second caveat is that our aim is not to exhaust all the documentation that dealt with the two cases of atheism – the one from China and the one from Brazil – but to identify the origin of their intersection and understand how it developed in the late 17th and early 18th centuries.

With that said, I will organize this essay into four parts. First, I will work with the main missionary sources that reported the supposed atheism of the Brazilian natives, dating from the mid-16th century, briefly examining their reception in late 16th- and 17th-century Catholic theology. Second, I will explore how some missionaries identified atheism in the Chinese "sects", particularly focusing on Confucianism. Third, I will briefly analyse the reception of both cases in scholastic thought in the 1680s and early 1700s, especially regarding the problem of philosophical sin. In the final section, I will discuss how this impacted the development of a universal history of atheism and outline the hypotheses and open research fields of my study. Chronologically, this essay will cover the period from 1680, when controversies surrounding the Chinese rites and philosophical sin converged, to 1706, with the publication of the final works written by Pierre Bayle.

2. *Atheist Tupi?*

The link between the natives of Brazil and China in the 16th and 17th centuries, especially regarding religion, may seem unusual. However, it had already been suggested by some 16th-century Jesuits. José de Acosta perhaps offers the most important testimony. In the infamous proem of *De Procuranda Indorum Salute* (1588), the Spanish Jesuit categorized all the peoples of the New World as barbarians, defining them as "those who stray from right reason". He proposed a tripartite division of extra-European humanity.

The first group included the Chinese and Japanese, who, although ignorant of the true God, had writing, philosophy, cities, and adhered to rational principles. The second encompassed the Incas and Aztecs. Despite their barbarous customs, they made proper use of wealth and possessions, and their laws were not contrary to nature or the Gospel. Finally:

> The third class of barbarians is difficult to describe, for it includes the many peoples and nations of the New World. Among them are wild savages, who are barely human; without law, king, contracts, magistrates, or any form of polity; they move constantly or dwell in places that resemble animal dens or enclosures. These include, first, those our people call Caribs, always thirsty for blood, cruel to outsiders, devourers of human flesh, who go naked or barely cover themselves. These are the barbarians Aristotle referred to when he said they could be hunted like beasts and subdued by force. And there are infinite hordes of such people in the New World: the Chunchos, Chiriguanás, Mojos, Yscaycingas – known to us for living near our borders – as well as most of the Brazilians and nearly all the peoples of Florida.[6]

6. "La tercera clase de bárbaros no es fácil decir las muchas gentes y naciones del Nuevo Mundo que pertenecen. En ella entran los salvajes semejantes a fieras, que apenas tienen

This classification became highly influential in subsequent years, both within and beyond the Jesuit tradition. It offered a framework to hierarchize non-European peoples according to degrees of "barbarity". Chinese natives were central to defining the first category of barbarian, while Brazilians played a key role in establishing the geographic and "ethnographic" boundaries of the third. Acosta's main source for his Brazilian assessment was the Portuguese Jesuit Manuel da Nóbrega.[7] Not only does Acosta mention him explicitly, but Nóbrega's letters – written during the time he lived among the coastal Tupi, where he would eventually die – are mirrored in his observations about the absence of "king and law".

However, Nóbrega placed even greater emphasis on another perceived peculiarity of the Tupi culture: the complete absence of belief in God or any religion. For this reason, he popularized one of the most famous phrases in colonial Brazil: just as the Tupi language lacked the letters L, R, and F, the Tupi people lacked *Lei, Rei*, and *Fé* (Law, King, and Faith).[8] In 1549, he says the following: "If they had a king, they could convert, [but] since they do not know what it means to believe or worship, they cannot understand the preaching of the Gospel […] since these people worship nothing, nor do they believe in anything, everything you tell them becomes nothing to them".[9] Clearly, Nóbrega was not merely asserting that they had no concept of God, but that they lacked any kind of belief whatsoever – going far beyond the common trope of lacking law, king, and faith. For him, the Tupi were the only people in the world without any notion of God or even a capacity for belief.

This assessment was echoed by other travellers and missionaries, including the most famous Protestant preacher to work in Brazil, the Calvinist Jean de Léry. Working with the same Tupi people as Nóbrega, but in French-invaded Rio de Janeiro, Léry wrote explicitly that many authors in Europe were using the Brazilian example to support atheist positions. At the time, the Ciceronian principle that no people existed without some notion of God – the so-called *consensus gentium* – was widely accepted. Although Léry upheld this consensus

sentimiento humano; sin ley, sin rey, sin pactos, sin magistrados ni república, que mudan la habitación, o si la tienen fija, más se asemeja a cuevas de fieras o cercas de animales. Tales son primeramente los que los nuestros llaman Caribes, siempre sedientos de sangre, crueles con los extraños, que devoran carne humana, andan desnudos o cubren apenas sus vergüenzas. De este género de bárbaros trató Aristóteles, cuando dijo que podían ser cazados como bestias y domados por la fuerza. Y en el Nuevo Mundo hay de ellos infinitas manadas: así son los Chunchos, los Chiriguanás, los Mojos, los Yscaycingas, que hemos conocido por vivir próximos a nuestras fronteras; así también la mayor parte de los del Brasil y la casi totalidad de las parcialidades de la Florida": José de Acosta, *De Procuranda Indorum Salute*, ed. by Luciano Pereña, Carlos Baciero, Vidal Abril, Antonio Garcia, D. Ramos, Javier Barrientos, and Francisco Maseda, Madrid, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas, 1984-1987 [1588], vol. II, p. 67.

7. *Ibid*., p. 45.

8. Sérgio Alcides, "F, L e R: Gândavo e o ABC da colonização", *Escritos*, 3 (2010), pp. 39-53: 39.

9. Manuel da Nóbrega, "Diálogo da conversão do gentio", in *Cartas do Brasil e mais escritos* (Opera omnia), Coimbra, Universidade de Coimbra, 1955, p. 221.

in theory, he admitted that, in light of his decade-long experience living with the Tupi, it was untenable. He affirmed that they had no religious sentiment or idol worship, unlike the peoples of Peru, for example.[10]

As shown by key scholars, the idea of Tupi atheism did not become the dominant view in missionary circles. However, as I have argued in previous work, it had considerable impact in Europe.[11] The first to react was Luís de Molina, one of the most important Jesuit theologians of the period. In 1588, he wrote: "We also know, according to reliable accounts from many sources, that the inhabitants of Brazil, before the arrival of the Portuguese on that coast, had no concept of God or worshipped anything like God".[12] Needless to say, this statement is directly derived from Nóbrega. Molina gave serious theological thought to the implications of this claim. First, he used it to argue that the *consensus gentium* principle could not be sustained. Second, he posited that while atheism had existed since antiquity, the Tupi represented the first instance of an entire people, not just individuals, living without God – unlike the Greek philosopher Diogenes. Lastly, Molina maintained that the Tupi could still be saved, as their ignorance was not voluntary but invincible. Molina's theses sparked wide debate and were addressed by the leading Jesuit theologians of the time, including Leonardus Lessius and Francisco Suárez. Although this reception cannot be fully explored here, it is worth emphasizing that the case of the supposed Tupi atheism was emblematic, and surprisingly underexplored in historiography, especially in theological contexts.

3. *Atheist Confucians?*

The research into the supposed atheism among the Chinese is quite different from, and much better known than, the case of the natives of Brazil. To briefly summarize: for the Italian Jesuit Matteo Ricci, in *Della entrata della Compagnia di Giesù e Christianità nella Cina*, published in 1615, Confucianism had originally

10. "Outre qu'ils n'ont nulle cognoissance du seul et vray Dieu, encores en sont-ils là, que, nonobstant la coustume de tous les anciens payens, lesquels ont eu la pluralité des dieux : et ce que sont encore les idolatres d'aujourd'hui, mesmes les Indiens du Péru […] ils confessent, ny n'adorent aucuns dieux celestes ny terrestres : et par conséquent n'ayans aucun formulaire, ny lieu député pour s'assembler, à fin de faire quelque service ordinaire, ils ne prient par forme de religion, ny en public ny en particulier chose quelle qu'elle soit": Jean de Léry, *Histoire d'un Voyage faict en la terre du Brésil*, ed. by Paul Gaffarel, Paris, Alphonse Lemerre, 1880, vol. II, pp. 59-60.

11. Bento Machado Mota, *Altíssima ignorância: a ignorância invencível e os debates europeus e sul-americanos sobre a salvação dos indígenas brasileiros a partir de Antônio Vieira (1535-1719)*, PhD dissertation, University of São Paulo, 2022; Bento Machado Mota, "Pre-Columbian atheists? The impact of debates around atheism among Brazilian Indigenous people from Luís de Molina to Francisco Suárez (1591-1625)", in *Rethinking atheism in the Early modern world*, ed. by Patrick McGhee, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2025, forthcoming.

12. "Oras navigassent, nulla penitus Dei cognitionem habuisse, nec rem aliquam ut Deum coluisse, certa multorum relatione accepimus": Ludovico Molina, *Commentaria in Prima Divi Thomae*, Lugduni, Sumptibus Ioannis Baptistae Buysson, 1593, Q. 2, a. 1, p. 37.

been monotheistic. However, after the rise of neo-Confucianism "they end up with no faith, for they do not follow any sincerely. And thus, some clearly confessing their unbelief, others deceived by the false persuasion that they believe, most of these people end up dwelling ('dueling') in the depths of atheism".[13] In Ricci's view, this is an expression of heresy, though neither idolatrous nor superstitious – unlike Buddhism or Taoism – for at least three reasons: first, the debate over whether Confucianism was originally monotheistic and, through its commentators and "neo-Confucians", gradually became atheistic; second, Confucianism's respect for natural law, its pursuit of peace, and its model of governance by philosophers; and third, and more widely known, the idea that certain Chinese customs could be compatible with Christianity – a thesis later known as *accommodatio*, the central issue in the Chinese Rites Controversy.

Until Ricci's interpretation, most Chinese and Westerners generally regarded Buddhism as closer to Christianity and Confucianism as a form of idolatry. Ricci's adoption of Chinese clothing and the fact that he was likely the first Westerner buried in the Forbidden City made him a symbol of the Jesuits' *accommodatio* strategy, and later of Jesuit laxism, especially after the Chinese Rites Controversy began.

Ricci's work must be received with caution. On the one hand, his writings only became known after being translated into Latin and French by Nicolas Trigault. Though Trigault developed some points that Ricci had left ambiguous, it was only from the second half of the 17th century onward that the theme of atheism based on Ricci was explored more thoroughly. On the other hand, there was an immediate and highly critical reception of Ricci's work by the Jesuit Niccolò Longobardo. With deep critiques, particularly around atheism, Longobardo criticized Ricci's "return to the ancients", arguing that both the ancients and moderns were atheists.[14] Despite the depth of his interpretation, Longobardo's work saw little immediate reception, being mostly used by later authors involved in the Chinese Rites Controversy.

The problem of atheism in China was discussed by many other authors throughout the 17th century, including missionaries involved in the Chinese Rites Controversy, such as Juan Bautista Morales (1597-1664) and Domingo Fernández Navarrete (1610-1689). I will not delve into all the aspects already thoroughly explored by major scholars such as Michela Catto, Urs App, and Selusi Ambrogio.[15]

13. "Vengono a restare senza nessuna, per non seguire nessuna di cuore. E così altri chiaramente confessando la loro incredulità, altri ingannati dalla falsa persuasione di credere, vengono la maggior parte di questa gente a stare nel Profundo dell'Atheismo": Matteo Ricci, *Della entrata della Compagnia di Giesù e Christianità nella Cina*, ed. by Maddalena Del Gatto, Macerata, Quodlibet, 2000, cited in Michela Catto, "L'ateismo dei cinesi in Matteo Ricci e Niccolò Longobardo: la strategia missionaria della Compagnia di Gesù in Cina", *Giornale di Storia*, 18 (2015), pp. 1-14: 6.

14. Catto, "L'ateismo dei cinesi", p. 10. For more details, see Kors, *Atheism in France*, p. 116.

15. Michela Catto, "A word travelling to and fro between Europe and China: Atheism", in *The rites controversies in the Early Modern World*, ed. by Pierre Antoine Fabre and Ines G. Županov, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2018, pp. 68-88; Urs App, *The Cult of Emptiness. The Western*

4. *Chinese rites and philosophical sin*

What I want to emphasize instead is the link between the supposed atheism of Brazilian natives and that of the Chinese. Two names stand out in this process. The first is Antoine Arnauld, a long-standing critic of the alleged moral laxism of the Jesuits. Inspired by Navarrete and other anti-Jesuits like Juan de Palafox (1600-1659), who denounced Jesuit "laxism" mainly in the Philippines and China, Arnauld wrote *La Morale Pratique des Jésuites*, published in 1669, and amplified in 1683. Part of his criticism involved the condescension of the Jesuits toward the Chinese funerary rites and their tolerance of Confucian atheism. Broadly speaking, for Arnauld Chinese practices were actually expressions of idolatry and paganism and should be uprooted in a deep and definitive manner.[16]

About four years later, the lesser-known but equally important Michel Le Tellier published in 1687 and 1690 *Défense des nouveaux Chrétiens et des Missionnaires de la Chine, du Japon, et des Indes*. This work circulated widely in its time, was translated into Spanish, and still awaits greater attention from historiography. Despite its title, Le Tellier's main focus was China. In opposition to Arnauld's rigorist interpretations, the Parisian theologian defended the *accommodatio* method and Ricci's missionary approach in various parts of the world, particularly in China. He also defended an important Jesuit who worked among the Tupi in Brazil, and who had been accused, among other things, of being a Judaizer and a laxist. In brief, when writing about the supposed Jesuit defence of Chinese atheism, Le Tellier argued that Confucians did not believe in God in the Christian sense. However, they practised other forms of rituals, and upheld ethical and philosophical systems that were compatible with Christianity – especially in original Confucianism – which made it possible to adapt to certain Chinese customs.[17]

Only three years later, however, these two authors would clash again in a lesser-known controversy: that of philosophical sin. This concept gained prominence through François Musnier (1642-1711), an obscure professor at the Collège de Godrans in Dijon. Briefly put, philosophical sin was defined as a sin committed in ignorance, offending natural reason but not God, and thus considered philosophical rather than theological. Under this premise, any act committed in

Discovery of Buddhist Thought and the Invention of Oriental Philosophy, Rorschach-Kyoto, University Media, 2012; Selusi Ambrogio, *Chinese and Indian ways of thinking in early modern European philosophy*: *the reception and exclusion*, London-New York, Bloomsbury, 2021.

16. Antoine Arnauld, "La morale pratique des Jésuites", in *Œuvres completes*, Lausanne, Société Typographique, 1775-1781, vol. XXXIII. For a good synthesis of Arnauld's position regarding Chinese atheism, see Kors, *Atheism in France*, p. 165.

17. It concerns the Jesuit António Vieira, who was repeatedly accused of Judaizing throughout his life. At the end of his life, in the book *Clavis Prophetarum*, he wrote extensively about the supposed atheism of the Brazilian natives. It is important to clarify, however, that this book was written only in the 1690s, thus after Le Tellier. See Mota, *Altíssima ignorância*; Michel Le Tellier, *Défense des nouveaux Chrétiens et des Missionnaires de la Chine, du Japon, et des Indes…*, Paris, Estienne Michallet, 1687.

ignorance would not be considered a mortal sin, even if it violated natural law or occurred without awareness of God.

From a practical standpoint, this definition had the potential for very deep consequences. Although Musnier did not explicitly apply his definition to any specific cases in his work (an idea that, in part, already existed among other Jesuit theologians), he was quickly accused of using it to justify the status of certain pagan peoples who were entirely ignorant of God prior to the arrival of Europeans, as well as of "atheists", without clearly specifying which groups were being referred to. The professor also wrote that if someone is completely ignorant of God, or does not think of Him at the moment of acting, they will go to Limbo, Purgatory, or some other place of temporary punishment.[18] Unsurprisingly, one of the most important sources from this period, Daniel Concina, went so far as to say that philosophical sin was "an Agnus Dei that takes away the sins of the world".[19]

This concept was denounced by Arnauld in 1689. Pope Alexander VIII officially condemned the Jesuit "philosophist" doctrine in 1690. The Jesuits' main defence was that the idea was merely a theological hypothesis. Already in his old age, Arnauld argued:

> There is no one who is not horrified when they are made to understand that, if one were to be persuaded of this doctrine, one would be forced to believe that there are billions of pagans who, having never known God […] will be exempt from eternal damnation, even though their lives were extremely dissolute, filled with all kinds of impurities and other crimes, as the same Apostle assures us, and as is evident from their books. And that the same must be said of billions of Americans, Chinese, and Japanese before the Gospel was preached to them.[20]

As is evident, he interprets philosophical sin here as referring to pagans outside Europe, who were ignorant of the Word. In other accusations, he clarifies once again that this concept was used for "atheists" and "pagans of the New World". Many Jesuits reacted, including Musnier, Dominique Bouhours, and the already mentioned Le Tellier. In *Sentiment des jésuites touchant le péché philosophique*, published in 1690, they stated that philosophical sin was not applicable to atheists,

18. The bibliography on the problem of philosophical sin is quite extensive. Perhaps the work that best situates this heresy within the context of 17th-century moral debates is Jean Pascal Gay, *Morales en conflit: Théologie et polémique au Grand Siècle (1640-1700)*, Paris, Éd. du Cerf, 2011.

19. Daniel Concina, *Historia del probabilismo e del rigorismo*, Madrid, oficina de la viuda de Manuel Fernández, se hallará en la librería de Manuel de Godos, 1772, p. 13.

20. "Il n'y a personne qui n'en ait horreur, quand on lui a fait comprendre, qu'on ne faudrait être persuadé de cette doctrine, qu'on ne fuit obligé de croire qu'il y a des mille millions de Païens, qui n'ayant point connu Dieu, comme S. Paul le témoigne, *sicut gentes quæ ignorant Deum*, seront exempts de la damnation éternelle, quoique leur vie ait été extrêmement débordée en toutes sortes d'impuretés, & d'autres crimes, comme le même Apôtre nous l'assure, & qu'on le fait assez par leurs Livres. Et qu'il en doit être de même de mille millions d'Américains, de Chinois & de Japonais, avant que l'Evangile leur fût prêché": Antoine Arnauld, "Premier dénonciation de la Nouvelle hérésie", in *Œuvres de Messire Antoine Arnauld*, Paris-Lausanne, chez Sigismond d'Arnay, vol. XXXI, 1780 [1689], p. 46.

but possibly to peoples who did not know God.[21] Considering that the concepts of ignorance and atheism were not clearly distinguished or widely known at that time, this differentiation is highly significant, as I will demonstrate later.

Jacques-Hyacinthe Serry, a well-known Jesuit opponent and friend of Arnauld, contested this view. In *Les Veritables sentiments des jésuites touchant le péché philosophique*, he argued that the concept of philosophical sin originated from Molina's interpretation of the concrete case of the Brazilians. From this case, Molina developed his laxist ideas, which became the foundation of the entire Jesuit thought regarding probabilism and the principle of accommodation. In this context, instead of distinguishing between atheists and the ignorant, Serry sought to defend the position that both atheists and the ignorant could be saved according to the new Jesuit conception.[22]

In response to this claim, his former rival in the controversy surrounding the Chinese rites Le Tellier wrote *Le erreur du péché philosophique combattue par les jésuites*, published in 1691. In this text, Le Tellier explicitly states that Molina did not use the example of the Brazilian indigenous people as a concrete case, but only as a hypothetical scenario.[23] The author is also a strong critic of the idea that the concept justified atheists, arguing – as his title suggests – that the Jesuits actually fought against this error.

Arnauld and other rigorists were victorious. The category was condemned by Pope Alexander VIII, who considered it "scandalous". However, the French theologian was not satisfied. Along with some of his peers, he wrote several other works against the notion of invincible ignorance defended by the Jesuits, which he saw as rooted in the laxist foundations of the Society of Jesus and as continuing to justify idolaters and atheists beyond the condemnation of philosophical sin. In 1692, reinforcing what his colleague Serry had already written, Arnauld wrote *Le philosophisme des Jésuites de Marseille*, published in 1697. In this book, he alleged that one of the roots of this great "problem" lay precisely in the interpretation of the indigenous people of Brazil:

> Since the discovery of the peoples of the Americas, we have come to better understand the views they may hold regarding the existence of a God, as elsewhere around the world […] Molina, along with other Jesuits, bore witness that the people of Brazil had no concept of the Divinity before the light of the Gospel was brought to them.[24]

21. Dominique Bouhours, Michel Le Tellier, and François Musnier, *Sentiment des jésuites touchant le péché philosophique*, Paris, chez la veuve de Sébastien Mabre-Cramoisy, 1690.

22. Jacques-Hyacinthe Serry, *Les Veritables sentiments des jésuites touchant le péché philosophique*, Louvain, s.n., 1690, p. 6.

23. "Particuliers, *aliquos homines rudos & incultos*: & il vous a plû d'en faire des peuples ou des NATIONS ENTIERS. Cela est-il de bonne foy? […] l'exemple des Brasiliens sur lequel il se fonde […] Molina rapporte de ces peuples sur la foy des relations, luy sert à prouver non pas leur ignorance invincible (cas les relations ne di soient pas si ele l'estoit ou non) mais seulement em général qu'on peut ignorer l'existence de Dieu, & qu'ain si ce n'est pas une de ces vérité qui sont évidentes par elles-mêmes sans aucun raisonnement": Michel Le Tellier, *L'erreur du péché philosophique*, Liège, Chez Pierre Boegelot, 1691.

24. "Depuis du découvert des peuples de L'Amérique on a mieux connu les sentiments que peuvent avoir sur l'existence d'un Dieu, comme autour du monde […] Molina avec autres

Direct references to the supposed ignorance and atheism of the indigenous peoples of Brazil – sometimes explicit, sometimes implicit – played a central role in the controversy over philosophical sin. However, even after the condemnation of philosophical sin in 1690, debates surrounding the possibility of salvation for atheists and the ignorant continued throughout the 1690s and 1700s. Cardinal Celestino Sfondrati, drawing on the example of the Chinese and once again the Brazilians, defended the idea that atheists and the ignorant could be saved based on similar arguments.[25] His theses, along with earlier ones, were commented on by Jacques Bossuet and Maurice Le Tellier, who criticized this stance as Pelagian and laxist.[26]

Meanwhile, during roughly the same period, Jesuits and rigorists were also deeply involved in the ongoing Chinese Rites Controversy, particularly after the publication of the first Latin translation of Confucian texts, *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*, in 1687. Regarding atheism, there was a shift in the attribution of the category toward Buddhism, while Confucianism came to be associated primarily with the notion of "political atheism". Following this publication, numerous theologians such as Louis Le Comte, Nicolas Malebranche, Noël Alexandre, and René-Joseph Tournemine, among many others, engaged with the topic.[27] The most prominent name during this period, however, was arguably Pierre Bayle. As early as 1682, he had written about the alleged atheism of the "pagan peoples" of the New World as a counterpoint to the idea of *consensus gentium*, explicitly referencing the case of the indigenous peoples of Brazil. In 1697, he became well known for presenting Chinese atheism in a positive light, aligning it with a Spinozist perspective in his *Dictionnaire Critique*. These authors influenced the development of atheism both in its negative and in its positive senses, explored the compatibility between morality and atheism, and contributed to the differentiation between atheism and ignorance, as well as between practical and speculative atheism. Such distinctions were fundamental to the conceptual evolution and increasing complexity of atheism throughout the 18th century.

Evidently, the aim here is not to explore the connection between the two models of atheism under investigation. These references, however, are already sufficient to show how the two controversies were closely linked, particularly through the recurring allusions to the atheism of both Brazilians and Chinese.

Jésuites end témoignage, que ceux du Brésil n'avoient aucune idée de la Divinité, avant qu'on leur eut porté la lumière de L'Evangile": Antoine Arnauld, *Le philosophisme des Jésuites de Marseille, en deux parties*, Avignon, chez Jaques Le Noir, 1697, p. 103.

25. Celestino Sfondrati, *Nodus Praedestinationis Sacris litteris, doctrinaque SS. Augustini, & Thomae, quantùm Homini licet, dissolutus*, Colonia, Soher Schmidt, 1705 [1696], p. 372.

26. Jacques Bossuet, *Epistola Quinque praesulum ad sanctissimim D. D. Innocentum Papam XII contra librum, cui titulus: Nodus Praedestinationis*, in *Opere di monsignor Jacopo-Benigno Bossuet vescovo di Meaux*, 1799, vol. XLVI, pp. 35-50; Michel Le Tellier, Ludovici Antonii de Noialles, Jacques Bossuet, and Guidonis de Seve, *Epistola illustriss et reverendissecclesiae Principum. Caroli Maur. Le Tellier Archiep. Ducir Remensis Remensis […] ad sanctissimum D. D. Innocentium PP. XII*, Leuven, 1697.

27. For an examination of this generation of authors, see Catto, "Chinese Atheism in the *Mémoires de Trévoux*", pp. 416-438; Kors, *Atheism in France*, pp. 161-177.

As Jean-Pascal Gay has shown, these disputes among clergy were so prominent that some poems were even written about the theme. In 1693, an anonymous author clearly illustrated the connection between the two controversies within the broader debate on the laxism characteristic of the period: "What kind of people are these Molinists / What new breed of Christians? / They become Pelagians / To combat the Calvinists. / Today these Probabilist / Side with the pagans / And now they've become Confucians […] / The proud Society, Jealous of its free will, Turns a deaf ear to the truth".[28]

5. *Conclusion*

My main objective here has been to investigate the moment in which theological reflection on atheism among the natives of Brazil and China converged within Catholic theology. Since the reflections of Acosta, both the indigenous peoples of Brazil and the Chinese fulfilled an important role in the classification scale of non-European peoples at the end of the 16th century. However, there was also a significant amount of missionary and theological testimony regarding the issue of unbelief and atheism linked to both the Tupi and the Confucians. At different times and in isolated ways, both had a significant impact on Catholic theology.

However, in the 1690s Arnauld and Le Tellier were central figures in two major controversies that unified previously separate disputes. First, the controversy of accommodation regarding the atheism of the Chinese. Second, the polemic of philosophical sin involving a central debate about the atheism of indigenous Brazilians. Their case was key to determining whether the possibility of salvation for peoples considered ignorant and atheist could be a valid theological hypothesis.

As stated at the beginning of this essay, the goal was not to explore the entire relationship between the atheism of the natives of Brazil and China. Rather, it aimed to identify and contextualize the moment of convergence between these two types of atheism. Secondarily, it also sought to point out some seminal elements that became fundamental throughout the 18th century. Despite its limitations, I believe this essay has addressed enough elements to support three hypotheses.

The first is that the debate about the supposed atheism of the Brazilian natives preceded that of the Chinese. Although the testimony of Ricci became more well known and influential, it developed later outside the internal Jesuit circuit and broader European theology. The Tupi, in contrast, had been described in such terms since the mid-16th century, and by the end of that century authors such as Molina had already discussed this exceptional case extensively. This does not imply that the sources debating the Tupi influenced Ricci and other missionaries in China. It simply means that important elements concerning supposedly atheist

28. *Sonnet sur les Cérémonies chinoises*, 1693, cited in Gay, *Morales en conflit*, p. 897.

peoples were already being discussed within the Society of Jesus before the Chinese case emerged, even if the controversies surrounding the latter became far more prominent.

The second hypothesis is that a convergence took place in the 1680s, centred around the Chinese rites and philosophical sin. Within the broader dispute between moral laxism and rigorism, there was an overlap of polemics, including the Chinese rites, philosophical sin, and moral probabilism, among others. It was amid this battlefield of ideas that the cases of Confucian and Tupi atheisms merged into a shared expression of Jesuit laxism. In other words, even though the two cases presented very different characteristics, the issues of the salvation of pagans, the principle of *accommodatio*, and the possible "original monotheism" of Confucianism were interpreted within the broader framework of theological laxism.

The third hypothesis, although not as fully demonstrated as the others, is that the accumulation of so many testimonies about the atheism of these two peoples produced several significant effects throughout the 18th century. First, there was the development of a broader reflection on atheism outside of Europe in general. Moreover, there was a clearer differentiation between ignorance and atheism, as well as between idolatry and paganism. The convergence of these two controversies built a crucial framework in which the concept of atheism was internally divided in a clearer and more complex way, transforming it into one of the most important concepts at the dawn of the 18th century.

Valentina Bottanelli, Anna Giazzon

Chinese and the Enlightenment's Linguistic Studies. Philippe Masson, Justus Heurnius, and the Hebrew Origin of Chinese

1. *Ante Babel: the quest for the original language in the early modern world*

The global expansion, exploration, and exchange of goods and ideas during the 17th and 18th centuries reinvigorated humanity's enduring quest to reconstruct a universal framework of knowledge. Within this intellectual milieu, a deepening fascination with both ancient and newly encountered languages stimulated the emergence of protolinguistic studies, in turn supported by the increasing accessibility and affordability of printed texts. As a result, descriptions of, and texts in, non-European languages circulated with increasing frequency, reaching scholarly networks, missionary circles, and the broader Republic of Letters.[1] The diffusion of bilingual or multilingual missionary texts and catechisms was reflected in European-based comparative studies, with the collection of multilingual translations of simple prayers as an instrument to build language genealogies.[2]

Within 17th-century protolinguistics, research followed two interconnected paths: the systematic, taxonomic classification of the world's languages in search of an original, primordial tongue; and the pursuit of a universal language and symbolic system, often manifested in experimental attempts to construct philosophical languages *ex novo*.[3] The first path, which we will follow in the present essay, was shaped by Biblical studies and a yearning to recapture the pure language believed to have been spoken by Adam and before the *confusio linguarum* of the Tower of Babel. Within the monogenic theory of languages, Hebrew held a preeminent position as the presumed mother tongue, only

1. On the role of the press, with a particular focus on the Low Countries, see Trude Dijkstra, *Printing and Publishing Chinese Religion and Philosophy in the Dutch Republic, 1595-1700: The Chinese Imprint*, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2022; *Global Exchanges of Knowledge in the Long Eighteenth Century. Ideas and Materialities c. 1650-1850*, ed. by James Raven, Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 2024.

2. For example, the Lord's Prayer: Augustus Pfeiffer, *Pansophia Mosaica E Genesi Delineata*, Leipzig, Gleditsch, 1685; the Apostles' Creed: *Symbolum SS Apostolorum diversis nationum linguis expressum*, Rome, Bartolomeo Zannetti, 1614.

3. In particular John Wilkins, *An Essay Towards a Real Character and a Philosophical Language*, London, printed for Sa. Gellibrand and for John Martyn printer to the Royal Society, 1668.

occasionally disputed by other Semitic languages. Works such as Guillaume Postel's *De originibus seu de Hebraicae linguae et gentis antiquitate* (1538), laid groundwork that extended well into the 17th century.[4] The very theme of the Tower of Babel proved to be a lasting fascinating topic for intellectuals, with numerous and influential publications such as Athanasius Kircher's *Turris Babel* (1679).[5] In this context, the European discovery of the Chinese language and of its intricate writing system, ancient literary canon, and philosophical traditions, reformed and revived the debates on universal knowledge and the search for the Adamic tongue. The antiquity of Chinese civilization itself, attested to in its classics, led to a reassessment of the global historical timeline, drawing further attention to Chinese lexicography and its "letters" as potential keys to the original tongue.[6] The increasing availability of sources on China, from 16th-century accounts such as those by Gaspar da Cruz and Juan González de Mendoza to later works by Jesuit missionaries such as Nicolas Trigault and Alvaro Semedo, became prized materials, and many of these texts were cited, copied, or directly quoted by European scholars in early Enlightenment studies.[7]

1.1. *Chinese "letters"*

Early attempts to incorporate Chinese into European linguistic frameworks blended factual evidence and acute observations with a sense of marvel and speculative interpretation, resulting in analysis at times naïve by modern scholarly standards. One prime example is Claude Duret's *Thresor de l'histoire des langues*, which, drawing on Mendoza's work, acknowledged the existence of written characters intelligible across East Asia, but also grouped Chinese and Japanese with non-human communication systems: the language of birds.[8] Duret's focus on writing over pronunciation reflects much of the early European scholarly view on Chinese. This emphasis on the written form was however constrained by the technological limitations of the time: European presses struggled to

4. Guillaume Postel, *De originibus seu de Hebraicae linguae et gentis antiquitate, deque variarum linguarum affinitate, liber*, Paris, excudebat Pierre Vidoué apud Denis Lescuier, 1538.

5. Athanasius Kircher, *Turris Babel, sive Archontologia,* Amstelodami, ex off. Janssonio-Waesbergiana, 1679.

6. For example, Isaac Vossius, *Dissertatio de vera aetate mundi*, Hage-comitis, ex typ. Adriaen Vlacq, 1659. Lejiamei Chen, "Early Modern Discussions about Ancient China: A New Perspective on Origin Stories and the Evolution of Historical Studies", *Asian Studies*, 13 (2025), pp. 195-227.

7. Gaspar da Cruz, *Tractado em que se contam muito por estenso as cousas da China, con suas particularidades, e assi do reyno dormuz*, Évora, Andrés de Burgos, 1569; Juan González de Mendoza, *Historia de las cosas mas notables, ritos y costumbres de la gran reyno de la China*, Madrid, s.n., 1585; Nicholas Trigault, *De Christiana expeditione apud sinas suscepta ab Societate Jesu*, Augsburg, Christoph Mang, 1615; Alvaro Semedo, *Relatione della grande monarchia della Cina*, Rome, Hermanni Scheus, 1643.

8. Claude Duret, *Thrésor de l'histoire des langues de cest univers*, Cologny, impr. de M. Berjon pour la Société caldorienne, 1613; Boleslaw Szczesniak, "The Origin of the Chinese Language According to Athanasius Kircher's Theory", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 72 (1952), pp. 21-29.

reproduce Chinese characters, which were often added as images using xylograph techniques. As a result, discussions of the Chinese language were often confined either to descriptive accounts, primarily provided by missionaries, or to a small number of printed sources that managed to include Chinese script and manuscripts with however limited circulation. It was mainly in the mid-18th century, with the publication of the first printed grammars, that a genuine shift toward systematic linguistic study began to take shape.[9]

In the early period, a notable exception was Kircher, who had direct access to Chinese sources and materials, and in turn provided printed characters, romanizations and character-by-character translations of Chinese texts in his *China Illustrata.*[10] This work significantly expanded access to Chinese script for the European public, soon becoming the primary source on Chinese *letters* for generations of scholars. In his study of Chinese characters, Kircher was primarily influenced by Egyptology, which he regarded as foundational to understanding the origins of humanity and the early diffusion of civilization. For Kircher, ancient Chinese culture and language were understood as direct descendants of a primeval language, either transmitted through Egyptian influence or shaped during the post-Babel dispersion of peoples. Kircher's interpretations of hieroglyphs were in turn influenced by the work of the Dutch scholar Otthonis Heurnius, whose *Barbaricae philosophiae antiquitatum libri duo* significantly antedated the use of hieroglyphics compared to earlier studies, thereby reinforcing Kircher's pursuit of an original Adamic language encoded within them.[11] In his monumental work *Oedipus Aegyptiacus*, printed in Rome between 1652 and 1654, Kircher employed a "scientific criticism" in an ambitious attempt to construct a comprehensive system of philology, which he would return to and develop in his *Polygraphia nova et universalis* (1663).[12] This is, however, not the place to expand on the figure of Kircher, about whom many excellent studies have been written, and many more remain to be undertaken.[13] It is nonetheless worth noting that several early European studies on the Chinese lexicon and writing system depended at least partially on Kircher's *China Illustrata* translation of the so-called Xi'an nestorian

9. Anna Di Toro and Luisa Maria Paternicò, "From Martini to Prémare: Early analytic Descriptions of Mandarin Chinese in Latin", in *New Perspectives in Global Latin: Second Conference on Latin as a Vehicle of Cultural Exchange Beyond Europe*, ed. by Elisa della Calce, Paolo Mocella, and Simone Mollea, Berlin-Boston, de Gruyter, 2025, pp. 165-196.

10. Athanasius Kircher, *China monumentis qua sacris quà profanis illustrata*, Amstelodami, apud Joannes Janssonium à Waesberge and E. Weyerstraet, 1667.

11. Thijs Weststeijn, "From hieroglyphs to universal characters: pictography in the early modern Netherlands", in *Art and science in the early modern Netherlands. Yearbook for history of art,* ed. by Eric Jorkink and Bert Ramakers, Leiden, Brill, 2011, pp. 238-281; Otthonis Heurnius, *Barbaricae philosophiae antiquitatum libri duo*, Leiden, Christophorus Raphelengius, 1600.

12. Athanasius Kircher, *Oedipus Aegyptiacus*, Romae, ex typographia Vitalis Mascardi, 1652-1654; Szczesniak, "The Origin of the Chinese Language".

13. In particular, *ibid.*; Chiara Ombretta Tommasi, "Note sulla China Illustrata di Athanasius Kircher. Tra premesse teoriche, visione idealizzata e conoscenza scientifica dell'Asia", *Civiltà e Religioni*, 9 (2023), pp. 63-84.

stele. This stele, inscribed in both Chinese and Syriac in 781, during the Tang dynasty, bears witness to the early presence of Christianity in China during the Silk Road expansion of the Syriac Church of the East. It was rediscovered around 1625 and quickly captured the attention of many missionaries and European scholars. Kircher offered both a free and a character-by-character translation of the stele's text, along with an appendix that included transcriptions of the Chinese and Syriac scripts. These were used in the construction of early lexicons and linguistic studies, such as the *Lexicon* by Christian Mentzel and Andreas Müller's *Clavis Sinica* and *Monumenti Sinici,*[14] and the text would circulate and be debated well beyond linguistics.[15]

A last 17th-century work that is worth considering, not for its later influence but for the use of sources and structure of argumentation, is *The antiquity of China* by John Webb (1611-1672).[16] In this treatise, Webb revisits the monogenetic theory of language origins with a shift: it is no longer a Semitic language but Chinese that he proposes as the original Adamic tongue. What is particularly notable in Webb's argument, especially when compared with other contemporary works, is the space given in his text to Biblical narratives, linking the Chinese people to the lineage of Noah, before even presenting the language:[17]

> Why may we not reflect upon the Chinois? For we shall make appear, that *They* were primitively planted in China, if not by *Noah* himself, by some of the Issue of *Sem*, before the remove of *Nimrod* to *Shinaar*, and the *Confusion* of *Tongues* at *Babel*; *Their* Language to be the self same at this day, as when they were first planted and began to be a people…[18]

Webb goes on to argue that China's relative isolation from foreign conquest, the historical prohibition of foreign travel and trade, and the preservation of ancient customs all contributed to maintaining the purity of its language. Thus, he claims, "it may be probably asserted, *That the Language of the Empire of CHINA, is, the PRIMITIVE Tongue, which was common to the whole World before the*

14. Christian Mentzel, *Sylloge minutiarum lexici latino-sinico-characteristici, observatione sedula ex auctoribus & lexicis Chinensium characteristicis eruta*, Norimbergae, Christiano Mentzelio, 1685; Andreas Müller, *Sinicae Clavis Historia Chronologica, in Epitomen redacta in Tentzels Monatliche Unterredungen*, unpublished, 1697; Andreas Müller, *Monumenti Sinici*, Berolini, Ex Officina Rungiana, 1672.

15. On the translations and debates around the Xi'an stele, see Michael Keevak, *The Story of a Stele. China's Nestorian Monument and Its Reception in the West, 1625-1916*, Hong Kong, Hong Kong University Press, 2008; Valentina Bottanelli, "A Catalogue of Translations of the Xi'an Nestorian Stele", *Cristianesimo nella Storia*, 46 (2025), pp. 69-100.

16. John Webb, *The antiquity of China, or An historical essay, endeavouring a probability that the language of the empire of China is the primitive language spoken through the whole world before the confusion of Babel*, London, printed for Obadiah Blagrave, 1678.

17. Webb was not the first to propose such lineage, as it can already be seen in Kircher and in the early modern "Egypt vs. China" debate on the oldest civilization. For a short but effective overview, see Wolfgang Behr, "'Monosyllabism' and some other perennial clichés about the nature, origins and contacts of the Chinese language in Europe", in *Asia and Europe-Interconnected: Agents, Concepts, and Things*, ed. by Angelika Malinar and Simone Müller, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 2018, pp. 155-209, in particular pp. 161-166.

18. Webb, *The antiquity of China*, pp. 43-44.

Flood".[19] To support his claims regarding the antiquity of Chinese civilization, Webb draws on sources such as Martino Martini's *Atlas*, Isaac Vossius, Semedo, Trigault, Kircher: all texts frequently quoted in the early sinological linguistic studies. According to Webb, Chinese meets all the criteria one might expect from an original language: "Antiquity, Simplicity, Generality, Modesty of expression, Utility, and Brevity".[20] However, these linguistic features are presented only at the conclusion of an argument that is primarily cultural and theological in nature. Webb's discussion of the Chinese language itself is inconsistent and at times confused, borrowing from other sources according to their utility and often without critical engagement.[21] Quoting Jacobus Golius (1596-1667), professor of mathematics and Arabic at the University of Utrecht and an avid collector of Chinese texts, Webb underscores the natural and meditative nature of the Chinese language: "The Language of China [seems] to have proceeded not so much from chance and necessity, as from meditation and Art… they have no Rules either for Grammar, Logick, or Rhetorick, but what are dictated to them by the light of Nature, through greater Eloquence, than amongst them hath scarcely been ever read".[22]

This, for Webb, further reinforces the notion of Chinese as the primitive language. It is only after more than 170 pages that Webb begins to discuss Chinese characters directly, offering but a handful of visual examples.[23] Unlike other early modern commentators, he does acknowledge the existence of various dialects across the empire, but he does not give them the status of languages. The existence of multiple pronunciations, however, does not weaken his thesis, for "all their Books are written in their true ORIGINAL Language, and the Characters of them are, and ever have been one and the same throughout their whole Empire".[24] From the 17th century onward, European accounts commonly portrayed Chinese as a uniform language, overlooking the linguistic diversity within China. Even with the circulation of materials reflecting regional speech, such as the Dominican work in the Spanish Philippines on Min Chinese, this monolithic view persisted.[25] The intense focus on Chinese characters, often imagined to hold universal meaning and also alimented by Webb, further masked China's multilingual reality, with regional differences frequently dismissed as mere "mispronunciation".[26] This

19. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 191.
21. For examples on tones, see *ibid.*, pp. 167, 198-199.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 167.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 174: 一十土王玉生主.
24. Webb noted, for example, that in the Fujian province (Fokien) the pronunciation of N often shifted to L, citing Lankin for Nankin as an example, based on Martino Martini. He attributed this linguistic variation to the "clownish" speech and "most common vice" of the region. *Ibid.*, pp. 186, 180.
25. See, for example, Melchior de Mançano's *Arte de la lengua chio chiu* (Zhangzhou 漳州), unpublished. See Henning Klöter, *The Language of the Sangleys. A Chinese vernacular in Missionary Sources of the Seventeenth Century*, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2010, for a presentation of the surviving manuscripts.
26. This perception persisted despite the fact that earlier accounts offered glimpses of local languages and pronunciations and early missionary discussions regarding the choice of

position was also often supported directly by missionaries in China: a case in point is the correspondence between Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz and Jean de Fontaney SJ (1705), in which the French missionary writes: "In China, only one language is spoken everywhere; however, there are some dialects in several provinces… Their jargon in that region [Fujian] is such corrupted Chinese that it is unintelligible. But everyone understands Mandarin… pure Chinese, without any particular dialect".[27]

Webb's work, in many respects, marks the conclusion of the golden age in which Chinese was considered as a candidate for either a universal or the original language. By the turn of the 18th century, enthusiasm for this linguistic quest had waned considerably. While theories connecting Hebrew, Chinese, and Egyptian hieroglyphs as potential remnants of a primordial script persisted, they no longer carried the intellectual urgency characteristic of 17th-century debates. However, a parallel resurgence of Hebrew studies in the Dutch Republic prompted a brief but significant revival of the Semitic-origin hypothesis for Chinese, this time bolstered by novel sources applied to established theories.

2. *Chinese for Old Testament studies: Philippe Masson and the* Histoire critique de la République des Lettres

At the turn of the century, the Low Countries maintained their position as a vital centre for printing, scholarly exchange, and intellectual discourse. Although the notion of a single, universal *Ursprache* had fallen from favour, this did not diminish European engagement with either sinological studies or Near Eastern linguistic traditions. Indeed, Hebrew, Syriac, and Coptic continued to inform emerging protosinological research. A key figure bridging these domains was Adriaan Reland, whose *Dissertationum Miscellanearum* offers readers an imaginative *tour du monde* of languages.[28] While Chinese receives limited attention, presented alongside Japanese and Annamese, the work remains noteworthy for its sources: beyond referencing Martini, Kircher, and Mentzel, Reland notes his access to portions of Golius's dispersed collection, acquired following the Dutch orientalist's death.[29]

language for catechization also hinted at the existence of linguistic diversity. The European inclination to perceive a "universal" Chinese pronunciation might have been partly influenced by missionary strategies employed in the Americas, where the identification of a *lingua franca* was prioritized for evangelization and administrative purposes; see Otto Zwartjes, *Portuguese Missionary Grammars in Asia, Africa and Brazil, 1550–1800*, Amsterdam Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2011, pp. 144-146.

27. Henning Klöter, *The language of the Sangleys. A Chinese vernacular in Missionary Sources of the Seventeenth Century*, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2010, pp. 43-44.

28. Adriaan Reland, *Dissertationum miscellanearum pars tertia et ultima*, Trajecti ad Rhenum, 1708.

29. *Dissertatione XI, De linguis insularum quarundam Orientalium*, *ibid.*, pp. 103-119. "Quod quidem facili negotio a me praestari potest, quum inter plurimas schedas manuscriptas Clarissimi Viri, Jacobi Golii, Insignis quondam vicina Academia Lugduno-Batava literarum

The hypothesis of Chinese deriving from Hebrew, though increasingly marginalized within mainstream French and English academic circles, found renewed vitality in more heterodox intellectual milieus and utopian scholarly discourses. The intellectual landscape of the Low Countries was particularly receptive to such theories, owing in part to the influence of French Huguenot exiles. These *émigrés* carried with them the ideal of the *République des Lettres*, which from 1712 found institutional expression in the Utrecht-based journal *Histoire critique de la République des Lettres, tant ancienne que moderne* (hereafter *HCRL*), with subsequent issues being printed in Amsterdam.[30]

The journal's publisher Samuel Masson (d. 1742) was himself a Huguenot, whose family had first relocated to England before settling in the United Provinces. His brother Philippe Masson, a minister based in Utrecht, remains a more obscure figure, though records indicate he married in 1699 and had a son, also named Philippe, who later moved to London in 1725.[31] Philippe Masson (senior) was the author of four articles devoted to the intersection between Chinese, Hebrew, and Old Testament Studies that appeared in the *HCRL* in 1713:

1. "Dissertation critique, où l'on tâche de faire voir, par quelques exemples, l'utilité qu'on peut retirer de la Langue Chinoise, pour l'intelligence de divers mots et passages difficiles de l'Ancien Testament".[32]
2. "Dissertation critique sur la Langue Chinoise, où l'on fait voir, autant qu'il est possible, les divers rapports de cette langue avec l'hébraique; adressé à Mr. Reland, Professeur en langues orientales dans l'Université d'Utrecht".[33]
3. "Remarques nouvelles, ou Dissertation faisant voir l'usage de la Langue Chinoise pour l'intelligence de quelques endroits du Vieux Test".[34]
4. "Eclaircissemens au sujet de la dissertation qui fait le second article du Tome precedent addressez à l'Auteur de cette Histoire Critique".[35]

To Masson, Hebrew could be understood through Chinese "for those of Noah's grandchildren who first came to live in China, a few centuries after the Flood, brought with them the Language of which they originally spoke, which was a dialect of Hebraic, if not the Hebraic Language itself".[36] Like Webb, Masson opens his dissertations with Biblical genealogies, but the similarities between

orientalium promotoris, vocabularum aliquod invenerim, in quo coves aliquae Latinae Sinice, Japonice, & Annamitice scriptae continevantur": *ibid.*, p. 109.

30. Michaël Green, "Jews and Other Religious Confessions as Seen in the French Language Periodicals Published by the Huguenots in the United Provinces (1680-1715)", *Scripta Judaica Cracoviensa*, 15 (2017), pp. 25-46.

31. Jan Julius Lodewijk Duyvendak, "Early Chinese Studies in Holland", *T'oung Pao*, 32/5 (1936), pp. 293-344: 329.

32. *HCRL*, vol. II, Utrecht, Chez Guillaume à Poolsum, 1713, pp. 95-153.

33. *Ibid.*, vol. III, Amsterdam, Chez Jacques Desbordes, 1713, pp. 29-106. The article is dated 25 March 1713, Vliet.

34. *Ibid.*, vol. IV, Amsterdam, Chez Jacques Desbordes, 1713, pp. 29-69.

35. *Ibid.*, pp. 85-93.

36. "Car ceux d'entre les petit-fils de *Noë*, qui vinrent les premiers habiter la *Chine*, quelques siecles après le Deluge, y apporterent avec eux la Langue dont ils se servoient

their works end there. What significantly distinguishes Masson's approach from that of both Webb and Kircher is in fact his focus on pronunciation rather than the graphic form of Chinese characters. This phonological emphasis warrants closer examination of Masson's sources and their romanization strategies; however, to date scholarship on Chinese character romanization during this period remains limited. The most comprehensive work in this field, Emanuele Raini's unpublished study, focuses primarily on Jesuit-produced texts and dictionaries, which were not Masson's primary sources, as will be shown in the next section.[37] His work thus represents a distinctive strand within early sinological inquiry, blending speculative etymology with an emerging attention to phonetic data, albeit within the ideological framework of the *République des Lettres*.

In terms of methodology, Masson extended his argument beyond Biblical-historical accounts, proposing systematic comparisons between Chinese and Hebrew terms that can be categorized as follows:

1. Hebraisms in the Chinese language;
2. Hebrew roots preserved in Chinese, of which only derivatives appear in Scripture;
3. Chinese words that are pure Hebrew;
4. Chinese words derived from Hebrew.

Masson was not the first to propose a Hebrew origin of Chinese. Scholars who regarded Hebrew as the original language spoken before the dispersion at Babel often attempted to demonstrate that all languages, thus including Chinese, were ultimately derived from it. This is exemplified by Louis Thomassin's *Glossarium Universale Hebraicum*, from which Masson quotes several examples.[38] However, Masson did not merely reproduce the work of others; he also offered a substantial number of examples of his own.

Since Masson's primary aim in the first dissertation is to demonstrate the usefulness of Chinese for interpreting the Old Testament, his examples focus chiefly on cases in which the original meanings of Old Testament Hebrew have been lost in Hebrew itself but are, he argues, preserved in Chinese.

This is evident in straightforward examples, such as the Hebrew term יין *yayin* (wine), which Masson links to the Chinese 雅 *ya* + 饮 *yn* (*yin*), interpreted as *boisson excellente* (excellent drink). Similarly, מן *man* (manna) is connected to 慢子 *mantsu* (*manzi*), glossed as *du pain* (bread). Conversely, Masson also suggests that Hebrew can shed light on the pronunciation of certain Chinese characters. For instance, 阳 *yâm* (*yang*, sun or day) is derived from the Hebrew יום *jom* (*yom*, day). Masson, however, does not limit himself to straightforward lexical comparisons, but also proposes more elaborate genealogies of meaning. One notable example is his interpretation of *Moab*, which he argues through

ordinairement, qui étoit une Dialecte de l'*Hebraïque*, si ce n'étoit pas la Langue Hebraïque elle-même" : *ibid.*, vol. II, p. 109.

37. Emanuele Raini, *Sistemi di Romanizzazione del Cinese Mandarino nei Secoli XVI-XVIII*, unpublished PhD dissertation, Sapienza-Università di Roma, 2010.

38. Louis Thomassin, *Glossarium Universale Hebraicum*, Paris, Typographia Regia, 1697.

a creative synthesis of Hebrew grammar, Septuagint exegesis, and Chinese philology, should be understood as meaning "without father". Masson begins his reasoning with Genesis 19:37, where Moab is introduced as "qui a été le père des Moabites".[39] Traditional interpreters, he notes, understand the name as deriving from the Hebrew מֵאָב (*me'av*, from the father), echoing the exegesis found in the Septuagint's version of Genesis 19:37: *ἐκ τοῦ πατρός*. However, Masson challenges this reading on grammatical grounds:

> Interpreters usually explain it as if it were מֵאָב (*me'av*, "from the father"). But it is not easy, it seems to me, to show that מוֹ is used in place of מִן. For when מִן is joined to a word beginning with a letter that grammarians call a guttural, the nun [ן] is lost and the Hiriq [ִ] changes to a Tzere [ֵ]: thus, according to this analogy, it ought to be מֵאַב, to signify "from the father". And this is what has led some interpreters to believe that the syllable mo must have here another meaning.[40]

To find this alternative meaning, Masson turns to Chinese. He notes that *mo* in Chinese can function as a negation, meaning "no" or "without" ("c'est que le terme mó marque une négation dans cette langue, puisqu'il signifie non, sans").[41] He offers examples to support this use, including the phrase *mó-yeù* (沒有, there is not), which helps identify the character he likely had in mind as 没 (*méi*).[42] Thus, by interpreting *mo* (*mei*) as a negation and combining it with *ab* (father), Masson concludes that the name *Moab* can be rendered as ἀπάτωρ (without father).

Despite his emphasis on phonetic correspondences, Masson concludes the second dissertation with a table highlighting graphic similarities between certain Chinese characters and Hebrew and Samaritan Hebrew script, positing that they may have originally shared a common form (Fig. 1).[43] Fortunately, Masson refrains from asserting that Chinese possesses an alphabet, a nuance reflecting at least some awareness of linguistic distinctions, which was not always shared by his contemporaries in Hebrew scholarship.

39. *HCRL*, vol. II, p. 115.

40. "Les Interprètes l'expliquent ordinairement, comme s'il y avoit מֵאָב, du père. Mais il n'est pas facile, ce me semble, de montrer que מוֹ soit mis pour מִן. Car lorsqu'on joint à quelque mot qui commence par une lettre que les Grammairiens appellent gutturale, le מִן perd son nun, et change le Chirek en Tséré: ainsi il devrait y avoir, selon cette analogie, מֵאַב, pour signifier 'du père'. Et c'est ce qui a fait croire à quelques Interprètes que la syllabe mo devait avoir ici une autre signification": *ibid.*, p. 116. The etymology theorized by the author implies that the preposition מִן, when followed by a guttural sound (in this case, the א in אב), loses the final ן- and undergoes a mutation regarding the pronunciation, which turns from short "i" (Hireq) to long "e" (Tsere). This observation demonstrates a certain degree of linguistic competence. See, for example, Jacob Weingreen, *A practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1959, p. 30.

41. *Ibid.*

42. This identification is particularly significant given that Chinese presents another negation term rendered *mǒ* in romanization: 莫. One task for future research would be to examine Masson's source manuscripts in detail to confirm whether he distinguishes between *méi* and *mò* in his romanizations, or whether this specific case represents a possible inconsistency or mistake (see section 3).

43. *HCRL*, vol. III, p. 103.

Chinese characters	Hebrew letters	Samaritan letters
山 *chān*	ש *schin*	ࠔ *schin*
力 *liè*	מ *mem*	
口 *keù*	ם *mem final*	
户 *hŭ*	ק *koph*	ࠒ *koph*
十 *ché*		X[44] *thau*
丫 *yā*	צ *tzade*	Y[45] *guimel*
斗 *teù*		ࠄ *he*
勿 *ué*		ࠑ *tzade*, ࠉ *jod*
甘 *kān*		ࠇ *cheth*
亦 *yé*	ת *thau*	

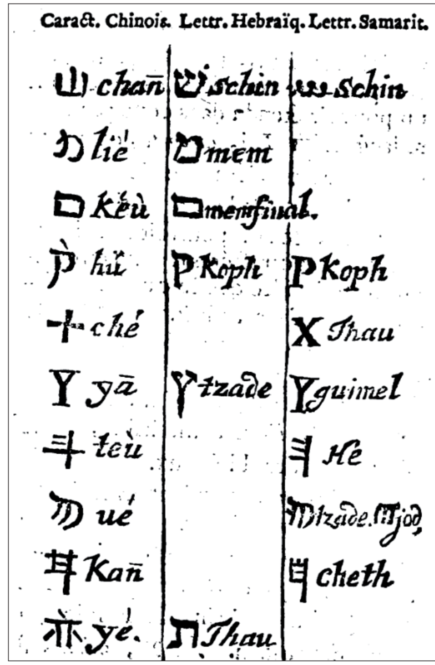


Figure 1. "Characteres Chinois, qui ont beaucoup de rapport avec quelques lettres Hebraiques, & quelques lettres Samaritaines", *HCRL*, vol. III, p. 103.

3. *Heurnius's* Confusy Doctrina Morales *and dictionary in Masson's "Dissertation critique" (*HCRL*, vol. III)*

By the beginning of the 18th century, Masson had access to a significant range of Chinese sources for (re)constructing the Hebrew-Chinese linguistic relationship. With regard to printed texts, he did not distance himself from his contemporaries and earlier studies by drawing directly on established works such as August Pfeiffer's *Pansophia Mosaica* and Kircher's translations of the Xi'an Stele from *China Illustrata*.[46] More remarkably, through Reland Masson gained

44. Masson prints the Samaritan *thau* as X (see adjacent image), but the corresponding letter should be closer to ࠕ.

45. As in the previous note: ࠂ.

46. "Il y a quelques années, que la China Illustrata de Kircher m'etant tombée entre les mains, je la lus avec beaucoup de plaisir, & je m'appliquai d'une façon toute particuliere à examiner le Monument Chinois, qui y est décrit en caracteres Chinois, & dans le quel aussi on trouve quelques caracteres Syriaques, avec les mots de la Langue Mandarine, qui expriment les idées que ces caracteres remettent dans l'esprit, & où l'on trouve de plus l'explication litterale de ce même Monument. L'antiquité de cet Empire, que l'on estime avoir été établi peu de siécles après le Deluge, me parut une chose digne de remarque, & la Langue Mandarine ne me parut pas moins digne de mon attention" : *HCRL*, vol. II, p. 106.

access to Golius's collection of Chinese manuscripts, a privileged resource that substantially informed his research. In the dissertations Masson mentions his use of a dictionary and other manuscript sources, describing them in sufficient detail to permit a clear identification:

> Among these manuscripts there is a small portion of Confucius's works, China's foremost philosopher; a description of rhubarb; the names of Chinese kings with their reign periods from the empire's foundation until 1627; an abridged Christian doctrine concerning creation and human salvation for teaching Christianity to the Chinese; and various others. These manuscripts are all the more valuable as they belonged to the renowned scholar Golius.[47]

For scholars familiar with Dutch pastor Justus Heurnius (1587-1651/52), brother of the Otto Heurnius mentioned previously, Masson's description clearly identifies him as the probable compiler of these Chinese materials. Appointed for the East Indies by the Amsterdam Classis on 13 November 1623, he arrived in Batavia, the Dutch East India Company's Asian headquarters, on 17 July 1624.[48] During his pastoral work there, Heurnius not only learned Malay but entered into contact with the Chinese language through interaction with a local community, predominantly composed of migrants from southern China. By 1628, he reported to his superiors that, with assistance from a Latin-educated Macanese Chinese collaborator, he had compiled a Chinese-Dutch dictionary and completed Chinese texts of the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer.[49] Heurnius's work extended beyond these texts, as he dispatched to Europe a significant collection of both religious and secular materials, now preserved in three still unpublished manuscripts housed at the Leiden University Library (hereafter L), the British Library in London (hereafter BL), and the Bodleian Library in Oxford (hereafter BO).[50] These materials eventually formed part of Golius's collection, with portions later acquired by Reland. This provenance establishes the direct lineage through which these resources reached Masson, completing their journey from missionary fieldwork in Batavia to European scholarly discourse.

47. "Entre ces Manuscrits il y a quelque petite partie des Ouvrages de Confusius, premier Philosophe de la Chine. Une Description de la Rhubarbe. Les noms des Rois de la Chine avec le temps de leur regne, depuis le commencement de l'Empire, jusqu'à l'an 1627. Un Abbregé de la Doctrine Chrétienne touchant la creation & le salut du genre humain, pour enseigner le Christinisme aux Chinois, & divers autres. Ces Manuscrits sont d'autant plus considerable, qu'ils ont été à l'usage de Golius si connu des Sçavans" : *ibid.*, p. 108.

48. Jacobus Richardus Callenbach, *Justus Heurnius: eene Bijdrage tot de Geschiedenis des Christendoms in Nederlandsch Oost-Indie*, Niijkerk, CC Callenbach, 1897, p. 98.

49. Duyvendak, "Early Chinese Studies in Holland", p. 318; Callenbach, *Justus Heurnius*, pp. 145-146; Koos Kuiper, "The earliest monument of Dutch Sinological studies. Justus Heurnius's manuscript Dutch-Chinese Dictionary and Chinese-Latin Compendium Doctrinae Christianae (Batavia 1628)", *Quaerendo*, 35/1-2 (2005), pp. 109-139, in particular p. 112.

50. Compendium: Bodleian Library (hereafter BO) Marsh 456; British Library (hereafter BL) Sloane 2746; Leiden University Library (hereafter L) Acad 225. Dictionary: BO Marsh 678; BL Sloane 2746; L Acad 224.

Heurnius's manuscripts contain all the key elements referenced by Masson: excerpts from the Confucian *Analects*,[51] a treatise on rhubarb, a chronological list of Chinese rulers extending to 1627 (consistent with Heurnius's correspondence dates), and a *Compendium* of Christian doctrine that indeed includes accounts of both Creation and Salvation of humankind. While BO represents the most comprehensive version of Heurnius's Chinese materials, Masson worked with BL, which preserves his annotations and signature.[52] Jan Julius Lodewijk Duyvendak first identified in 1936 Heurnius's work as the source of Masson's dissertations; however, his conclusion was based on the description by Leonel Giles, who "kindly took the trouble to examine the manuscript for me", rather than direct examination of BL.[53] Duyvendak assumed – reasonably but incorrectly – that BL, like BO and L, contained Heurnius's original Latin translations and romanizations throughout. In reality, while BL presents complete Chinese texts, it largely lacks these apparatus except where subsequently added by a later hand consistent with Masson. The manuscript contains several unrecorded features: additional folios with notes in Latin and French, including a brief section titled "Origine de la langue Chinoise tirées de la langue Hebraïque". Most notably, the portion showing the densest annotations is Heurnius's extract from the Confucian *Analects* (*Confusy Doctrina Morales*), suggesting that Masson engaged most intensively with the philosophical texts in his collection. This philological focus on Confucian material is directly reflected in the examples and arguments presented in Masson's "Dissertation critique" (*HCRL*, vol. III).

Masson opens his dissertation with two excerpts drawn directly from the *Analects*, each presented through a consistent framework: a romanization of the Chinese text, a French translation, and his commentary. The second example also presents an image of the Chinese characters alongside their romanization on a separate page. The first example, taken from book IV of the *Analects*, reads:

> Tsu pe guêi gin-che nem hao gin men oo gin
> Confucius says: Only the virtuous man can, with complete assurance, love others and hate others. This must mean that the virtuous man alone can make a just discernment of those he ought to love and who are worthy of it.[54]

51. Justus Heurnius, *Confusy Doctrina Morales*, 1628c. MS BO Marsh 456, ff. 114r-131r; MS BL Sloane 2746, ff. 217/329v-256/ 310r; MS L Acad 225, ff. 11v-14v (incomplete), corresponding to books I to IV(16) of the *Analects*. BO also presents a second, longer translation, without romanization and characters, ff. 182v-177v (books I to VI(28) of the *Analects*).

52. BO Marsh 456 lacks only two non-Chinese texts present in BL: a Malay translation of the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer in Chinese characters. BO text is structured in three columns, intended to be read from right to left. The rightmost column presents a character-by-character Latin translation, the central column displays the original Chinese characters, and the leftmost column provides their romanization.

53. Duyvendak, "Early Chinese Studies in Holland", p. 318.

54. IV(3). 子曰：「唯仁者能好人，能惡人。」. "Confucius dit: Celui-là seul qui est homme de bien peut en toute seureté aimer les hommes, & peut en toute seureté hair les hommes. Ce qui dois signifier, que l'homme de bien peut seul faire un juste discernement des personnes qu'il doit aimer & qui en sont dignes" : *HCRL*, vol. III, p. 36.

This passage corresponds to the text found in BL, f. 250/312r:

Confucius	ait	solus ille	qui probus est		tutò potest
子	曰	惟[55]	仁	者	能
Çù tcu	yuĕ pe	guêi	giñ	chè	nemˆ
diligere	homines	tutò potest	odisse	homines	
好	人	能	惡	人	
háo	*giñ*	*nemˆ*	~~*háo oo*~~ *^ú^*	*giñ*	

To underscore the divergence between Masson's and Heurnius' texts, consider the same passage as it appears in BO (Marsh 456, f. 128v):

Confusius	ait	tantum	pius	ille	potest
子	曰	惟	仁	者	能
tcù	*yué*	*gueî*	*giñ*	*chè*	*nèn*
amare	homines	et potest	abhorrere	homines	
好	人	能	惡	人	
haó	*giñ*	*nèn*	*ú*	*giñ*	

Masson's translation in the *HCRL* aligns with his character-by-character annotations in BL. However, closer examination of his romanization practices offers deeper insights into both his analytical methodology and the likely chronology of his engagement with these materials. In BL, Masson consistently provides two romanizations for the character 子 (*zǐ*), rendering it as both *tcu* and *çù,* while in the *HCRL* he employs only a single, slightly different form: *tsu*. This discrepancy suggests a possible evolution in his transcription of this sound, with the *çù* form potentially being a later addition. The character 曰 (*yuē*) exhibits similar development, appearing as *pe* in the *HCRL* but with dual forms *yuĕ* and *pe* in BL, where *pe* is frequently crossed out, indicating Masson's subsequent recognition and correction of the mistake. This pattern of revision continues with 惡 (*è*), which appears as *oo* in the *HCRL* but shows a clear progression in BL from *oo* → *háo* → *ú*. These systematic corrections confirm that Masson continued to engage with the manuscript even after the articles in the *HCRL*. When compared to Heurnius's practices, Masson's romanizations reveal both dependence and development. Heurnius himself employed inconsistent systems, alternating between Latin/Portuguese and Dutch orthographic conventions. For instance, he rendered 惡 (*è*) as both *oo* and *v*/*u* in his dictionary, variations that directly parallel Masson's later emendations in BL. These inconsistencies in Heurnius's work likely explain both Masson's initial choices and his subsequent corrections, confirming that he used Heurnius's dictionary not merely as an original source but as a reference for revisions.

55. Both BL and BO present the variant 惟 instead of 唯.

The second quotation from the *Analects* presented by Masson follows a similar pattern:[56]

> Here is another noteworthy saying of the same Philosopher:
> Tsu pe Kium-tsu cheu ulh pu tsu siao-gin tsu ulh pu cheu
> Confucius says: The virtuous man is universal and not particular; the wicked man by contrast, or he who is of base and abject spirit, is particular and not universal.[57] This means that the virtuous man is born not only for himself, but also for goodness and for serving his fellow men; whereas the wicked man, being base-spirited, is born only for himself, seeking solely his private good rather than the public good.[58]

The BL romanization exhibits familiar characteristics: 曰 (*yuē*) appears first as *pe* before correction to *yue*, while 比 (*bǐ*) progresses from *tcù* to *pí* – further evidence of later revision. The principal divergence between Heurnius's and Masson's romanizations concerns 而 (*ér*): Heurnius uses *lh'*, while Masson employs *ulh*. However, Heurnius's dictionary includes both *lh* and *ul* forms, indicating that Masson's *ulh* could represent a conflation or interpretation of these existing forms.

Masson's interest in pronunciation is further evidenced in his dissertations, particularly through his references to the existence and characteristics of the "Chin-cheo dialect of the Fukien region", an apparent departure from the prevailing monolingual theory. The fourth dissertation in volume IV of the *HCRL* explicitly addresses objections regarding the divergent pronunciations of Mandarin (which Masson employs in his romanizations linking Hebrew and Chinese) and Fujianese. However, like Webb, Masson ultimately privileges Mandarin as the authoritative reference language, distancing himself from other "dialects" and thereby perpetuating the monolingual myth still prevalent in the early 18th century. As Masson asserts:

> When I have spoken of the Chinese language, I have principally referred to Mandarin, which alone may justly bear the name of the Chinese language, as it is the purest and most ancient.[59]

> I might add here that, as some of China's provinces were only conquered by the Chinese long after the kingdom's establishment, it should not seem surprising that their language

56. II(14). 子曰：「君子周而不比，小人比而不周。」； *HCRL*, vol. III, p. 38.

57. Masson's character-by-character translation in BL (f. 232/322r) reads: "Confusius ait probus at perfectus vir universalis & non particularis improbus ac vilis & homoq. abjecti homo particularis est & adeoque non universalis".

58. "Voici une autre sentence de ce même Philosophe, qui est digne de remarque,
Tsu pe Kium-tsu cheu ulh pu tsu siao-gin tsu ulh pu cheu.
Confucius dit: l'homme de bien est universel & non pas particulier: le méchant au contraire, ou celui qui est s'un esprit bas & abject, est particulier & non pas universel. Cela veut dire, que l'homme de bien n'est pas seulemente né pour lui-même, mais aussi pour le bien, & pour le service des autres hommes sed prochains; au-lieu que le méchant, qui a un espirit bas, n'est né que pour lui seul, & ne cherche uniquement que son bien particulier, & non pas celui du public" : *HCRL*, vol. III, p. 38.

59. "Lors que j'ai parlé de la Langue Chinoise, je n'ai eu principalement en veuë que la Langue Mandarine, qui est la seule à proprement parler qui doive porter à juste titre le nom de Langue Chinoise, comme étant la plus pure & la plus ancienne " : *ibid.*, vol. IV, p. 86.

differs from Mandarin. Doubtless, they retained at least part of their original tongue even after submission to the Chinese Empire.[60]

Nonetheless, Masson's interest acquires particular significance given that Heurnius worked among Batavia communities likely speaking Min Nan variants, rather than the early Mandarin on which both his and Masson's romanizations are based. This discrepancy underscores a broader research desideratum: a systematic analysis of the competing romanization systems across Heurnius's works.

4. *Conclusions*

Far from being an isolated experiment only loosely based on linguistics, Masson's work must be situated within a broader intellectual context that still clung to the hope, however feeble, of reconstructing an Adamic, universal language, while simultaneously engaging with and systematizing phonological data and other materials collected in the field by missionaries.

Masson's methodology, marked by an emphasis on pronunciation over script and by a comparative reading of Biblical Hebrew and Chinese lexemes, significantly diverged from earlier visual-symbolic approaches such as those of Kircher. His use of romanization, drawn from and at times revised over Heurnius's inconsistent systems, reflects a hybrid stage in the evolution of European sinological methods. On the other hand, his way of quoting the Hebrew Bible, together with his observations regarding Biblical Hebrew grammar, proves a certain familiarity with Hebrew sources, or at least a readiness of lexicons and other learning instruments. Thus we could open another line of study: it would be most interesting to reconstruct Masson's Hebrew sources. Moreover, Masson's annotations on BL Sloane 2746 attest to a sustained philological engagement that outlasted the publication of his articles in the *HCRL*. In this, he signals a transition from speculative etymology to a more empirically grounded, albeit still ideologically inflected, linguistic inquiry.

Despite these contributions, Masson's theories gained little to no traction within either the burgeoning field of sinology or Hebrew studies of the period. This lack of attention, especially in Chinese and Hebrew scholarly traditions, remains a critical area for future research. Investigating why Masson's work failed to circulate meaningfully, and whether it was dismissed outright or simply overlooked, could shed light on shifting disciplinary boundaries and epistemological standards within early modern linguistic scholarship.

Moreover, further research should systematically analyse the romanization systems employed in Masson's articles and annotations, especially in comparison with Heurnius's own practices as preserved in the L and BO. This would help

60. "J'ajoûterai ici, que comme quelques unes des Provinces de la Chine n'ont été conquises par les Chinois, que dans la suite des tems, & longtems après l'établissement du Royaume, il ne doit pas paroître surprenant, qu'il se trouve de la difference entre leur langue & la Mandarine, puis qu'ils avoient sans doute une langue particuliere avant que d'être soumis à l'Empire Chinois, laquelle ils ont conservée, pour le moins en parti " : *ibid.*, p. 89.

clarify how marginal missionary transcription practices influenced early European phonological models of Chinese. Finally, a broader analysis of Masson's examples and argumentations scattered across his four dissertations could yield a more comprehensive picture of his linguistic model, in the hope of ascertaining if his derivational categories reflected broader trends in etymological speculation, or if they were an isolated, personal choice. Through these avenues, Masson's case may be more fully understood not only as a historical curiosity, but as a meaningful episode in the genealogy of global linguistic field research.

Paolo De Troia

Images and Representations of Europe in China: Missionaries Narrate the West

This essay aims to investigate the intercultural dynamics beneath the production and circulation of European geographical knowledge in early modern China, focusing on Jesuit missionary strategies between the late 16th and 17th centuries. Drawing on the works of Matteo Ricci and Giulio Aleni, and especially Aleni's *Zhifang waiji* 職方外紀 (Record of Foreign Lands), it explores how geography and cartography functioned not only as scientific instruments but also as rhetorical tools of cultural persuasion and, moreover, epistemic negotiation. Maps and descriptions of Europe served to construct an image of the West tailored to Chinese intellectual expectations, invoking parallels with Confucian ideals of moral order, harmony, and rational governance. By examining these texts, this essay aims to show how Jesuit scientific works in China were not only vehicles of knowledge transfer, but interventions in a complex field of cultural legitimacy, authority, and translation.

Beginning in the late 16th century, Jesuit missionaries in China – particularly, with regard to the theme addressed in this contribution, Ricci (Macerata, 6 October 1552-Beijing, 11 May 1610), Aleni (Brescia, 1582-Yanping, 10 June 1649), Ludovico Buglio (Mineo, 26 January 1606-Beijing, 7 October 1682), Francesco Sambiasi (Cosenza, 1582-Canton, 1649), and Ferdinand Verbiest (Pittem, Courtrai, 1623-Beijing, 1688) – played a crucial role in disseminating geographical and cultural knowledge about Europe through the production of maps and geographical texts.[1] Through works such as the famous *Kunyu*

1. An extensive bibliography exists on Matteo Ricci and his *Mappamondo*. As a starting point, for Ricci's works see Pietro Tacchi Venturi, *Opere storiche del P. Matteo Ricci S.I.*, 2 vols, Macerata, Giorgetti, 1911-1913; Pasquale D'Elia, *Fonti Ricciane*, 3 vols, Rome, Libreria dello Stato, 1942-1949; Pasquale D'Elia, *Il Mappamondo del P. Matteo Ricci S.I.*, Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1938; Kenneth Ch'en, "Matteo Ricci's Contribution to, and Influence On, Geographical Knowledge in China", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 59, 3 (1939), pp. 325-59. For a modern edition with map reproductions and translation see *La cartografia di Matteo Ricci*, ed. by Filippo Mignini, Rome, Libreria dello Stato, 2013. A recent publication about Ricci's map that contains a comprehensive bibliography and offers new perspectives on the geographical work of the missionary is *Remapping the World in East Asia: Toward a Global History of the "Ricci Maps"*, ed. by Mario Cams and Elke Papelitzky, Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 2024. On the geographical work of the successors of Ricci, see Paola Demattè, "Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam: Jesuit Mapping in China by Giulio Aleni,

wanguo quantu 坤輿萬國全圖 (Complete Map of All Nations on the Earth, hereafter *Mappamondo*) by Ricci and the maps and treatises by his successors, the Jesuits introduced into the Chinese context a vision of the world inspired by European cartography and cosmography, strategically reformulated within a logic of adaptation and inculturation. In these works, descriptions of Europe were often idealized: Western Europe was portrayed as an advanced, orderly, and morally superior land – a depiction meant to inspire respect and curiosity among the Chinese educated elites. These utopian representations not only served to ennoble the Christian message, but also to legitimize the missionaries' intellectual authority as intermediaries of universal knowledge. Jesuit maps and texts became fundamental tools of evangelization and cultural diplomacy, contributing to a redefinition of the Chinese imaginary of Europe.[2]

1. *Geography as a language*

The reason the missionaries used geography and maps within their apostolic work lies in the nature of the cartographic object itself. Maps have always held great value for human beings, as they represent the ideas people have about the world around them. Maps and geography, as representations of the world around us, have always held immense practical and cultural value throughout human history. Moreover, they constitute a language before languages:

> Mapping – like painting – precedes both written language and systems involving numbers, and though maps did not become everyday objects in many areas of the world until the European Renaissance, there have been relatively few mapless societies in the world at large. The map is thus both extremely ancient and extremely widespread; maps have impinged upon the life, thought, and imagination of most civilizations that are known through either archaeological or written records. […] In these respects, the starting assumption is that maps constitute a specialized graphic language, an instrument

Francesco Sambiasi, Niccolò Longobardi, Manuel Diaz, and Others", in *Reimagining the Globe and Cultural Exchange. The East Asian Legacies of Matteo Ricci's World Map*, ed. by Laura Hostetler, Leiden, Brill, 2024, pp. 178-201. For an annotated translation of Aleni's atlas, see Giulio Aleni, *Geografia dei paesi stranieri alla Cina. Zhifang Waiji* 職方外紀 (Opera omnia), vol. I, ed. by Paolo De Troia, Brescia, Fondazione Civiltà bresciana-Centro Giulio Aleni, 2009.

2. Much has been written about the cultural policies and accommodation strategies of the Jesuits in the Chinese mission starting from the 16th century. It is difficult both to summarize the enormous existing literature and to avoid repeating ideas and arguments that have already been explored in detail by many scholars who have previously dealt with these themes. For a general introduction to the relationship between the Jesuits and science, the *Handbook of Christianity in China. Vol. I: 635-1800*, ed. by Nicolas Standaert, Leiden, Brill, 2019 is certainly useful – particularly the section on science, pp. 689-803. See also David E. Mungello, *Curious Land: Jesuit Accommodation and the Origins of Sinology*, Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1985; Liam Matthew Brockey, *Journey to the East: The Jesuit Mission to China 1579-1724*, Cambridge, MA, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007; Florin-Stefan Morar, "The Westerner: Matteo Ricci's World Map and the Quandaries of European Identity in the Late Ming Dynasty", *Journal of Jesuit Studies*, 6 (2019), pp. 14-30.

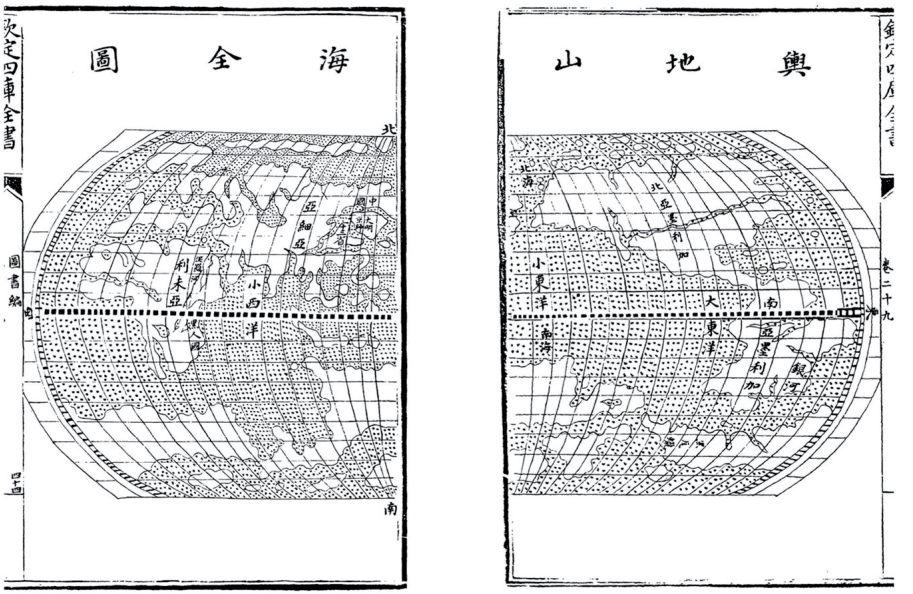


Figure 1. *Yudi shanhai quantu* 輿地山海全圖 (Complete Map of Mountains and Seas), Zhang Huang 章潢 (1527-1608), public domain, Wikimedia Commons.

> of communication that has influenced behavioural characteristics and the social life of humanity.[3]

It is therefore easy to understand why the Jesuits employed them in their efforts to engage with Chinese society for apostolic purposes. More than other kinds of objects, maps could serve as tools of cultural communication and allowed the missionaries to approach Chinese literati in their attempt to convert China. And indeed, this is exactly what happened: Ricci was the first to realize that a map could arouse more interest than words among his interlocutors. Encouraged also by requests from his Chinese friends, he began producing geographical works.[4]

There are numerous accounts of the enthusiasm shown by Chinese literati toward the missionary's maps. For example, Pasquale D'Elia reports that during Ricci's first journey to Beijing, a copy of one of the early editions of his world map was frequently admired by the Jesuit's travel companions (Fig. 1):

> Among the other things the Fathers brought with them was a rather large painting, in which Father Matteo had created a universal map of the whole world (*Shanhai yudi quantu* 山

3. John Brian Harley and David Woodward, *The History of* Cartography, vol. I, *Cartography in Prehistoric, Ancient, and Medieval Europe and the Mediterranean*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1987, p. 1.

4. Standaert, *Handbook*, p. 690: "Ricci's choice to use science to attract the interest of Chinese scholars was a response to the curiosity aroused by his planisphere".

> 海輿地全圖), with inscriptions and explanations in the Chinese language. It was a very beautiful work, which greatly delighted Guanciunmin [Wang Zhongming 王忠銘], as he saw in it the vastness and diversity of the entire earth depicted with such variety.[5]

This map also plays a central role in a delightful and intriguing episode that took place during the same journey, as it is said that the "Viceroy" of Nanjing owned a copy of it, which he unknowingly presented to Ricci as a map produced in China. It is worth quoting in full the account provided by D'Elia on the matter:

> At that time, a great friend of his was serving as Viceroy of Nanjing, with the surname of Ciao [Zhao 趙], and named Cotai [Kehuai 可懷],[6] who did not reside in Nanjing but in a city called Chiugiun [Jurong 句容], a day's journey from Nanjing. […] This Viceroy had received from the friend of Father Matteo, Guaniuscia [Wang Yusha 王玉沙], who had been promoted to Governor [*zhifu* 知府] of Cinchianfu [Zhenjiang Fu 鎮江府] in the province of Nanjing [Nanzhi li 南直隸], a world map – one of those that had been printed in Quantone [Guangdong 廣東]. Being very pleased with it, he had it re-engraved onto a large stone in the city of Suceo [Suzhou 蘇州], along with a fine composition in praise of the work that he himself had written; yet he had not included the name of the original author. Thus, when sending – according to their custom – a gift to celebrate the safe arrival of his friend Guanciunmin, among other things he also sent one of these self-printed world maps. When Guanciunmin saw it and found it very similar to the one Father Matteo had shown him, he immediately summoned him to his palace and, in the presence of many other scholars, said to him while showing him the map: "See, we too in China have knowledge of all parts of the world and of all those other things you showed me in your chart, and you are not the first author in China of this science". The Father, upon seeing the map, at once recognized it as his own work and, beginning to explain everything to him, revealed that he was indeed the author of it, as it had already been printed once in Sciaochino [Zhaoqing 肇慶]. […] Guanciunmin immediately wrote to his friend, thanking him for the gift and informing him that the author of that world map was with him in Nanjing, on his way to Beijing. When the Viceroy Ciao heard this, he quickly sent one of his mandarins with a letter to Guan Sciansciu, asking that, by all means, Father Matteo be sent to his palace, as he had long desired to meet him because of the fame he had heard about his works.[7]

5. D'Elia, *Fonti Ricciane*, vol. II, p. 13: "Fra l'altre cose che i Padri portavano seco, era un quadro assai grande, nel quale il P. Matteo aveva fatto un *Mappa universale di tutto il mondo*, con lettere e dichiaratione in lingua cinese, assai bello, con che il Guanciunmin [Wang Zhongming 王忠銘] si allegrava molto, vedendo in esso la grandezza e distintione di tutta la terra con tanta varietà". As stated, it is a copy of the *Yudi shanhai quantu* 輿地山海全圖 (Complete Map of Mountains and Seas) – that is, the first edition of Ricci's World Map – published in October 1584. The original map has since been lost, but a rendition survives in Zhang Huang's *Tushu bian* 圖書編 (see Fig. 1). See Florin-Stefan Morar, "The Westerner: Matteo Ricci's World Map", pp. 14-30.

6. The Chinese official in question was Zhao Kehuai (趙可懷, 1541-1603), who had obtained the *jinshi* degree in 1564. On this figure and his intellectual ties with Ricci, see Frédéric Wang, "The tongnian network in Matteo Ricci's intellectual network", in *New Perspectives in Studies on Matteo Ricci*, ed. by Filippo Mignini, Macerata, Quodlibet, 2019, pp. 59-75.

7. D'Elia, *Fonti Ricciane*, vol. II, pp. 13-15: "Stava in quel tempo un grande suo amico per Vicerè di Nanchino, per cognome Ciao [Zhao 趙] e nome Cotai [可懷], il quale non habitava in Nanchino ma in una città detta Chiugiun [Jurong 句容], distante una giornata di camino da Nanchino. […] Questo aveva auto dal amico del P. Matteo, Guaniuscia [Wang Yusha 王玉沙], che era stato alzato a Governatore [zhifu 知府] di Cinchianfu [Zhenjiang fu 鎮江

2. *A matter of knowledge: intercultural epistemology*

This episode is emblematic of the Jesuits' use of science in China. Scientific knowledge was employed as a tool to arouse curiosity and generate interest in the Christian message.[8] However, it was not only a matter of stimulating the curiosity of Chinese literati to "draw them" toward religion, but also, more subtly, of persuading them of the validity of Western knowledge. What was taking place can be described as a true process of knowledge negotiation, which can be framed within the broader context of intercultural epistemology.

"Intercultural epistemology" may be defined as the view that investigates how different systems of knowledge interact and are transformed through contact and translation. We observe how, through the cultural and scientific dialogue built by Jesuit missionaries, epistemological premises themselves were challenged – that is, the very foundations of what could be considered valid knowledge within a different cultural context.

Upon receiving a map as a welcome gift from the "Viceroy" of Nanjing, Zhao Kehuai, Wang Zhongming, the scholar who accompanied Ricci on his journey, quickly summoned the missionary to demonstrate that China, too, was capable of producing a detailed and up-to-date map like the marvellous and precious one Ricci was carrying to Beijing, and which he so deeply admired. He called Ricci and said: "See, we too in China have knowledge of all parts of the world and of all those other things you showed me in your chart, and you are not the first author in China of this science" – only to discover, shortly thereafter, that Ricci

府] della provincia di Nanchino [Nanzhi li 南直隸], un Mappa universale [sic], di quelli che furno stampati in Quantone [Guangdong 廣東] et, essendogli piaciuto molto, lo aveva fatto ristampare in una grande pietra nella città di Suceo [Suzhou 蘇州], insieme con una bella compositione in lode dell'opra, che egli stesso aveva fatto; e non aveva posto in essa il nome del primo autore. Laonde, mandando, secondo il loro stile, il presente della buona arrivata al suo amico Guanciunmin, fra l'altre cose mandò anco uno di questi mappamondi da sè stampati, [il] qual, visto dal Guanciunmin esser assai simile a quello che il P. Matteo gli aveva mostrato, subbito lo mandò a chiamare al suo palazzo, et in presenza di molti altri letterati gli disse, mostrandogli quel Mappa: «Ecco che noi anco nella Cina habbiamo notitia di tutte le parti del mondo con tutte le altre cose che mi avete mostrate nel vostro quadro, e non s[i]ete voi il primo autore nella Cina di questa scientia». I1 Padre, vedendo il Mappa, subbito riconobbe essere sua opra, e cominciandogli a dichiarar tutto, gli scopritte che egli era l'autore di quello, per essersi stampato già un'altra volta in Sciaochino [Zhaoqing 肇慶]. […] scrisse subito il Guanciunmin al suo amico dandogli gratie del presente, e gli disse che l'autore di quel Mappamondo stava seco in Nanchino per passare a Pacchino. Udito questo dal Vicerè Ciao, mandò con molta prestezza un mandarino de' suoi sudditi con lettera al Guan Sciansciu che in ogni modo gli mandasse là al suo palazzo il P. Matteo, perché aveva molto tempo che desiderava di vederlo, per la fama che aveva udito delle sue cose".

8. Standaert, *Handbook*, p. 689: "For the whole duration of the Jesuits' presence in China, science played an important role in their activities. It was used as a tool for evangelisation: Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) found that it was a good way to arouse Chinese literati's interest in European culture. With a few exceptions, the Jesuits were the only missionaries to adopt this strategy. And in no other of their missions in the world was science used so systematically and extensively as in China".

was in fact the actual author of the very map he believed to be Chinese. In this episode of misunderstanding, we witness – almost like a scene in a theatrical play – the stage of this negotiation between bodies of knowledge, where epistemic authority is negotiated. Authority through science: Western knowledge (astronomy, mathematics, geography, mechanics, zoology, and many other fields) was presented as evidence of the validity of European thought. The underlying question, in the minds of missionaries, was likely: "By what means can I persuade you that my science – my body of knowledge – holds validity? How might I convince you that my epistemology deserves recognition equal to your own?". In their interaction with the Chinese, the Jesuits negotiated epistemic authority through science, which thus became a tool to earn their trust. As a result, many scientific works were produced, including maps and atlases.

According to Tsien, in the period from c. 1584 to 1790, the number of Jesuit compilations and translations in Chinese language reached a total of 437.[9] Among these, more than a half of them (251) were obviously on religious topics.[10] However, a significant number of works were dedicated to the Western humanistic culture (55) and to Western science (131).

In this brief contribution, I want to draw on a passage from one of these geographical texts authored by the Jesuit missionary Aleni, the *Zhifang waiji* 職方外紀 (Record of Foreign Lands, hereafter *Record*), in order to highlight the epistemological process mentioned above. This will involve examining the image of Western Europe that was presented by the Jesuit missionaries in Chinese.[11]

3. *The shaping of the unseen: to create a valid image of the West*

Maps and geographical atlases are not only representations of the world as it can be directly observed, but also serve to shape the unseen; paraphrasing Numa Broc, they aim "to take stock of what is known and what remains unknown".[12] Just

9. See Tsien Tsuen-hsuin, "Western Impact on China through Translation", *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, 13/3 (1954), p. 307. The data of Tsien do not include reprinted editions. Sources of data of Tsien: Louis Pfister, *Notices biographiques et bibliographiques sur les Jésuites de l'ancienne mission de Chine, 1552-1773*, Shanghai, Imprimerie de la Mission Catholique, 1932-1934; Henri Bernard, "Les adaptations chinoises d'ouvrages européens, 1514-1688", *Monumenta Serica*, 10 (1945), pp. 1-57, 309-388.

10. "It is obvious that the primary motive of the Jesuit translators was religious": Tsien, "Western impact", p. 306.

11. An extensive bibliography exists on Giulio Aleni and his works. See Roman Malek and Tiziana Lippiello, *"Scholar from the West": Giulio Aleni S.J. (1582-1649) and the Dialogue between Christianity and China*, Brescia, Sankt Augustin, Fondazione civiltà bresciana, Steyler Verlag, 1997. For a detailed biography and a complete description of his works, see Eugenio Menegon, *Un solo cielo. Giulio Aleni (1582-1649). Geografia, arte, scienza, religione dall'Europa alla Cina*, Brescia, Grafo, 1994. For the critical edition and translation of the work here cited, see Aleni, *Geografia dei paesi stranieri alla Cina*.

12. Numa Broc, *La geografia del Rinascimento. Cosmografi, cartografi, viaggiatori: 1420-1620*, Modena, Franco Cosimo Panini, 1989, p. 7.

Figure 2. Giulio Aleni, *Zhifang waiji* (Record of Foreign Lands), Hangzhou, 1623, public domain, Wikimedia Commons.

as Martino Martini had finally described China in detail, associating the correct toponyms with places and cities that had been mentioned in earlier geographical works, so too did other Jesuit missionaries in the opposite direction, outlining for the Chinese the borders and details of a faraway and wondrous land: the West. Just as an image of China was created and circulated in Europe through the accounts of missionaries and travellers, so an image of the Western world was introduced into China – symmetrically – by the missionaries themselves.

The first to do so, as is well known, was Ricci. With his world map in Chinese, he was the first to provide Chinese readers with a representation of the world, including continents and populations unknown to them, drawing – where Chinese geography lacked information – on Western sources. Moreover, Ricci altered the representation of the world as it was then known to the Chinese, placing Asia, and China in particular, at the centre of his *Mappamondo*.[13]

13. Regarding the reframing of the world shape by Ricci, it is important to underline that scholarship often asserts that Ricci "gave the Chinese a true picture of the world as it was then known". Such claims rely on an unspoken assumption that Chinese cartographers and scholars were somehow "not yet" at the same level of development as their European counterparts, and that there exists a single, universal view of "truth", implicitly aligned with European cartographic conventions. They overlook the fact that all maps – and all knowledge – are created from a particular position, serving particular needs and functions. As suggested by Walter D. Mignolo, reframing the statement more carefully as "a picture

Ricci's map, however, included only brief and concise descriptions, as it was a planisphere. The first long textual descriptions of the world were instead found in the above-mentioned work by Aleni. He was the first to add a third dimension – the textual one – to the two-dimensional planisphere created by Ricci, producing in 1623 his *Record* (Fig. 2). This five-chapter text draws on some descriptions from the captions of Ricci's map, but the two works differ significantly not only in form – Ricci's atlas is a map, Aleni's *Record* is a book – but also in approach.

In Aleni's work, there is a clearer focus on narrative and description, rather than on geographical precision, coordinates, or cosmographic explanations, which in Ricci's case were elaborated and meticulously presented. In this sense, the two works may be considered complementary, and Aleni's geography could be described as a sort of addendum to Ricci's atlas. With this work, Aleni filled in the blank spaces Ricci had outlined, adding details intended to intrigue and fascinate readers by presenting a comprehensive account of Europe's social, administrative, religious, and cultural institutions.

In addition to strictly geographical information, such as the shape and appearance of continents, rivers, and coastlines, as well as distances and coordinates according to the knowledge of the time, the *Record* provides many details about peoples, their customs, and the history of Western countries. The image of Europe that emerges from this information is often idyllic, especially in contrast with the descriptions of many other countries, such as Central Africa, described as a wild, backward land inhabited by warlike and primitive peoples. The laudatory tone is typical of this category of texts, which were conceived, written, and circulated with the aim of offering a positive image of Europe to support the validity of Western thought and the Catholic religion.

Here below is the incipit of the chapter dedicated to Europe:

> 凡歐邏巴州內大小諸國，自國王以及庶民皆奉天主耶穌正教，絲毫異學不容竄入。國主互為婚姻，世相和好。財用百物有無相通，不私封殖。
> (Europe): In all the states, large and small, within the European territory, everyone – whether noble or commoner – believes in the true religion of the Lord of Heaven, and the spread of heretical doctrines is not permitted in any way. The ruling families of various nations intermarry, thereby maintaining peace for generations. Wealth and goods circulate between the rich and the poor, and no one accumulates riches solely for themselves.[14]

of the world as it was then understood by both Europeans and Chinese" acknowledges that multiple worldviews were at play. In moments of cultural contact like this, there is never one uncontested "truth": there are parallel perspectives, each with its own criteria for legitimacy. Both Ricci's accounts and those of the Chinese literati demonstrate that what was presented as "truth" was always a matter of perspective, contingent on the voice and position of the one making the claim. See Walter D. Mignolo, *The darker side of the Renaissance. Literacy, territoriality, and colonization*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1995, pp. 225-226.

14. Aleni, *Geografia dei paesi stranieri alla Cina*, ch. 2, p. 2.

4. *Building epistemic bridges*

One of the central elements in Aleni's portrayal of Europe is the vision of a continent united under the banner of Catholicism. According to his account, all European peoples, from the aristocracy to the common people, share a belief in the "true religion of the Lord of Heaven" (*Tianzhu* 天主), and deviations from orthodoxy are not tolerated. While this utopian depiction starkly contrasts with the historical reality of the time – an era marked by religious conflicts such as the Protestant Reformation and the Thirty Years' War – it serves a deliberate rhetorical purpose: to present Europe as a spiritually unified and socially stable civilization, made harmonious through the moral and doctrinal authority of Christianity.

This vision would have strongly resonated with a Chinese readership, accustomed to the ideal of the emperor as the pivot of cosmic and political order within the *Tianxia* (天下) system. Just as the emperor's mandate (*Tianming* 天命) ensured unity and harmony under Heaven through moral governance, Aleni's Europe is imagined as a realm unified not politically but spiritually, under a single "Heavenly Lord" and a coherent religious system. In this parallel structure, the Catholic Church assumes a role similar to that of the imperial throne: guarantor of orthodoxy, order, and the moral fabric of civilization. Through this analogy, Aleni subtly builds epistemic and symbolic bridges, presenting Christianity not as a foreign disruption, but, in my understanding, as a system structurally compatible with Chinese political and cosmological ideals.

A second important element is the depiction of European political harmony, ensured by arranged marriages among ruling families. Aleni claims that such unions secure peace among nations for generations, thereby creating a stable political order. This theme resonates with the Confucian ideal of harmony within families and among states, offering the Chinese reader an exemplary model of governance through virtue and dynastic order. Furthermore, the concept of forging peace through dynastic marriages between members of European noble families would have found a meaningful echo among Chinese readers of the time. In traditional Chinese society, arranged marriages were not only a social norm but a deeply rooted institution used to maintain harmony, consolidate power, and reinforce alliances between families. The strategic use of matrimony as a political instrument would thus have appeared both familiar and legitimate, reinforcing the perceived moral and civilizational parity between Europe and China in the minds of the Confucian literati.

Another important point is about the fair distribution of money and resources. In his account, Aleni emphasizes a society where all people have access to the same material goods, and where wealth is shared by everyone for the benefit of the community. This idealized portrayal suggests a morally guided economy, where economic justice is the foundation of social stability, an idea deeply rooted in the Bible – both the Old and the New Testaments – and is central to Christian teaching.[15] At the

15. Some examples can be found in the Old Testament, when the Torah commands that the edges of fields must be "left for the poor" to glean (Leviticus 19:9-10) and urges that one "open your hand to the needy" (Deuteronomy 15:7-8). The prophets further denounce those

same time, it resonates with Confucian ideals of harmonious social order, where the well-being of the community takes precedence over individual accumulation. Aleni presents Western societies as being in tune with these principles, which appeals to Chinese scholars and makes the Christian worldview seem ethical.

Where can one find a more significant example of cultural accommodation? This brief utopian description perfectly serves that purpose: not only was Western Europe portrayed as an advanced, orderly, and morally superior land, intended to evoke respect and curiosity among the educated Chinese elite, but the descriptions also drew clear parallels with Confucian ideals of harmony and social order.

Aleni's *Record* is the first detailed description of the world written in Chinese, and it also served for a long time as a valuable source of information, becoming a kind of reference guide for those who needed or wished to learn about the world beyond China. Many Chinese travellers who ventured abroad in subsequent centuries made use of it, as did border officials, diplomats, and military personnel. Excerpts from Aleni's work appear in important works, including those by later missionaries but also by Chinese authors, such as the *Mingshi* 明史 (History of the Ming, 18th century) and the *Qingchao wenxian tongkao* 清朝文獻通考 (Comprehensive Examination of Qing Dynasty Documents, 1747). We know that Chinese scholars and intellectuals consulted the work directly or through other texts based on it well into the late 19th century.[16]

Fragments of Aleni's work, whether directly or indirectly cited through derivative texts, can be found in the *Haiguo Tuzhi* 海國圖志 (Illustrated Treatise on Maritime Countries), published in 1844 by Wei Yuan 魏源 (1794-1856). Wei's treatise, like another famous geographical text, the *Yinghuan zhilüe* 瀛寰志略 (Short Account of the Maritime Circuit) by Xu Jiyu 徐繼余 (1795-1873), published in 1849, also adopted the toponymy found in Aleni's book.[17]

who accumulate wealth at the expense of the vulnerable, calling for a society grounded in fairness and solidarity (Amos 5:11-12; Isaiah 58:6-7). In the New Testament, this moral vision is evident in the proclamation of good news to the poor (Luke 4:18: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.") and in the descriptions of practices of the early Christian community, which "had all things in common" and "distributed to each as any had need" (Acts 2:44-45). See https://www.biblegateway.com/ (accessed June 2025).

16. On the influence of the *Zhifang waiji* on the writings of travellers, intellectuals, and diplomats of the 18th and 19th centuries, see Miriam Castorina, "The Journey and Narrative Memory: Mapping Mobilities Through Twentieth-Century Chinese Travel Notes on Italy", in *Cultural Mobilities Between China and Italy*, ed. by Valentina Pedone and Gaoheng Zhang, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan, 2024, pp. 61-87; Miriam Castorina, *"In the garden of the world". Italy to a young 19th century Chinese traveler*, Florence, Firenze University Press, 2020; Federica Casalin, *Un diplomatico cinese a Roma. L'Italia di Xue Fucheng (1838-1894)*, Rome, Libreria Editrice Orientalia, 2023.

17. On the reception of Jesuit texts, see Federico Masini, "Italy Described in the Qing Chao Wen Xian Tong Kao", *Rivista degli Studi Orientali*, 63/4 (1989), pp. 285-298; Federico Masini, "The Legacy of Seventeenth Century Jesuit Works: Geography, Mathematics and Scientific Terminology in Nineteenth Century China", in *L'Europe en Chine: Interactions Scientifiques, Religieuses et Culturelles aux XVII et XVIII Siècles*, ed. by Catherine Jami and Hubert Delahaye,

The case of Jesuit geographical writings in early modern China illustrates a pivotal episode in the history of intercultural epistemology. Figures like Ricci and Aleni did not simply export European knowledge; they reconfigured it within Chinese categories of thought, aligning it with local epistemic values to gain credibility. In doing so, they negotiated not only religious acceptance but also intellectual authority. The maps and texts they produced became instruments of a deeper strategy: to persuade Chinese literati that Western science – and, by extension, Christian message – deserved a place within the realm of valid and valuable knowledge. As such, Jesuit cartography was not merely descriptive, but performative: it staged an encounter between worlds in which knowledge itself was at stake. The enduring legacy of these texts, their reuse in later Qing sources, and their influence on Chinese geographical and epistemological paradigms underscore their historical significance as sites of cross-cultural negotiation and hybrid intellectual production.

Collège de France, Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises, Paris, 1993, pp. 137-146. On the question of place names, see Paolo De Troia 保罗, "17 Shiji Yesuhui shi zhuzuo zhongde diming zai Zhongguo de chuanbo 17 世纪耶稣会士著作中的地名在中国的传播 (17th century toponyms in Jesuit works and their circulation in China)", in Zhou Jian 周荐, *Ming Qing lai Hua xiren yu cishu bianzuan* 明清来华西人与辞书编纂 (Westerners in China in Ming and Qing period and their lexicon-related works), Beijing, Commercial Press, 2023, pp. 123-159.

Chen Cui

The Jesuit Translation of China and its Echoes in Oliver Goldsmith's *The Citizen of the World* (1762)

> Out of my own country the highest character I can ever acquire, is that of being a philosophic vagabond.
>
> Oliver Goldsmith, *A Letter from a Traveller*

> Le Monde étant la Partie des Philosophes, ils doivent être entiérement défaits de cette basse & mauvaise Jalousie, qui regne entre les Personnes d'une différente Nation.
>
> Marquis d'Argens, *Lettres juives*

1. *Introduction*

Did any of the Jesuits who travelled to China for missionary work and translated their understanding of it into European languages potentially influence the literary career of Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774), one of the most accomplished Irish poets, novelists, and playwrights of Enlightenment Britain and Ireland?[1] If so, who are they? And how did their influence take shape in the convoluted process of Sino-Irish cross-cultural contact through the intermediary of the Jesuits writing for the audience of continental Europe? A follow-up question, therefore, is to what extent intertextual evidence can (or cannot) be interpreted from a comparative-literary perspective to render a more nuanced picture of the entangled network

1. This essay stems from the PRIN Project "*Classica Serica*: The language and literary characteristics of East Asian Latin and the impact of classical texts on Latin Texts of Eastern Asia between Medieval and Early Modern Age" (CUP H53D23007030006), which is hosted at Ca' Foscari University of Venice and headed by Prof. Tiziana Lippiello. It is jointly funded by the China Scholarship Council (File No. 202107820034), which enabled research in Switzerland and the United Kingdom. I thank Prof. Michela Catto for inviting me to present parts of it at the international conference "Enlightened by China: Representations and Myths in 18th-Century Europe" at the University of Turin (19-20 June 2025), branching out from the PRIN Project "Images of China from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment" (CUP D53D23021390001). Exchanges of ideas with Dr Enit Steiner, Prof. Flavio Gregori, and Prof. Daniel Canaris were inspiring when this paper was in its embryonic stage. Equally, I acknowledge the Ricci Institute for Chinese-Western Cultural History at Boston College (especially Dr Mark Mir and Dr Mårten Söderblom Saarela) and the Newberry Library in Chicago (especially Prof. Paul F. Gehl) for providing me with useful archival materials. Of course, possible infelicities, should there be any, are mine.

of influence – a network featuring the imprints and impacts of the China-related knowledge transmitted by Jesuits into Europe that contributed so significantly to the literary flourishing of Enlightenment Europe. This essay is intended to offer a tentative case study that extrapolates and explores the latent Jesuit traces in Goldsmith's imaginary travelogue *The Citizen of the World* (1762), a text that marks a milestone in his lifelong literary success.[2]

This essay argues that Goldsmith's *The Citizen of the World* was significantly shaped by the distinctly discernible – albeit indirect – influence of pre-circulated Jesuit missionary writings about China in 17th- and 18th-century Europe. Intertextual and comparative analysis reveals that his portrayal of the fictional Chinese philosopher Lien Chi Altangi, as well as his multifaceted representations of China in the novel, draw heavily on Confucian thought filtered through Jesuit poetics of translation.[3] To phrase it differently, before Goldsmith established his literary reputation, a broad array of Jesuit narratives focused on China had already permeated Enlightenment Europe, and they exerted a profound, yet hitherto underexplored, impact on European (as well as British and Irish) intellectuals and thinkers who were critically reflecting on Western civilization in an age of drastic ideological transfer and oscillation. In this vein, I conduct an intertextual analysis of Goldsmith's works through the lens of relevant Jesuit sources that are historically documented to have been massively read and well received across Continental Europe, where Goldsmith travelled during the Grand Tours he took

2. For biographical writing on Oliver Goldsmith's life and works, see John Forster, *The Life and Times of Oliver Goldsmith*, vol. I, London, Forgotten Books, 2018; vol. II, Sligo, HardPress Ltd, 2019. For recent scholarly investigations into Sino-British cultural-literary contact throughout the 18th century, see Yan Mengmeng, *Foreignness and Selfhood. Sino-British Encounters in English Literature of the Eighteenth Century*, London, Routledge, 2022, where it is argued that Chinese and British cultures are not antithetical entities: they exist in relation to one another and create possibilities in the continuing appreciation of diversity amidst a drive to universality. The Jesuit undercurrents as an intermediary between Chinese and British cultures are, nonetheless, insufficiently discussed here, and thus deserve more critical attention. Regarding this connection, see Enit Karafili Steiner, *Contesting Cosmopolitan Moments in the Long Eighteenth Century*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2025, ch. 1: "Like Rivers Increased and Refined: Oliver Goldsmith's *Citizens of the World*", where Steiner shows that "acts of inclusion from cosmopolitan viewpoints sought to cope with British imperialism, war, social injustice, slavery, and technologies of self- and societal improvement, concerns that survive to this day". Jesuit-transmitted materials are not unpacked in detail here, but of course this is not necessary for the purposes of Steiner's monograph.

3. The literary archetype of Lien Chi Altangi, the Chinese philosopher, has intertextual points of contact with Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes* (1721), George Lyttleton's *Letters from a Persian in England* (1721), and Jean-Baptiste de Boyer, Marquis d'Argens's *Lettres Chinoises, ou Correspondance philosophique, historique & critique, entre un Chinois voyageur à Paris & ses correspondans à la Chine, en Moscovie, en Perse & au Japon*, 5 vols, La Haye, 1751. See Ronald S. Crane and Hamilton Jewett Smith, "A French Influence on Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World*", *Modern Philology*, 19/1 (1921), pp. 83-92: 83. See also Levette Jay Davidson, "Forerunners of Goldsmith's *The Citizen of the World*", *Modern Language Notes*, 36/4 (1921), pp. 215-220; James Watt, "Goldsmith's Cosmopolitanism", *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 30, 1 (2006), pp. 56-75: 57-58; and Samuel H. Woods, JR, "Images of the Orient: Goldsmith and the Philosophes", *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 15 (1986), pp. 257-270: 257-259.

in his youth, several decades before *The Citizen of the World* gained popularity.[4] Goldsmith's *The Citizen of the World* thus serves as one particular epitome of how the Jesuit translational interpretation of China inspired the European literary construction of the unfamiliar Asian alterity, an alterity that also embodies European thinkers' self-reflection about their status quo on both philosophical and moral-political levels.

2. *Jesuit sources potentially influencing Goldsmith's literary career*

Goldsmith's first novel, *The Citizen of the World* (1762), most prominently features a fictional Chinese philosopher (named Lien Chi Altangi) as its epistolary narrator and travelling protagonist. As the narrative states, this imaginary Chinese sage is not only well versed in Confucian philosophy but also capable of reason and rationality, both of which are the apotheosized human qualities most central to the zeitgeist of the European Enlightenment.[5] In Goldsmith's fashioning, moreover, Lien Chi insightfully observes English society, pointing out the social malaises of Europe, especially the oftentimes lamentable defects of the English nation. At the same time, he also makes comparisons between Europe and China, but without basing these on any first-hand experiences – after all, Goldsmith himself never set foot on Chinese soil. Goldsmith's accounts of China are instead rooted by and large in pertinent Jesuit reports that had already spread widely across Enlightenment Europe. Whether or not they were directly related to Goldsmith's imagination and linguistic construction of China, these Jesuit sources, composed mostly in Latin and French (and occasionally already rendered into English in Goldsmith's time), to some extent provided the author with indispensable "building blocks" for inventing plots and embedding subjective authorial critiques of the "present situation" into the ideological fabrics of *The Citizen of the World*.[6] It goes without saying that Goldsmith himself did not name any specific Jesuits in his *œuvres*; neither did he particularly acknowledge or emphasize the impact of any specific Jesuit source about China on his literary career. Hypothetically, however, quite a few Jesuits and their missionary writings must have intertextually seeped into and inspired his descriptions of China and Chinese affairs in *The Citizen of the World*. At any rate, Goldsmith was undoubtedly aware of the crucial role Jesuit missionaries played in transmitting China-related knowledge to Europe, although

4. Regarding the reception and 18th-century popularity of Goldsmith's works, see an intriguing case study on the success of his *The Vicar of Wakefield* in the United States between 1791 and 1839: Ian Campbell Ross, "Oliver Goldsmith's Indigent Philosopher, U.S. Foreign Policy, and Three American Editions of *The Vicar Of Wakefield*, 1791-1839", *The Library: The Transactions of the Bibliographical Society*, 25/2 (2024), pp. 202-207.

5. Marcus Power, "Enlightenment and the era of modernity", in *The Companion to Development Studies*, ed. by Emil Dauncey, Vandana Desai, and Robert B. Potter, 4th ed., London, Routledge, 2024, pp. 102-107.

6. On the influence of French literature and culture, including Jesuit literature written in French, see Arthur Lytton Sells, *Les Sources françaises de Goldsmith*, Paris, Edouard Champion, 1924.

he was not credulous when reading Jesuit accounts: "I know not whether I am more obliged to the Chinese missionaries for the instruction I have received from them, or prejudiced by the falsehoods they have made me believe".[7]

In the broader sense of the word "intertextuality", "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another".[8] Viewed in this way, even when Goldsmith does not directly cite Jesuit sources explicitly, *The Citizen of the World* may echo their rhetoric, tropes, or ideological framing of China; it is thus methodologically legitimate to trace and extrapolate the recurring motifs, narrative strategies, and philosophical positions (e.g. the Confucian sage as a moral outsider) that originate in Jesuit texts and are refracted through Enlightenment intermediaries. Likewise, Reception Theory – Hans Robert Jauss's concept of "horizon of expectations" – revolves around the proposal that a reader's interpretation of a literary work is deeply informed by their cultural-historical background and prior experience with literature.[9] By this token, it is valid to conjecture that Goldsmith's readership had access to Enlightenment-era perceptions of China already formed by Jesuit accounts, and this lays the grounds for considering that Jesuit writings were part of the "discursive environment" that informed both Goldsmith's imagination and his readers' reception. What follows is thus the surmise that, instead of directly borrowing from Jesuit writings about China, Goldsmith wrote within a matrix of ideas about China that were Jesuit in origin but diffused through secondary sources, e.g. Voltaire, the Marquis d'Argens, and Jean-Baptiste Du Halde, all of whom prove to bear conspicuous intertextual relevance to Goldsmith.

The Jesuits who were potentially influential for Goldsmith's literary career include Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), the most emblematic Jesuit missionary in China, whose *De Christiana expeditione apud Sinas* (composed by his colleague Nicolas Trigault (1577-1628) based on his journals, first published in 1615) was extensively read and translated in early modern Europe.[10] More directly influential, however, is the monumental masterpiece *Description de la Chine* (1735), compiled by Du Halde (1674-1743): another encyclopedic text about China that was broadly circulated across Enlightenment Europe while also being well received among European intellectuals. *Description* was composed based on letters and reports sent by Jesuits such as Joachim Bouvet (1656-1730), Jean-François Gerbillon (1654-1707), and Pierre Jartoux (1669-1720), all of whom

7. Letter XVI from Oliver Goldsmith, *The Citizen of the World*, in *Collected Works of Oliver Goldsmith*, ed. by Arthur Friedman, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1966, vol. II.

8. Julia Kristeva, "Word, Dialogue and Novel", in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. by Leon S. Roudiez, New York, Colombia University Press, 1980, pp. 64-91: 66.

9. Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. by Timothy Bahti, University of Minnesota Press, 1982.

10. On the reception of *De Christiana expeditione apud Sinas*, a French translation was published in 1616, a German edition appeared at Augusburg in 1617, a Spanish translation was published in both Seville and Lima in 1621, an Italian edition was published in Naples in 1622, and, finally, an English translation appeared in 1625. See Nicholas J. Lewis, "Revisiting *De Christiana Expeditione* as an Artefact of Globalisation", *Itinerario*, 45/1 (2021), pp. 47-69.

went to China from France and passed away in Beijing. It is no exaggeration to say that these Jesuits dedicated their missionary and scholarly lives to the evangelical undertaking in late imperial China.[11] Considering that both Voltaire (1694-1778) and Montesquieu (1689-1755) read De Halde, it is highly probable that Goldsmith encountered bits and pieces of the contents of *Description* and was informed of some of its narratives about China secondhandedly, through the intermediation of the French Enlightenment thinkers who were also indispensable sources of inspiration throughout his literary career.[12]

Lastly, Prospero Intorcetta (1625-1696), as another central figure in the Jesuit mission to China, was also constitutive of the intellectual climate that shaped Goldsmith's portrayal of China, albeit indirectly once again. An Italian Jesuit missionary hailing from Sicily, Intorcetta was one of the earliest Europeans to translate Confucian texts systematically into Latin; he therefore performed a vital role in transmitting Chinese philosophy to Europe in the 17th century. He completed *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* (1687) jointly with Philippe Couplet (1623-1693), Chrisitan Herdtrich (1625-1684), and François de Rougemont (1624-1676). This is a Latin translation and compilation composed of four parts: *The Analects*, *The Doctrine of the Mean*, *The Great Learning*, and *Commentaries explaining Confucian moral and political philosophy*. Intorcetta's *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* was the first major presentation of Confucianism to a European audience that amply promoted the view of Confucianism as a rational, ethical system compatible with Christian (particularly Catholic) moral teachings.[13] As I will demonstrate, Lien Chi as Goldsmith's leading protagonist in *The Citizen of the World* oftentimes conveys Confucian philosophical teachings in a distinctly moralizing tone, accompanied by words of wisdom that are consonant with the pre-existent Jesuit translation of Confucianism but were not generated by Goldsmith's subjective authorial imagination of the interpretation of Confucianism. After all, in Arthur Friedman's 1966 edition of Goldsmith's *The Citizen of the World*, the

11. On the reception of *Description de la Chine*, see, among others, Georg Lehner, "Le savoir de l'Europe sur la Chine: transferts franco-allemands au miroir des encyclopédies (1750-1850)", *Revue germanique internationale*, 7 (2008), pp. 21-31; Bolesław Szcześniak, "A Russian Translation of J. B. Du Halde's *Description de L'empire de La Chine*", *Monumenta Serica*, 17/1 (1958), pp. 373-376; and Véronique Bui and Roland Le Huenen, *Balzac et la Chine: la Chine et Balzac*, Rouen, Presses universitaires de Rouen et du Havre, 2017, p. 26.

12. For a discussion of Jean-Baptiste Du Halde's exchanges with Voltaire and Montesquieu, and by extension also with Oliver Goldsmith, see Bo-Yuan Huang, *China on the periphery: transitions of Chinese "Orientalism" from Oliver Goldsmith to Thomas De Quincey*, PhD dissertation, University of Warwick, 2014, pp. 28-36, 107-108.

13. On the reception of *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*, see Břetislav Horyna, "The Idea of Care for Reason in Chinese Philosophy and Its Influence on German Enlightenment: The Reception of Confucianism in the Moral Philosophy of Christian Wolff", *Knowledge Cultures*, 9/2 (2021), pp. 7-43; Francesco Borghesi and Yixu Lü, "Translating the East: an introduction", *Intellectual History Review*, 34/3 (2024), pp. 523-533; and Weigui Fang, "Zeitgeist and Literature. The Reception of Chinese Literature in Germany Until the First Half of the Twentieth Century", in *A World History of Chinese Literature*, ed. by Yingjin Zhang, London, Routledge, 2023, pp. 35-48.

fact that the author drew inspiration from Jesuit sources about China – i.e. sources composed originally in French by Jesuit missionaries with first-hand experiences of China but later translated into English – is outlined unequivocally:

> Probably equally important in Goldsmith's decision in favour of a Chinese was the fact that he would need information about the supposed writer's country of origin, and information about China he found readily available in [the French Jesuit missionary] Louis Le Comte's *Nouveaux mémoires sur l'état present de la Chine*, which he consulted in the third edition, published at Paris in 1697, and in J. B. Du Halde's large collection, which he used in the English translation entitled *A Description of the Empire of China*, published by Edward Cave in two folio volumes in 1738 and 1741. Possibly the decisive factor was that from the time he began the series Goldsmith was acquainted with the Marquis d'Argens's *Lettres chinoises*, and from this work, whenever inspiration failed him, he was able to draw a sentence, a paragraph, or even an entire letter.[14]

This indicates that, apart from the Jesuit authors whose influence permeated every nook and cranny of the intellectual context of Enlightenment Europe (e.g. Ricci, Trigault, Couplet, Intorcetta, and Du Halde), Louis de Comte (1655-1728), Jean-Baptiste de Boyer, and Marquis d'Argens (1704-1771) also deserve to be taken into consideration in the endeavour to extrapolate the Jesuit traces woven into Goldsmith's *The Citizen of the World*. Accordingly, my comparative literary analysis, equipped with the necessary historical-archival foundation, is grounded precisely in the retrievable networks of influence through which the Jesuit knowledge of China infiltrated into Enlightenment writers' narrative of the East. Ultimately, this comparative literary analysis is conducted in the belief that the marks and stamps of Jesuit translational writing – be it about Confucianism or late imperial China in general – can be unearthed, to varying degrees, even from slightly distant literary works such as Goldsmith's. This demonstrates how the "Jesuit literature" that did carry Chinese sagacity to Enlightenment Europe is not merely "translated literature" and, as such, secondary to the original. Rather, as David Damrosch's definition of "world literature" states, it is "actively present within a literary system beyond that of its original culture" and hence qualifies as "world literature" in that such literature typically circulates beyond national borders, partakes of translatability, embodies intercultural resonance, and arises from institutional mediation.[15] In this spirit, more than detecting and illustrating the Jesuit elements scattered throughout *The Citizen of the World*, this essay simultaneously aims to foreground the idea that Jesuit translational writing about China is indeed "world literature", i.e. writing that "is not a set canon of texts but a mode of reading", as well as "writing that gains in translation".[16] At any rate, the pre-established Jesuit accounts of China and their branching impact on both pro-Jesuit and anti-Jesuit intellectuals in Europe (e.g. d'Argens, whose ideological inclination was blatantly counter-Jesuit yet whose *Lettres chinoises* was heavily premised on antecedent Jesuit accounts and massively referenced by Goldsmith) align with Damrosch's definition of "world literature" in

14. Friedman, *Collected Works*, p. x.

15. David Damrosch, *What Is World Literature?*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2003, p. 4.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 281.

the sense the "Jesuit literature" functions "not so much by mirroring and reflecting an unchanged meaning [in Confucian texts written in classical Chinese], as by refracting it, in a prismatic process that can add new highlights and reveal new facets in a classic text".[17]

The following discussion examines how Jesuit-mediated representations of China inspired Goldsmith's literary imagination, shaping both the content and the philosophical-ideological framework of *The Citizen of the World*. The literary analysis focuses on a specific dimension of Goldsmith's Jesuit-based verbal appropriation and construction of China, namely how he engaged with the Jesuit-inflected understanding of the Confucian conceptualization of reason and sensibility, two concepts at the heart of Enlightenment discourse across Europe. As Christoph Houswitschka has insightfully noted, in Europe "sensibility had not existed as a social or cultural force before the 18th century"; moreover, the 18th century gradually built the consensus that "self-improvement was not possible without feeling and a growing sensibility that supported rational and benevolent actions to the advantage of fellow human beings".[18] I will demonstrate that, resorting to Jesuit translations of Chinese philosophy, Goldsmith channeled the Confucian and Western European interpretations of reason and sensibility through the fictional persona and epistolary travelling narrator of Lien Chi. For Goldsmith, this was ultimately intended to advocate for a more nuanced counterpoise between emotional expression and rational thinking, which he considered to be lacking but worth addressing in 18th-century Europe. It is precisely here that China played the role of an inspiring alterity in relation to Enlightenment Europe.

3. *Confucian reason and Enlightenment sensibility in Goldsmith's moral vision*

How did Goldsmith articulate moral critiques of British society through the fictional figure of Lien Chi, a personification of Confucian moral-political philosophy? Goldsmith's comparative narrative of China and Europe, as it stands, resonated with a Jesuit-mediated understanding of Confucian virtues, particularly those of self-reflection and self-governance. He reframes social satire as a platform for Enlightenment moral inquiry, using the imagined perspective of a Chinese philosopher to illuminate the contradictions and excesses of 18th-century Britain. In letter III of *The Citizen of the World*, for instance, Goldsmith offers a vivid depiction of English luxury, focusing especially on the refined appearances of the English elite as seen through Lien Chi's highly defamiliarizing yet rational gaze.

17. David Damrosch and David Lawrence Pike, *Longman Anthology of World Literature*, London, Pearson Longman, 2009, p. xxv. See also Nicholas Harrison, "World Literature: What gets lost in translation?", *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 49/3 (2014), pp. 411-426: 412.

18. Christoph Houswitschka, "The Novel and Sense(s): Reason, Sentiment, and Subjectivity", in *Handbook of the British Novel in the Long Eighteenth Century*, ed. by Katrin Berndt and Alessa Johns, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2022, pp. 41-64: 41.

The Chinese observer's initial surprise gradually gives way to a critique grounded not in cultural prejudice, but in ethical evaluation:

> Behold me then in London when gazing at the strangers, and they at me; it seems they find somewhat absurd in my finger; and had I been never from home it is possible I might find an infinite fund of ridicule in their; but by long travelling I am taught to laugh at folly alone, and to find nothing truly ridiculous but villainy and vice. When I had just quitted my native country, and crossed the Chinese wall, I fancied every deviation from the customs and manners of China was a departing from nature… I smiled at the blue lips and red foreheads of the Tonguese; and could hardly contain when I saw the Daures dress their heads with horns. […] But I soon perceived that the ridicule lay not in them but in me; that I falsely condemned others of absurdity, because they happened to differ from a standard originally founded in prejudice or partiality.[19]

In this passage, Lien Chi's remark that "by long travelling I am taught to laugh at folly alone, and to find nothing truly ridiculous but villainy and vice" encapsulates a distinctly rationalist, self-reflecting moral sensibility that privileges ethical substance over superficial cultural divergence. His admission that he had "falsely condemned others of absurdity" according to a "standard originally founded in prejudice" further resonates with Enlightenment critiques of ethnocentrism, while also underscoring the importance of subjecting inherited norms to rational scrutiny. The travelling narrator distinguishes between moral failing and mere custom, which to some extent mirrors core Enlightenment ideals such as the call for universal standards of reason untainted by inherited prejudice or provincial bias. This is completely in tune with Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)'s definition of his epoch as an age of critique in his *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (1781):

> Unsere Zeit ist das eigentliche Zeitalter der Kritik, der sich alles unterwerfen muss. Religion, durch ihre Heiligkeit und Gesetzgebung, durch ihre Majestät, wollen sich gemeiniglich derselben entziehen. Aber alsdann erregen sie gerechten Verdacht wider sich und können auf unverstellte Achtung nicht Anspruch machen, die die Vernunft nur demjenigen bewilligt, was ihre freie und öffentliche Prüfung hat aushalten können.[20]

Lien Chi here is perfectly capable of self-critique, hence incarnating the spirit of the Enlightenment so succinctly summarized by Kant. His candid reflection on his own evolution from mocking unfamiliar practices to recognizing the parochialism of his judgments also reveals a spirit of critical

19. Goldsmith, *The Citizen of the World*, p. 22.

20. Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, ed. by Theodor Valentiner, Leipzig, Verlag von Felix Meiner, 1919, p. 15, n. See also Helmut Reinalter, "Aufklärung als Kritik und Kritik an der Aufklärung", in *Sonderband 2 Nietzsche–Radikalaufklärer oder radikaler Gegenaufklärer?: Internationale Tagung der Nietzsche-Gesellschaft in Zusammenarbeit mit der Kant-Forschungsstelle Mainz und der Stiftung Weimarer Klassik und Kunstsammlungen vom 15.-17. Mai 2003 in Weimar*, ed. by Renate Reschke, Berlin-Boston, Akademie Verlag, 2004, pp. 33-44: 40-41. Translation mine: "Ours is truly the age of critique, to which all claims must submit. Religion, by invoking its sanctity, its legislative authority, and its sovereign majesty, commonly seeks to place itself beyond such critical scrutiny. Yet in doing so, it invites rightful suspicion and forfeits any legitimate claim to the unfeigned reverence that reason accords only to that which has endured the trial of its free and public examination".

self-awareness and intellectual modesty. Also, without treating foreign customs as quaint cultural anomalies, Lien Chi interrogates the legitimacy of national standards themselves, which is a plot that points to a cosmopolitan outlook. Here, he keenly realizes that the source of ridicule lies not in the practices of the Tonguese or Daures (who are not widely recognized real-world ethnic or national groups in a strict historical or anthropological sense, but are instead satirically illustrated here to indicate cultural difference as perceived by travellers from afar); rather, on reflection, he concludes that the source of ridicule lies in his own preconceptions about cultural diversity.[21] For one thing, the narrative in this passage amounts to a pointed challenge to cultural absolutism; on the other hand, however, it also significantly bears the implication that no single society possesses an exclusive claim to reason, a position reflecting a tempered but distinct embrace of cultural relativism. This ethos, as gently conveyed by Lien Chi, is consonant with Enlightenment cosmopolitan ideals such as the belief that humanity shares a common moral horizon and that meaningful understanding emerges through open, cross-cultural engagement. In Kant's *Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht* (1784), his vision of history is likewise one that moves towards a universal civil society or cosmopolitan order where the diverse human nations contribute to fully developing humanity's natural capacities. Goldsmith's Lien Chi is a miniature of such a Kantian cosmopolitan ideal:

> …daß nach manchen Revolutionen der Umbildung endlich das, was die Natur zur höchsten Absicht hat, ein allgemeiner weltbürgerlicher Zustand, als der Schooß, worin alle ursprünglichen Anlagen der Menschengattung entwickelt werden, dereinst einmal zu Stande kommen werde.[22]

21. This is thematically diametrically contrary to Goldsmith's contention in his *History of the Earth* (1795) that "of all the colours by which mankind is diversified, it is easy to perceive that ours is not only the most beautiful to the eye, but the most advantageous", and therefore fails to lead to the argument that he is consistently cosmopolitan in the sense of looking at diverse cultures unbiasedly. See Oliver Goldsmith, *An History of the Earth, and Animated Nature*, 8 vols, London, printed for J. Nourse, in the Strand, Bookseller to His Majesty, 1774, vol. II, p. 232. For a more convincing study of Goldsmith's orientalizing approach to China in *The Citizen of the World*, see Tao Zhijian, "Citizen of Whose World? Goldsmith's Orientalism", *Comparative Literary Studies*, 33 (1996), pp. 15-34. However, Goldsmith's anti-monarchical and anti-oligarchical stance is receiving increasing scholarly attention nowadays; see, for instance, Michael Griffin, "Citizen of nowhere? Cosmopolitanism, Liberalism, and Local Affiliation in Oliver Goldsmith", *Estudios Irlandeses*, 18, 2 (2023), pp. 71-82: 78-79.

22. Immanuel Kant, *Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht*, Göttingen, LIWI Literatur-und Wissenschaftsverlag, 2019 [1784], p 28. See also Bernward Grünewald, "Geschichtsphilosophie oder Theorie der Geschichtswissenschaft? Welchen Zweck verfolgt Kant mit seiner geschichtsphilosophischen Reflexion?", in *Philosophie nach Kant. Neue Wege zum Verständnis von Kants Transzendental- und Moralphilosophie*, ed. by Mario Egger, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2014, pp. 499-520: 509. Translation mine: "…that after many revolutions of transformation, what nature has as its highest purpose – a universal cosmopolitan condition, as the womb in which all the original capacities of the human species are developed – will one day come into being".

The same holds true in Lien Chi's letter to Fum Hoam, the first president of the Ceremonial Academy at Pekin in Goldsmith's fictional story-world. In letter VIII of *The Citizen of the World*, the Chinese philosopher relates, from a first-person perspective, how he changes his opinion about having been deceived by English prostitutes by deploying reason combined with sensibility:

> How insupportable! […] I begin to learn somewhat of their manners and customs, and to see reasons for several deviations which they make from us… In spite of taste, in spite of prejudice, I now begin to think their women tolerable; I can now look on a languishing blue eye without disgust, and pardon a set of teeth, even though whiter than ivory. I now begin to fancy there is no universal standard for beauty.[23]

Curiously enough, a self-retrospective soliloquy by the fictional narrator in d'Argens's *Lettres chinoises*, as follows, also articulates a process of self-rediscovery and critical detachment that, akin to Lien Chi's case illustrated above, fleshes out the Enlightenment ideals of rationality, self-reflection, and emerging cosmopolitanism in a way that is nevertheless oftentimes tinged with a drive to orientalize the East (largely in Edward Said's sense of the word).[24] The resonance between Goldsmith and d'Argens suggests that "d'Argens's philosophical visions", as it appears, must have partly participated in Goldsmith's literary creation through the intermediation of *Lettres chinoises*. The following quote as much as the previous one from *The Citizen of the World* likewise foregrounds the epistolary narrator's conscious balancing between reason and sensibility in pursuit of redressing his understanding of cultural-geographical alterity:

> Je l'avoüe à ma honte, je fus à peine sorti des frontières de la Chine, que je condamnai tout ce que je vis d'apposé à nos maximes. […] Enfin j'en suis venu, mais lentement & par dégré, à sentir tout le ridicule de ce préjugé national. […] Quelle confusion n'ai-je donc point ressentie, cher Yn-Che-Chan, lorsque me rappellant ma première façon de penser, j'ai apperçu qu'on auroit pû à juste titre m'adresser cette remontrance? Embécille Chinois, quelle n'est pas ton erreur! Tu méprises, tu condamnes tout ce qui n'est pas des usages de ta Nation; hé! ne vois-tu pas que tous les autres peuples de Monde, s'ils étoient aussi injustes & aussi prévenus que toi, mépriseroient, condamneroient avec une raison égale les mêmes usages qui seuls font l'objet de ton estime & de ta véneration?[25]

23. Goldsmith, *The Citizen of the World*, pp. 41-42.

24. See Eun Kyung Min, "Orientalism", in *Oliver Goldsmith in Context*, ed. by Michael Griffin and David O'Shaughnessy, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2024, pp. 218-227.

25. See D'Argens, *Lettres chinoises*, letter LIII, vol. II, pp. 235-236; see also Goldsmith, *The Citizen of the World*, p. 22. Translation mine: "I confess it to my shame: I had barely crossed the borders of China when I began to condemn everything that ran counter to our customs and principles. […] At last, I came – though slowly and by degrees – to feel the full absurdity of this national prejudice. […] What confusion I felt, dear Yn-Che-Chan, when recalling my earlier way of thinking, I realized that someone could quite rightly have addressed this reproach to me: 'Foolish Chinese, how great is your error! You scorn and condemn all that does not belong to the customs of your own nation; but do you not see that all the other peoples of the world, if they were as unjust and prejudiced as you, would scorn and condemn with equal reason the very customs which alone are the object of your esteem and veneration?'".

In admitting that he once condemned everything "opposé à nos maximes" (opposed to our maxims) merely upon leaving China, the epistolary persona of d'Argens's *Lettres chinoises* demonstrates an initial adherence to ethnocentric thinking, i.e. an ideological leaning to treat national customs as universal standards. This is in line with Lien Chi's early belief in *The Citizen of the World* that deviation from Chinese norms is equal to a "departing from nature". Both narrators, so viewed, undergo a rational awakening: d'Argens's character comes to realize the "ridicule de ce préjugé national" (absurdity of this national prejudice), while Goldsmith's Lien Chi similarly acknowledges that the "ridicule lay not in them but in me". These phrases not only express a reason-based inward turn towards self-criticism, but also indicate their shared rejection of the notion that one culture possesses a natural or moral monopoly, a posture consistent with Enlightenment rationalism. What further strengthens the intertextual bond here, I shall further stress, is their shared rhetorical structure of a Confucian outsider assessing foreign customs not with arrogance but with growing humility and analytical self-reflection, both of which are based on the use of reason and rationality.

At this point, it is important to highlight that, although d'Argens himself was a skeptical critic of the Jesuits in general and took a staunch position against clerical authority, his portrayal of a Chinese philosopher capable of self-reflection owes much to the Jesuit model of the Confucian sage.[26] Concerning the discourses of reason, sensibility, and the balance among them, it is most noteworthy that the foregoing Jesuit translators of Chinese classics into a European frame, such as Couplet and Intorcetta, had subjectively added "reason" and "rationality" into the Confucian doctrine of human nature. Obviously, this is a translation-based appropriation of Confucian moral philosophy in tune with European Enlightenment. For instance, the initial sentence setting the keynote of the Confucian classic *Zhongyong* (中庸), which largely revolves around the relationship between divine will and civic life, is translated as follows in *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* (Paris, 1687):

> 天命之謂性，率性之謂道，修道之謂教。[27]
>
> Id quod à caelo est homini inditum dicitur natura rationalis: quod huic conformatur natura & eam consequitur, dicitur regula, seu consentaneum rationi, restaurare quoad exercitium hanc regulam se suaque per eam moderando, dicitur institution, seu disciplina virtutum.[28]

26. Mita Choudhury, "'Carnal Quietism': Embodying Anti-Jesuit Polemics in the Catherine Cadière Affair, 1731", *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 39/2 (2006), pp. 173-186: 173-174. See also Jeffrey D. Burson, "Between Power and Enlightenment: The Cultural and Intellectual Context for the Jesuit Suppression in France", in *The Jesuit Suppression in Global Context: Causes, Events, and Consequences*, ed. by Jeffrey D. Burson and Jonathan Wright, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015, pp. 40-64: 47-49.

27. Zhuxi, *Sishu Zhangju Jizhu*, Beijing, Zhonghua Shuju, 1983, p. 17. Translation mine: "What is called nature is the decree of Heaven; what is called the Way is to follow one's nature; what is called instruction is to cultivate the Way".

28. Prospero Intorcetta et al., *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus, sive, Scientia Sinensis Latine exposita*, Parisiis, Apud Danielem Horthemels, 1687, p. 40. Translation mine: "That

Here, as crystallized in the opening sentence of *Zhongyong*, the Jesuit missionaries (e.g. Intorcetta and his collaborators) strategically framed Chinese moral philosophy through a European lens that is clearly rooted in the Aristotelian-Thomistic emphasis on human reason.[29] The phrase "natura rationalis" (rational nature), used here to render the Confucian concept of *xing* (性), unambiguously positions human nature as endowed with reason by Heaven. This reinterpretation draws a parallel between Confucian moral capacity and the Aristotelian-Thomistic notion of natural law, suggesting that all human beings share an inherent, rational moral structure, a key idea in both Scholasticism and Enlightenment universalism.[30] The subsequent use of "regula" (the rule) and "consentaneum rationi" (being in accord with reason) to describe the Confucian concept of *dao* (道, the Way) further interprets and elevates Confucian ethics as a rational and objective standard rather than a culturally specific set of customs. This framing accords with the Enlightenment emphasis on reason as the "ultimate arbiter" of morality.[31]

A similar case exemplifying the Jesuit incorporation of "rationality" into their interpretation of Confucian doctrine can be identified from an excerpt in *Sinensis imperii libri classici sex* (published in Prague in 1711), which is a translation of the Six Classics of the Chinese Empire by the Belgian Jesuit François Noël (1651-1729).[32] Here, Noël's translation is comparable to a commentary in that it is presented in tandem with the exegesis by Zhang Juzheng (1525-1582). Strikingly, however, the synthetization of the scholastic-Thomistic apotheosis of reason and the Confucian pursuit of living one's life in line with the *regula* is saliently present in this Jesuit poetics of translation. Also, while it aligns with Lien Chi's self-reflective emotional flows in *The Citizen of the World*, it also sheds light on the

which is implanted in man from Heaven is called rational nature; that which conforms to this nature and follows it is called a rule, or that which is in accordance with reason. To restore, in practice, this rule by governing oneself and one's affairs according to it is called moral instruction, or the discipline of the virtues".

29. Luisa M. Paternicò, "Translating the Master: The Contribution of Prospero Intorcetta to the *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*", *Monumenta Serica*, 65 (2017), pp. 87-121; *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus (1687): The First Translation of the Confucian Classics*, ed. by Thierry Meynard, Rome, Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 2011, pp. 42-43. See also Werner Lühmann, *Konfuzius: aufgeklärter Philosoph oder reaktionärer Moralapostel? Der Bruch in der Konfuzius-Rezeption der deutschen Philosophie des ausgehenden 18. und beginnenden 19. Jahrhunderts*, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz Verlag, 2003, p. 51; Wong Ching Him Felix, "*The Unalterable Mean:* Some Observations on the Presentation and Interpretation of *Zhongyong* of François Noël, SJ", *Journal of Chinese Studies*, 60 (2015), pp. 197-224: 203-204, 216-217.

30. Giuseppe Tanzella-Nitti, "The Aristotelian-Thomistic Concept of Nature and the Contemporary Debate on the Meaning of Natural Laws", *Acta Philosophica*, 6 (1997), pp. 237-264.

31. Richard A. Shweder, "The Ultimate Moral Arbiter, Received Tradition or Autonomous Reason? Some Questions Concerning Morality and Development in Confucian Ethics", *Dao*, 14 (2015), pp. 219-224.

32. For more details, see Yves Vende, "François Noël, Reading Chinese Philosophy and Spiritual Transformation", *International Studies on Confucianism*, 2 (2024), pp. 150-169.

way Jesuit-mediated knowledge of China *might* have seeped into Goldsmith's literary creation:

> 蓋天地生人，既與之氣以成形，必賦之理以成性，在天為元亨利貞，在人為仁義禮智，其稟受付畀，就如天命令他一般，所以說，天命之謂性。[33]

> Coelum in producendo homine, post qua milli aerem seu materiam sensibilem indidit ad formandum corpus, tum eidem rationem ad perficiendam naturam infundit; haec ratio, quatenus in Coelo residet, dicitur principium primum seu magnum, communicatiuum, directiuum, perfectiuum. Quatenus autem in homine existit, dicitur pietas, aequitas, honestas, prudentia, seu intelligentia congenita. Hujus rationis infusio & receptio est instar legis ac praecepti a Coelo imposti. Idcirco dicitur: natura est Coeli lex; (scilicet in actu primo).[34]

In this connection, another letter from Lien Chi to Fum Hoam offers an equally telling example revealing the indelible traces of Jesuit-filtered China in the veins of Goldsmith's fashioning of the peripatetic Chinese philosopher's emotional world. In this case as well, Lien Chi's self-awareness of and incessant stress on the significance of maintaining synergy between reason and sentiment are both conspicuous here:

> But as I submit to the stroke of heaven, I hold the volume of Confucius in my hand, and as I read grow humble and patient, and wise. We should feel sorrow, says he, but not sink under its oppression, the heart of a wise man should resemble a mirror, which reflects every object without being sullied by any. The wheel of fortune turns incessantly round, and who can say within himself I shall to day be uppermost. We should hold the immutable means that lies between insensibility and anguish; our attempts should be not to extinguish nature, but to repress it; not to stand unmoved at distress, but endeavour to turn every disaster to our own advantage. Our greatest glory is, not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.[35]

In this passage, Goldsmith employs the fictional voice of Lien Chi to dramatize a philosophical equilibrium between emotion and reason, a balance central to both Enlightenment ethics and Jesuit-transmitted Confucianism. The narrator's appeal to "the volume of Confucius" as a source of solace and moral clarity introduces a Confucian framework wherein feelings are not only acknowledged but also, significantly, governed by reason. When Lien Chi affirms

33. Chen Shengxi, *Zhang Juzheng jiang ping Daxue and Zhongyong*, Shanghai, Shanghai Cishu Chubanshe, 2023, p. 55. For more detailed discussion, see Ying Luo, "Preliminary Studies on the Latin Manuscript of *Zhongyong* Collected by Michele Ruggieri S.J.", *Logos & Pneuma: Chinese Journal of Theology*, 42 (2015), pp. 119-144: 8-9; Ying Luo, "The Jesuits' Latin Translations of the *Zhongyong* 中庸 during the 17th and 18th Centuries", *Journal of Confucian Philosophy and Culture*, 26 (2016), pp. 1-24: 16.

34. *Sinesis imperii libri classici sex*, p. 41. Translation mine: "Heaven, in producing the human being, after having implanted in him air or sensible matter to form the body, then also instils reason to perfect his nature. This reason, insofar as it resides in Heaven, is called the first or great principle – communicative, directive, and perfective. Insofar as it exists in the human being, it is called piety, justice, integrity, prudence, or innate intelligence. The infusion and reception of this reason is like a law or precept imposed by Heaven. Therefore, it is said: nature is the law of Heaven (that is, in its first act)".

35. Goldsmith, *The Citizen of the World*, p. 39.

that "we should feel sorrow […] but not sink under its oppression", he chimes in with a distinctly Confucian idea of moderation – neither Stoic suppression nor Epicurean emotional indulgence – and this idea is in line with the opening chapter of *Zhongyong* strongly recommending the proper control of emotions through the use of reason:

> 喜怒哀樂之未發，謂之中；發而皆中節，謂之和。中也者，天下之大本也；和也者，天下之達道也。致中和，天地位焉，萬物育焉。[36]

In Intorcetta's *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*, the Latin translation imbuing Goldsmith's literary creation reads as follows, highlighting the significance of reason to the utmost:

> Itaque passiones animi, ut sunt gaudium ex prosperis, ira ex adversis, tristitia ex iactura, hilaritas seu laeta fruitio rei obtentae, priusquam pullulent prodeantque in actum, dicuntur medium seu esse in medio, quia sunt adhuc indifferens quid ad excessum vel defectum; at ubi pullularunt, et omnes attigerunt rectae rationis dictamen, dicuntur consentaneum, seu quidam passionum intersectum ipsa ratione concentus. Et quidem, cum sunt in medio, orbis universi magnum principium ac omnium bonarum actionum fundamentum dicuntur; cum sunt rationi consentanea, orbis universalis regula, seu regia humani generis via dicuntur. […] Ubi igitur perfecta fuerint medium & consentaneum, tum demum Caeli quoque ac terrae status quietus, permanens ac pacificus, & omnium rerum uniformis propagatio vigorque consequetur.[37]

Here, the Jesuit translators rendered such Confucian teachings into Latin using rationalist terminology, interpreting the ideal of emotional order as a sign of a "natura rationalis" (rational nature) endowed by Heaven. This conception is in line with Goldsmith's metaphor of the heart as a "mirror" reflecting the world without being sullied or stained, i.e. without being disturbed by irrational elements; this symbolizes emotional responsiveness balanced by moral clarity. Furthermore, the call to "repress" rather than to extinguish nature and to hold a "means" between "insensibility and anguish" parallels the Confucian commitment to cultivating virtue not by eradicating emotion but by harmonizing it with reason and moral duty. This is not unlike the Jesuit interpretations that viewed

36. Zhuxi, *Sishu Zhangju Jizhu*. Translation mine: "When joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure have not yet arisen, this is called the state of equilibrium (*zhong*). When they arise and are all kept in proper measure, this is called harmony (*he*). Equilibrium is the great foundation of the world, and harmony is the universal path. When equilibrium and harmony are fully realized, Heaven and Earth are in their proper positions, and all things are nourished and flourish".

37. Intorcetta et al., *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*, pp. 41-42. Translation mine: "Thus, the passions of the soul – such as joy in prosperity, anger in adversity, sorrow from loss, and cheerfulness or joyful enjoyment of something obtained – before they sprout and emerge into action, are said to be in the *mean* or to *exist in the middle*, because they are still indifferent with respect to excess or deficiency. But when they have sprouted and all conform to the dictate of right reason, they are said to be *harmonious*, that is, a kind of intersection or consonance of the passions with reason itself. Indeed, when they are in the mean, they are considered the great principle of the universe and the foundation of all good actions; when they are in harmony with reason, they are called the rule of the universe, or the royal path of humans. Therefore, when the mean and harmony have been perfected, then at last the condition of Heaven and Earth will also be peaceful, lasting, and tranquil, and the uniform propagation and vitality of all things will follow".

Confucianism as a system of "disciplina virtutum" (ethical formation) wherein the passions are understood to be shaped by rational guidance. Viewed in this way, Goldsmith's Lien Chi offers not merely a fictionalized Chinese perspective but a philosophically hybrid voice drawing on Jesuit-mediated Confucianism to model an Enlightenment ideal: the tempering of sentiment through disciplined reason. As the translational commentary (jointly ascribed to Intorcetta, Herdtrich, de Rougement, and Couplet) continues in the following excerpt, the Jesuit translators even added a metaphysical reading of the opening paragraph of *Zhongyong* via a glossary that emphatically stresses the importance of striking a balance between reason and sentiment:

> Nam (ut interpretes addunt) si homo agat semper juxta rectam rationem, quandoquidem hic unum veluti corpus cum universo efficiat, consequenter erit, ut etiam caelum et terra juxta normam sibi inditam agant, planetae influant absque vitio, quatuor anni tempestates absque defectu decurrant, juvenes optatos vitae annos, senes finem naturae consentaneum, res denique omnes debitum sibi statum et locum consequantur.[38]

In this connection, in letter XLVII (sent by Lien Chi to Hingpo, a slave in Persia), the Chinese sage presents a model of moral psychology that foregrounds the harmony and balance between reason and passion, an idea that resonates with the Jesuit-mediated Confucian maxims listed above that pivot on a reason-passion equilibrium:

> A mind rightly instituted in the school of philosophy, acquires at once the stability of the oak, and the flexibility of the osier. The truest manner of lessening our agonies, is to shrink from their pressure, is to confess that we feel them. […] I know but of two sects of philosophers in the world that have endeavoured to inculcate that fortitude is but an imaginary virtue; I mean the followers of Confucius, and those who profess the doctrine of Christ. All other sects teach pride under misfortunes; they alone teach humility. […] Philosophers, my son, have long declaimed against the passions, as being the source of all our miseries; they are the source of all our misfortunes I own, but they are the source of our pleasures too: and every endeavour of our lives, and all the institutions of philosophy, should tend to this, not to dissemble an absence of passion, but to repel those which lead to vice, by those which direct to virtue. […] Reason guides the bands of either host, nor can it subdue one passion but by the assistance of another. Thus, as a bark on every side, beset with storms, enjoys a state of rest, so does the mind, when influenced by a just equipoize of the passions, enjoy tranquility.[39]

Similarly, this passage also presents a sophisticated rumination on the balance between reason and emotion, drawing implicitly on both classical and Enlightenment conceptions of moral psychology. The metaphor of the mind formed by philosophy possessing both "the stability of the oak" and "the flexibility

38. *Ibid*. Translation mine: "For (as the interpreters add), if a human being always acts according to right reason, since he thereby forms one body with the universe, it will follow that even Heaven and Earth act according to the norm instilled in them, the planets exert their influences without flaw, the four seasons proceed without defect, youths attain their desired years of life, elders meet a natural and fitting end, and all things finally attain their proper state and place".

39. Goldsmith, *The Citizen of the World*, pp. 200-201.

of the osier", in this context, alludes not to the suppression of feeling but to resilient adaptability. This imagery affirms that strength lies not in rigidity but in a cultivated pliancy capable of withstanding external shocks while maintaining inner coherence. Moreover, the acknowledgment that "to confess that we feel" is the first step in lessening suffering marks a crucial philosophical stance, indicating that emotions are not inherently the enemies of reason. Rather than promoting a Stoic negation of passions, Lien Chi here argues for a conscious engagement with them, affirming that emotions are indeed the "source of our misfortunes" but without negating that they are, at the same time, also "the source of our pleasures". The Janus-faced nature of passion is neither annulled nor moralized outright; instead, it is framed as a fundamental human reality that we must work with, not against. By this token, the image of a mind "beset with storms" yet achieving tranquility through "a just equipoize of the passions" offers a model of inner harmony based on integration rather than repression, in keeping with the Enlightenment's project of harmonizing natural human impulses with cultivated reason; this model thus portrays virtue not as the absence of feeling, but as the disciplined orchestration of emotion. To further construct the image of China as a miniature of reason balanced by feelings, sentiments, and passion, Goldsmith comments on the ontological linguistic-rhetoric features of the Chinese language through his epistolary narrator Lien Chi:

> In the east, similes are seldom used, and metaphors almost wholly unknown; but in China particularly, the very reverse of what you allude to, takes place; a cool phlegmatic method of writing prevails there. The writers of that country, ever more assiduous to instruct than to please, address rather the judgement than the fancy. Unlike many authors of Europe, who have no consideration of the reader's time, they generally leave more to be understood than they express.[40]

In this paragraph, Lien Chi articulates what he perceives to be a distinctive feature of Chinese literary and intellectual style, namely deliberate restraint in expressing emotions and a preference for rational clarity over ornamental language. Whether Goldsmith presents this observation with admiration or gentle irony, the underlying commentary reveals a deep engagement with the notion that Chinese thought emphasizes an inherent balance between reason and passion. Lien Chi notes that similes are "seldom used" in Chinese writing and metaphors are "almost wholly unknown", thus pointing to a stylistic austerity that avoids excessive figurative language. This restraint can be interpreted as reflecting a broader philosophical disposition in Chinese tradition featuring the tenet that emotion must be moderated and subsumed within a rational and ethical framework. By stating that Chinese writers are "ever more assiduous to instruct than to please", Lien Chi contrasts Chinese didacticism with European literary affectation, thereby drawing a sharp distinction that implies a cultural model tending to privilege judgment over fancy – or, in other words, favouring reason over unbridled passion. The choice "to leave more to be understood than they express" thus points to stylistic subtlety as well as a respect for the reader's ability

40. Goldsmith, *The Citizen of the World*, pp. 145-146.

to reflect. This method invites quiet contemplation rather than emotional reaction, while also echoing a Confucian ethos in which restraint, inner regulation, and tacit understanding govern both speech and conduct. Likewise, the "cool phlegmatic method of writing" is not simply an aesthetic choice; it instead reflects a cognitive and moral ideal, one that values clarity, balance, and the slow cultivation of understanding over emotional stimulation.

However, the source underlying Goldsmith's writing about the Chinese language and literary style can be intertextually detected from Jesuit accounts of China, especially Louis Le Comte's *Nouveaux mémoires sur l'état present de la Chine* and the English translation of Du Halde's *Description*. In the Jesuit-transmitted sources, nonetheless, the Chinese language is perceived and depicted as rhetorically more expressive and ornate, as well as more typically characterized by abstruse metaphors, wit (rather than judgement alone), an evocative (in lieu of indexical) use of language, and laconicism than in Goldsmith's description. The dissonance here, I argue, contrastively foregrounds Goldsmith's familiarity with the pre-circulated Jesuit literature and his subjective borrowing from (and reworking of) Du Halde's works to construct China as a model to imitate and a source of inspiration for Europeans in the age of the reason-feeling counterpoise:

> Les Chinois sont éloquens par des expressions vives, des métaphores nobles, des comparaisons hardies & peu étenduës, & sur tout par une infinité de sentences & de passages tirez des anciens, qui parmi eux sont toûjours d'un grand poids: ils disent beaucoup de choses en peu de mots ; leur style est serré, mysterieux, obscur, & peu suivi.[41]

> The style of the *Chinese* in their Compositions is abstruse, concise, allegorical, and sometimes obscure to those who are not well vers'd in the Characters. It requires Skill to make no Mistakes in reading the Author; they say many Things in a few Words; their Expressions are lively, animated, and intermix'd with bold Comparisons, and noble Metaphors.[42]

4. *Conclusion*

At this juncture, it is reasonable to consider that Lien Chi's letters in *The Citizen of the World* largely embody a constellation of distinct – and often distant – points of resonance between Goldsmith's fictional portrayal of China (voiced through a peripatetic Chinese philosopher) and the Chinese philosophical traditions transmitted to Enlightenment Europe via Jesuit literature. Intertextual and comparative literary analysis, reinforced here by archival research, supports the view that European and British fictional narratives of China (as exemplified by Goldsmith) were not only indirectly informed but also deeply inspired by Jesuit-

41. Louis Le Comte, *Nouveaux mémoires sur l'état present de la Chine*, Paris, 1697, vol. I, pp. 303-304. Translation mine: "The Chinese are eloquent through vivid expressions, noble metaphors, bold and concise comparisons, and above all through an abundance of maxims and passages drawn from the ancients, which among them always carry great weight. They say much in few words; their style is dense, mysterious, obscure, and not very continuous".

42. Jean-Baptiste Du Halde, *A Description of the Empire of China*, London, 1738, vol. I, p. 365.

mediated knowledge of China, particularly Confucian thought. The sonorous echoes between early Jesuit translations of Chinese culture and Goldsmith's literary construction of China should not be confined merely to the domain of intertextual influence or efforts at tracing specific literary responses to Jesuit travel reports. Rather, these echoes underscore the need to reassess Jesuit literature – not only the seminal works of Noël, Intorcetta, Du Halde, and Le Comte, but also writings by Jesuit-influenced figures such as d'Argens (who was anti-Jesuit in nature) – as a source of imaginative stimulus for early novelists. Jesuit literature exerted a profound influence on the nascent forms of the European and British novel, and its enduring, generative afterlife invites renewed attention, both in terms of literary form and in relation to the cross-fertilization among Eastern and Western philosophical traditions. In other words, the inquiry conducted in this essay encourages us to approach Jesuit literature not merely as theological or philosophical tracts that can be duly interpreted in comparison with the Greco-Roman, Renaissance Humanist, or medieval framework. Jesuit literature may, with greater ambition and discernment, be reconsidered as a corpus of world literature weaving itself through the very fibers and channels of the finest products of the European imagination. Such a reorientation transcends the narrow confines of conventional exegesis and opens new avenues for understanding the formative intercourse between diverse systems of thought and the literary genius of 18th-century Europe in an age marked by reason and sensibility alike, simultaneously pursuing harmony, resolution, and the progress of the human spirit. At a moment when the pre-modern and late imperial Chinese world is increasingly regarded through lenses that are more cosmopolitan, more interdisciplinary, and less encumbered by prejudice in global humanistic scholarship, the enduring influence of Jesuit letters on the European novel, as it stands, demands renewed and more rigorous scholarly attention.

Niccolò Guasti

The Image of China in the Neapolitan Enlightenment: from Genovesi to Filangieri

1. *The ambivalent Genovesi's Sinophilia*

This essay seeks to retrace the reflections of Gaetano Filangieri and, before him, Antonio Genovesi on the myth of China. My aim is to assess whether, within the context of the Neapolitan Enlightenment, it is possible to discern a shift in the essential characteristics of the image of the Celestial Empire, starting from the sources (Jesuit and non-Jesuit) used to support that myth. It is well known that Enlightenment political and cultural discourse drew on the various representations of the East provided by Jesuits,[1] travellers, and scholars to develop new socio-political models and propose tangible reforms of institutions, values, and behaviours.[2] Moreover, the specific use of the Chinese model within the Neapolitan Enlightenment, particularly by the so-called "Genovesian party", is certainly not a new historiographic topic.[3]

1. Paul A. Rule, *K'ung-tzu of Confucius? The Jesuit interpretation of Confucianism*, Sidney, Allen & Unwin, 1986; David E. Mungello, *Curious Land. Jesuit accommodation and the Origins of Sinology*, Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1989 (2nd edition); Liam Matthew Brockey, *Journey to the East. The Jesuit Mission to China, 1579-1724*, Cambridge, MA-London, Harvard University Press, 2007; Antonella Romano, *Impressions de Chine. L'Europe et l'englobement du monde (XVIe -XVIIe siècle)*, Paris, Fayard, 2016.

2. Virgile Pinot, *La Chine et la formation de l'esprit philosophique en France (1640-1740)*, Paris, P. Geuthner, 1932; René Etièmble, *L'Europe Chinoise*, 2 vols, Paris, Gallimard, 1988-1989; Basil Guy, *The French Image of China before and after Voltaire*, Geneva, Voltaire Foundation, 1963; Rolando Minuti, *Orientalismo e idee di tolleranza nella cultura francese del primo '700*, Florence, Olschki, 2006; Ashley Eva Millar, *A singular Case. Debating China's Political Economy in the European Enlightenment*, Montreal & Kingston, McGill–Queen's University Press, 2017; Benoît Malbranque, *Les origines chinoises du lib*éralisme, Paris, Institut Coppet, 2021.

3. Sergio Zoli, *La Cina e l'età dell'Illuminismo in Italia*, Bologna, Patron, 1974; Sergio Zoli, *Europa libertina tra Controriforma e Illuminismo. L'"Oriente" dei libertini e le origini dell'Illuminismo*, Bologna, Cappelli, 1989; Sergio Zoli, *Dall'Europa libertina all'Europa illumunista. Alle origini del laicismo e dell'Illuminismo*, Florence, Nardini, 1997; Federico D'Onofrio, "La nazione meglio polita: buon governo e costituzione economica della Cina alla scuola di Genovesi", *Società e Storia*, 161 (2018), pp. 471-497.

Although the Chinese "myth" already surfaces in certain works published by Genovesi in the 1740s,[4] it is only with the "Discorso sopra il vero fine delle Lettere e delle Scienze" that it takes on a clearly exemplary function. The "Discorso", which served as the preface to the Neapolitan edition of Tuscan agronomist Ubaldo Montelatici's *Ragionamento*, edited by Genovesi himself, may be regarded as the manifesto of the future Genovesian school.[5] Its themes would be reiterated in the inaugural lecture Genovesi delivered a few months later at the launch of the chair in commerce and mechanics, which he himself took up. The "Discorso" in fact set out the guidelines for the future reform of the society, mentality, and economic structures of the Kingdom of Naples, starting with agriculture, under the banner of public happiness. In the context of the analysis of the six causes of the wealth and greatness of nations, China is mentioned specifically in relation to the importance of trade, the sciences, and industriousness. The interesting aspect of this first explicit use of the Chinese "heterotopia" is the ambivalence of the model itself: "The Chinese, although neither a barbarous nor ignorant nation, albeit not as wise and blessed as some would have us believe, when they saw our clocks and other machines – products of our philosophy – thought that Europeans were men of a nature far superior to others, almost like gods". [6] The implicit reference to the Jesuits, and to one of the reasons for their success at the imperial court, is clear.

Beyond this initial rendering of the Chinese "heterotopia", the mentions of China in Genovesi's writings from the 1750s are generic, ambivalent (and often negative), and certainly not used to indicate any concrete reformist strategies. This is true in particular of the manuscript *Elementi di Commercio* (which represented the university course on civil economy taught by the Salernitan abbot during the 1757-1758 academic year, and which would later become the basis of his *Lezioni di commercio*) and of the three volumes of the *Storia del Commercio di Gran Brettagna*, published in the same years.

Things change decisively in 1764 with the publication of *De iure et officiis in usum tironum libri II* and, above all, of the *Lettere accademiche*.[7] The date is not incidental, as it coincides with a great famine that struck Italy (particularly southern Italy) and led Genovesi and other Neapolitan intellectuals to a final realization that the southern rank-based society was not only profoundly unjust, but also economically inefficient. Thus, at the same time as his ideas were clearly radicalized, Genovesi began to view the Chinese model as useful both in denouncing the major problems of the Kingdom's political and institutional order, and in suggesting specific options for reform.

4. Eluggero Pii, *Antonio Genovesi. Dalla politica economica alla "politica civile"*, Florence, Olschki, 1984, pp. 141-142.

5. Antonio Genovesi, "Discorso sopra il vero fine delle lettere e delle scienze", in Ubaldo Montelatici, *Ragionamento sopra i mezzi più necessari per far fiorire l'agricoltura*, Naples. G. Simone, 1753 [1752], pp. iii–ciii; Franco Venturi, *Settecento Riformatore*, Turin, Einaudi, 1969, vol. I, *Da Muratori a Beccaria 1730-1764*, pp. 523-644: 560.

6. Genovesi, "Discorso", p. lx.

7. Antonio Genovesi, *Lettere accademiche su la questione se sieno più felici gl'ignoranti che gli scienziati* […], Naples, Stamperia Simoniana, 1764 (2nd revised ed., 1769).

The central theme of the *Lettere accademiche* is the value of civilization and progress, to the point that Genovesi's polemical target is essentially Rousseau and the myth of the noble savage. According to Genovesi, every savage people is unhappy because it languishes in poverty and the deepest ignorance, while the arts and sciences serve to meet both the natural needs of humanity and those introduced by the gradual process of civilization. By drawing a parallel between the misery of the southern Italian lower classes and the barbarity of non-European savage peoples, Genovesi extolled the value of culture, education, and scientific-technological progress, especially from the perspective of the economic and social benefits they brought to "civilized" societies.

In this framework, the exemplary nature of the Chinese civilization emerges with force, with its stereotyped characteristics reconstructed in a skilful combination of travel literature and Jesuit sources. Particularly in the *Lettere accademiche*, Genovesi explicitly refers to Martino Martini, Ferdinand Verbiest, and François Gérbillon (whose *Voyages* were included in volumes VII and VIII of the *Histoire générale des voyages* edited by Antoine François Prévost). There is also a clear influence from Jean-Baptiste Du Halde's *Description*, which Genovesi had certainly been familiar with for some time by 1764.[8]

The Salernitan abbot highlights four exemplary features of the Celestial Empire, which would be reiterated in both the *Lezioni di commercio* and the *Diceosina*. First, the high level of development of its agriculture, the "mother and guardian of all the arts" and "the first source of all trades as well as of all comforts and pleasures in life". Second, the efficiency of the imperial paternal government, which Genovesi compares to that of the Quakers in Pennsylvania and of the ancient Peruvians, given that the emperor (at once a father, priest, and king) holds "three powers in the same person" (*Lettera X*). Third, the industriousness of the Chinese people (since idleness and vagrancy are punished by the mandarins). Finally, their religious tolerance: in *Lettera XII*, Genovesi recalls how Kangxi condemned the fanaticism of the Grand Lama of Tibet and of Buddhism in general. Chinese civilization is therefore one of the great human civilizations, able also to civilize neighbouring barbarian peoples, such as the Tartars, through the arts, for example through music.

However, this idealization of the Chinese political and social system is tempered by criticism of its xenophobia, which is associated with that of the Spartans and of the Muscovites before Peter the Great opened up Russia to European culture: this isolationism prevents the Chinese from enjoying the full benefits of trade. Genovesi also remembers the emperors' occasional tendency to punish less diligent mandarins severely (*Lettera VIII*). Not by chance, among the

8. Martino Martini, *Sinicae Historiae Decas Prima […]*, Munich, I. Wagner, 1658; Ferdinand Verbiest, *Voyages de l'Empereur de la Chine, dans la Tartarie […]*, Paris, É. Michallet, 1685; François Gérbillon, "Voyages dans la grand Tartarie […]", in *Histoire générale des voyages […]*, ed. by Antoine François Prévost, 19 vols, Den Haag-Paris-Amsterdam, P. De Hondt-Didot-Arksteè & Merkus-Rozet-Pancoucke, 1746-1770, vol. VII, pp. 444-620, and vol. VIII, pp. 1-66; Jean-Baptiste Du Halde, *Description […] de la Chine et de la Tartarie chinoise*, 4 vols, Paris, Le Mercier, 1735.

sources cited by Genovesi is also George Anson's *Voyage round the World in the years 1740-1744*, known to him through the French translation included in the *Histoire générale des voyages* (*Lettera V*), revealing the return of the ambivalence toward China that had already emerged in the "Discorso" of 1753.[9]

2. *The Cinese model in Genovesi's* Lezioni

It is above all in the *Lezioni di commercio*, or rather its first volume, that the Chinese model emerges most clearly and in the greatest detail.[10] It is in fact important to stress that in the second volume, published around the time of the expulsion of the Jesuits from the Kingdom of Naples, the Chinese model not only collapses in quantitative terms (with a drastic reduction of references to Chinese civilization), but is also explicitly called into question as an example to follow, to the point that criticisms of China outweigh any praise. Let us analyse this evolution in detail, in order to understand in connection with which specific themes Genovesi inserts references to China.

The Chinese paradigm emerges strikingly from the very *Proemio* (Preface) of the *Lezioni*. After outlining the aims, scope, and key authors of the "political science of economy and commerce" (Montesquieu, Bielfeld, Melon, Uztáriz, and Ulloa), Genovesi includes a footnote in which, paraphrasing a passage from Martini's *Sinicae Historiae Decas Prima*, he recalls that "among the precepts of Confucius, the Plato of the Chinese, one was that the art of governing is, ultimately, the art of feeding the people".[11] Around 20 pages later, in discussing the origins of states, the Neapolitan thinker again refers to Confucius, this time in connection with the political importance of religious ceremony, one of the three pillars of human education, alongside stable marriages and "civil power".[12]

Genovesi thus shares the idea, first advanced by the Jesuits, particularly in the *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*, and later by Montesquieu,[13] that Confucius had been a philosopher-legislator whose teachings shaped the character of the Chinese "nation", and that Confucianism functioned as a form of civil religion. In this sense, it was comparable to Stoicism (given that it emphasized merit and taught temperance, the value of diligence, and mercy), and was clearly distinct

9. George Anson, "Voyage de George Anson, autour du Monde, par le Sud-Ouest", in *Histoire générale des voyages*, vol. XI, pp. 115-198.

10. The first Neapolitan edition of 1765-1767 was followed by a second edition, also printed by the Simone brothers. I am using the critical edition by Maria Luisa Perna, which follows the text of the second Neapolitan edition, including the variants from the earlier one. Antonio Genovesi, *Delle Lezioni di commercio o sia di Economia civile con Elementi del commercio*, ed. by Maria Luisa Perna, Naples, Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Filosofici, 2005.

11. Genovesi, *Delle Lezioni*, p. 267.

12. *Ibid*., p. 286.

13. Prospero Intorcetta, Christian Herdtrich, François de Rougemont, and Philippe Couplet, *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus […]*, Paris, D. Horthemels, 1687; Charles-Louis de Secondat de Montesquieu, *Esprit des lois* (hereafter *EL*), ed. by Robert Derathé, 2 vols, Paris, Garnier, 1973 [1748], vol. II, b. XXIV, chs 9 and 19.

from atheism and in opposition to "libertinism".[14] It is Confucianism that in fact gives rise to the two key elements of China's exemplarity and, in many ways, its exceptionalism: a paternal imperial government that rewards merit, whose secret lay in the competence of its mandarins, and a widespread work ethic that found its most longstanding expression not only in an agriculture based on hydraulic engineering but also in the development of the arts and trades.

Within the framework of Genovesi's original stadial theory of human civilization, China thus belongs to the group of "civilized nations" that have developed not only all the necessary arts, but also commerce, luxury, literature, and the sciences. Moreover, the empire possesses an additional feature typical of the most advanced nations, namely a complex social structure, to the extent that to describe it Genovesi draws on the social pyramid model theorized in 1672 by the English thinker William Temple.[15] Following closely Montesquieu's reflections on Chinese exceptionalism among despotic regimes,[16] Genovesi identifies two specific features of the Celestial Empire. First, it lacks a hereditary nobility, since "its political power is closer to paternal rule than to civil government; the sovereign holds more the rights of a father than those of a king, but of a father in the state of nature, and thus a severe and rigid father. He is at once prince and pontiff".[17] Second, even the class of "rulers" (magistrates, public officials, clergy, teachers, and intellectuals more broadly), who form the backbone of what Genovesi calls "the middle order between the great and those who labour to support the nation", is recruited on the basis of merit: "It is the mandarins who advise the great and govern the lower ranks".[18] The interesting aspect of this is that Genovesi, in the fourth chapter of the *Lezioni*, explicitly uses the term "mandarins" to describe the universal qualities that the class of "rulers" of every civilized nation ought to possess, regardless of the political regime. This is a social group, he argues, that should be educated "in sciences not of words or empty ideas, but of things and of the calculation of things". In other words, they ought to "understand the political and physical history of the nation, political arithmetic, the good philosophy of man, and the true spirit of public law and civil jurisprudence".[19] The presence of a state bureaucracy recruited on merit thus places the Celestial Empire among the institutional models worthy of consideration.[20]

14. Genovesi, *Delle Lezioni*, p. 481.

15. *Ibid*., pp. 314-315.

16. Although Genovesi rejects Montesquieu's climatic determinism, he nonetheless follows other aspects of his interpretation concerning China's exceptionalism, including its internal contradictions (chief among them, the characterization of the Chinese political regime as a form of paternal despotism). See *EL*, vol. I, b. VI, ch. 9; b. VIII, ch. 21; b. XIX, chs 13-19.

17. Genovesi, *Delle Lezioni*, p. 315.

18. *Ibid*., p. 320.

19. *Ibid*. While Genovesi does not cite any author in support of this argument, Eluggero Pii and Sergio Zoli have rightly identified *Il politico moderno* by Paolo Mattia Doria as a possible source of inspiration, given that Genovesi refers to other manuscript works by Doria in the *Lezioni*, in particular *Del commercio del regno di Napoli* (1740). See Genovesi, *Delle Lezioni*, p. 729; Pii, *Antonio Genovesi*, pp. 271-281; Zoli, *Dall'Europa libertina*, pp. 525-529.

20. One of the principal duties of the mandarins, according to Martini, is to support and protect agricultural work in the various provinces of the empire. Genovesi, *Delle Lezioni*, p. 491.

China also offers a perfect illustration of a second maxim that, in Genovesi's view, underpins progress in the arts, trades, and sciences: the dignity of labour. Since the passions are "the principal engine of the human spirit", honours and rewards "nurture and stimulate both spirit and ingenuity". Where the crafts and manual trades are considered ignoble – as was the case in the Kingdom of Naples and, more broadly, in the "feudal" societies of the *ancien régime* – these activities struggle to reach their full development.[21]

In several other passages in the first volume of the *Lezioni* Genovesi reinforces, drawing on the Chinese model, the crucial role that a strong work ethic (when internalized as a moral duty not only by the productive classes, but also by those who govern society) plays in economic development and in the attainment of public happiness. According to the Neapolitan thinker, such an outcome is achieved through a combination – already identified by Montesquieu – of religion and good laws.[22] The latter, taking into account the driving forces of human action, must be capable of shaping social customs, sometimes through repression and at other times through well-considered incentives.[23] Even the apparent rejection of bullionism by the emperors, who ordered the closure of various precious metal mines,[24] confirms that Chinese culture and the imperial regime share the principle that wealth is based solely on human industriousness and ingenuity.

The first consequence of this Oriental version of the Calvinist ethic[25] is obviously the flourishing of agriculture, which in turn makes it possible to support a large population.[26]

To conclude this overview of the key aspects of the Chinese model outlined in the *Lezioni*, it can be said that this was a myth not without its shadows, and one that never acquired the concrete political-ideological weight that it did in the hands of the Physiocrats and their exaltation of legal despotism. Especially in the second volume of the *Lezioni*, the Neapolitan thinker attributes several negative and regressive elements to the Chinese political, social, and economic system. First of all, Genovesi, following Montesquieu's reasoning, recalls the principle that great monarchies are prone to instability, due to the difficulty that the centre of power has in transmitting orders to faraway peripheral regions. The Celestial Empire is a perfect example of such a principle, as "almost every year there are rebellions".[27] This instability is compounded by the pressure of the Tartars, which, despite Kangxi's victorious military campaigns at the end of the 17th century, did not cease, making a new invasion from the steppe barbarians an ever-present danger.[28]

21. *Ibid.*, p. 492.

22. See, for instance, *EL*, vol. I, b. XVIII, ch. 6; Genovesi, *Delle Lezioni,* p. 850.

23. *Ibid*., pp. 292, 307, 364 (n. j), 472 (n. b) and 601 (n. x).

24. *Ibid*., pp. 389 and 861.

25. On the other hand, Genovesi recalls that in Pennsylvania too "there is a magistrate who takes care of the idle": *ibid*., p. 466.

26. *Ibid*., p. 327. Genovesi considers a "just population" to be an effect of economic development: *ibid*., p. 381. See other references to the causes of China's population: *ibid*., pp. 316 (where Martini and Du Halde are explicitly quoted), 329 and 353.

27. *Ibid*., p. 291, n. u.

28. *Ibid*., p. 577.

Next, ever faithful to the principle that foreign trade is a vehicle of civilization,[29] Genovesi repeats the criticism already made in the *Lettere accademiche* according to which China's autarky and xenophobia toward foreign merchants may ultimately become a source of crisis. Ancient history (as in the case of the Jews under Solomon and in the case of the Spartans) shows that when a nation closes itself off to commerce, it deprives itself of "the light of other peoples" and gradually becomes "the most dependent upon them", something that "will undoubtedly happen to the Chinese, unless they change their political method".[30] In this regard, Genovesi in fact highlights the role played by Jesuit missionaries, especially under the reign of Kangxi, in transmitting European science to Chinese culture through their translations, as reported by Du Halde.[31]

Genovesi then criticizes certain extremely cruel penalties prescribed by Chinese criminal law for magistrates found guilty of corruption, as well as the widespread superstition disseminated by Buddhist bonzes and by "an infinite number of fortune-tellers and astrologers" who also cast a sinister light on the "philosophical" rule of the emperors. As a result, the Salernitan abbot concludes tersely, without hesitation or fear of contradiction: "China therefore (let me add, in passing) still seems to me far from being a learned nation".[32]

Finally, Genovesi condemns the "harmful luxury" that China brings to Europe through the latter's importation of luxury goods from the Orient (silks, porcelain, and so on). To acquire these goods, European merchants are forced to ship large quantities of American silver to China, resulting in a significant trade deficit to the benefit of the Chinese empire.

3. *The Jesuit Sources in Genovesi's* Lezioni

Turning now to examine the sources that Genovesi employs to construct his image of China in the *Lezioni di commercio*, we can distinguish between those he cites directly and those that may have influenced his thinking more indirectly. As we have seen, Genovesi develops his portrayal of China primarily through two Jesuit authors: Martini (whose *Sinicae Historiae Decas Prima* is cited explicitly 12 times in the first volume of the *Lezioni*, never in the second) and Du Halde (whose *Description* is mentioned three times in the first volume and twice in the second). This amounts to a relatively limited corpus of Jesuit sources on China: compared to the *Lettere accademiche*, for instance, the Jesuit texts compiled by Abbé Prévost disappear entirely.[33]

29. *Ibid*., p. 560.

30. *Ibid*., p. 393.

31. *Ibid*., p. 561; Du Halde, *Description*, vol. I, pp. xxviii–xlviii ("Préface"), 551-552; vol. II, pp. 126-127; vol. III, pp. 266-289.

32. Genovesi, *Delle Lezioni*, p. 847, n. o. Genovesi builds his description on Du Halde, *Description*, vol. III, pp. 16-64.

33. In the *Lezioni*, Genovesi cites Prévost's collection not in relation to China, but rather to Lapland. Genovesi, *Delle Lezioni*, p. 371.

In addition, in the *Lezioni* Genovesi makes direct reference to a number of texts that undoubtedly helped shape key aspects of the 18th-century myth of China. Alongside the ever-present Montesquieu, used when outlining the exceptional nature of China's despotic/paternalist regime, and authors such as Doria and Anson, the Neapolitan cites D'Argenson's *Considérations sur […] la France*, which contain an extended eulogy of China (particularly regarding the absence of a hereditary nobility and the tax system), as well as of the "divine Confucius".[34] Also heavily cited is the *Recueil des voyages […] de la Compagnie des Indes Orientales*.[35] Of additional interest is a reference to *Recherches sur l'origine du despotisme oriental* by Nicolas-Antoine Boulanger, a contributor to the *Encyclopédie*. Genovesi mentions the *Recherches* alongside D'Argenson's *Considérations* in a note referring to the ancient peoples of Asia in general.[36]

However, the contemporary author who probably influenced Genovesi's construction of the Chinese myth the most, despite not being cited directly in this regard, was Sébastien Le Preste, Marquis of Vauban. Among the economic writings that clearly shaped the Neapolitan's thinking is Vauban's *Projet d'une dîme royale*, which he refers to in a note in the first volume of the *Lezioni*.[37] In the *Projet* (which in turn cites Louis Le Comte's *Nouveaux mémoires*, the *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*, and works by Martini, Joachim Bouvet, and Athanasius Kircher), Louis XIV's maréchal praised the efficiency of Chinese agriculture (as evidenced by the country's high population), the imperial tax system (based on payment in kind and the absence of internal customs duties), and the honesty of the mandarins. As he acknowledged, his own proposal of a 10-percent land tax based on cadastral value had been inspired by the *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*. Although Genovesi did not agree with this particular reform proposal, the broadly positive image of China's political and economic regime offered by Vauban seems to have influenced him considerably, since it closely matches the version he presents in the *Lezioni*.

Certain absences in the corpus of sources employed in the *Lezioni* are just as significant as the texts that are actually included. Genovesi had undoubtedly read various volumes of the *Lettres édifiantes*, but they are not among the sources cited explicitly. Nor does he mention *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*, Louis Le Comte's *Nouveaux mémoires*, or Charles Le Gobien's *Histoire de l'édit de*

34. *Ibid.*, pp. 308, 440 (n. b), 741; René-Louis de Voyer de Paulmy d'Argenson, *Considérations sur le gouvernement ancien et présent de la France*, Amsterdam, M. M. Rey, 1764; Malbranque, *Les origines*, p. 103.

35. *Recueil des voyages qui ont servi à l'établissement et aux progrès de la Compagnie des Indes Orientales*, 7 vols, Amsterdam, É. Roger, 1725; Genovesi, *Delle Lezioni*, p. 355, where he mentions vol. V concerning Formosa.

36. Nicolas-Antoine Boulanger, *Recherches sur l'origine du despotisme oriental*, s.l., s.n., 1761; Genovesi, *Delle Lezioni,* p. 440, n. b.

37. Sébastien Le Preste de Vauban, *Projet d'une dîme royale*, s.l., s.n., 1707; Genovesi, *Delle Lezioni*, p. 695, n. d, where he recalls his land registry project, which Genovesi, however, does not endorse. See Michèle Virol, *Vauban, de la glorie du roi au service de l'état*, Seyssel, Champ Vallon, 2003, pp. 134-135, 156, 195, 292; Malbranque, *Les origines*, pp. 97-101.

l'empereur de la Chine.[38] Also absent are some of the best-known authors from the Protestant polemic on Chinese rites: I refer above all to Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz and Christian Wolff, so their omission must be seen as deliberate.[39]

Furthermore, unlike in the manuscript *Elementi di commercio*,[40] in the *Lezioni* Genovesi never refers to Voltaire or to the many *Encyclopédie* entries on China (for example, Diderot's "Chinois, philosophie des", which appeared in the third volume of the *dictionnaire*). This is despite the fact that he read both the *Lettres philosophiques* and the early volumes of the encyclopaedia edited by Diderot and D'Alembert with interest. Equally curious is the absence of any reference to Jacob Brucker's *Historia critica philosophiae*, which included a lengthy summary of Chinese philosophy based on Jesuit sources.[41] Genovesi was certainly very familiar with this work. Also notable is the lack of reference to certain travel accounts that were popular on the Italian book market at the time, in particular Thomas Salmon's *Lo stato presente di tutti i paesi e popoli del mondo*.[42]

From my point of view, however, the absence of libertine and deist texts on China, which drew heavily on Jesuit sources, particularly the works by Étienne de Silhouette or the Marquis d'Argens, is not at all surprising. Nor does it seem strange that Genovesi made no mention of François Quesnay's early writings, especially *Le despotisme de la Chine* (published in 1767 in issues III, IV, V, and VI of the *Éphémérides du citoyen*), which in theory he would have been able to use at least in the second Neapolitan edition of the *Lezioni*. In reality, he had no sympathy for the Physiocratic "sect" or its methodology, while the *Lezioni* contain no explicit references to either the *Tableau économique* or to Quesnay's "Grains" and "Fermier" entries in the *Encyclopédie*.[43] It is true that the Salernitan abbot cites Mirabeau's *L'Ami des hommes* twice in the *Lezioni*,[44] but it still seems the pre-Physiocratic version of the work, published before the Marquis's definitive conversion to the sect. Genovesi in fact had no need to draw on the Physiocratic

38. Louis Le Comte, *Nouveaux mémoires sur l'état présent de la Chine*, 2 vols, Paris, J. Anisson, 1696; Charles Le Gobien, *Histoire de l'édit de l'empereur de la Chine en faveur de la religion Chrestienne […]*, Paris, J. Annison, 1698.

39. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Novissima sinica istoriam Nostri Temporis Illustratura […]*, s.l., s.n., 1697; then in Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Opera omnia […]*, 6 vols, Geneva, De Tournes brothers, 1768, vol. IV; Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, "Lettre […] sur la philosophie chinoise, discours sur la théologie naturelle des chinois à Mons. De Rémond" [1716], in Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Viri illustris G. G. Leibnitii epistolae ad diversos*, 4 vols, Leipzig, Breitkopf, 1735, vol. II, pp. 413-494; Christian Wolff, *Oratio de Sinarum philosophia practica*, Frankfurt, A. Hort, 1726.

40. In the *Elementi di commercio*, Genovesi, on the other hand, had recalled *Le siècle de Louis XIV* and the *Lettres philosophiques*; see Genovesi, *Delle Lezioni*, pp. 27, 49, 62.

41. Jakob Brucker, *Historia critica pilosophiae […]*, 4 vols, Leipzig, B. C. Breitkopf, 1742-1744.

42. Thomas Salmon, *Lo stato presente di tutti i paesi e popoli del mondo […]. Della Cina*, Venice, G. Albrizzi, 1740. See an explicit reference to this work in Montelatici, *Ragionamento*, p. 19, n. 1.

43. Pii, *Antonio Genovesi*, pp. 167-168.

44. Victor Riqueti de Mirabeau, *L'Ami des hommes, ou Traité de la population*, Avignon, s.n., 1756 (2nd revised ed., 3 vols, 1758-1760); Genovesi, *Delle Lezioni*, pp. 560, 634.

version of the Chinese myth, since, as we have seen, he could rely on an earlier and very similar one developed by Vauban.

Finally, the absence of any direct references to Vico in the passages of the *Lezioni* where the Chinese model is discussed also does not seem strange to me, even bearing in mind that the Neapolitan philosopher had devoted substantial attention to Chinese history and culture in his writings.[45] The influence that Vico exerted on Genovesi's thought (especially on certain aspects of his conception of human progress) is well known,[46] and in a note in the second volume of the *Lezioni*, Genovesi offers a sincere tribute to the "immortal fame" of his former teacher, linked to the publication of the *Scienza Nuova*.[47] That said, Genovesi mentions him only once more in the treatise, and then only to dispute one of Vico's theories, namely the claim that ancient savage peoples used grain instead of gold as currency. He dismisses this as pure "imagination", since "grain, like any agricultural product, cannot be known to any savage people".[48]

4. *The limits of the Chinese model in Genovesi's* Diceosina

Turning now to the *Diceosina*, Genovesi's best-known treatise on moral philosophy,[49] it is worth observing that the myth of China appears mainly in volumes II and III (particularly in the commentary notes) of the second posthumous edition published in 1777, while it plays only a marginal role in the first volume (originally published in 1767). This, incidentally, reinforces the doubts about possible interpolations in the manuscript used by the Neapolitan printer Domenico Terres for his edition. Broadly speaking, Genovesi – drawing explicitly on the same authors, both Jesuit and non-Jesuit, already referenced in the *Lezioni* (Martini, Du Halde, Anson, with the addition of Gérbillon in the Prévost edition, who thus reappears since he had already been cited in the *Lettere accademiche*) – softens the ambivalence that had characterized his reception and elaboration of the Chinese myth from the outset, and praises its exemplary aspects more emphatically. As a result, the posthumous 1777 edition of the *Diceosina* is the work in which Genovesi presents the Chinese model in the most positive terms.

First of all, the Salernitan abbot praises the canals constructed by "great and wise rulers", comparing them with the roads of the Inca empire.[50] He also recalls

45. Daniel Canaris, *Vico and China*, Oxford-Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2020.

46. Paola Zambelli, *La formazione filosofica di Antonio Genovesi*, Naples, Morano, 1972, pp. 254-255, 269, 285-289, 558, 742; Pii, *Antonio Genovesi*, pp. 26, 111, 133-135, 140-143, 147, 194-195, 213, 244, 284.

47. Genovesi, *Delle Lezioni*, p. 661.

48. *Ibid*., p. 680, n. m.

49. The first volume was published in 1767 (although dated 1766), while the second, incomplete volume appeared posthumously in 1771. The second edition, with additions, was published in 1777 in three volumes, printed by the Terres press. I will use the recent edition Antonio Genovesi, *Della Diceosina o sia della filosofia del giusto e dell'onesto*, ed. by Niccolò Guasti, Mariano del Friuli, Edizioni della Laguna, 2008.

50. *Ibid*., p. 139.

the consistent support given by the Chinese emperors to the "primitive or creative arts", beginning with agriculture. In this context, Genovesi mentions (drawing from Du Halde's *Description*) the custom followed by early Chinese emperors of ploughing the first furrow to inaugurate the agricultural season: this was an event frequently cited by both Sinophile and non-Sinophile writers of the 18th century, starting with the Physiocrats.[51]

Next, following the principles set out by Cesare Beccaria (a key influence on the *Diceosina*), Genovesi praises the Chinese judicial system on the basis that the prisons of the Celestial Empire are more humane than European ones[52] and punishments are generally proportionate to the severity of the crime.[53] On this issue, Genovesi takes a firm stance, openly contesting the reports of those who, like Anson, had emphasized the cruelty of the Chinese. By contrast, he writes, "in China everything is a school. […] China is an immense and perpetual school" where emperors and mandarins seek to prevent crime by correcting vice through example and affection.[54]

In the *Diceosina*, Genovesi also reaffirms his admiration for the paternal regime of the Chinese emperors, but does so by drawing a parallel with other exemplary paternalistic regimes, that is the North American Quakers, the Guaraní of Paraguay converted by the Jesuits, and the ancient Peruvians. These civilizations were all committed to reducing human needs and whims, which, as Beccaria had identified in *De' delitti e delle pene*, were the root of criminal behaviour. As Genovesi explains in chapter 5 of volume III, these four "civil bodies" were each founded "through the skill and knowledge of certain individuals" who had a deep understanding of human nature.[55] In short, the references to Martini and Du Halde found in these passages of the *Diceosina* are systematically interwoven with information drawn from Garcilaso de la Vega's *Comentarios reales* (known to Genovesi in a 1704 French edition), Ludovico Antonio Muratori's *Il Cristianesimo felice*, and maybe Voltaire's *Lettres philosophiques*.[56]

51. *Ibid*., p. 186, n. a; Du Halde, *Description*, vol. II, pp. 70-71. See, for instance, *EL*, vol. I, b. XIV, ch. 8, and *Éphémérides du citoyen*, 1 (1767), pp. 166-168. But this ritual will also be mentioned by Diderot, Bertrand, Mercier, and many other *philosophes*.

52. Genovesi, *Della Diceosina*, p. 285, n. b (quoting Du Halde).

53. *Ibid*., p. 286, n. a.

54. *Ibid*., pp. 295 (n. b) and 299 (n. a), where, however, it is the Chinese who imitate the Peruvians. This association between the Chinese and the Peruvians had also been proposed by Francesco Algarotti in a 1755 writing on the Incas. See Eugenio Garin, *Rinascite e rivoluzioni. Movimenti culturali dal XIV al XVIII secolo*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2007 (2nd edition), pp. 327-362: 332-333.

55. *Ibid*., p. 351.

56. Garcilaso de la Vega, *Le commentaire royal, ou l'Histoire des Yncas, rois du Pérou […]*, 2 vols, Amsterdam, G. Kuyper, 1704; Ludovico Antonio Muratori, *Il Cristianesimo felice nelle missioni de' padri della Compagnia di Gesù nel Paraguai*, 2 vols, G. Pasquali, Venice, 1743-1749; Voltaire, *Lettres philosophiques*, Amsterdam, E. Lucas, 1734 (especially the first four letters on the Quakers); Genovesi, *Della Diceosina*, p. 152 (n. b), 292-293, 296-297, 351. The other information about China is peripheral: *ibid*., pp. 193, 280, 297, 378.

I wish to conclude this survey of the *Diceosina* and of Genovesi's works by reiterating that the authorities he draws on are essentially the same as those already employed in the *Lezioni* (Martini, Du Halde, Anson, D'Argenson, Boulanger, and Vauban), with the reappearance of a reference to Gérbillon and the addition of the *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses* (whose fifth volume is, however, implicitly cited in relation to the diary of the Jesuit Eusebio Kino's journey in California) as well as works by other travellers such as Schouten's *Voyages*.[57]

In conclusion, Genovesi's eclectic and selective use of the principal *topoi* associated with Chinese civilization in his printed works (which leads to a broadly positive, though nonetheless ambivalent, judgement), is the result of a selective and thoughtful engagement with the works available to him. For instance, the Neapolitan thinker incorporates some of the critical reflections voiced by Jesuit missionaries (such as Du Halde) on the Chinese mentality and culture, avoiding an uncritical endorsement of all their positive assessments. At the same time, Genovesi also appreciated the writings of various detractors of China, including Anson, although he did challenge their anti-Chinese prejudices.

5. *The fall of the Chinese myth: Gaetano Filangieri*

Turning to the key features of the Eastern heterotopia in Gaetano Filangieri's *Scienza della legislazione*,[58] two certainties can be discerned. The first is that the Chinese model, although portrayed in a positive light, is very nuanced and, above all, scarcely present – almost residual – in the overall structure of the treatise. The second concerns the type of sources on China that Filangieri uses, and how he uses them: Jesuit works are certainly present, but he generally prefers to draw his information on the Celestial Empire from authors who had themselves processed data and reports of Jesuit origin. In other words, in contrast to the works of Genovesi, the Chinese myth proposed by Filangieri is above all the one set out by Leibniz, De Guignes, the Physiocrats (as far as the economic element is concerned, though certainly not the political one), the Encyclopedists, and, above all, the second edition of Raynal's *Histoire philosophique et politique […] dans les deux Indes*. Let us look a little more closely at and briefly outline the key themes around which Filangieri constructs his image of China.

With regard to political matters, Filangieri, in common with Genovesi, refers to the "moderation and wisdom" of the Chinese imperial regime, thus

57. *Ibid*., pp. 45 (n. a), 280 (n. a), 301 (n. 653). Gautier Schouten, *Voyages aux Indes orientales commencé l'an 1658 & fini l'an 1665. Traduit du hollandais*, 2 vols, Amsterdam, P. Mortier, 1708.

58. I obviously use as my reference text the critical edition published under the direction of Vincenzo Ferrone: Gaetano Filangieri, *Scienza della legislazione*, 7 vols, Venice, Centro di studi sull'Illuminismo europeo "Giovanni Stiffoni", 2003-2004. The first two volumes of the treatise appeared in 1780 (Naples, Stamperia Raimondiana), the third (divided into two tomes) in 1783, and the fourth (divided into three tomes) in 1785. Filangieri died in 1788, so the eight chapters of the fifth book were published posthumously in 1791.

contradicting Montesquieu's thesis that large empires are naturally predisposed to despotism.[59] However, this does not mean that he endorses the Chinese political system, since his work contains no exaltation of the Physiocratic concept of "legal despotism". Rather, this apparent praise for the wisdom of China's despotic government, which confirms the exceptionalism of the country's political system, based on the influence of Confucian philosophy, provides Filangieri with a historical *exemplum* useful to dismantle a specific theoretical (or more precisely, politological) claim made by Montesquieu, as it demonstrates that the theory according to which large territorial states must necessarily adopt despotic forms of government is ultimately baseless. Filangieri is speaking of China, but he is in fact thinking of the European imperial states (first of all Great Britain) of his own era.

Filangieri's appreciation for Chinese agriculture, by contrast, is clearer. At the beginning of chapter 2 of book II, devoted to the "Present State of Population in Europe", the Neapolitan thinker observes that "the most reliable indication of a country's population is without doubt the state of its agriculture".[60] No European people, he writes, has succeeded in making the land bear fruit as effectively as the "industrious Chinese", who, thanks less to hydraulic works than to an efficient organisation of labour and the wise distribution of land, manage to obtain three rice harvests per year. A little later, in chapter 15 concerning potential incentives for the development of agriculture, Filangieri returns to what had by then become a well-established image of the Chinese emperor as the "first farmer of the state", who "guides a plough, opens the furrow, turns the earth with a hoe, and grants certain honours to those who have best cultivated the land".[61] In a footnote, Filangieri again cites the *Histoire des deux Indes*, which contained an illustration of the Chinese agricultural rituals in the frontispiece of volume I, and a detailed written account in chapter 13.[62] As already noted in the case of Genovesi, this was in fact a *topos* handed down to Enlightenment and late 18th-century economic thinkers through Jesuit works, most notably Du Halde's *Description*.

On the other hand, in the second part of book III of the *Scienza della legislazione*, devoted to "Criminal Laws: On Crimes and Punishments", Filangieri reprises the *topos* of Chinese industriousness, linking it, as Genovesi had done before him, to criminal law. Starting from the principle that laws should be adapted to the dominant customs and passions of a people, Filangieri argues that in societies characterized by a strong work ethic, penal sanctions should be softened with milder punishments, since high levels of employment are themselves a powerful deterrent to crime. By contrast, in cultures inclined towards idleness, punishments

59. Filangieri, *Scienza*, vol. I, p. 165.

60. *Ibid*., vol. II, p. 25.

61. *Ibid*., p. 121, n. b.

62. Guillaume-Thomas Raynal, *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes*, 7 vols, The Hague, chez Gosse fils, 1774, vol. I, ch. 13, pp. 123-156.

must be harsher and more repressive. To support his argument, Filangieri cites in a footnote the 1670 French edition of Kircher's *China Illustrata*.[63]

After this lone reference in book III, the Chinese model is put aside, and in book IV, dedicated to education, Filangieri does not mention it at all. This, in my view, is highly significant, since it is precisely this section of the *Scienza della legislazione* that sets out most clearly not only the project of constitutionalizing the subjective rights of Man that is at the heart of Filangieri's treatise, but also the concrete reformist dimension of his proposals.[64] One need only recall the trenchant critique of the inequality embedded in the Neapolitan society of ranks implicit in his proposal to provide scholarships for the children of the lower classes. In short, in mid-1780s Naples, the Chinese model – of a despotic political regime, albeit a paternal one, and of an immobile society, despite its strong work ethic – was no longer useful for the critique of the *ancien régime*, as it had been two decades earlier in Genovesi's time. At least, it no longer seemed so to Filangieri (and the same could be said of Mario Pagano). On the contrary, the Chinese paradigm could provide a positive example to the supporters of monarchical absolutism and of social and legal inequality, such as the Physiocrats and Simon-Nicolas-Henri Linguet. Indeed, this evolution in the meaning attributed to the Chinese heterotopia can be observed in Filangieri's chief source, the *Histoire des deux Indes*, where the relatively positive appraisal of China found in the second edition of the work is decisively overturned in the third edition of 1780 (under the influence of Diderot, who had long been disinclined to sympathize with the Chinese political model). In the later version, the absolutism and injustices of the Chinese empire are sharply condemned.[65]

Nevertheless, the fifth and final book of *Scienza della legislazione*, which is devoted to "Laws Concerning Religion", contains one final reference to China. Here, Filangieri includes a rather scattered examination of Chinese polytheism and Confucianism within a rich comparative historical reconstruction of world religions. His discussion of Chinese beliefs serves to support his thesis that humankind has always tended to deify the forces of nature and its own vices and virtues, but also to believe in the immortality of the soul. The pantheon of authorities used to substantiate this claim is very broad: among the Jesuit writers, in addition to Du Halde and Kircher, he explicitly cites Claude de Visdelou's "Notice du livre chinois nommé Y-King" and Henri-Joseph de Prémare's "Discours", both included in *Le Chou-king* edited in 1770 by Joseph de Guignes.[66] He also

63. Filangieri, *Scienza*, vol. IV, p. 102 (n. g); vol. VI, pp. 101 (n. e), 142 (n. a); Athanasius Kircher, *La Chine […] illustré de plusieurs monuments tant sarcées que prophanes*, Amsterdam, Jasson et h.s Weyerstaet, 1670, p. 215.

64. Vincenzo Ferrone, *La società giusta ed equa. Repubblicanesimo e diritti dell'Uomo in Gaetano Filangieri*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2003.

65. Guido Abbattista, "How to deal with China. New questions in the 1780 edition of the Histoire des deux Indes", in *Autour de l'abbé Raynal: genèse et enjeux politiques de l'Histoire des deux Indes*, Paris, Centre International d'étude du XVIIIe siècle, 2018, pp. 171-187.

66. Filangieri, *Scienza*, vol. VI, pp. 49 (n. k), 54 (n. v), 93-94, 99 (n. b), 101 (n. e), 111 (n. d); 120 (n. n), 133 (n. b), 134 (n. j), 139 (n. h), 142 (n. a). See Henri-Joseph de Prémare's "Discours préliminaire, ou recherche sur les tems antérieurs *à* ceux dont parle le Chou-king

makes extensive use of several volumes of the *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses* (especially volumes V, XII, XIII, XVIII, XXIV and XXVI), and he refers to Niccolò Longobardi's *Traité sur quelques points de la religion des chinois*, which had been included in the fourth volume of Leibniz's *Opera omnia*.[67] In addition, Filangieri also made use of several accounts of journeys to the Far East, such as Giovanni Francesco Gemelli Careri's *Giro del mondo*,[68] and certain 18th-century works that discuss the Chinese political and cultural model: for instance, the "Agriculture" and "Population" entries in the *Encyclopédie*, René-Louis de Voyer de Paulmy d'Argenson's *Considérations*, and Jakob Brucker's *Historia*.[69]

Finally, in a note on the Chinese belief in a deity responsible for the souls of the dead, Filangieri cites Du Halde alongside Domingo Fernández de Navarrete's *Tratados*,[70] one of the earliest "Spanish" critiques of Chinese history and culture. This text, strongly anti-Jesuit in tone, had presented a translated compendium of Chinese legal documents.[71]

In conclusion, the body of literature on China employed by Filangieri is significantly broader and filtered more heavily through French Enlightenment and anti-Jesuit sources than that used by Genovesi. This is hardly surprising, as the two thinkers belonged to different generations of the Enlightenment. Certainly, the image of China presented by both thinkers is, in many respects, ambivalent and intermittent. This, too, is to be expected, since representations of China and the Orient had long functioned as tools for conceptualizing alternative political and social models: as such, they served as a means of advocating for tangible reforms to institutions, policies, ideas, and values of the European *ancien régime*.

[…]" and Claude de Visdelou's "Notice du livre chinois nommé Y-King […]", in *Le Chou-king, un des livres sacrés des Chinois […]*, ed. by Joseph de Guignes, Paris, N. M. Tillard, 1770, pp. xliv-cxxxviii and pp. 401-436, respectively.

67. Filangieri, *Scienza*, vol. VI, pp. 108 (n. p), 128 (n. m), 136 (n. d), 142 (n. a); Leibniz, *Opera omnia*, vol. IV, pp. 88-144.

68. Giovanni Francesco Gemelli Careri, *Giro del mondo*, 6 vols, Naples, G. Roselli, 1699-1700.

69. Filangieri, *Scienza*, vol. VI, pp. 49 and 54. But see also *ibid*., vol. II, pp. 121 and 164; vol. V, pp. 10 and 345.

70. Domingo Fernández de Navarrete, *Tratados históricos, políticos, éthicos y religiosos de la monarquía de China*, Madrid, Imprenta Real por J. García Infançón, 1676.

71. Filangieri, *Scienza*, VI, p. 139, n. h. In this note, Filangieri comments: "Despite the materialism introduced some time ago among the class of Chinese literati, the people still honour this god under this idea".

Giulio Talini

"Le plus laborieux de tous les peuples". China, France, and the Haitian Revolution in the Views of Two Caribbean Planters

1. *Introduction*

Determining when, how, and why the model of the Chinese empire – so cherished by the Enlightenment world, from Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz to the Physiocrats – was actively received in the West Indies French plantation colonies is not easily accomplished, for several reasons. First and foremost, such an investigation demands meticulous documentary and archival excavation into the economic, political, and scientific cultures of the Francophone tropical plantocracies, a task that may not necessarily yield the desired results. Furthermore, there is a broader historiographic issue at the root of such an inquiry: the relative scarcity of studies dedicated specifically to these cultures. Indeed, they have long been neglected due in part to the enduring 18th-century stereotype of white Creole colonists as crude, lascivious, and illiterate, driven solely by unrestrained profiteering at the expense of enslaved Africans. Historians such as April G. Shelford are now beginning to recognize how detrimental this framing can be to a more accurate and nuanced understanding of plantation capitalism.[1]

Given these significant gaps in the literature, it would be risky to attempt a comprehensive synthesis. I will therefore limit myself to presenting two interwoven case studies that reveal a non-superficial – indeed, distinctive and peculiar – reinterpretation of the image of China within the Saint-Domingue planter elite. In the period under consideration, this colonial elite had recently been overthrown by the Haitian Revolution and the first abolition of slavery, decreed by the French Convention on 4 February 1794.[2] Specifically, I focus on

1. April G. Shelford, *A Caribbean Enlightenment: Intellectual Life in the British and French Colonial Worlds, 1750-1792*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2023; Giulio Talini, "Enlightenment and Reform in the French Atlantic Empire. François Véron de Forbonnais, Pierre-Louis de Saintard, and the 1756 Debate over the Admission of Neutral Commerce in the Antillean Colonies", *French History*, 37/1 (2023), pp. 36-52; Giulio Talini, "Jean Barré de Saint-Venant et les Lumières caribéennes. Colonisation nouvelle, économie politique et modernisation à Saint-Domingue (1776-1802)", *Diciottesimo Secolo*, 11 (2026), forthcoming.

2. Gabriel Debien, *Les colons de Saint-Domingue et la Révolution. Essai sur le club Massiac (août 1789-août 1792)*, Paris, Armand Colin, 1953; Jeremy D. Popkin, *You are All Free:*

the translations, treatises, and correspondence of two *maîtres* of unequal renown but equal prestige and influence: Médéric Louis Élie Moreau de Saint-Méry and Jean Barré de Saint-Venant. These figures have been chosen not only because their writings more frequently reference a "Creolized" Chinese model, but above all because these references express certain intellectual trends and political aspirations.

Moreau de Saint-Méry and Barré de Saint-Venant – both curious, multifaceted scholars affiliated with the Agricultural Chamber of Le Cap and Cercle des Philadelphes – were once patriotic white colonists of Saint-Domingue with plantations, slaves, and elite networks. The "Black Jacobins"[3] uprising and momentary triumph of the Société des Amis des Noirs and French abolitionist campaign stripped them of their lands and wealth, forcing them into exile and wandering until the ephemeral Napoleonic attempt at restoring the empire.[4] At this point, they turned their gaze to the ancient and distant Celestial Empire.

It was a moment of revolutionary upheaval, international conflicts, and Atlantic economic transformations eventually leading to the commercial decline of the French and British Caribbean and rise of new commodity frontiers in Brazil (coffee), Spanish Cuba (sugar), and the United States (cotton). In this context, the two men saw in the Chinese mirage both a possible opportunity for French commercial expansion and a successful example of stability, hierarchy, and order to hold up in opposition to the turbulent "philanthropists" of the Revolution. It also served as a robust confirmation of the inseparable link between public wealth, civilization, and coerced labour. The much-admired Chinese, considered as civilized as Europeans, could not be subjected to the same racial prejudices reserved for enslaved Africans.[5] Moreau de Saint-Méry and Barré de Saint-Venant thus approached the abundant literature on China printed in the Old World through

The Haitian Revolution and the Abolition of Slavery, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010; Trevor Burnard and John D. Garrigus, *The Plantation Machine: Atlantic Capitalism in French Saint-Domingue and British Jamaica*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016; Paul Cheney, *Cul de Sac: Patrimony, Slavery, and Capitalism in French Saint-Domingue*, Chicago-London, University of Chicago Press, 2017; Manuel Covo, *Entrepôt of Revolutions: Saint-Domingue, Commercial Sovereignty, and the French-American Alliance*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2022.

3. Cyril L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint Louverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, New York, Vintage Books, 1989 [1938].

4. For a discussion of emigrated French planters in the aftermath of the Haitian Revolution, see, for instance, Alain Yacou, "La présence française dans la partie occidentale de l'île de Cuba au lendemain de la révolution de Saint-Domingue", *Outre-Mers. Révue d'histoire*, 275, pp. 149-188; Paul Lachance, "Repercussions of the Haitian Revolution in Louisiana", in *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*, ed. by David Geggus, Columbia, University of South Carolina Press, 2001, pp. 209-230; Darrell Meadows, *The Planters of Saint-Domingue, 1750-1804: Migration and Exile in the French Revolutionary Atlantic*, PhD dissertation, Carnegie Mellon University, 2004. On the French Caribbean Chambers of Agriculture and Cercle des Philadelphes, see *infra* §1.

5. Dominque Rogers, "Raciser la société: un projet administratif pour une société domingoise complexe (1760-1791)", *Journal de la Société des Américanistes*, 92/2 (2009), pp. 235-260.

the Creole lens of two New World planters, as I will soon demonstrate; in any case, they interpreted this model more in light of pressing political and practical agendas than scholarly or bookish interest.

2. *Converging nostalgias: Médéric Louis Élie Moreau de Saint-Méry and Jean Barré de Saint-Venant in the age of revolution*

Before delving into Moreau de Saint-Méry's French translation of the travel account by Dutchman Andreas Everardus Van Braam Houckgeest (1797), as well as Barré de Saint-Venant's better-known work *Des colonies modernes sous la zone torride, et particulièrement de celle de Saint-Domingue* (1802), it is worth briefly considering the intertwined biographical trajectories of these two *grands blancs* (great whites). Barré de Saint-Venant and Moreau de Saint-Méry were born, respectively, in August 1737 in Niort and in January 1750 in Fort-Royal, Martinique. The reason why their contemporaneous references to the Chinese example shared similar, or at least complementary, aims and characteristics lies in the fact that they shared political experiences and cultural sensibilities during the "death" of the French Atlantic.[6] They embodied the modernizing vision of a colonial reformism grounded in technological innovation, free trade, racial prejudice, and enslaved labour.

Following a chronological order, I shall begin with Jean Barré de Saint-Venant, a planter, scientist, agronomist, and inventor whose spectacular economic and social rise after the Seven Years' War (1756-1763) and "talents multiplies" earned him the admiration of his friend Moreau de Saint-Méry.[7] Like many young Aquitanians of modest background who emigrated to the Antilles – an Eldorado of boundless promise – Barré de Saint-Venant arrived in Saint-Domingue between 1755 and 1756 as a mere *petit blanc* (small white); as such, the local aristocracies held him in scarcely higher regard than an African slave.[8] For a colonial parvenu, the surest path to amassing a fortune was by purchasing land and men, thereby escaping the ranks of the colonial white "proletariat". Barré de Saint-Venant succeeded in doing just that. With the support of his uncle Jean-André, a small landholder in Grande-Rivière, and thanks to the fact that he was valued as a supervisor and manager of other people's plantations, in 1767 he acquired a third of the Jumelle estate in the Artibonite region. In 1781, he obtained half of Paul-

6. Alan Forrest, *The Death of the French Atlantic: Trade, War, and Slavery in the Age of Revolution*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2020.

7. Médéric-Louis-Élie Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description topographique, physique, civile, politique et historique de la partie française de l'île de Saint-Domingue*, Philadelphia, Chez l'Auteur, 1797, vol. I, p. 237. See also Gabriel Debien and Françoise Thésée, *Un colon niortais à Saint-Domingue: Jean Barré de Saint-Venant (1737-1810)*, Niort, Société Historique et Scientifiques des Deux-Sèvres, 1975; Erica R. Johnson, *Philanthropy and Race in the Haitian Revolution*, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, pp. 86-87.

8. Jacques de Cauna, *L'Eldorado des Aquitains. Gascons, Basques et Béarnais aux Îles d'Amérique (XVII^e^-XVIII^e^ siècles)*, Biarritz, Atlantica, 1998.

Eustache de Cadush's sugar plantation at Quartier-Morin, in the north of Saint-Domingue. This latter was an agro-industrial unit measuring 331 hectares and employing 202 enslaved men and women, deemed lazy and undisciplined.[9]

Once prosperous, Barré de Saint-Venant soon stood out as an *éclairé* planter, combining practical knowledge (agronomic, botanical, hydraulic, economic, and historical) with a taste for intellectual sociability and the professed civic virtue of a loyal subject. As such, between 1766 and 1770 he submitted to Affiches américaines and Académie des Sciences in Paris proposals for an agricultural irrigation machine, described as an *aérohydraulique*, and a model for a mill that would enable a second pressing of sugar cane.[10] In 1776, he was brought into the Agricultural Chamber of Le Cap, a public consultative body on matters of political economy and the ideological hub of the resident planter class.[11] As a member of the chamber, Barré de Saint-Venant voiced opposition to the metropolitan monopoly over colonial trade (*Exclusif*) and fought against royal taxation, drawing on the financial doctrines of the Physiocrats and Montesquieu's theories about the limitations of "ministerial despotism".[12] Finally, on 15 August 1784, he founded the Cercle des Philadelphes alongside physicists, doctors, naturalists, and producers such as Charles Arthaud and Paul Belin de Villeneuve. This scientific academy maintained contact not only with leading figures in Paris, but also with the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia.[13]

9. *Vente de moitié d'habitation, noirs, animaux et autres objets. M. de Cadush à Barré de Saint-Venant*, 23 May 1781, Archives Départementales de la Gironde, Bordeaux (hereafter ADG), *Fonds Debien*, *Papiers de Barré de Saint-Venant*; *Instructions à M. Dujardin de Beaumetz pour la conduite de mon habitation et de mes affaires*, April 1788, ADG, *Fonds Debien*, *Papiers de Barré de Saint-Venant*.

10. *Affiches américaines*, 27 August 1766; *Machine pour doubler les cannes à sucre*, 3 February 1780, Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence (hereafter ANOM), F3, 125, ff. 188-189.

11. On the Chambers of Agriculture, founded by Naval Minister Nicolas René Berryer in 1759 and then reformed by Étienne-François de Choiseul in 1763, see Pernille Røge, *Économistes and the Reinvention of Empire, c. 1750-1802*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2019, pp. 105-152; Giulio Talini, *Bodies of Expertise: Economic Knowledge, Colonial Development, and State Sovereignty in the French Caribbean (1759-1791)*, PhD dissertation, Scuola Superiore Meridionale, 2024; Giulio Talini, "Ascesa degli esperti. Politica economica e sovranità nella Francia imperiale (ca. 1750-89)", *Storica*, 89 (2024), pp. 47-86.

12. Jean Barré de Saint-Venant, *Mémoire sur les affranchis*, 3 October 1776, ANOM, F3, 125, f. 124; Jean Barré de Saint-Venant, *Mémoire sur les corvées*, 7 January 1779, ANOM, F3, 125, ff. 136-149v; Jean Barré de Saint-Venant, *Mémoire sur le commerce étranger avec les colonies françaises de l'Amérique, présenté à la Chambre d'agriculture du Cap, le 17 février 178*[5], Paris, Cuchet, 1785. See also Giulio Talini, "'Un mal nécessaire'. Schiavitù e tratta nei progetti riformatori delle Camere di agricoltura dei Caraibi francesi (1759-1790)", *Rivista storica italiana*, 3 (2024), pp. 960-1001. On the mercantilist *Exclusif*, see Jean Tarrade, *Le commerce colonial de la France à la fin de l'Ancien Régime*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1972; Paul Cheney, *Revolutionary Commerce: Globalization and the French Monarchy*, Cambridge, MA-London, Harvard University Press, 2010.

13. James McClellan, *Colonialism and Science: Saint-Domingue and the Old Regime*, Chicago-London, The University of Chicago Press, 2010, pp. 247-256.

By the time the revolution broke out in France in 1789, Barré de Saint-Venant had become a son-in-law to the secretary of the Agricultural Chamber of Le Cap, Pierre Joseph Laborie. He was a politically engaged *grand blanc* and respected man of science in Saint-Domingue, both within the Ministry of the Navy and at court (“membre de la Chambre d’agriculture et du Cercle des Philadelphes du Cap Français, commandant des milices de la paroisse du Quartier-Morin, […], chef du premier escadron de la cavalerie de la Garde Nationale parisienne”).[14]

The Martinican historian and lawyer Moreau de Saint-Méry is better known in Italy for his role as the Napoleonic administrator in Parma between 1801 and 1806; especially following the work of Dominique Taffin and Sara E. Johnson, he needs little introduction.[15] However, it is worth briefly recalling both his intellectual profile and the close relationship he maintained with Barré de Saint-Venant. Moreau de Saint-Méry was descended from a respectable Poitou-based family and was a slave owner. A collector and antiquarian endowed with encyclopedic erudition, he neglected the management of his plantations to instead devote himself to collecting, cataloguing, and analysing colonial history and legislation, both in a private capacity and on behalf of the imperial bureaucracy. Above all, his proud affirmation of the anthropological and racial superiority of *créolisés* or Creoles – that is, the people raised in the Caribbean – drove him to almost obsessively accumulate a monumental colonial archive.[16] We do not know exactly when Moreau de Saint-Méry, admitted to the Superior Council of Le Cap and one of the Masonic lodges of Saint-Domingue, first met Barré de Saint-Venant. It is certain, however, that he likewise took part in Agricultural Chamber activities as *secrétaire adjoint* between 1783 and 1788, and in the scientific enterprises of the Cercle des Philadelphes. Indeed, it was specifically Barré de Saint-Venant’s influence that led minister César Henri de La Luzerne to grant the Circle official recognition.[17]

The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (26 August 1789), denunciations by abolitionists led by Honoré de Riqueti de Mirabeau, Étienne Clavière, and Jacques-Pierre Brissot, and the outbreak of the Haitian Revolution in August 1791 brought the career of both Barré de Saint-Venant and Moreau de Saint-Méry to an abrupt halt. They both promptly relocated to the imperial capital after the opening sessions of the Estates General and made coordinated

14. Bernadette and Philippe Rossignol, “Il y a 200 ans à Paris. Un ‘beau mariage’ entre Domingois”, *Généalogie et Histoire de la Caraïbe*, 11 (1989), pp. 78-80.

15. *Moreau de Saint-Méry ou les ambiguïtés d’un créole des Lumières*, ed. by Dominique Taffin, Fort-de-France, Société des Amis des Archives de la Recherche sur le Patrimoine Culturel des Antilles, 2006; Sara E. Johnson, *Encyclopédie noire: The Making of Moreau de Saint-Méry’s Intellectual World*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2023.

16. Malick W. Ghachem, “Controlling Haitian History: The Legal Archives of Moreau de Saint-Méry”, in *Voices in the Legal Archives in the French Colonial World. “The King is Listening”*, ed. by Nancy Christie, Michael Gauvreau, and Matthew Gerber, London-New York, Routledge, 2021, pp. 63-87.

17. *Nomination de M. d’Augy Preudéminent comme secrétaire adjoint de la Chambre d’agriculture en vue de suppléer Moreau de Saint-Méry en cas d’absence*, 1788, ANOM, F3, 126, ff. 470-471v.

efforts – both within and outside the National Assembly – to defend the slave system and plantation economies. Nonetheless, the fourfold threat posed by abolitionism, the slave revolt in the northern plain of Saint-Domingue, the French turn to republicanism in September 1792, and the declaration of war on Britain on 1 February 1793 interrupted their rise as not merely colonial but imperial elites.

While Barré de Saint-Venant prudently withdrew to his estate in Fortoiseau, near Melun, Moreau de Saint-Méry opted for exile, taking his wife and children to the United States and joining the diaspora of *émigré* French planters. As reported in his manuscript *Voyage aux États-Unis de l'Amérique*, in Philadelphia he frequented figures such as La Rochefoucauld Liancourt, Talleyrand, Volney, Beaumetz, and the Duke of Chartres – the future Louis-Philippe of Orléans.[18] It was in these dramatic circumstances, caught between nostalgia for the *Ancien Régime* and hope for a palingenetic reconquest of Saint-Domingue, that imperial China captured the imagination of our protagonists.

3. *Van Braam's* Voyage*: erudition, business, or political engagement?*

A formidable polyglot, Moreau de Saint-Méry engaged with Chinese civilization in his dual role as translator from the Dutch and printer in his Philadelphia workshop at the corner of Front and Walnut streets. In 1797, he published a refined French octavo edition, richly illustrated with maps and engravings, of *Voyage de l'ambassade de la Compagnie des Indes orientales hollandaises vers l'empereur de la Chine, en 1794 et 1795*, based on the first-person account by Andreas Everardus Van Braam Houckgeest.[19] The author was a Dutch-born merchant who had acquired United States citizenship, a staunch admirer of the American Revolution and its Enlightenment ideals, director of the Dutch East India Company (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie, VOC) in Canton (Guangzhou), and diplomat attached to the embassy sent by the VOC to the Qianlong Emperor (1735-1796) in Beijing between 1794 and 1795.[20]

Notably, by the end of 1798, an English translation of Moreau de Saint-Méry's *Voyage* appeared in London, printed by Phillips – clear evidence the

18. Médéric Louis Élie Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Voyage aux États-Unis de l'Amérique, 1793-1798*, ed. by Stewart L. Mims, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1913, p. xxii.

19. Andreas Everardus Van Braam Houckgeest, *Voyage de l'ambassade de la Compagnie des Indes Orientales hollandaises, vers l'empereur de la Chine, en 1794 et 1795, où se trouve la description de plusieurs parties de cet empire inconnues aux Européens*, Philadelphia, Chez l'Éditeur, 1797-1798. See also Johnson, *Encyclopédie noire*, pp. 87-126.

20. Led by the diplomat Isaac Titsingh, the Dutch embassy to Beijing (1794-1795) pursued the same goal as the 1793 British embassy. The leader of the latter, George Macartney, had sought in vain to open additional Chinese ports beyond Canton to British merchants. See Aeneas Anderson, *A narrative of the British embassy to China, in the years 1792, 1793, and 1794*, London, Debrett, 1795. See also James L. Hevia, *Cherishing Men From Afar: Qing Guest Ritual and the Macartney Embassy of 1793*, Durham-London, Duke University Press, 1995; Tonio Andrade, *The Last Embassy: The Dutch Mission of 1795 and the Forgotten History of Western Encounters with China*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2021.

learned editor's initiative had immediately sparked transnational interest.[21] The commercial intent behind Moreau de Saint-Méry's publishing venture is apparent from his chosen subtitle: "où se trouve la description de plusieurs parties de cet empire inconnues aux Européens". Likewise, the lengthy "Préface de l'éditeur" repeatedly emphasized that the work, while catering to the growing fascination with the exotic and still little-known Asian empire, also aimed to shield readers from the illusions and distortions of popular "romans" then in circulation.[22] One of the sources for *Voyage's* illustrations was likely Pu Qua (1769-1843), an artist renowned for his depictions of working-class occupations and everyday life in Qing China. According to his own diary (May 1796), Moreau de Saint-Méry accessed such materials and first-hand accounts during visits to Van Braam and his entourage of "Chinois" at the Dutchman's estate along the Delaware River, known as the "Chinese Retreat".[23]

Van Braam also invested significant capital in the transatlantic slave trade; indeed, it would be misleading to reduce the French translation of his work to a mere publishing enterprise tailored to the American book market. The subject matter, context, and editorial annotations of *Voyage* reveal a subtle web of political, economic, and historical references intelligible only when viewed through the lens of the translator's identity: a white Creole, colonial slaveholder, and Atlantic refugee.

First, the geopolitical context must be taken into account: despite the dedication to George Washington and rhetorical parallel between him and the Chinese emperor as "père de la famille nationale", with the one leading the "peuple le plus ancien" and the other a "peuple nouveau", *Voyage* was also potentially interesting to French rulers and merchants.[24] This was especially the case after the subjugation of the Dutch Republic by French revolutionary forces and proclamation of the Batavian Republic in January 1795. It should be recalled that, between February 1783 and early 1784, namely just prior to the reconstitution of the French Compagnie des Indes Orientales in April 1785, Louis XVI had sponsored commercial expeditions from Saint-Malo, La Rochelle, Bordeaux, Nantes, Marseille, Lorient, and Le Havre to Canton in hopes of bypassing intermediaries to procure porcelain and tea at competitive prices.[25]

Second, at least since Jean-Baptiste Labat's *Nouveau Voyage aux Isles de l'Amérique* (1722) French and British West Indian planters had long speculated about and partially experimented with acclimatizing botanical species from the East

21. Andreas Everardus Van Braam Houckgeest, *An authentic account of the embassy of the Dutch East-India Company, to the court of the emperor of China, in the years 1794 and 1795*, London, Phillips, 1798.

22. Van Braam, *Voyage de l'ambassade*, vol. I, pp. v-vii.

23. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Voyage aux États-Unis*, p. 220.

24. Van Braam, *Voyage de l'ambassade*, pp. iii-iv.

25. On the French commercial expedition to China, entrusted to Pierre-Jacques Meslé de Grandclos, a merchant from Saint-Malo, see ANOM, C1, 14, ff. 54-135. See also Elizabeth Cross, *Company Politics: Commerce, Scandal, and French Visions of Indian Empire in the Revolutionary Era*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2023, with bibliography.

Indies and China. By the 1770s and 1780s, sugar yields were beginning to decline, prompting many metropolitan merchants and shipowners, known as *capitalistes*, to increase their investments in the Mascarene Islands, Indian Ocean, and Far East.[26]

Finally, beyond the professed neutrality of both Van Braam and his translator, Moreau de Saint-Méry – as an ardent defender of plantation slavery – had direct political reasons for taking an interest in China's language, institutions, commodities, and customs. He interpreted these through analogies with Africa and the colonial Americas, settings far more familiar to him. It is no coincidence that, in the very same year *Voyage* was published, the Martinican colonist published his *Description topographique, physique, civile, politique et historique de la partie française de l'isle Saint-Domingue*. A thoroughly documented celebration of the pre-revolutionary planter class, this book's racialized taxonomy of skin colour was designed to legitimize the segregation of black populations.[27] Among Moreau de Saint-Méry's papers was the anonymous "Réflexions sur les colonies" dating to around 1780: in this text, the author praises the Chinese political system as centralized, meritocratic, hierarchical, and hence durable, the same sentiments later echoed by Moreau de Saint-Méry in the preface to *Voyage*. As such, it is held up as a more far-sighted system than that of the ungrateful and quixotic French, "corrupted" by the egalitarian ideals of *philosophes* and abolitionists. Here we see the Enlightenment stereotype – also appearing in Voltaire's *Essai sur les mœurs* – of a Chinese monarchy governed by virtue rather than arbitrary will and, as in François Quesnay's framing, enriched by agriculture and free competition.[28]

More specifically, reflecting on the traumatic and disastrous uprooting of slave-based property and the once flourishing but now "lost" Saint-Domingue, Moreau de Saint-Méry implicitly links China's imperial success to its peculiar systems of unfree labour. Significantly, in the "Notes de l'éditeur" (glossary) appended to the two volumes of *Voyage*, he includes the entries "Esclaves" and "Coulis" (coolies): under the former, he remarks that "il n'y a pas […] d'esclaves à la Chine, mais des espèces d'engagés à temps", i.e., indentured labourers. Under the latter, he describes the para-slavery of "coulis", an Indian term (according to Moreau de Saint-Méry) for men assigned to all kinds of labour but especially carrying people and goods, barefoot and nearly destitute.[29]

26. Jean-Baptiste Labat, *Nouveau Voyage aux Iles de l'Amérique*, Paris, Cavelier, 1722, vol. III, pp. 476-477; Giulio Talini, "From the Indian Ocean to the Caribbean: The Political Economy of Transplants in the 18th-Century French Empire", in *Nature's Treasures: Commodities and Environments in Global Asia, 1400-1800*, ed. by Giorgio Riello, Guillemette Crouzet, and Michael O'Sullivan, London, UCL Press, forthcoming.

27. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description topographique*. See also Florence Gauthier, *L'aristocratie de l'épiderme. Le combat de la Société des citoyens de couleur, 1789-1791*, Paris, CNRS Éditions, 2007.

28. *Réflexions sur les colonies*, n.d. [ca. 1780], ANOM, F3, 48. See also Stefan G. Jacobsen, "Physiocracy and the Chinese Model: Enlightened Lessons from China's Political Economy?", in *Thoughts on Economic Development in China*, ed. by Ma Ying and Hans-Michael Trautwein, New York-London, Routledge, 2013, pp. 12-34.

29. Van Braam, *Voyage de l'ambassade*, vol. I, pp. lxx, 20, 26, 52, 71, 81; vol. II, pp. viii, 213.

Presented in this way, the Celestial Empire was revealed as more similar to the regulated and dynamic plantation societies of the French West Indies than might have been assumed. It could be inferred that, prior to the cataclysmic French and Haitian revolutions, the historical trajectory of the latter had by and large followed that of the former. More tellingly still – and as further evidence of this symbolic alignment of China with the planter Caribbean – the Gomgom, a drum used by the Chinese, is described by Moreau de Saint-Méry as virtually identical to the Tamtam of African nations.[30]

At the same time, the glossary entries on slavery, indentured labour, and coolies also seemed to hint, within the delimited sphere of coerced labour, at possible alternatives to the chattel slavery that had been abolished three years prior to the publication of *Voyage*. It is as though, without ever disavowing his support for slavery, Moreau de Saint-Méry sought to persuade colonial landowners that they might rely on analogous systems of unfree or only nominally free labour with equal profitability, even in the absence of formal slavery. Was not coerced labour – though not technically slavery – the secret of China's imperial strength?

4. *"Second slavery" in Saint-Domingue and the Chinese example*

The ultimate meaning of Moreau de Saint-Méry's allusions becomes clearer in *Des colonies modernes* by Jean Barré de Saint-Venant. Published in Paris in 1802, this treatise on colonial governance was part of an imperial and international conjuncture that had further evolved since *Voyage*.[31] Explicitly addressed to First Consul Napoleon and also written in hopes of securing an administrative appointment,[32] the main aim of *Des colonies modernes* was to "illuminate" the Napoleonic regime about the modernizing measures that should accompany its neo-colonial project.[33] General Charles Victor Emmanuel Leclerc, husband of Paolina Bonaparte, had been engaged since December 1801 in reconquering Saint-Domingue; in the early months of 1802, Bonaparte, the Council of State, and the navy were preparing the edicts of 20 May and 16 July that would reinstate slavery in Guadeloupe and the islands returned by Great Britain to France under the 25 March Treaty of Amiens (Martinique, Tobago, Saint Lucia). Like François Page, Pierre-Victor Malouet, and Louis-Narcisse Baudry des Lozières, Barré de Saint-Venant participated in the pro-slavery public campaign aimed at convincing Napoleon to both restore enslaved labour in Saint-Domingue following the hoped-

30. *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. lxxiii.

31. Jean Barré de Saint-Venant, *Des colonies modernes sous la zone torride, et particulièrement de celle de Saint-Domingue*, Paris, Brochot, 1802.

32. Barré de Saint-Venant to Napoleon, 12 June 1802, ADG, *Fonds Debien*, *Papiers de Barré de Saint-Venant*. See also Debien and Thésée, "Un colon niortais", pp. 158-159.

33. *Rétablissement de l'esclavage dans les colonies françaises, 1802. Ruptures et continuités de la politique coloniale française (1800–1830). Aux origines de Haïti*, ed. by Yves Bénot and Marcel Dorigny, Paris, Maisonneuve et Larose, 2003; Yves Benot, *La démence coloniale sous Napoléon*, Paris, La Découverte, 2006.

for defeat of Toussaint Louverture and entrust the planning and implementation of reforms in the colony to white planters who had emigrated to Jamaica, Cuba, France, and the United States after 1791.[34] With *Des colonies modernes*, Barré de Saint-Venant – much like the Cuban planter and official Francisco de Arango y Parreño – positioned himself as an ideologue of what Dale W. Tomich has termed the 19th-century "second slavery", a remarkable technological renewal of plantation slave economies driven by the increased demand of a world market dominated by countries on the path to industrialization.[35]

Within this complex political maneuvering, Barré de Saint-Venant, like Moreau de Saint-Méry, evoked China variously as a potential commercial hub for French exports, a reservoir of spices and plants – including the paper mulberry – to be transplanted to Saint-Domingue, and irrefutable proof that the high civilization of imperial centres could not do without "contrainte au travail" (forced labour) in peripheral zones, whatever its specific forms, from Asian coolies to enslaved Africans in the Antilles.[36] Reminiscent of Montesquieu, the justification for such "contrainte" was also climatic: "Là où la nature ne le commande pas, par les besoins qu'elle impose aux hommes des pays froids, cette auguste fonction est départie aux peuples civilisés pour faire arriver ceux qui sont barbares et sauvages à la civilisation".[37]

This was precisely what the admirable and sophisticated Chinese example taught: that public happiness, demographic growth, and agricultural and manufacturing development depended not only on advancing sciences and techniques, but also the laws that "commandent le travail".[38] Drawing an unmistakable analogy between the paternalistic ideal of the "good" colonial planter and the myth of the benevolent and moderate Chinese emperor, Barré de Saint-Venant asserted that places where a single ruler, endowed with the most absolute powers, governed

34. François Page, *Traité d'économie politique et de commerce des colonies*, Paris, Brochet, 1801; Pierre-Victor Malouet, *Collection de mémoires et correspondances officielles sur l'administration des colonies*, Paris, Baudouin, 1801; Louis-Narcisse Baudry des Lozières, *Les égarements du nigrophilisme*, Paris, Migneret, 1802. See also Philippe Girard, "Napoléon voulait-il rétablir l'esclavage en Haïti?", *Bulletin de la Société d'Histoire de la Guadeloupe*, 159 (2011), pp. 3-28.

35. Barré de Saint-Venant, *Des colonies modernes*, pp. viii, 218, 285-286, 439. On "second slavery" and the Industrial Revolution, see Dale W. Tomich, "The Wealth of Empire: Francisco Arango y Parreño, Political Economy, and the Second Slavery in Cuba", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 45 (2003), pp. 4-28; Dale W. Tomich, *Through the Prism of Slavery: Labor, Capital, and World Economy*, Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield, 2004; Robin Blackburn, *The Reckoning: From Second Slavery to Abolition, 1776-1888*, London-New York, Verso, 2024.

36. Barré de Saint-Venant, *Des colonies modernes*, pp. 320, 441.

37. *Ibid.*, pp. 4-6, 42-77. See also Malick W. Ghachem, "Montesquieu in the Caribbean: The Colonial Enlightenment between 'Code Noir' and 'Code Civil'", *Historical Reflections/ Réflexions Historiques*, 25/2 (1999), pp. 183-210.

38. Barré de Saint-Venant, *Des colonies modernes*, p. 10. See also Tessie P. Liu, *A Frail Liberty: Probationary Citizens in the French and Haitian Revolutions*, Lincoln, The University of Nebraska Press, 2022, p. 286: "[for Barré de Saint-Venant] climatic differences divided the globe into zones of human liberty (in both legal and social sense) and zones of perpetual servitude".

one third of humanity "en père de famille" and compelled men and women to work – or, in other words, to "civilize" themselves – had given rise to "le plus nombreux et le plus laborieux de tous les peuples", the one best reflecting the Creator's will. Ultimately, no "nation grande, puissante et civilisée" had ever existed without workers subjected to coercive constraints of various kinds.[39]

Like Moreau de Saint-Méry, Barré de Saint-Venant sought to use comparison with China to demonstrate that slavery was but one among many regimes of coerced labour without which no empire, East or West, had ever been able to prosper. It is worth highlighting that, in essence, these observations held true: after 19th-century emancipations, all plantation societies went on to replace slavery with surrogates that were nearly as extractive and violent, despite the payment of wages.[40]

5. *Conclusion*

Barré de Saint-Venant's imperial restoration plans for Saint-Domingue – and thus his and Moreau de Saint-Méry's need to forge a "Caribbean" vision of China – were definitively thwarted by the proclamation of the Republic of Haiti on 1 January 1804. In a 13 July 1805 letter to his "ancien ami" Moreau de Saint-Méry, Barré de Saint-Venant bitterly observed: "Je crois en vérité qu'on a renoncé aux colonies".[41] The Creole cultural representations of the Chinese empire, symptomatic of an acute awareness of the ongoing crisis and a search for solutions to overcome it, definitively lost their historical and geographical point of reference: the colony of Saint-Domingue, to which Moreau de Saint-Méry and Barré de Saint-Venant had long hoped to return triumphant.

39. Barré de Saint-Venant, *Des colonies modernes*, pp. 21-22, 124.

40. Rebecca J. Scott, *Slave Emancipation in Cuba: The Transition to Free Labor, 1860-1899*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1985; Thomas C. Holt, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992; Alessandro Stanziani, *Le metamorfosi del lavoro coatto. Una storia globale, XVIII-XIX secolo*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2022.

41. Barré de Saint-Venant to Moreau de Saint-Méry, 13 July 1805, ANOM, F3, 267, f. 486.

Paolo Bianchini

Cultural Policies and Survival Strategies: French Jesuits and the Chinese Mission During the Suppression

1. *Jesuit missionaries as mediators between Europe and China*

Much has been written – and much remains to be written – about the important place China held in European debate during the Age of Enlightenment.[1] As a "mirror" for evaluating the *ancien régime* or proposing alternative models of government, as an example of "orientalism" *ante litteram*, China seems to have interested European scholars and travellers in the 18th century as a radically different reality, and therefore one of great comparative value in relation to what they found in their homelands, rather than as a social and cultural model to know and understand thoroughly.

These perspectives would also be projected into the following centuries, representing a crucial moment in the formation of Western attitudes toward the East that always oscillated between fascination and diffidence, idealization and stereotyping.

Equally well known is the role Jesuits played in forming knowledge about China, as well as in constructing Europeans' judgments towards the Celestial

1. There are numerous studies on European interpretations and representations of China; some of the most recent include David Martin Jones, *The Image of China in Western Social and Political Thought*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2001; John S. Gregory, *The West and China Since 1500*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002; Gungwu Wang, *Anglo-Chinese Encounters Since 1800. War, Trade, Science and Governance*, Cambridge-New York, Cambridge University Press, 2003; Zhan Shi, "L'image de la Chine dans la pensée européenne du XVIIIe siècle. De l'apologie à la philosophie pratique", *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, 347 (January-March 2007), published on 1 March 2010, consulted on 30 September 2016, available online; *Perceptions and Images of China*, ed. by Heinz-Dieter Assmann, Thomas M.H. Chan, and Karin Moser von Filseck, Baden-Baden, Nomos, 2008; Shunhong Zhang, *British Views of China at a Special Time, 1790-1820*, Beijing, China Social Sciences Publishing House, 2011; Georg Lehner, *China in European Encyclopaedias, 1700-1850*, Leiden, Brill, 2011; Roger Hart, *Imagined Civilizations. China, the West, and their First Encounter*, Baltimore, JHU Press, 2013; Simon Kow, *China in Early Enlightenment Political Thought*, London-New York, Routledge, 2017; Antonio Padoa Schioppa, "Note sulla civiltà della Cina nel pensiero europeo moderno", *Italian Review of Legal History*, 10/1 (2024), pp. 449-462, available online; Guido Abbattista, *Enigma Cina. Leggi, diritto e giustizia cinesi nella cultura europea tra '700 e '800*, Trieste, Eut, 2018.

Empire: the missionaries' letters that flowed into the *Lettres edifiantes et curieuses* and other successful works, as well as the epistolary correspondences they maintained with intellectuals and politicians, especially in France, provided Europe with first-hand news about a reality as mysterious as it was fascinating, thus granting the Society of Jesus a privileged mediating role in relations between the two worlds.

This essay will attempt to illustrate how the Jesuits strove to preserve this role even during the suppression, not so much for the sake of cultural prestige as, above all, to try to identify a possible form of survival in the wake of Clement XIV's brief.

2. *French Jesuits and the* Missions Etrangères

Although it addresses the relationship between French Jesuits and China, the centre of gravity of this essay is Paris and, more precisely, the Séminaire des Missions Etrangères. The Seminary of Foreign Missions was founded in 1663 by members of the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament and the congregation of the Good Friends, in particular thanks to the missionary vocation of Monsignor Pallu and Pierre Lambert de La Motte, later apostolic vicars of Tonkin and Cochinchina respectively. The seminary was located on rue du Bac, in the heart of religious Paris that arose in the 17th century. It was thus not far from Saint Sulpice and the Carmes convent, around which stood the female monasteries where numerous ex-Jesuits operated as confessors or spiritual directors after the expulsion of the Society of Jesus.[2]

The Jesuits had maintained close contact with the seminary since its foundation, but the relationship between the *Compagnie* and the Society of Foreign Missions underwent a series of highly conflicting phases. The Society soon passed under the control of the bishop of Paris and, over time, he used it to assert the episcopate's role in directing the missions. This brought the Missions Etrangères to clash repeatedly with the Jesuits, given the latter's traditional jealousy of their independence in missions.

Most of the causes of friction disappeared after the expulsions, however, as the *Compagnie* had lost the majority of its missions. After the assets of the missions in America were also confiscated by the French state or stolen by England, the former Jesuits needed the support of the Missions Etrangères to maintain control over their missions in the East. Since in China (like India) there was no representative body of the French State with the authority to ratify the royal bans promulgated in the motherland, the Jesuits had in fact continued to work as if nothing had happened.

2. See Silvia Mostaccio, "Donne, clero e modello ignaziano. Riletture di genere delle pratiche di governo gesuite tra Rivoluzione e Restaurazioni", in *La Compagnie de Jésus des Anciens Régimes au Monde Contemporain (XVIIIe-XXe siècles)*, ed. by Pierre Antoine Fabre, Patrick Goujon, and Martín Morales, Rome, Ecole française de Rome-Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 2020, pp. 215-232.

However, it was important for the Society to find a way to prevent its presence in China (and India) from becoming a struggle for survival; this mission also needed to continue to constitute one of the Order's most important economic and cultural resources, as it had been until the dispersion that followed its expulsion from France. A *Rapport au Roi* drafted by the Conseil des dépêches in 1775 accurately accounts for the notable difference between the Indian missions of Malabar and Pondicherry and the Chinese ones: as we know, in fact, the India missions had "pour objet la conversion et l'instruction d'un grand nombre de chrétiens naturels du pays" (as their object the conversion and education of a large number of natural Christians of the country), while for China "les missionnaires ne sont appelés à Pekin que comme savants ou comme artistes" (the missionaries are called to Beijing only as scholars or as artists).[3]

While India represented an immense reservoir of souls to convert for the Society of Jesus, China was the flagship of its missionary and scientific activity.[4] Since the first decades of the 17th century, the disciples of Saint Ignatius had maintained a substantial colony of men of letters and science at the emperor's court who, while bringing knowledge of the West to China, also provided Europe with an extraordinary link to Chinese culture and arts. For almost two centuries the Beijing mission thus represented a very rich cultural resource, and at the end of the 18th century the curiosity of Europeans seemed far from exhausted.

At the same time, neither the monarchy nor the parliaments in France could ignore the importance of Jesuit missions in China. The Seven Years' War had just demonstrated the significance of colonies from an economic and military point of view. At a time when it appeared increasingly difficult for France to envisage a prominent future for itself on the American continent, it was essential that it safeguard the tenuous ties linking it to East Asia. In this sense, it was undeniable that the French Jesuits' missions in China were a valid bridgehead not so much for guaranteeing the support of local potentates as for seeking to monitor and limit the interference of other European countries. It was probably for these reasons that neither the parliaments nor the king made any effort to find a way to force the Jesuits to leave their East Asia missions.

On the contrary, efforts were made to encourage the Jesuits to stay in China. Between 1762 and 1765, while the *Compagnie* was banned and persecuted in France, two young Chinese novices crossed the country under the guidance of France's leading scientists and experts in Oriental languages, by explicit will of the government. In keeping with a custom consolidated over time, the Society

3. The *Rapport au roi* from which I quote, as well as all the other Jesuit documents relating to the India and China missions, are part of the papers collected by Gabriel Brotier and kept at the Archives of the Province of France, Society of Jesus (hereafter AFCJ), *Fonds Brotier*, GBro 92.

4. See especially the essays collected in *Les Jésuites dans le monde moderne. Nouvelles approches*, a monographic issue of the *Revue de Synthèse*, 120/2-3 (1999). See also Sabina Pavone, "Ricostruire la Compagnia partendo da Oriente? La comunità gesuita franco-cinese dopo la soppressione", in *Missioni, saperi e adattamento tra Europa e imperi non cristiani*, ed. by Vincenzo Lavenia and Sabina Pavone, Macerata, Eum, 2015.

had brought these two Chinese novices, Ko and Yang, from China to be educated in the French language and culture.[5] At the moment of the dispersion they were being hosted at the Lazarist seminary, thanks to a royal pension, in order to finish their studies. Before returning to their homeland, Ko and Yang were offered an educational journey through France "afin que de retour à la Chine, ils puissent comparer ceux [the arts] qui fleurissent dans cet Empire, en observer les différences avec les nôtres, et entretenir avec nous une corréspondance qui deviendroit avantageuse réciproquement aux deux Nations" (so that back in China, they could compare those [the arts] that flourish in that Empire, observe the differences with ours, and maintain with us a correspondence that would become mutually advantageous to both Nations).[6] To this end, they were instructed by Mathurin-Jacques Brisson and Louis-Claude de Gassicourt Cadet, both members of the Academy of Sciences, in natural history, physics, and chemistry; they were then taken to Lyon to visit the silk manufactories and subsequently to Saint-Etienne, "où ils apprirent tout ce qu'on peut savoir en peu de jours sur la fabrication des armes à feu" (where they learned everything there is to know in just a few days about firearms manufacturing).[7] Finally, back in Paris, they learned the rudiments of the typographic art on a portable printing press that Louis XV later gifted to the Chinese emperor.

At the same time, the French Assistance continued to send missionaries to China. Unlike before the expulsions, the vast majority of these new envoys were young men who had not yet completed their training. In 1766, Léon-Pascal Baron,[8] Jean Matthieu de Ventavon,[9] and Pierre Ladmiral[10] sailed on the same

5. For a discussion of these novices, Joseph-Marie Amiot and the correspondence they engaged in for decades with Minister Bertin, see Adam Parr, *The Mandate of Heaven. Strategy, Revolution, and the First European Translation of Sunzi's Art of War (1772)*, Brill, Leiden, 2020. See also John Finlay, *Henri Bertin and the Representation of China in Eighteenth-Century France*, Routledge, London, 2020; John Finlay, "Henri Bertin and Louis XV's Gifts to the Qianlong Emperor", *Extrême-Orient Extrême-Occident*, 43 (2019), *Des arts diplomatiques. Échanges de présents entre la Chine et l'Europe, XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles*, pp. 93-111.

6. See *Mémoires concernant l'histoire, les sciences, les arts, les moeurs, les usages, etc, des Chinois, par les missionnaires de Pe-Kin*, Paris, chez Nyon, 1776-1814, vol. I, p. 2. The passage is from the preface in which the editor, probably Batteux, explained the circumstances under which the work was published.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

8. Léon-Pascal Baron was born in Carcassonne in 1738. He entered the novitiate in 1757, left France in 1766, and arrived in Canton in the same year. He was sent as a missionary to Beijing in 1769, Hukwang in 1771, and Kiangsi in 1778. He undertook the fourth vow in China in 1771. He died in Kiangsi in 1784. On Baron, see Joseph Dehergne, *Répertoire des jésuites de Chine de 1552 à 1800*, Rome-Paris, Institutum historicum Societatis Iesu-Letouzey & Ané, 1973, p. 24.

9. Jean Matthieu de Ventavon Tournu was born in Gap in 1733. A novice in 1754, he became a priest in 1762 without having studied theology; in 1766 he left for China, where he lived continuously in Beijing. He died in Beijing in 1787. On Tournu, see Dehergne, *Répertoire*, pp. 287-288.

10. Pierre Ladmiral was born in Turny (Yonne) in 1723. A novice in Nancy in 1744, he embarked for China in 1766 but was arrested on arrival. He then went to the Hukwang, where

ship from Lorient. Only the latter had already taken his final vows, while the first two would do so in China a few years later. Jean-Joseph de Grammont followed a similar path:[11] in 1762, he continued his training in Genoa and then left for China, where he took his fourth and final vow in 1770. A few years later, in 1806, it was Grammont himself who renewed his vows – with the permission of Pius VII – and joined the Society of Russia, thereby contributing to formally bringing the Chinese mission back to life with the help of Aloys-Antoine de Poirot, a Frenchman who had studied in Rome and took his vows in China in 1771.

3. *Privileging the role of royal officials over that of French Jesuit missionaries. The "schism of Beijing"*

Aware of the importance that Eastern missions had for France, the ex-Jesuits sought the protection of the State at the moment their existence in the East was threatened. The 1773 bull of suppression issued against the Society also applied to the priests engaged in missions. Unlike France, the Holy See was interested in removing the Jesuits and replacing them with missionaries sent and directed by the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (Propaganda Fide). Therefore, at a time when the Chinese Jesuits were already aware of the Order's papal abolition, the grand vicar of the bishop of Nanjing, the German Carmelite Joseph de Sainte Thérèse, went to Beijing where the episcopal seat had been vacant for almost 20 years and officially informed them that the Society had been dissolved. At the same time, he announced that the mission's assets would henceforth pass "sous le domaine du pape" (under the domain of the pope)[12] through the same Portuguese bishop of Nanjing who would assume control. In Rome, meanwhile, Propaganda Fide was preparing to send out priests to run the mission.

In these circumstances, the former French Jesuits remembered that, however mistreated, they nonetheless remained subjects of the king of France. After consulting with his confrères in France, Joseph-Marie Amiot, a long-time

he was killed during the persecution against Christians in 1784. On Ladmiral, see Dehergne, *Répertoire*, p. 140.

11. A novice in 1750 in Toulouse, after the suppression Jean Joseph de Grammont continued his studies in Genoa, where he became a priest in 1764; he then left for China where he arrived in 1768. A mathematician and musician in Beijing, he apparently converted a Korean prince ambassador to Beijing, who in turn converted over 4,000 Koreans. He took the fourth vow in 1770 in Beijing. He was welcomed back into the Society in 1806 with the permission of Pius VII, reestablishing it in China together with Poirot. It is uncertain whether he died in Macau in 1808 or, more likely, in Beijing in 1812. On Grammont, see Marek Inglot, *La Compagnia di Gesù nell'impero russo (1772-1820) e la sua parte nella restaurazione generale della Compagnia*, Rome, Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1997, pp. 245-246; Dehergne, *Répertoire*, pp. 118-119.

12. AFCJ, *Fonds Brotier*, GBro 134, ff. 62-63. Much of the correspondence between the former Jesuits and ministers Bertin, Sartine, and Vergennes, but also copies of many letters exchanged between the Parisian ministries and Rome, which Bertin passed on to Brotier, are preserved in AFCJ, *Fonds Brotier*, GBro 91-92.

missionary in China and one of the most important priests of the Order, thus sent a letter to Secretary of State Henry Bertin with whom the Jesuits of China maintained an intense scientific and literary correspondence, asking for the king's help. In his letter to Bertin, Amiot reconstructed the episode of the *Dominus ac Redemptor* brief being communicated in Beijing, recalling that the Jesuits had submitted "avec respect et une intière résignation au décret du Souverain pontife" (with respect and total resignation to the decree of the Sovereign Pontiff) and had signed it, so that "ne nous regardant plus comme étant sous le regime de la société puisqu'elle était détruite, nous vivrions desormais comme des prêtres séculiers sous la dépendance de l'ordinaire" (no longer regarding ourselves as being under the regime of the Society since it was destroyed, we would henceforth live as secular priests under the dependence of the ordinary).[13] He then went on to report that, faced with the apostolic vicar's request to cede him control of the mission, he and his confrères had replied that "n'étant que les administrateurs du temporel de la mission française il ne nous appartenait pas d'en céder le domaine sans le consentement du roi de France et de l'Empereur de la Chine" (being only the administrators of the temporal affairs of the French mission, it did not belong to us to cede its domain without the consent of the king of France and the Emperor of China). Amiot concluded by claiming that all the mission's assets had been entrusted to it thanks to the "libéralité de cez deux grands princes qui nous l'ont donnée comme à des français plutôt que comme à des jésuites" (liberality of these two great princes who gave it to us as French rather than as Jesuits).

Amiot's communication had obvious political aims and therefore contained statements that should probably not be taken literally. However, it is undeniable that, in order to safeguard the prestigious Beijing mission, the Jesuits were willing to entrust it to Caesar rather than the Holy See.

Amiot's report and repeated visits by Jesuits associated with the court to the foreign ministry had immediate effects. In Paris, efforts were made to resolve the situation as beneficially as possible. Indeed, two traditional allies of the Society sat at the head of the ministries on which the colonies depended. In 1774, Antoine Raymond Jean Galbert Gabriel Sartine became minister of the navy.[14] Sartine had been one of the most active protectors of the Society of Jesus in France since the time of its expulsion when, as lieutenant general of the Paris police, he strove to make the investigations ordered by parliament from 1762 to 1773 less rigid. In the same year, Charles Gravier Vergennes – a figure known to be mistrustful of the Enlightenment – became minister of foreign affairs; indeed, Vergennes's position was so marked that Augustin Barruel later counted him in his *Mémoires pour*

13. *Ibid*.

14. Antoine Raymond Jean Galbert Gabriel Sartine (1729-1801) was lieutenant general of the Paris police from 1759 to 1774. He became minister of the navy in 1774 and held that post until 1780. On Sartine, see A. de Maurepas and A. Boulant, *Les Ministres et les ministères du siècle des Lumières, 1715-1789.* Étude et Dictionnaire, Paris, Christian-JAS, 1996, pp. 246-250.

servir à l'histoire du jacobinisme as one of the very few advisors of Louis XVI who was not involved in the revolutionary plot.[15]

Thanks to such influential protectors, it was not difficult to convince the king that the Jesuit missions needed to be safeguarded. The government proposed that the Missions Etrangères take charge of the Jesuit missions. Yet, since it was evident that accepting such a task was equivalent to opposing Rome as well as submitting to the will of the ex-Jesuits, the proposal was rejected. This gave rise to a long dispute with Bishop Christophe de Beaumont, also a staunch supporter of the *Compagnie*, as he tried to prove that the Missions Etrangères seminary was under his jurisdiction and therefore that its prosecutors could not make decisions without consulting him beforehand.

The solution that eventually brought the government and Missions Etrangères into agreement did indeed allow the mission in China to continue, but it also gave rise to what Jesuitical historiography would come to call the "schism of Beijing".[16] Supported by the French government, the schism was consolidated by the Jesuits when they refused to recognize any authority outside of Louis XVI until January 1785.

As soon as he received Amiot's report, Bertin forwarded it to Sartine and Vergennes and these latter pleaded the Jesuit cause before the king and parliament, convincing both that "il était nécessaire pour la religion et même utile à notre commerce et aux belles lettres de maintenir cet établissement" (it was necessary for the religion and even useful to our commerce and to *belles lettres* to maintain this establishment).[17] With unusual promptness for a state of the *Ancien Régime*, on 30 November 1776 Louis XVI appointed the former Jesuit François Bourgeois, already director of the mission, to be superior of the French mission in Beijing.[18] With the same pronouncement, the Chinese Jesuit Yang was appointed procurator of the French nation in China. On the same day Sartine, sending the letters patent for Bourgeois and Yang to de Vauquelin, the consul in Canton, explained to the French officer that "l'intention de Sa Mayesté est que cet établissement fondé et soutenu par les rois ses prédécesseurs pour des objèts de pitié et d'utilité soit maintenu" (the intention of His Majesty is that this establishment founded and supported by the kings his predecessors for objects of piety and utility be

15. Charles Gravier Vergennes was foreign minister from 1774 to 1787. On Vergennes, see *ibid.*, pp. 170-174. On Barruel's judgment of Vergennes and other ministers of pre-revolutionary France, see Paolo Bianchini, "Le annotazioni manoscritte di Barruel ai Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire du jacobinisme", *Annali della Fondazione Luigi Einaudi*, XXXIII (1999), pp. 367-443.

16. This is also how the Jesuit historian Dehergne defines it in *Répertoire*, p. 210.

17. AFCJ, *Fonds Brotier*, GBro 134, f. 76: *Lettre de M. de Sartine, Ministre de la Marine, à M. d'Aligre, premier président, et à M. Joly de Fleury procureur général du parlement de Paris*, Marby, 5 June 1778.

18. François Bourgeois was born in Remicourt (Vosges) on 21 October 1723. A novice in 1740 in Nancy, he wrote an ode to the bishop of Pouilly in 1750. He left in 1764 for China, where he arrived in 1767, at Canton. In 1768 he moved to Beijing where he died on 29 July 1792. See Dehergne, *Répertoire*, p. 33. See also the entry by M. Prevost in *Dictionnaire de Biographie Française*, Paris, Letouzey et Ané, vol. VI (1954), p. 1473.

maintained), and urged him to "faire éprouver à Canton et ailleurs où Vous le pourrez les effets de la protection du roi" (make feel in Canton and elsewhere where You can the effects of the king's protection).[19]

From that point on, the king effectively took on the functions once held by the general, receiving a detailed yearly report on the state of assets and progress of the mission, as well as allocating honours and offices to the missionaries.[20] Strengthened by this protection, for 10 years the Chinese Jesuits were free to not recognize the authority of the bishop of Nanjing and then that of the vicar general of Beijing appointed by the bishop of Macao. For the French government, in fact, it was essential that the Portuguese, in agreement with the Holy See, not manage to seize control of the colony. For this reason, every year when the vicar came to the Jesuits to force them to comply with the brief of suppression, they replied that "Louis XVI lui même avait eu la bonté de faire savoir à son ambassadeur à Rome pour nous conserver notre mission et nos biens, qu'il étoit à présumer que tous les souverains ayant pu disposer des biens de la Compagnie dans leurs états, la France avait le même droit" (Louis XVI himself had had the kindness to make known to his ambassador in Rome to preserve our mission and our goods for us, that it was to be presumed that all sovereigns having been able to dispose of the Society's goods in their states, France had the same right).[21]

The schism lasted until negotiations between the French government (also representing the Jesuits' demands) and the Holy See produced a result acceptable to all parties: after the cross-veto of the French proposal to appoint Amiot apostolic prefect in China and the Roman one to grant management to the Missions Etrangères, in 1784 Propaganda Fide appointed a bishop of Portuguese nationality to serve in Beijing, answering directly to Rome; moreover, the management of the Jesuit mission in China formally passed to the French Lazarists, as the Jesuits and government of France wished. On 27 January 1785, when Monsignor Alexandre de Gouvea took possession of the episcopal seat of Beijing, the Jesuits formally submitted to him. That same day, Bourgeois officially ceded the mission to the Missionaries of the Saint Esprit; a few years later, however, he said that the Jesuits lived with these missionaries "dans la plus grande union" (in the greatest unity).[22]

The episode known as the "schism of Beijing" leads to reflection not only on the bond that tied French Jesuits to the motherland, but above all on the rift that the suppression had created between the members of the dissolved *Compagnie*

19. AFCJ, *Fonds Brotier*, GBro 134, f. 68.

20. The king renewed the appointment of the mission's superiors annually, but they remained the same. In 1779, he merely gave Amiot the power to "administrer le temporel et gouverner les missionnaires […] en cas de mort, absence, maladie ou autre légitime empêchement du sieur Bourgeois" (manage the temporal affairs and oversee the missionaries […] in the event of the death, absence, illness or other legitimate incapacity of Sieur Bourgeois). See AFCJ, *Fonds Brotier*, GBro 134, f. 83: *Brevet de supérieur des missions françaises en Chine pour M. Amiot, 18 novembre 1779*.

21. *Ibid.*, f. 69: *Extrait de la lettre de M. Bourgeois missionnaire français de Chine, au Ministre de la Marine, Pekin, 16 décembre 1776*.

22. AFCJ, *Fonds Brotier*, GBro 92, f. 76: *Lettre du P. Bourgeois au Père Brotier, Pékin, 27 juin 1789*.

and the Holy See. It is true, in fact, that in the past the Jesuit mission in China had given rise to tensions and clashes between Rome and the Jesuits, as well as between the Society of Jesus and other missionary orders. The phase of greatest conflict had coincided with the *querelle* over Chinese rites, with the Society suffering one of the worst humiliations of its history when it was called upon to provide proof of its orthodoxy. Before the *Dominus ac Redemptor* brief, however, it would have been difficult to imagine the "chosen militias of the pope" so openly opposing the Holy See.

The "schism of Beijing" affair should probably be considered one of the most evident manifestations of the former Jesuits' dissent towards the Holy See following the suppression of the Order. Aware how important the Chinese mission was for the government, the Jesuits tried to make the most of their negotiating leverage in France. After Bourgeois was appointed director of the mission at the end of 1776, they cherished for some time the dream of seeing the Society reborn there. Theoretically, since parliament had always refused to promulgate Clement XIV's bull, it was sufficient for Louis XVI to declare null the expulsion ban issued by his predecessor in November 1764 to bring the Order back to life. The Paris parliament proved ready to block any move towards reconstitution, however, and Louis XVI could not help the Order except by recognizing the pontifical suppression with his edict of 13 May 1777. For the Jesuits, this marked the end of their dream of bringing the Order back to life, at least in France. However, the orphans of the Society had never lost hope, as Bourgeois demonstrated by writing to Sartine that "les arrêts de 1777 contre les restes infortunés de notre chère Compagnie ont éloigné de nous des espérances dont nous croyon pouvoir nous flatter" (the decrees of 1777 against the unfortunate remains of our dear Society have distanced us from hopes which we believed we could indulge in).[23]

While the French Jesuits' supreme ambition remained out of reach, the *Compagnie* nevertheless made some important achievements through the Chinese mission, in addition of course to preserving it itself. Indeed, the Jesuits were formally assigned the task of training missionaries to be sent to China. This undertaking was given to Louis Vitré Du Gad, probably the most celebrated Jesuit missionary at that time and well regarded both for his apostolic vocation and for his mystical writings.[24] Du Gad was appointed procurator for the mission of the former French Jesuits in China at the seminary of the Missions Etrangères a few

23. AFCJ, *Fonds Brotier*, GBro 134, ff. 84-92: *Lettre du P. Bourgeois, supérieur de la mission à Pekin, à M. de Sartine, Ministre de la Marine, en lui evoyant les comptes et l'*état de la maison de *Pekin, année 1779, Pekin, 29 septembre 1779*.

24. Louis Vitré Du Gad was born in Lyon in 1707. A novice in 1723 in the Lyon province, he left for China in 1737. He was superior of the French mission in China from 1752 to 1758 and from 1760 to 1762. Deported by the Portuguese to Saint Julien between 1762 and 1766, he returned to China in 1767. In 1770, he was sent back to Paris to plead the cause of the missions, and died there in 1786. See Aloys De Backer-Carlos Sommervogel, *Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jésus*, Brussels-Paris, Schepens-Picard, 1890-1932, vol. III, col. 270; M. Viller, "Un texte inédit du P. Louis Du Gad sur l'abandon", in *Mélanges offerts au P. F. Cavallera*, Toulouse, Institut Catholique, 1948, pp. 449-469. See also the entry by Joseph Dehergne in *Dictionnaire de Biographie Française*, vol. XI (1967), p. 1479.

days after Bourgeois had been appointed superior of the mission.[25] This position was assigned to Du Gad with the full consent of parliament, although only a few months later it resumed hostilities against the ex-Jesuits.[26] His task was to "faire en un mot tout ce que le procureur de ces missions faisait à Paris avant la dissolution de la société des jésuites" (do in a word all that the procurator of these missions did in Paris before the dissolution of the Society of Jesuits).[27] Du Gad even tried to obtain permission to set up a special seminary in Paris where missionaries could be trained for China, but Sartine denied him this, maintaining that "Sa Majesté n'a pas jugé à propos d'approuver […] une maison de retraite destinée à l'instruction des sujets qui se voueront à la mission de la Chine" (His Majesty has not judged it appropriate to approve […] a retreat house intended for the instruction of subjects who will devote themselves to the mission of China).[28] However, Du Gad was given a position as procurator at the seminary of the Missions Etrangères, thus effectively becoming one of the authorities deciding about the strategies of the missionary body.

Thus it was that, with the approval of the government rather than the consent of the seminary directors, the Jesuits saw their massive presence at the Missions Etrangères ratified. Between the 1770s and 1780s, the seminary in rue du Bac became a veritable den of former Jesuits who, going against the prescriptions of parliament, found a way to live in community at least in part. One of these was Hubert Cousin de Méricourt who, on 15 August 1769 when the *Compagnie* had already been banned from France for almost five years, took his final vows at the monastery of the Visitation nuns[29] located beside the Missions Etrangères seminary.[30] Having become professed, an operation legally forbidden in France, de Méricourt set off on a mission to China and arrived there in January 1773, shortly before the brief of suppression was promulgated; he died there the following year.

25. His appointment as a procurator is recorded in AFCJ, *Fonds Brotier*, GBro 134, f. 70: *Lettre de M. Dugad de Vitré à M. de Sartine, Paris, 3 décembre 1776*. Du Gad simultaneously held the post of spiritual director of the Carmelite nuns of rue saint Jacques in Paris.

26. *Ibid.*, f. 77: *Lettre de M. d'Aligre premier président du parlement de Paris à M. de Sartine, Ministre de la Marine, Rivière, 16 juin 1778*. D'Aligre's favourable response is accompanied by an annotation from Sartine, writing that "la réponse de M. Joly de Fleury, procureur général du parlement, est dans le sens que celle de M. d'Aligne" (the answer of Mr Joly de Fleury, attorney general of parliament, is in the same vein as that of Mr d'Aligne).

27. AFCJ, *Fonds Brotier*, GBro 134, f. 73: *Lettre de M. de Sartine ministre de la Marine, à M, Dugad de Vitré Directeur des Carmelites de la rue S. Jacques à Paris, 1776*.

28. *Ibid.*, f. 72, *Lettre de M. de Sartine à M. Dugad, Fontainebleau, 9 novembre 1777*.

29. Relations between the former Jesuits and the nuns of the Ordre de la Visitation were very close throughout France until the Revolution. Exchanges were particularly intense at the rue du Bac convent: it hosted Sister Pelagia, who directed Jean Grou's "spiritual conversion". Antoine Vernet, a former missionary who had helped manage negotiations with the government over the missions of India, became director and confessor of the same monastery in 1787.

30. Méricourt announced his profession to Ricci in a letter preserved in ARSI, *Gallia*, 24, f. 551. Born in 1729, he had entered the Order in 1754, thus quite late compared to the average age of his brethren who began their novitiate before they were in their twenties.

4. *Survival strategies, from community life to cultural policies*

The seminary of the Missions Etrangères was not only the place where the Society of Jesus continued its existence in great secrecy; it was also one of the driving forces behind its cultural activities. The boarders living at the convent of rue du Bac included not only the Jesuits assigned to train missionaries for China, but also some of the men of letters most committed to preserving the Order's cultural heritage. Some of the works that went on to prove the Jesuits were still alive and active were written there. In 1773, on his return from Bohemia, Barruel settled at the Missions Etrangères where, as a boarder in 1774, he was commissioned by his confrères to compose the ode with which the Order officially greeted Louis XVI's accession to the throne after having passed over in silence the death of Louis XV, the sovereign responsible for the suppression of the *Compagnie*. [31]

From August 1771 until the Revolution, Yves-Marie Querbeuf also lived at the seminary.[32] Starting in 1777, he published the works of the confrères who had directed the Order at the time of suppression, and who had not published any of their manuscripts after 1762 so as not to draw new controversy to the Society. He began by publishing the *Sermons* of Charles Frey de Neuville, which were focused on the main themes of Jesuit devotion but did not hesitate to voice open criticism of the Enlightenment.[33] He then printed the works that Guillaume Berthier had written after the suppression and which circumstances had prevented him from putting on the market.[34]

31. Augustin Barruel, *Ode sur le glorieux avénement de Louis Auguste au trône, présenté à la Reine par l'abbé de Barruel*, Paris, Valade, 1774. Detaching from the long Jesuit tradition of composing eulogies for deceased sovereigns, the members of the dissolved Society had remained silent upon the death of Louis XV, the king who had disbanded the Ignatian Order in France. Through Barruel, they addressed the new ruler in the hope that he would change course and behave quite differently from his predecessor. On Barruel's presence at the Missions Etrangères, see Archives des Missions Etrangères, *Seminaire*, vol. 1501, *Recettes*.

32. Yves Mathurin Querbeuf was born in Landernau, Brittany, in 1726 and entered the Paris novitiate in 1742. He managed to remain in Paris, where he was teaching at the time of the suppression, until the parliamentary ban of 1764, at which point he took refuge in Fribourg. The following year he returned to Brittany, where he remained clandestinely until 1770. He died in Brunswick in 1797. There is no study reviewing his literary output. His biography can be reconstructed through Sommervogel, *Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jésus*, vol. VI, coll. 1335-1338. His stay at the seminary of the Missions Etrangères is documented in the Archives des Missions Etrangères, *Seminaire*, vol. 1501, *Recettes*.

33. Pierre-Claude Frey de Neuville, *Sermons du pere Neuville l'ainé, dédiés au Roi*, Rouen, Laurent Dumesnil, 1778, 2 vols. Before the dispersal, Querbeuf had published only *Ode sur la naissance de Mgr le Duc de Berry*, Paris, Thiboust, 1754, and the translation of an ode by Claude-François Willermet, *Oraison funèbre de Mgr le duc de Bourgogne*, Paris, 1761.

34. Yves-Marie Querbeuf, *Les Psaumes traduits en françois avec des notes et des réflexions. Par le P.G.F. Berthier*, Paris, Mérigot le jeune, 1785, 8 vols; Yves-Marie Querbeuf, *Isaïe traduit en françois avec des notes et des réflexions, par le P. G.-F. Berthier*, Paris, Mérigot le jeune, 1788-1789, 5 vols; Yves-Marie Querbeuf, Réflexions spirituelles du P. G.-F. Berthier, Paris, Mérigot le jeune, 1790.

The most important editorial operation encouraged by Querbeuf was undoubtedly the new edition of *Lettres edifiantes et curieuses*, which had been interrupted with the death of Patouillet.[35] Querbeuf had been involved in this enterprise by Gabriel Brotier, and they worked together on the preparation of the 26 volumes of the new edition between 1780 and 1783. The missives, unlike the previous reprints, were grouped not by date of compilation but by geographical areas of origin, and some of them had remained unpublished.[36] The Brotier-Querbeuf edition of *Lettres edifiantes et curieuses* offered interesting information both about indigenous populations and the life of the Jesuit missions that survived the suppression. It served to revive one of the main literary glories of the *compagnie* while also recalling its engagement in the educational, apostolic, and literary fields. Moreover, the work collected the letters of Jesuits who still performed their work in missions scattered throughout all the continents and concentrated especially in China and, as such, represented the most substantial proof of the Society of Jesus's enduring vitality.

In the decades of the suppression, the Chinese mission represented a difficult but extraordinary opportunity for the French Jesuits to demonstrate their institutional, and above all cultural and spiritual, survival, in France even more than in China. By maintaining a presence at court and elsewhere in the empire, they were able to send large amounts of first-hand information to Paris, and this flowed into successful publications such as the new edition of *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses* and the *Mémoires concernant l'histoire, les sciences, les arts, les moeurs, les usages, etc., des Chinois, par les missionnaires de Pe-Kin*. This allowed the *compagnie* to continue playing an almost unique mediating role between Europe and a land and culture that fascinated European readers and fueled intense debate, thus reaffirming – in a not especially veiled way – the usefulness of the Ignatian Order and the deleteriousness of its suppression for the Church as well as for the State and the Republic of Letters.

35. *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses, écrites des Missions etrangères*, *Nouvelle Edition*, Paris, Merigot le jeune, 1780-1783, 26 vols.

36. The *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses* edited by Brotier and Querbeuf are commonly presented as a simple reissue. In reality, while the letters of the earlier editions were indeed reprinted in their entirety, a good number of new missives were added and sent from the missions specifically for this publication. Another new element was that numerous letters were not written by Jesuits, whose numbers as we know had greatly diminished in China after the suppression, but by other missionaries. In the preface to the work, it was made clear that Brotier's role had been to collect the letters, making explicit reference to individual ethnic, geographical, and political phenomena. Brotier stated that he had conducted research for this purpose, having "consulté les Missionnaires qui ont longtems séjourné dans les différents contrées dont il sera question dans cet ouvrage" (consulted the Missionaries who have long resided in the different regions which will be discussed in this work); see *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*, vol. I, 1780, p. xi.

Guido Abbattista

Visual Representations of China. Institutions, Society, and Nature in Western Illustrations (c. 1700-1840)

1. *The visual encounter with otherness*

The experience of human and cultural otherness in modern-age Europe was largely mediated through visual perception and imagery. In the pre-photographic era, illustrations complementing textual descriptions and the illustrated book in its many forms were among the principal tools carrying out such mediation, as numerous studies have increasingly documented.[1] This holds true especially for the countries and civilizations of the East, and notably for China. Of the earliest significant works on China in the 16th century, mostly stemming from Jesuit authors, many were accompanied by illustrations and, over time, substantial publications consisting solely of image collections also appeared.

The first such collection devoted to China – neither a travelogue nor an illustrated description, but a true series of portraits – was perhaps *L'Estat présent de la Chine en figures* by Father Joachim Bouvet (1697). This splendid collection of 43 engravings, executed by Parisian bookseller, publisher, and engraver Pierre Giffart (1643-1723) and modelled after original Chinese designs, depicted male and female types – representative figures rather than historical individuals – from the Chinese court and high society. Each type was rendered in both full colour and black and white and accompanied by brief captions, with particular attention to attire as an indicator of rank. The collection opens with a detailed "Idée du gouvernement de la Chine", leaving no doubt as to the idealized framing of the Chinese imperial government as one of the world's most perfect, ruled by excellent laws and a wise sovereign, lacking only the light of the Gospel but perfectly capable of receiving it:

> In a word, if China is fortunate enough one day to be fully enlightened by the lights of the Gospel, as we have reason to hope, such a wise Government, receiving its final perfection from the Holiness of Christian Law, could be regarded as something even more perfect than Plato's Republic, and all those beautiful ideas of government that our wisest politicians have ever imagined.[2]

1. Regarding the 18th century, see *Book Illustration in the Long Eighteenth Century: Reconfiguring the Visual Periphery of the Text*, ed. by Christina Ionescu, Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011.

2. Joachim Bouvet, *L'Estat présent de la Chine en figures*, Paris, chez Pierre Giffart, 1697, p. 4. Translation mine.

Jumping forward approximately a century to the great personal collection of French Minister Henri Léonard Bertin[3] – enriched by materials from Beijing and partly incorporated into the monumental *Mémoires concernant l'histoire, les sciences, les arts, les mœurs, les usages, &c. des Chinois. Par les Missionnaires de Pekin* (1776-1791) – one sees how the demand for illustrated depictions of China grew. This rising demand pursued the idea of authentic representation based on high-quality Chinese materials and expanded the variety of subjects depicted to encompass every aspect of social, cultural, economic, and natural life, as well as the landscape and geography of the Middle Kingdom. The *Mémoires* not only reflect this demand but also, through their illustrations, demonstrate the persistent tendency in the late 18th century to idealize China as a great nation governed by a wise emperor, protector of his subjects and patron of letters and the arts.[4]

It is well known that for much of the 18th century, the Jesuits of the Beijing mission devoted considerable effort to making the visual arts a tool of intercultural exchange and transmitting examples of Chinese artistic skill – especially in painting – to Europe, thereby countering detractors such as Cornelius De Pauw with his criticisms of Chinese artistic abilities, echoing a view already expressed in the *Encyclopédie*.[5]

Given all this, it is no surprise that the theme of visual representations of China in 18th-century European culture has been explored in the past 20 years from various perspectives, focusing on individual authors (Athanasius Kircher, Johann Nieuhoff, Johann van der Aa, Jean-Baptiste Du Halde, Bertin and the *Mémoires*, William Chambers, William Alexander), as well as through digital projects and museum exhibitions.[6]

3. John Finlay, *Henri Bertin and the Representation of China in Eighteenth-Century France*, New York-London, Routledge, 2020; Nathalie Monnet, "Art et politique sous les Qing" for the exhibition *Chine, l'Empire du trait* at the National Library of France in 2004; Chao-Ying Lee, "Les illustrations des *Mémoires concernant les Chinois* (1776-1791): comparaison des styles occidentaux et extrême-orientaux", PhD dissertation under the direction of Daniel Rabreau, Université de Paris 1, 2004; Chao-Ying Lee, "L'enjeu politique et religieux des modes de représentation dans les *Mémoires concernant les Chinois* (1776-1791)", *Histoire de l'art*, 51 (2002), pp. 87-99; Joseph Dehergne, "Une grande collection: *Mémoires concernant les Chinois* (1776-1814)", *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient*, 72 (1983), pp. 267-298.

4. See n. 12 below.

5. "C'est une sorte de peinture que les Chinois font sur des éventails ou sur la porcelaine, où ils représentent des fleurs, des animaux, des paysages, des figures, &c. avec des couleurs fines & brillantes. Le seul mérite de leur peinture est une certaine propreté & un certain goût d'imitation servile, mais où l'on ne remarque ni génie, ni dessein, ni invention, ni correction" : "Peinture chinoise", in *Encyclopédie ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, etc.,* ed. by Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert, vol. XII (1765), p. 278, no author. See University of Chicago, ARTFL Encyclopédie Project (Autumn 2022 edition), ed. by Robert Morrissey and Glenn Roe, available online.

6. On the former, see the sections on China in the digital history project "Visualizing Cultures" at MIT, Boston, founded in 2002 by MIT professors John Dower and Shigeru Miyagawa, available online; on the latter, see "China on Paper: European and Chinese Works from the Late Sixteenth to the Early Nineteenth Century", 6 November 2007-10 February 2008, at the Getty Center of the J. Paul Getty Museum, available online; "Imagining China: the View

Rather than dwelling on individual authors or themes, this essay seeks to understand how the visual experience of China evolved in European culture and public opinion between the 18th and 19th centuries, the image of China addressed here in a strictly figurative sense, albeit inseparable from textual aspects. To clarify, this study does not address cartography or topography despite the fundamental contributions that Jesuits such as Matteo Ricci, Martino Martini, and Giulio Aleni made to shaping the cartographic image of China between the 17th and 18th centuries,[7] nor does it include specialized iconographies (e.g. the 23 plates of *Flora sinensis* by Michael Boym, Vienna, 1656) or decorative arts, that is, the vast array of figurative motifs on Chinese craft products imported into Europe; sparking the vogue for chinoiseries, these latter not only influenced taste and consumption but also helped fix among the Western public an aesthetic idea of China as linked to technical refinement, detail, chromatic vibrancy, and the exoticism of human and animal, floral, and vegetal motifs.

2. *Documentary illustrations: scope and method*

The focus here is on documentary illustrations, those intended to convey depictions of Chinese reality alongside printed descriptive texts or through iconographic collections (watercolors or engravings) with or without brief explanatory texts. The adjective "documentary" is used in the awareness that it does not equate to "objectivity": even realistic illustrations, those not the result of artistic invention, are inevitably influenced by the intentions of their creators and the contexts in which they were produced and disseminated. Every illustrated representation reveals some degree of transformation, be it idealizing or denigrating, exoticizing or domesticating.

The aim is to highlight changes and possible trends in the evolution of illustrations of China available in Europe from roughly the mid-17th to the mid-

from Europe, 1500–1700", September 2009-January 2020, at the Folger Shakespeare Library, available online; as well as the large exhibition at the Palace Museum in Beijing, "Portrayals from a brush divine", June 2015-April 2016, for the tercentenary of Castiglione's arrival in China, available online.

7. Marco Caboara, *Regnum Chinae: The Printed Western Maps of China to 1735*, Leiden, Brill, 2022; *Remapping the World in East Asia: Toward a Global History of the "Ricci Maps"*, ed. by Mario Cams and Elke Papelitzky, Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 2024; Eugenio Menegon, *Un solo Cielo. Giulio Aleni S.J. (1582-1649). Geografia, arte, scienza, religione dall'Europa alla Cina*, Brescia, Grafo, 1994; Giulio Aleni, *Geografia dei paesi stranieri alla Cina. Zhifang waiji*, translation, introduction and annotations by Paolo De Troia, Brescia, Fondazione Civiltà Bresciana-Centro Giulio Aleni, 2009; *Scholar from the West: Giulio Aleni S.J. (1582-1649) and the Dialogue between Christianity and China*, ed. by Tiziana Lippiello and Roman Malek, Brescia-Sankt Augustin, Fondazione Civiltà Bresciana and Monumenta Serica Institute, 1997; Federico Lombardi SJ, "Martino Martini: The Jesuit who introduced China to Europe", *La Civiltà Cattolica*, June 2023; Giuseppe O. Longo, *Il gesuita che disegnò la Cina. La vita e le opere di Martino Martini*, Milan, Springer, 2010; *La storia della cartografia e Martino Martini*, ed. by Elena Dai Prà, Milan, Franco Angeli, 2015.

19th century, privileging a broad perspective over close analysis of individual works and authors.[8] To this end, the first step was to draft a preliminary, and necessarily incomplete, inventory identifying the quantity, nature, authors, and dissemination channels for these images.

This inventory yielded 30 main titles, from Johann Nieuhoff's *L'ambassade de la Compagnie orientale des Provinces Unies vers l'empereur de la Chine* (Leiden, 1665) to Thomas Allom's *The Chinese Empire Illustrated* (London–New York, 1842-1845, 2 vols), spanning a long series of works. Of these, the most significant include Kircher's *China illustrata* (1667), Olfert Dapper's *Atlas Chinensis* (1671), Pieter Boudewyn van der Aa's *La galerie agréable du monde* (1729), Du Halde's *Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique, et physique de l'empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie chinoise* (1735, 4 vols), the aforementioned *Mémoires* (1776-1791), Alexander's *The Costume of China* (1805), and George Henry Mason's *The Costume of China* (1800) and *The Punishments of China* (1801): a mix of travel accounts or descriptive syntheses and image collections with explanatory texts, such as Bouvet's work. Excluding important works with few or no illustrations, e.g. Le Comte's *Nouveaux Mémoires sur l'état présent de la Chine* (1696), the *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*, Joseph-Marie-Anne de Moyriac de Mailla's and abbé Jean-Baptiste Gabriel Alexandre Grosier's *Histoire générale de la Chine* (1785), and André Everard Van Braam Houckgeest's *Voyage de l'ambassade de la Compagnie des Indes Orientales hollandaises, vers l'empereur de la Chine* (1794-1795) – the corpus amounts to over 2,300 illustrations. Rather than a close analysis, which would be impossible here, the study offers a dual perspective: highlighting quantitative and qualitative aspects, and focusing on certain themes and cases of particular significance in light of evolving knowledge about, and overall relations between, Europe and China.

8. For example, Marcia Reed, "Bernard Picart on China: 'Curious' Discourses and Images Taken Principally from Jesuit Sources" and Catherine E. Clark, "Chinese Idols and Religious Art: Questioning Difference in *Cérémonies et Coutumes Religieuses*", in *Bernard Picart and the First Global Vision of Religion*, ed. by Lynn Hunt, Margaret Jacob, and Wijnand Mijnhardt, Los Angeles, The Getty Research Institute, 2010, pp. 215-234 and 235-250, respectively; Steff Nellis, "A Cabinet of Religious Curiosities. Theatricality and Performativity in Bernard Picart's Illustrations for the Cérémonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde (1723-1737)", *Images Re-vues*, Hors-série 12 | 2024, available online; Paola Von Wyss Giacosa, "Visual Provocations. Bernard Picart's illustrative strategies in Cérémonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde", in *Feeling Exclusion Religious Conflict, Exile and Emotions in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Giovanni Tarantino and Charles Zika, London, Routledge, 2019, pp. 233-258; Paola Von Wyss Giacosa, "Investigating religion visually: On the role and significance of engravings in Athanasius Kircher's discourse on Idolatry", *Asdiwal*, 7 (2012), pp. 119-149; Jing Sun, *The Illusion of Verisimilitude: Johan Nieuhoff's Images of China*, Universiteit Leiden Repository, 2013, available online; Chao-Ying Lee, *Visions de l'Empire du Milieu. Illustrations des Mémoires concernant les Chinois*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2016; Chen Yushu, "William Alexander's Image of Qing Cina", *Monumenta Serica*, 67, 2 (December 2019), pp. 397-440; Stacey Sloboda, "Picturing China: William Alexander and the visual language of Chinoiserie", *The British Art Journal*, 9/2 (Autumn 2008), pp. 28-36.

3. *Thematic variety and shifting focus*

A first noteworthy element is the thematic variety of the illustrations: in varying proportions depending on the author, they cover subjects from views and landscapes to institutions, social and economic life, natural resources, and religion. Kircher (1667), in his 68 illustrations, emphasizes animal and plant subjects followed by writing and religion; Johan Nieuhoff (1665) focuses nearly half of his one 133 images on city views, landscapes, and nature; Dapper (1671), in 89 illustrations, grants equal importance to landscapes, social figures, institutions, and administration. Van der Aa (1729) devotes 40 per cent of his 249 illustrations in his three "Chinese" volumes to city and monument views; Du Halde addresses geography in over 60 per cent of his 101 illustrations, with the remainder equally divided among other themes; the 16 volumes of the *Mémoires* (1776-1791) contain 176 illustrations, nearly half depicting political-institutional and historical themes, and 26 per cent on culture, science, and music. Alexander, an artist with the Macartney Embassy (1792-1794), in his 35 sketches inserted into George Thomas Staunton's *Authentic Account of the Embassy from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China* (1797) focuses mainly on urban and rural views, followed by politics and institutions, and then economic, technical, and infrastructural themes, giving less attention to religion (nine per cent); in his *Costume of China* (1805), 48 plates depict, in descending order of frequency, politics and institutions, economic activities and trades, and especially rural landscapes; in *Picturesque Representations of the Dress and Manners of the Chinese* (1814), over half the images concern trades, professions, and social figures, with a consistently small share devoted to religious subjects. This distribution is nearly identical in Jean-Baptiste Joseph Breton de la Martinière's *La Chine en miniature* (1811-1812), Bazin de Malpière's *La Chine, moeurs, usages, costumes* (1825), and Auguste Borget's *La Chine et les Chinois* (1842), where 85 per cent of the 32 images are social, clothing styles, or economic subjects. Rural and urban landscapes, scenes of domestic and social life, and various economic activities predominate (77 per cent) among the 128 splendid illustrations of Allom's *China in a Series of Views* (1842-1845).

Over nearly two centuries, there was a visible decline in attention to religion and cults and a marked increase in interest in society – its economic activities, classes, figures, and trades – and in landscape and urban views, with a consistently stable, but never majority, space devoted to representations of imperial authority, administration, and power. In short, the real daily and material life of contemporary China increasingly attracted the European gaze more than its institutional, religious, and cultural aspects – a development linked to accelerating commercial contacts and the more substantial Western presence in China (mainly Canton) at the end of the 18th century and, especially, in the early decades of the 19th century. After the First Opium War, with the opening of the "Treaty Ports" and greater mobility, the possibilities for interaction in inland China and variety of visual accounts of Chinese society – e.g. in the medical field[9] – went on to grow

9. Sijie Fan, "A Study on Lam-qua's Medical Image (1836-1855) Based on the Chinese and Western Visual Interaction Mode", School of Art and Design, Guangzhou Maritime University,

exponentially; from the mid-1840s, photography changed the Western visual perspective on China dramatically.

A second noteworthy element is that, despite the suppression of the Jesuit Order, the Jesuit channel for supplying illustrations to Europe (especially France) continued to play a key role in the late 18th century thanks to the protection and encouragement of minister Bertin, as well as the related Sinophile discourse. In the final years of the century, especially after the Macartney Embassy, the landscape changed. Previously, there had been only a few image collections derived from sketches made on site by merchants, soldiers, officials, or non-religious artists, such as Chambers's *Designs of Chinese Buildings…* (1757). After Macartney, however, this became the prevailing means of collecting and distributing images of China, produced by both European and Chinese hands, and especially Cantonese workshops such as Lamqua's specializing in export watercolors depicting clothing styles, social figures, flora, and fauna.[10] In parallel, a European – especially British – vision emerged that was less sensitive to the Sinophile motifs of Enlightenment culture and increasingly critical of Chinese society, raising questions about how this shift would affect image production, especially in terms of subject choice. To clarify this aspect, it is necessary to look back at some iconographic motifs favoured by the Sinophilia of Du Halde and shared by Jesuits and Enlightenment thinkers.

4. *Iconographic motifs of Sinophilia*

Examples of subjects expressing Jesuit admiration for China, shared by much of Enlightenment culture, include the figure of the emperor and his exercise of power; productive activities (agriculture, weaving, fishing), the industriousness of the population and its harmonious relationship with nature; and the life and doctrine of Confucius. Each is articulated through sub-themes well represented in the illustrations. These themes are already present in 17th- and early 18th-century works by Kircher, Nieuhoff, and Van der Aa, whose images continued to circulate well into the 18th century.

The emperor, in all his majesty, appears both as a solitary figure and participating in ceremonies and processions – the famous portraits of Qianlong and his consorts by Giuseppe Castiglione (1736-1770s) are a vivid example.[11]

2023; Stephen Rachman, "Memento Morbi: Lam Qua's Paintings, Peter Parker's Patients", *Literature and Medicine*, 23/1 (Spring 2004), pp. 134-159; "Lam Qua Paintings", Medical Historical Library, Harvey Cushing/John Hay Whitney Medical Library at Yale, available online; *Imagining Chinese Medicine*, ed. by Vivienne Lo and Penelope Barrett, Leiden, Brill, 2018; Ari Larissa Heinrich, *The Afterlife of Images: Translating the Pathological Body between China and the West*, Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2008.

10. Craig Clunas, *Chinese Export Watercolours*, London, Victoria and Albert Museum, 1984.

11. The main body of Giuseppe Castiglione's work is held at the Palace Museum in Beijing as evidence of the official portraiture of 18th-century imperial China (see https://theme.npm.edu.tw/exh104/giuseppecastiglione/en/index.html#main). See also Michèle Pirazzoli-

The *Mémoires concernant les Chinois* also exalt the figure of the emperor, especially in connection with military and peaceful achievements.[12] The former is exemplified by the series of 16 engravings executed in France at Qianlong's behest to glorify the victorious campaigns of 1755-1759 against the Zungars or Oirats ("Eleuths" in Jesuit texts) in northwest China. Officially described as "pacification" of Central Asian frontier areas, these were in fact systematic conquest and extermination campaigns causing hundreds of thousands of deaths. Jesuit artists Castiglione, Jean Attiret, Ignatius Sichelbarth, and Jean-Damascène Sallusti were tasked with creating large-scale paintings, whose preparatory drawings were subsequently sent to France in 1767. Here, Charles Nicolas Cochin produced copper engravings published in a splendid boxed edition with Chinese text,[13] and Isidore-Stanislas Helman published a version in 1785 (*Suite des seize estampes représentant les conquêtes de l'empereur de la Chine*) (Fig. 1). This was a remarkable exercise in cultural diplomacy, intended to facilitate the Franco-Chinese commercial relations initiated years earlier by Louis XV's commission of the "Les tentures chinoises" tapestries at Beauvais, based on François Boucher's designs – an iconographic ensemble expressing rococo chinoiserie.[14]

Among the many plates in the *Mémoires*, none depict Qianlong's western campaigns. Yet this subject does appear in volume I, where Father Amiot acknowledges its historical significance: what was a pretext for imperial celebration and diplomacy, Amiot calls a "tragedy, of which I was a witness… A revolution by which an entire nation is annihilated deserves, without doubt, a place in the annals of the universe", even though no one in the West was aware of it at the time.[15]

T'Serstevens and Marco Musillo, *Giuseppe Castiglione: 1688-1766. Peintre et architecte à la cour de Chine*, Paris, Thalia Edition, 2007.

12. "Ce grand Prince [Qianlong], dont le portrait gravé d'après le dessein original, qui a été envoyé de Péking l'année dernière, décore le frontispice de cet Ouvrage, réunit le génie & les talens de l'homme de lettres avec la science & l'art du gouvernement": *Mémoires concernant l'histoire, les sciences, les arts, les mœurs, les usages, &c. des Chinois. Par les Missionnaires de Pekin [J. Amiot, P.-M. Cibot, F. Bourgeois, A. Kao]* (hereafter *Mémoires concernant les Chinois*), 15 vols, Paris, chez Nyon, 1776-1791, vol. I, "Préface", p. x. The portrait of Qianlong, "déssiné d'après nature par Panzi Jésuite" and engraved by Martinet, is accompanied by the following caption: "Occupé sans relâche à tous les soins divers d'un Gouvernement qu'on admire le plus grand Potentat qui soit dans l'Univers est le meilleur Lettré qui soit dans son Empire".

13. See https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b53192455s/f1.item. See also Niklas Leverenz, "Drawings, Proofs and Prints from the Qianlong Emperor's East Turkestan Copperplate Engravings", *Arts Asiatiques*, 68 (2013), pp. 39-60, available online.

14. See the exhibition "Une des provinces du rococo: la Chine rêvée de François Boucher", Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie de Besançon, https://memoirevive.besancon.fr/page/une-des-provinces-du-rococo-la-chine-revee-de-francois-boucher, on which Juliette Trey, "Chinoiseries à Besançon, La Chine rêvée de François Boucher", *Revue de l'art*, 212/2 (2021), pp. 78-83.

15. Letter from Father Amiot to Bertin, Beijing, 4 October 1772, in *Mémoires concernant les Chinois*, vol. I, p. 326.

Figure 1. Isidore-Stanislas Helman, *Suite des Seizes Estampes représentant les Conquêtes de l'Empereur de la Chine*, 1785, planche 3, gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Alongside military deeds, peaceful achievements also exalt the emperor, integrating the traditional themes of antiquity, stability, efficiency, and the paternal character of Chinese institutions. Three iconographic examples stand out: the first is the set of 12 original Chinese plates published in the *Mémoires* to commemorate relief efforts after the 1742 Yangzhou flood, testifying to imperial solicitude;[16] the second is the traditional image of the emperor presiding over the Spring plowing ceremony (*qin geng*), already known in Europe from earlier texts and celebrated in official silk scrolls from the Yongzheng era (1723-1735),[17] with numerous illustrations available in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, notably

16. "Description de l'inondation de la ville de Yen-Tcheou-Fou et de son territoire, en 1742", in *Ibid.*, vol. IX, 1783, pp. 454-507.

17. Zhang Jingni He Beijie, 《雍正帝祭先农坛图》系列 图卷考释与典礼空间述要 ("The 'Emperor Yongzheng's Sacrifice to the Altar of Agriculture' Serial Scroll with the Spatial Ceremonies Reviewed"), 故宫博物院院刊 (*Journal of the Palace Museum*), 4/264 (2024), pp. 66-87; Jacques Marx, "L'Empereur de Chine ouvrant le premier sillon: réception et exploitation politique de l'image dans la culture française du XVIIIe siècle", *NCUJH*, 2014. The ceremony is mentioned by Martino Martini, Jean-Frédéric Bernard in *Cérémonies et coutumes religieuses des peuples idolatres, représentées [...] par la main de Bernard Picart*, Amsterdam, J. F. Bernard, 1723-1743, vol. II, part I, pp. 229-230, Jean-Baptiste Du Halde in *Description de la Chine*, 4 vols, Paris, Le Mercier, 1735, vol. II, pp. 69-70, Montesquieu in "Bonne Coûtume de la Chine", in *Esprit des Lois*, Geneva, 1750, vol. II, book XIV, ch. 8, p. 15, Denis Diderot in "Agriculture", in *Encyclopédie ou dictionnaire raisonné*, vol. I (1751), p. 184 (see University of Chicago, ARTFL Encyclopédie Project (Autumn 2022 edition), available online, Moyriac de Mailla and Grosier, *Histoire générale de la Chine*, 1785, vol. II, pp. 34-37, Voltaire, Pierre Poivre, and many other authors.

Figure 2. Isidore-Stanislas Helman, *Cérémonie du labourage faite par l'Empereur de la Chine*, 1786, online collection, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.

the frontispiece of volume I of Abbé Raynal's *Histoire des Deux Indes* (La Haye, chez Gosse, 1774) and Helman's *Cérémonie du Labourage Faite par l'Empereur de la Chine* (1786) (Fig. 2). The third example of appreciating the majesty of imperial power is found in admiration for the architecture of imperial residences and parks, mirrors of imperial grandeur and care for nature. This admiration is visually conveyed through a series of illustrations: the 36 views of Jehol's Summer Palace by Matteo Ripa (1711-1713), which so influenced the English desire for oriental-style gardens via Lord Burlington and William Chambers;[18] the 40 views of Yuanmingyuan commissioned by Qianlong (1738-1744); the 20 later views of European-style palaces (1783-1786) (Fig. 3) known in France among the Bertin circle, and Louis-François Delatour in particular;[19] and the 96 engravings by Le Rouge inspired by silk paintings from Beijing.[20]

The theme of agriculture brings us to another recurring iconographic motif: not only the diligent cultivation of fields and skilled irrigation, but the industriousness

18. *Ideas of Chinese Gardens: Western Accounts, 1300-1860*, ed. by Bianca Maria Rinaldi, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015, ch. 8, "Matteo Ripa (16821746)", pp. 83-90.

19. Delatour later dealt with this in his *Essais sur l'architecture des Chinois* (1803). See John Finlay, "Henri Bertin (1720-1792) and Images of the Yuanmingyuan in Eighteenth-century France", in *Collecting and Displaying China's "Summer Palace" in the West: The Yuanmingyuan in Britain and France*, ed. by Louise Tythacott, London-New York, Routledge, 2018, pp. 124-137.

20. Georges Louis Le Rouge, *Le jardin anglo-chinois à la mode. Cahiers XV-XVI-XVII*, 1786.

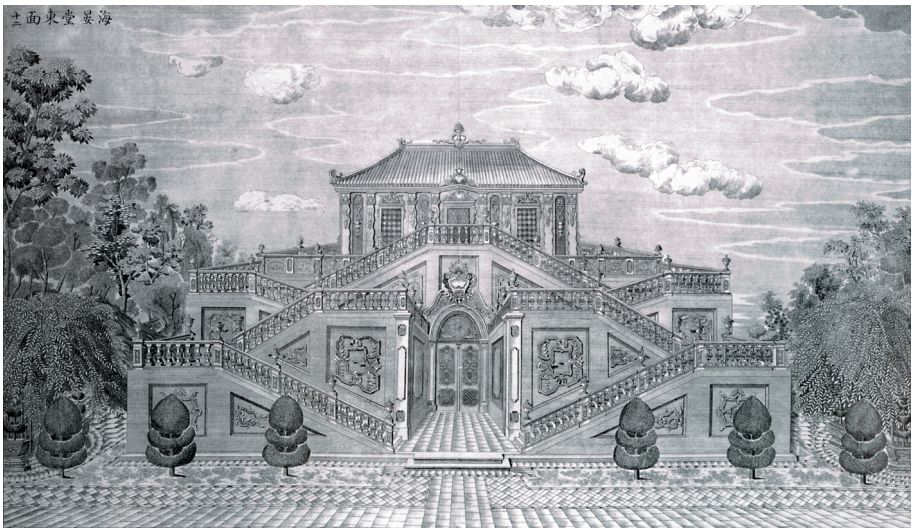


Figure 3. Giuseppe Castiglione, from drawings by Yi Lantai, Yuanmingyuan, Garden of Perfect Brightness, "East Façade of the Room of the Calm Ocean", 1783-1786, Special Collections, Getty Research Institute.

of the Chinese people and their harmonious relationship with a bountiful, fertile nature.[21] This theme is well rooted in traditional Chinese iconography, for instance the *Gengzhitu* (Pictures of Tilling and Weaving), a classic Song dynasty scroll collection about rice cultivation and sericulture that was often reprinted under the Qing; other albums were also dedicated to cultivation.[22] The *Gengzhitu* was reprinted and expanded in 1696 at the initiative of Emperor Kangxi, who added his own verses, and Castiglione made painted reproductions. This repertoire also spread to Korea and Japan, providing decorative motifs for export crafts such as porcelain, fans, wallpaper, and screens, and it was certainly very familiar to the Jesuits.[23] Although there is no evidence of *Gengzhitu*-derived printed

21. To get an idea of the image of Chinese botanical beauty as seen through the eyes of the Jesuits, one must refer to the splendid unpublished collection by Pierre-Martial Cibot, *Plantes e fleurs de la Chine*, 1772, available online in the Bibliothèques numériques of the Institut de France.

22. For example on cotton cultivation, see "Les très riches heures de la cour de Chine: chefs d'oeuvre de la peinture impériale des Qing, 1662-1796: exposition présentée au musée Guimet du 26 avril au 24 juillet 2006", Paris, Réunion des Musées Nationaux- Musée des arts asiatiques Guimet, 2006.

23. Nathalie Monnet, *Le Gengzhitu. Le livre du riz et de la soie. Poèmes de l'empereur Kangxi, Peintures sur soie de Jiao Bingzhen*, Paris, J. C. Lattès, 2003; Jia Luo, "A Study on the Historical Evolution, Value, and Inheritance Innovation of Farming and Weaving Pictures", *Al-Qantara*, 9/3 (2023), pp. 12-27; Roslyn Lee Hammers, *Pictures of Tilling and Weaving. Art, Labor, and Technology in Song and Yuan China*, Hong Kong, Hong Kong University Press, 2011.

Figure 4. "Barques chinoises: Manière singulière de pêcher", in Jean-Baptiste Du Halde, *Description de la Chine*, Paris, Le Mercier, 1735, vol. II, p. 162, Archive.org.

illustrations in 18th-century European publications, Du Halde does extensively describe Chinese agricultural and sericultural techniques and provides detailed illustrations, although apparently not directly from the *Gengzhitu*.[24] Other illustrations in his *Description* convey the idea of nature's generosity as well as Chinese industriousness, inventiveness, and harmony with nature in the fields and waterways. A recurring iconographic theme in this sphere is cormorant fishing (Fig. 4), found in Nieuhoff (1665), Dapper (1670), Staunton (1797), Jean-Baptiste Benoît Eyriès (1822), Bazin de Malpière (1825), and Allom (1845).

The final theme to briefly consider is Chinese religion – a complex subject, here suffice it to note that 17th- and 18th-century iconography oscillates between unsympathetic depictions of pagan idolatry and Buddhist priests, and representing Confucius. The latter is presented positively in Jesuit publications, from *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* (1687) to Le Comte and Du Halde, where Confucius is depicted as a sage philosopher, assuming a hieratic pose with draped robes, ritual headgear (*mianguan*), and a calm, unperturbed gaze. In the 18th century, the Jesuit

24. Du Halde, *Description de la Chine*, vol. II, p. 208 ff.

affinity with Confucius found new and more important outlets of iconographic expression. The *Mémoires* (vol. XII, 1785) feature a "Vie de Confucius" compiled by Father Amiot from Chinese texts, accompanied by 18 plates engraved by Helman, freely reinterpreting drawings copied by Amiot most probably from *Shengji tu* ("Illustrations of the Sage's Deeds"), a Ming-era illustrated biography released in several versions, one from 1758, with images numbering from 30 to over 100.[25] Amiot's "explications" created on the basis of the plates, especially those depicting Confucius's posthumous veneration, underline – in line with the Jesuit view of Confucianism – that he is revered as "the Doctor of the nation and the Sage par excellence, Master of the nation", not the object of superstitious devotion.

5. *Changing attitudes and new visual regimes*

By the late 18th century, two important changes had occurred: one contextual, the other specifically concerning "Chinese" illustrations. The first, evident in the last quarter of the century, was a marked shift in European opinion on China that involved abandoning the admiration that had characterized much of 18th-century culture and adopting a view of the Middle Kingdom as "stationary" (Smith, 1776), obstinately closed to the West, and plagued by official corruption and imperial oppression – no longer paternal.[26] The Macartney Embassy reinforced

25. Chao-Ying Lee, "Integration of Foreign Culture with Local Culture: The Icons of Confucius in *Mémoires concernant les Chinois* (1776-91) in France", *Commenti accademici sul cristianesimo cinese*, 4 (Deceber 2007), pp. 109-135; Julia K. Murray, "Illustrations of the Life of Confucius: Their Evolution, Functions, and Significance in Late Ming China", *Artibus Asiae*, 57, 1/2 (1997), pp. 73-134. A 1758 version of *Shengji tu* comprising 53 b/w xylographies on paper is available online in the Irish Chester Beatty Online Collections.

26. On this, I would like to refer to some writings in which I have explored this issue from various angles: Guido Abbattista, "European perspectives on China: a prescriptive turn", *Diciottesimo Secolo. Rivista della Società Italiana di Studi sul Secolo XVIII (SISSD)*, 7 (2022), pp. 35-44; Guido Abbattista, "The Despotism of the Plough, Throne and Tradition: Commercial Enlightenment and China in the *Histoire des deux Indes*", in *Le Siècle des Lumières. VI. Qu'est-ce que les Lumières? Nouvelles réponses à l'ancienne question*, Moscow, Naouka, 2018, pp. 84-109; Guido Abbattista, "Chinese Law and Justice: George Thomas Staunton (1781-1859) and the European Discourses on China in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries", in *Law, Justice and Codification in China and the European Thought*, Trieste, Eut, 2017, pp. 1-135; Guido Abbattista, "How to Deal with China. New Questions in the Third Edition of the *Histoire des Deux Indes* (1780)", in *Autour de l'abbé Raynal. Genèse et enjeux politiques de l'Histoire des deux Indes*, ed. by Antonella Alimento and Gianluigi Goggi, Ferney-Voltaire, Centre international d'étude du XVIIIe siècle, 2017, pp. 171-187; Guido Abbattista, "Europe, China and the 'Family of Nations': Paradoxes of the 'Commercial' Enlightenment in the Sattelzeit (1780-1840)", in *China's Development from a Global Perspective*, ed. by María Dolores Elizalde and Wang Jianlang, Cambridge, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017, pp. 122-195; Guido Abbattista, "At the Roots of the 'Great Divergence': Europe and China in an 18th Century Debate", in *Cultural Transfers, Encounters and Connections in the Global 18th Century*, ed. by Matthias Middell, Leipzig, Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2014, pp. 113-162.

these opinions through works such as Staunton's official *Account* (1797), and especially John Barrow's *Travels to China* (1804). The shift affected not only English culture, already less susceptible to Enlightenment infatuations, but also European culture more broadly as the latter was increasingly influenced by the perspective of Western merchants active in Canton and subjected to countless restrictions and abuses.[27] A new era in Sino-Western relations began, marked by growing pressure from European mercantile nations, soon joined by the United States. These pressures led to further embassies – the Dutch Isaac Titsingh (1794-1797), the Russian Yurii Golovkin (1805), the British William Amherst (1816-1817) and Lord William Napier (1834) – whose failures only exacerbated Western frustration with the Chinese empire, but had the positive result of greatly increasing the quantity and quality of visual accounts of China. This work was now produced by artists accompanying diplomats and by compilers, editors, and artists eager to satisfy growing European curiosity about every aspect of China, especially its everyday reality.

An additional factor was the public's growing familiarity with Chinese objects due to the increasing importation of luxury and mass-consumption goods and memorabilia, including illustration albums produced in Canton for the Western market by specialized Chinese artists such as Lamqua, Tingqua, and Puqua, who ran true artistic workshops.[28] This familiarity resulted in a profound typological, stylistic, and thematic change in the illustrations available to the European public and in the resulting image of China. Whereas previously Jesuit-produced illustrations, even those disseminated via the *Mémoires*, had been destined mainly for small circles of collectors and intellectuals, especially in France, from the early 19th century onward a much broader typological and iconographic variety became widely available through mass-market print editions.

To conclude, let us briefly examine some aspects of this change and the authors of illustrated collections on China published between the early 1800s and 1845. Alexander (1767-1816) stands out: as an artist with the Macartney Embassy, he was the first European artist to observe the Chinese interior. He produced nearly 1,000 sketches in China (now in the British Library, with a selection of 111 included in the 2004 edition of Macartney's *Journal*) and, upon his return, he developed watercolors that were repeatedly used as models for published engravings. The most important of these were the 46 plates in the *Atlas* accompanying Staunton's *Account* (1797), itself enriched by 35 small engravings from Alexander's drawings. But above all there were the 48 plates of his *Costume of China* (1805) and the 48 images of *Picturesque Representations of the Dress and Manners of the Chinese* (1814): a monumental testimony to late 18th-century imperial China as viewed by an English artist. The value of this extraordinary series lies in its lively, ideologically unfiltered depictions, not so much of places and institutional figures as of urban and especially rural scenes and the lifestyles

27. I have dealt with this mainly in the previously cited "Chinese Law and Justice".
28. See n. 10 above.

Figure 5. William Alexander, "Dwelling of a Mandarin", in *The Costume of China*, London, W. Miller, 1805, Archive.org.

of lower social strata.[29] While such subjects had sometimes featured in earlier illustrations – even in Kircher, Dapper, and Du Halde in the late 17th and early 18th century – Alexander offered works of great artistic refinement, attention to detail, chromatic taste, and a naturalistic realism never before seen, akin to the innovations of contemporary English landscape artists such as Turner and Constable.[30] There are no interpretive distortions or biases: what prevails is a taste for faithful, sympathetic representations of individuals, groups, landscapes, architecture, and work techniques (Figs 5-6). Notably, Alexander produced the first image of foot-binding – a practice known to and textually described by Western observers, but never illustrated until his ethnographic sketch appeared in Staunton's *Account* (Fig. 7).[31] Yet, if one seeks among Alexander's images the critical stance toward Chinese society found in Staunton's text, or even more so in Barrow's or in later early 19th-century writings, one is disappointed. At least in this case, the illustrations run counter to an increasingly unfavourable climate of opinion toward China. Iconographically, this climate is evidenced by the first

29. Alexandra Loske, "Shaping an image of China in the West: William Alexander (1767-1816)", Brighton & Hove Museum, s.d. [probably 2016].

30. See *William Alexander. An English Artist in Imperial China*, Brighton, Brighton Borough Council, 1981, p. 14. On Alexander (and Mason), see also Chen Yushu, "William Alexander's Image of Qing China", *Monumenta Serica*, 67 (3 July 2019), pp. 397-440, available online; William Alexander and George Henry Mason, *Views of 18th Century China: Costumes, History, Customs*, foreword by Lord Maclehose of Beoch K.T., London-New York, Gramercy, 1988.

31. *An Authentic Account of the Late Embassy*, London, Nicoll, 1797, vol. I, p. 423.

Figure 6. William Alexander, "A group of trackers of the vessel at dinner", in *The Costume of China*, London, W. Miller, 1805, Archive.org.

Western satirical image of a Chinese subject: James Gillray's famous depiction of Macartney's imperial audience (1793-1794), the progenitor of a vast series of satirical prints on China that went on to flood the British and European public sphere during the Opium Wars, Taiping Rebellion, and Boxer Rebellion.

Alexander's work circulated widely, was translated into French, and was reused or even plagiarized by French authors such as Bazin de Malpière and Allom: "For at least half a century, it remained the only unquestionably authentic and composite depiction of China", and it stimulated a late vogue for chinoiseries in England at the turn of the two centuries.[32] To fully appreciate Alexander's contribution, two other aspects of the early 19th-century visual panorama on China deserve mention. First, the widespread European diffusion of Chinese-produced illustrations, especially from Puqua's Canton workshop, with collections in the

32. *William Alexander. An English Artist*, pp. 14-15.

Figure 7. William Alexander, "The foot bandage", sketch in G. L. Staunton, *An Authentic Account of an Embassy from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China*, London, Bulmer & Nicoll, 1797, vol. I, p. 423, Archive.org.

British Museum and Victoria & Albert Museum.[33] The most famous of these are colour albums of Chinese social types, full-length, decontextualized, and done in a modest, schematic, even naïve style which, while retaining distinctly Chinese aesthetic qualities, were also adapted for English publications. Mason, for example, explicitly states that the 60 plates of his *Costume of China* (1800) (a different work from Alexander's) derive from drawings purchased in Canton (where Mason stayed in 1789-1790) and engraved in London by John Dadley: "Pu-Qùa, Cantòn, delint. Dadley, London, sculpt". Mason is also known for another collection, *The Punishments of China* (1801), which perfectly expresses the changing climate of opinions and perspectives on China. The theme of corporal punishment, appearing in earlier illustrations since the mid-17th century (even in Alexander), was emphasized so as to highlight its singularity, such as the use of the "cangue", or portable pillory. Montesquieu's claim that China was governed "with the stick" refers to the practice of bamboo beating, generalizing its significance. By the late 18th and early 19th centuries this theme became central, treated independently to document the cruelty of Chinese justice, its invasive regulation of individual behaviour, and its distinctiveness as compared to European customs. Western encounters with Chinese justice were not only documentary or figurative but also direct, as shown by the cases of crew members of the British East Indiamen *Lady Hughes* (1787) and *Neptune* (1807) in Canton; the latter is famous by virtue of Staunton's positive role as an interpreter and the

33. Iside Carbone, *Glimpses of China Through the Export Watercolours of the 18th-19th Centuries. A Selection from the British Museum's Collection*, PhD dissertation, School of Oriental and African Studies, London, 2002.

contemporary painting of the Chinese court scene.[34] Especially when highlighted by Mason's commentary, therefore, a survey of the variety, harshness, and even ingenious sophistication of corporal punishments inflicted daily on Chinese subjects (Figs 8-9) – the phrase "Chinese torture" still denotes particular cruelty – could only confirm for Western audiences the idea of China's radical otherness. Such representations inspired compassion for "suffering Chinese humanity" and, above all, fostered complacency among Europeans secure in the conviction that they lived in a part of the world where such cruelties were not permitted, thus creating a new element in Orientalist stereotypes.[35]

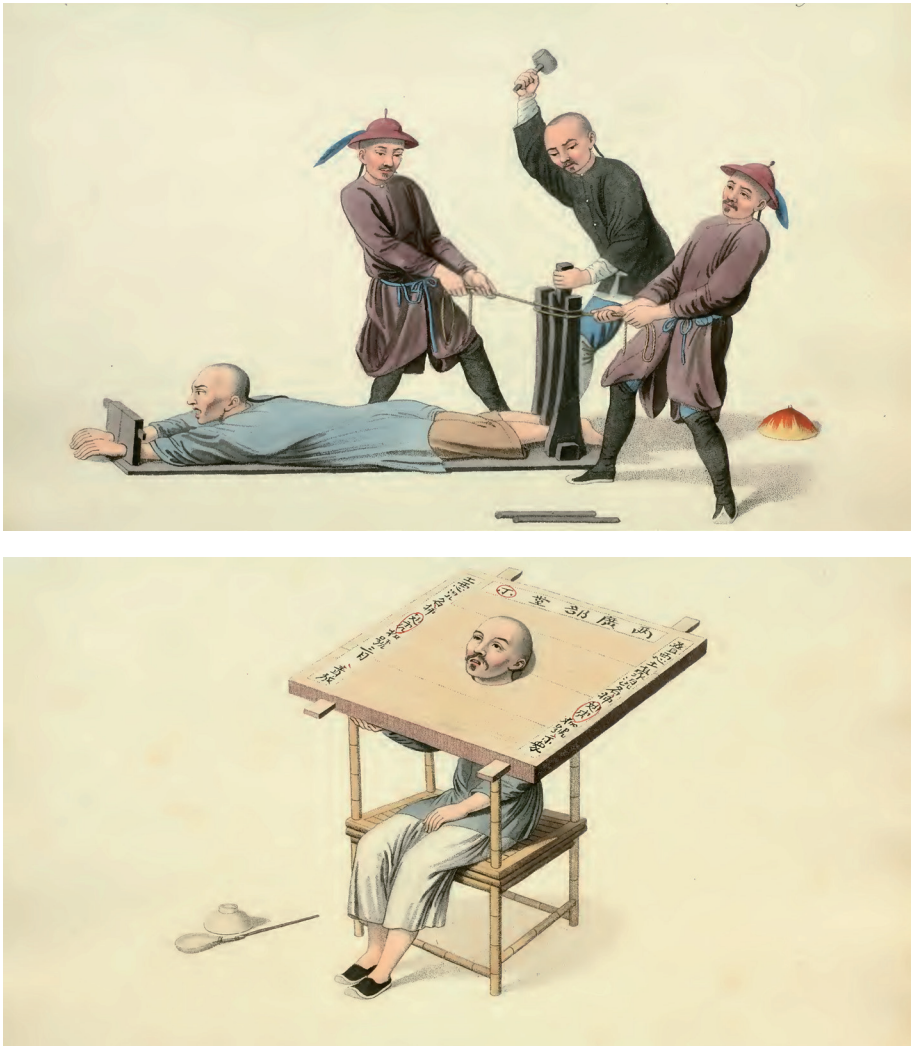
As in Mason, the tension between image and text is even more evident in other illustrated collections about China, revealing how text tends to overshadow or even contradict the image. A French precedent appears in *Costumes Civils actuels de tous les Peuples connus* (1788), where the future follower of Babeuf Sylvain Maréchal, in his "Notice historique sur les Chinois", writes scathing and negative judgments while the six accompanying colour illustrations of Chinese social figures are devoid of denigrating aspects. The most significant example, however, is Allom.

The four volumes (in two tomes) of *China, in a Series of Views* (1842-1845), with its 128 beautiful black-and-white steel engravings by the architect and topographer (who apparently never visited China), reinterpret earlier drawings, sketches, and illustrations by missionaries, diplomats, and artists.[36] Allom develops an array of themes inspired by the encyclopedic desire to document Chinese society in all its facets, from nature to institutions, from daily work to ceremonies and leisure (Fig. 10). His is an idealized, "romantic" vision dominated by landscapes and views of rivers, waterfalls, and mountains, with high-quality images characterized by strong naturalistic realism and lively representation. Allom constructs a spectacular and picturesque visual geography of China where nature and human actions intertwine through highly scenic depictions of productive activities, agricultural practices, lifestyles, rituals, and places of worship; the landscape and natural elements are always key players, even in "genre" scenes. Beyond their descriptive effect, the plates convey an exotic atmosphere and a sense of fascination that certainly shaped the European imagination of the first half of the 19th century, thanks in part to subsequent English, French, German, and Spanish editions. The collection's accompanying text by Anglican clergyman and Irish author George N. Wright, however,

34. For a discussion of Staunton, son of George Leonard, secretary to Macartney's embassy, and himself a very young participant in the mission before becoming an employee of the East India Company in Canton, Chinese interpreter and translator of the "Qing Penal Code", see my publication "Chinese Law and Justice".

35. On Mason, see Eric Hayot, *The Hypothetical Mandarin: Sympathy, modernity, and Chinese Pain*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 61-94.

36. An easily accessible digital edition of *China, in a Series of Views* is available online in The New York Public Library Digital Collections. On the French edition, see Charline Monseur, "Spotlight on China – An Analysis of L'Empire Chinois Illustrated by Thomas Allom and Described by Clément Pellé", *MaRBLe*, 6 (1 July 2014), available online.



Figures 8-9. George Henry Mason, “IX. The Rack” (above) and “XIII, The wooden collar” (below), in *The Chinese Punishments*, London, Miller & Bulmer, 1801, Archive.org.

presents a very different picture. Political-institutional aspects, economic practices, productive techniques, social forms (rigid social distinctions), customs (foot-binding, infanticide), and religious cults (Buddhism), according to Wright, reveal a stagnant country hopelessly mired in tradition and incapable of technical revitalization where the exploitation of vast manpower has hindered the introduction of machinery, symbol of Western progress. Wright even approved of the recent war – the First Opium War, 1840-1842 – in the name of civilization,

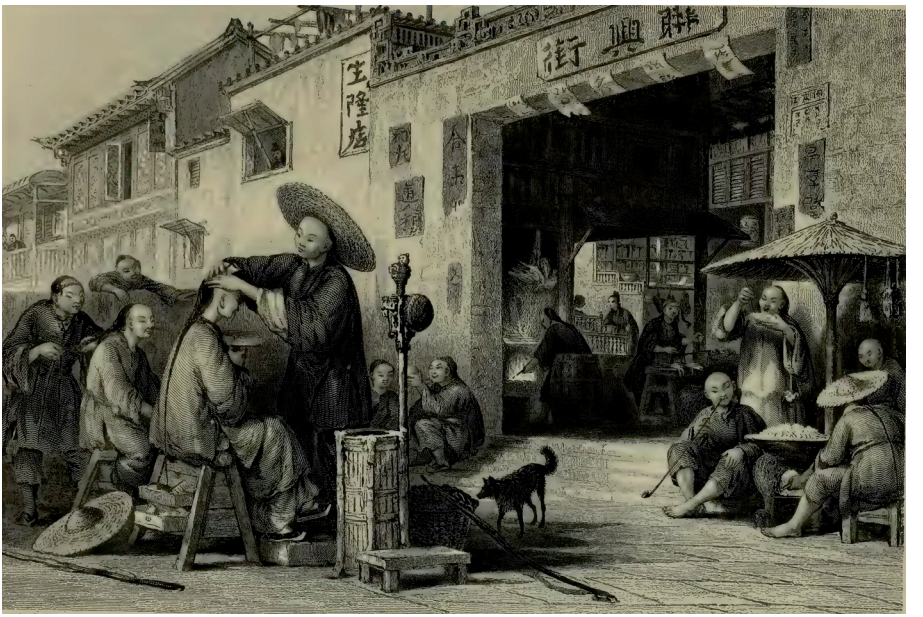


Figure 10. Thomas Allom, "An itinerant barber", in *The Chinese empire: historical and descriptive, illustrating the manners and customs of the Chinese, in a series of steel engravings*, 2 vols, London-New York, The London Printing and Publishing Co., 1858 [1842-1845], vol. I, p. 73, Archive.org.

deploying the rhetoric of commerce, free enterprise, and civilizing mission, thus counterposing the rhetoric of modernity against a pictorial apparatus inspired by a naturalist and traditionalist picturesque style.

Ambiguity, caught between fascination and Orientalist alienation, also characterized other contemporary illustrated works such as Borget's *La Chine et les Chinois* (1842). Unlike Allom, Borget travelled the world and spent 10 months in China, representing it in sketches and drawings, 34 of which became plates in the 1842 illustrated work that was subsequently reissued in England; Borget's 200 sketches later illustrated Paul-Émile Daurand-Forgues's *La Chine ouverte* (1845). These works combine a documentary approach with a naturalistic attention to detail and a penchant for the picturesque, portraying China as both alluring and fundamentally foreign. The representation emphasizes China's sophistication yet underscores its stagnation ("stationnaire"), presenting it as a subject of both curiosity and critique. This depiction highlights a society dominated by oppressive ("écrasant") despotism and suggests that China is no longer suitable for the idealized mythologization previously offered by Jesuit accounts. Far from justifying British imperialism, however, this vision lacked the sense of Western superiority and the idea of a civilizing mission aimed at "opening up" and transforming the Celestial Empire: "Il faut bien reconnaître" – Borget conceded

to the Chinese – "ce qu'il y a de logique dans le mépris dont les Chinois accablent les Européens".[37]

From Alexander and Mason onward, throughout the first three to four decades of the 19th century illustrated collections and works revealed, in their choice of subjects, figurative style, and intended audience, an immeasurable distance from the great age of Jesuit erudition, aristocratic collecting, and Enlightenment polemics. China continued to exert an extraordinary fascination on the West – a magnetism which, unfortunately, coexisted with the pursuit of policies and objectives that, for the late Qing empire, marked the beginning of its "century of humiliation".

37. "À l'envisager d'une manière philosophique, le gouvernement chinois n'est qu'un despotisme infertile, maintenu par un espionnage actif et par une responsabilité sans limites, une sorte de patriarcat tyrannique dont la terreur assure l'autorité": Paul-Émile Daurand-Forgues, *La Chine ouverte*, Paris, H. Fournier, 1845, pp. 122 and 366.

Index of Names

Contributors

Guido Abbattista, a historian of the early modern age and former professor at the University of Trieste, is a scholar of expansion and colonial empires, as well as of European voyages around the world and their political, cultural, and ideological repercussions. He is the author of books and essays on the socio-cultural phenomenon of human exhibitions in Italy and worldwide within a long-term ethno-anthropological framework (1700-1950), including *Umanità in mostra* (Trieste 2021). He has promoted numerous experiments in digital communication, co-founding in 1995 Cromohs – Cyber Review of Modern Historiography, the first Italian journal of early modern history entirely online; and, in the fields of digital history and artificial intelligence, with the project Global Sea Routes. A Historical Geodatabase of European Commercial Navigation, 1500-1900 (2019-ongoing).

Paolo Bianchini is full professor of History of Education at the University of Turin. He deals with the history of education and schooling in Europe between the 18th and 21st centuries. He has been a visiting professor at European and American universities. He is the author of monographs and essays in Italian, English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese, including *Educazione di un gesuita. La giovinezza di Augustine Barruel e le origini del pensiero reazionario* (Turin 2018). Recently he co-edited *La vocazione alla missione nella storia della Compagnia di Gesù. Origine ed evoluzione delle indipetae (XVI-XIX secolo)* (with M. Rochini; Brescia 2022).

Francesco Borghesi teaches Italian literature at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia. His interests are in textual editing and the history of ideas from the 13th to the 18th century, and he places his research at the intersection of the histories of literature, religion, and philosophy. His main publications include an edition of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's so-called "Oration on the Dignity of Man" (Cambridge 2012) and an edition of his letters (Florence 2018). For the period 2021-2025, he was the lead investigator of an Australian Research Council Discovery Project dedicated to the analysis of Jesuit translations of the Confucian canon, and he is currently the lead investigator of the PRIN 2022 PNRR project "Images of China from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment".

Valentina Bottanelli is a postdoctoral fellow at the Fondazione per le Scienze Religiose Giovanni XXIII (FSCIRE) in Bologna. Her research focuses on intercultural

encounters in religious and philosophical texts between China, East Asia, and Europe, with particular attention to Protestant literature in Chinese from the 17th and 18th centuries. She has worked as a research fellow at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia for the project "Images of China from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment", and as a research assistant for the project "Transforming the East" (University of Sydney), which investigates the translations of the Confucian classics by the early Society of Jesus.

Daniel Canaris is an intellectual historian and philologist specializing in Sino-Western cultural exchange and Italian thought from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment. He completed his PhD in Italian Studies at the University of Sydney in 2017. He is currently an ARC Discovery Early Career Researcher Award (DECRA) fellow at the University of Sydney. His first monograph was *Vico and China* (Liverpool 2020). He has published several critical editions of early modern texts, including a co-edited edition of Niccolò Longobardo's *Resposta breve* (with T. Meynard; Singapore 2021) and the first English-language edition of Michele Ruggieri's *Tianzhu shilu* (Leiden and Boston 2023).

Michela Catto, PhD at the Scuola Normale Superiore (Pisa), is associate professor of Early Modern History at the University of Turin. Her research focuses on European encounters and exchanges in a global perspective, with particular attention to the missionary order of the Society of Jesus, the methodologies employed in China, and their impact on European culture. Her books include *La Compagnia divisa. Il dissenso nell'ordine gesuitico tra '500 e '600* (Brescia 2009; Mexico City 2016), *Cristiani senza pace* (Rome 2012), and *Ultimissime dalla Cina. Michele Ruggieri missionario e divulgatore* (with M. Brunello; Bari 2024). Recently, she has co-edited *From Europe to Overseas. Saints, Martyrs, Heroes, Models and Soft Power in an early Modern Global perspective* (with E. Rai; Gottingen 2025).

Chen Cui is a grant-holding researcher at Ca' Foscari University and the University of Lausanne. He studied in Beijing, Venice, Bamberg, and Geneva before pursuing his PhD in Lausanne and London. He has held various fellowships in Munich, Boston, Chicago, Reykjavik, and Oslo, among other academic institutions. His research focuses on three interrelated domains: 1) medieval English and Germanic literatures, especially travel writing in relation to theology, natural history, cognition, and manuscript studies; 2) Christian missionary poetics of translation in premodern China, including the circulation of Chinese knowledge in Enlightenment Europe; and 3) Digital Humanities, especially scholarly editing, stylistics, and GIS.

Monica De Togni is associate professor of Chinese History at the Department of Humanities of the University of Turin. After an initial focus on the relations between Tibet and the Chinese empire, her research has mainly turned to institutional and social changes in the transition from empire to republic in the Chinese province of Sichuan. She is the author of *Governo locale e socializzazione politica in Cina* (Alessandria 2007). More recently, thanks also to her participation in the "Sino-European Religious Intersections in Central Asia. Interactive Texts and Intelligent Networks" (SERICA) research project, she is analyzing the spread of Christianity in China and, above all, the travels and stays of Chinese people in Europe during the 17th and 18th centuries.

Paolo De Troia, MA in Oriental Languages and PhD in Asian and African Civilization at Sapienza University of Rome in 2003, is associate professor of Chinese Language and Literature at the Italian Institute of Oriental Studies at Sapienza University. During his training years, he specialized at Nanjing University and Beijing Normal University. His research interests and publications mainly focus on the history of Sino-Western contacts in science in the Ming era, from a cultural and lexical perspective. He has to his credit numerous publications on the scientific production of the Jesuits of the Chinese mission in the 17th century, including the introduction, translation, and annotation of Giulio Aleni, *Geografia dei paesi stranieri alla Cina* (Brescia 2009).

Pierre Antoine Fabre is Directeur d'études at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) in Paris. For more than 30 years, his work has focused on the first century of the Society of Jesus, the history of modern evangelization missions, the question of the Christian image in the aftermath of the Council of Trent, and the history of spiritual writing in the 17th century. He is the author of numerous works, including *Décréter l'image. La XXVe session du Concile de Trente* (Paris 2013), and *Caravage: hors-champ* (with G. Careri; Paris 2017). He has also published more than 300 articles and coordinated some 50 works, including, in recent years, *La Compagnie de Jésus des anciens régimes au monde contemporain* (with P. Goujon and M. Morales; Rome 2021); *Litterae indipetae. Una fonte lunga cinque secoli* (with G. Imbruglia and G. Mongini; Rome 2022) and *Genres de sainteté* (with S. Barthélémy, P. Desmette, and P. Martin; Louvain 2024).

Irene Gaddo is researcher of Early Modern History at the University of Eastern Piedmont (UPO). She is editorial coordinator of the review *Storia della Storiografia*/*History of Historiography* and member of the board of directors of the series *Studi e testi di storia dell'utopia* (Edizioni dell'Orso, Alessandria). Her research interests cover the Jesuit missions and overseas networks, the relations between politics and religion, and the history of utopian thought. Her publications include *Secolarizzazione e modernità. Un quadro storico* (with E. Tortarolo; Rome 2017); *Vocazione e identità gesuitica in Giovanni Antonio Valtrino (1556-1601)* (Padova 2019); *Sulle tracce delle prime* indipetae. *Le richieste di missione al tempo di Laínez, Borgia, Mercuriano* (Alessandria 2023). She edited *The First Italian* Indipetae (with E. Colombo, G. Mongini; Boston 2024).

Anna Giazzon studied Philology and Classical Tradition at the University of Bologna, with a special interest in the transmission of the works of Philo of Alexandria in the Armenian language. She is currently working as a cataloguer at the Dossetti Library of the Bologna branch of the Fondazione per le Scienze Religiose Fondazione per le Scienze Religiose Giovanni XXIII (FSCIRE).

Niccolò Guasti (PhD) is associate professor of Early Modern History at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia. His main research interests focus on 18th-century reforms in Spain, the Neapolitan Enlightenment, and the Society of Jesus in the early modern age. He is the author of four research monographs and a wide range of articles in scientific journals and essays in collective books edited by international publishers (Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, Brill, Palgrave,

Notre Dame University Press). He has been visiting researcher at the European University Institute's Department of History and Civilization in Florence, at the University of Alicante (three times), and at the University of Stettin.

Bento Machado Mota is a postdoctoral fellow in the Fellowship Program of the Institute of Historical Research at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). Previously, he was a fellow at the Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies – Villa I Tatti in Florence, and a short-term fellow at the John Carter Library at Brown University (Providence). He has also been a fellow and a visiting researcher at KU Leuven. He holds a PhD in Social History from the University of São Paulo and pursued postgraduate studies in the History and Anthropology of Religions at the National School of Anthropology and History (ENAH, Mexico). He has published academic articles on a wide range of topics, including the Renaissance, atheism, ignorance, frontispieces, indigenous history, and early modern philosophy and theology.

Sabina Pavone is professor of History of Christianity at the University of Naples L'Orientale. Her research sits at the intersection of several disciplines, including institutional history, religious history, and cultural history, working especially on Jesuit missions. Her recent publications include *Sacre metamorfosi. Racconti di conversione tra Roma e il mondo in età moderna* (with C. Petrolini and V. Lavenia; Rome 2022); *Lessico della storia moderna* (with F. Motta; Rome 2024); *Sacrifice and Sacred Violence. History, Comparisons, and the Early Modern World* (with C. Facchini, G. Imbruglia, V. Lavenia; Turnhout 2025).

Giulio Talini is a research fellow in the Turin Humanities Programme at Fondazione 1563. Formerly a postdoctoral fellow at Bocconi University, he obtained his PhD in Global History from the Scuola Superiore Meridionale in Naples. He has also been a *chercheur invité* at the Centre de Recherches en Histoire Internationale et Atlantique in Nantes and a Gustave Gimon Fellow in French Political Economy at Stanford University. He is currently working on a monograph based on his doctoral dissertation, provisionally titled *Local Knowledge and Political Economy in the French Caribbean, 1759-1791: The Rise of the Experts*. He is also the author of *Piantagioni e schiavi nella storia del capitalismo. Sguardi atlantici (secoli XVII–XIX)* (Rome 2025).

Finito di stampare
nel mese di novembre 2025
da The Factory s.r.l.
Roma

VIELLA HISTORICAL RESEARCH

Michela Catto (ed.)

Enlightened by China

Representations and Myths in 18th-Century Europe

What did Europe see when it looked at China? In the 18th century, it saw a laboratory of civilization and a testing ground for its own ideas. *Enlightened by China. Representations and Myths in 18th-Century Europe* reconstructs the birth and decline of the myth of China: from the Confucian model celebrated by the Jesuits to censorship by the Roman church; from the *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses* and Jean-Baptiste Du Halde's *Description de la Chine* to the Chinese presence in Europe; from Paolo Mattia Doria to Oliver Goldsmith and the Neapolitan reformers, from the representation of Europe for the Chinese to the visual motifs that shaped the collective imagination. What emerges is an intertwined history of religion, politics, economics, and visual cultures, in which admiration and dominion, science and propaganda, universalism and empire challenge one another. It is a book that helps us to understand how the Enlightenment also constructed itself through China, and how Europe shaped its own modernity.

Michela Catto is an Associate Professor of Early Modern History in the Department of Historical Studies at the University of Turin. Her research focuses on the Society of Jesus as an actor in global history (16th–18th centuries), with particular attention to cultural contacts between Europe and China, the Chinese Rites Controversy, and missionary practices in the extra-European world. Among her recent works, with Mauro Brunello, *Ultimissime dalla Cina cavate da una relazione del 1602. Michele Ruggieri missionario e divulgatore* (Bari 2024).

www.viella.it

€ 35,00

ISBN 979-12-5701-093-5