

# EAST AND WEST ENTANGLED

(17<sup>TH</sup>-21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURIES)

edited by  
Rolando Minuti  
Giovanni Tarantino



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Rolando Minuti  
Giovanni Tarantino

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INTRODUCTION

## East and West Entangled (17<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> Centuries)

Rolando Minuti, Giovanni Tarantino

The original idea for this volume arose from a conference on entangled East-West histories that was held in February 2019 at the SAGAS Department of the University of Florence. Scholars from Chinese, Korean and Japanese universities participated alongside colleagues from Western universities. To complement the revised versions of some of those conference papers, several chapters exploring entanglements between trends in Italian research in Asian cultural history and the lines of interest of Asian scholars on Italian and European culture were specially commissioned for this volume<sup>1</sup>.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines the verb «to entangle» as meaning «to twist, interlace, or mix up in such a manner that a separation cannot easily be made». It derives from the noun «tangle», which is a species of seaweed. As Ralph Bauer and Marcy Norton have recently recounted, one of the earliest documented uses of «entangle» is in Richard Eden's *Decades of the New World* (1555), a translation of Peter Martyr d'Anghiera's history of European encounters with Native America. Eden writes that, while reconnoitring Cuba during the second voyage, Columbus's men tried to venture inland into a vast tallgrass

<sup>1</sup> The editors of this volume would like to express their gratitude to Althea Muirhead and Emanuele Giusti for the excellent job they have done in editing the manuscript and assisting with the publication process.

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plain, and soon became «soo entangled and bewrapte therin, that they were scarsely able to passe a myle, the grasse beinge there lyttle lower then owre rype corne». American nature not only entangles the European conquerors physically, it also «defies the imposition of a European order of things». The word's etymological roots remind us of the importance of moving beyond the «epistemologically indefensible nature-culture binaries» that sprang up hand in hand with European colonial ideologies seeking to legitimate the subjugation of indigenous peoples (Bauer and Norton 2017).<sup>2</sup>

In the global or globalised age, a culture is no longer regarded as a discrete entity, but rather as a hybrid formation that interacts with other cultures in an incessant process of multidirectional exchange.<sup>3</sup> Eurocentric views that construct «a European singularity dating back to antiquity» and that fail to acknowledge the ways in which Europe has been influenced by the rest of the world have been accused of «theft of history» (Goody 2006).<sup>4</sup> Translocal perspectives have led to a critical rethinking of categories such as «nation» and «civilisation», and many historians previously averse to theorisation have come to recognise its importance. «History has to reorient», as the historian and sociologist Andre Gunder Frank observed (1998).<sup>5</sup> In modern cultural studies, space is not just physical or material, but also embraces a wide range of spaces – imagined, ascribed, mental, textual, corporeal, literary, and so forth. If it is to be inventive, a transcultural history of ideas, religion, environmental change, economic flows, urbanisation, and emotions needs to work with these very different notions of space, «globally encompassing understandings of the past» while remaining attentive to local particularities (Sachsenmaier 2006, 452).

Because historical research like this covers very different topics and spatial constellations, there is also a great diversity of methods: «ecumenical histories», «connected histories», «entangled histories», and «*histoire croisée*» are just some of the neologisms coined to denote attempts to offer more plural views of the past that incorporate alternative perspectives. However, a clear shift towards more transcultural research can be observed across the gamut of approaches. Of course, the task is not an easy one. In a provocative interview with *Cromohs*, Sanjay Subrahmanyam perceptively notes that transcending comparative history and redrawing geographical boundaries in an innovative way does not mean that

<sup>2</sup> In *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*, Tzvetan Todorov (1982) found himself trapped, or nearly trapped, in distinctions between 'advanced' and 'primitive' societies that historians and anthropologists have long rejected as hopelessly culture-bound.

<sup>3</sup> On the constructedness of identity patterns and the perception and representation of the Other, in all their discursive variations, as considered by contemporary imagology, see Leerssen (2007).

<sup>4</sup> Also see Feuchter, Hoffmann, and Yun (2011, 16); Chow (2001); Abbattista and Minuti (2006); Duffy (2021).

<sup>5</sup> Also see Dirlík (1996); Martínez-Robles (2008); Weigelin-Schwiedrzik (2014). For a criticism of «a growing and ultimately teleological Sino-Western-centrism», see McManus and Tworek (2022).

«we replace one set of rigid boundaries (say, of the nation-state) with another» but rather we «multiply and cross archives and other primary sources, in keeping with the complexity of the problem» (Barbu 2017-2018, 124). As Dominic Sachsenmaier has aptly pointed out, «the claim that scholarship needs to become more multi-conceptual, multi-lingual and multi-angled» is not trivial, as it requires historians' voices «to become increasingly dialogical in nature and actively to include other interpretations of the past within one and the same narrative» (Sachsenmaier 2006, 462-63).

The writing of entangled histories presupposes an interest in «the agentic capacities of all actors», especially the ones traditionally ignored by Western-centric historiographic paradigms, with the sources all too often being «written by the winners». Unlike some transnational histories that still look exclusively at Europeans' *representations* of and impact on *others*, «entangled histories attend to the multiplicity of sources, agencies, directions of influence, and modalities of intercultural connectedness» (Bauer and Norton 2017, 3). They require a «decolonization of thought» (Viveiros de Castro 2014).<sup>6</sup>

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In the few years separating the 2019 conference from the publication of this volume, events of unexpected importance and gravity have occurred on the international scene. Besides affecting lives on a global scale, they have also generated new research patterns and perspectives and reinforced the awareness of the importance of transcultural studies.

An exceptionally serious pandemic, which swept across a world ill prepared to deal with its effects, brought about major changes in everyone's lives, the social and economic consequences of which we are still far from being able to assess in full. It has also led to a change in the psychological conditions underlying human relations, especially between subjects who are very far apart geographically, as well as causing particular and objective difficulties in the conditions of research (Thompson 2021).

At the onset of this emergency, the likes of which most of us had never experienced previously, some people attacked the authorities for being unable to protect citizens from the contagion of a virus that became a swaggering metaphor of the unwelcome migrant corrupting the health of the body and mind, the economy and the culture of the community where it arrived. In the space of a few weeks, the virus shed East Asian somatic features and became Italian in the eyes of the world. Italians suddenly found themselves experiencing the condition of the foreigner deprived of their freedom of movement, rejected at borders, limited in their social interactions and viewed universally with suspicion, fear and contempt. Subsequently, variants of the virus began to be associ-

<sup>6</sup> Also see Tarantino and von Wyss-Giacosa (2021); Berg (2023).

ated with individual nationalities (English, Brazilian, South African, Nigerian), grimly satisfying the instinct to project the emergence of a pathogen onto others.

The hope that we would emerge from this long crisis with a new perspective that recognised our common vulnerability, but also our common humanity, was soon dispelled. Instead, new and particularly violent and dramatic wars broke out in the heart of the European continent. Producing unspeakable tragedies and raising the disturbing prospect of catastrophically serious scenarios, Russia's ongoing war on Ukraine, Hamas's terrorist attack on Israel and Israel's military response in Gaza have rocked the framework of international relations and fuelled identity ideologies, reactionary nationalisms and a rhetoric of labelling and othering.

In short, though only a few years have elapsed, profound changes have taken place, in which anxiety about the future, uncertainty and catastrophic visions have acquired new and powerful significance. This theme took centre stage at a recent conference held at Tohoku University in Japan,<sup>7</sup> which highlighted the complex and highly evocative concept of *naraku*, meaning discord, dysfunction and dystopia, a notion that appears to correspond well to the mental climate and sensibility of the present time.

Placing the transcultural issue at the centre of attention does not appear to us, therefore, to have the same meaning now as it might have had only a few years ago. It has taken on a new prominence and importance, not only in terms of reconstructing global cultural connections in the past, but as a commitment to acknowledging the value of interconnectedness in the present context. The scholars who gathered in the now «distant» 2019 – as we are tempted to put it – and those who came together for this volume propose a framework of research that seeks to grasp the civic value coexisting alongside the research content.

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The studies in this volume deal with topics from the seventeenth to the twenty-first centuries. Eugenio Menegon's opening chapter aptly reminds practitioners of global history of the importance of scrutinising and reconstructing the economic and structural mechanisms (in particular the «materiality» of the Propaganda Fide and Jesuit missions to China) that made the circulation of information, funding and merchandise between Europe and China feasible and efficient. Linda Zampol D'Ortia's chapter closely examines expectations of and biases towards the «three Tibets» (Baltistan, Ladack, and Lhasa) through the lens of the Italian Jesuit Ippolito Desideri (1684-1733) and his ambivalent attitude towards Hindus and Muslims, «hidden Christians», and «gentiles». Chen Rihua's essay illustrating the significance of the spread of county histories (in conjunction with antiquarianism) in Early Modern England for the formative period of the nation-state, when the relationship between local lives and their national future came to

<sup>7</sup> *Naraku: Discord, Dysfunction, Dystopia: The 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Hasekura International Japanese Studies Symposium, Tohoku University, Sendai, 27-29 September 2022.*

be strategically asserted and tightened, appears to echo recent appeals to historians who study landscapes and, more generally, the commodification of land, to look beyond aesthetic styles and to investigate socio-cultural discourses and the formation of national and individual identity. Significantly, this push to adopt «entangled landscapes» as a new research paradigm comes from scholars who seek to question both universal and binary assumptions of history by portraying the plurality of histories (Zhuang and Riemenschmitter 2019).

With its focus on the theme of female cross-dressing and the different concepts and renditions of female agency and gendered emotions in Chinese and English fiction in the eighteenth century, Wen Jin's essay shows very effectively how representations of other cultures are never simply descriptive, but involve locating (and often misreading or mistranslating) the other cultures within the symbolic and emotional frameworks of the observing culture. The issue of the translatability of emotions across cultures is also explored in the next chapter by Giovanni Tarantino, who uses a late Tokugawa Japanese scroll depicting a fire as the starting point for a reflection on «grammars of identity/alterity». The chapter is informed by an awareness of the problematic nature of two different but closely correlated interpretative orientations: on the one hand, the tendency to assume that emotional strategies for coping with post-disaster trauma are universal or at least translatable, thereby denying the specificity and value of different emotional cultures; and on the other, the propensity to represent the conventional boundaries of emotions (including «national emotional autostereotypes») in a lazily stereotypical manner, thereby ducking the challenge that historical entanglements pose for sound comparative analysis.

Recognition of the Jesuits' role as cultural mediators between Europe and the East, explored in the opening chapters, returns in Jong-Ho Chun's essay. This uncovers Voltaire's debt to the Jesuit Jean-Baptiste Régis (c.1663-1738) for the praise of Korea and Koreans occasionally found in both his historical and dramatic works, where the underlying philosophical approach to history, informed by culturally biased ideas of progress and teleological accounts of history, is a broader search for meaning (conversely, to contemporary and no less biased 'Sinophobic' thinkers, Chinese paternalism would appear to be a deceptive shield for tyranny).

When Japan opened its doors to the external world around the 1850s, it struggled to grasp its intellectual landscape. Contact with Western civilisation led to a massive amount of translation, but discrepancies between the source and target languages inexorably created complex entanglements, as Nozomi Mitsumori's essay on the multifaceted history of the Japanese translation (*kyōwa*) of the term *res publica* convincingly shows. The impact of Western Enlightenment moral and political science – with its emancipatory conception of Nature as independent of any social or moral order – on the eastern Asian context is examined in the chapter by Sayaka Oki exploring the activities of a learned society from Meiji-period Japan, created to selectively promote and appropriate Western studies (*yokaku*) and to foster moral training (*shushin*).

The Second Anglo-Sino War (1856-1860) saw the birth of war photography, and the Italian-British photographer Felice Beato (1832-1909) was one of the

first people to take photographs in East Asia and one of the first war photographers. By analysing a selection of snapshots taken by an official in the Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs, a foreign-administered agency of the Chinese government, as well as a number of glass slides by other amateur photographers (all taken just before or during the Russo-Japanese War), Aglaia De Angeli's chapter demonstrates the value of photography, a Western import, in grasping the modernising process in late Qing China. This is followed by Edoardo Tortarolo's subtle analysis of the theoretical premises and analytical concepts underpinning the thinking of the Italian photographer, anthropologist and writer Fosco Maraini (1912-2004) in his reading of Japan. He viewed the country as «the essential modernizer», and contrasted the perceived Japanese model of societal evolution, based on a relation of continuity with the country's past and tradition, with the Italian model of evolution, predicated upon rupture and displacement.

Dong-Hyun Lim's chapter reverses the viewing direction in Chun's chapter and reflects on how, in the aftermath of the Eulsa Treaty of 1905, which made Korea a protectorate of Japan, Korean historians appropriated and recontextualised the history of the Italian *Risorgimento* accessed via Chinese or Japanese translations of Western works. The aim was to achieve a kind of self-strengthening through Westernisation, the hope being that Korea would become the «Italy of the Orient». In turn, in 1950s and 1960s Italy, at a time when most Western countries, Italy included, decided not to recognise the People's Republic of China, a group of mostly leftist scholars – as Guido Samarani shows in his chapter – set out to make the «New China» accessible and palatable to a broad and politically sensitive audience.

The volume closes with an essay by Aldo Giuseppe Scarselli that brings us into the twenty-first century, with an assessment of the peculiarities of gamic (or techno-)Orientalism as shown in a number of far-from-accurate depictions of Japanese history in videogames produced either in the West or in Japan.

Presented in the form of an afterword dealing with the historical problem of diversity, Guido Abbattista's interview with leading Peace Studies scholars Cheng Liu and Egon Spiegel reflects on the ways in which the challenging reality of global interdependence – creating a seemingly endless and unbroken web of world politics – needs to be sheltered from identity-driven conflicts. This can be achieved by promoting a plural, global, post-Western governance in which violence and war become taboo, and changes in one party have a meaningful impact on the attainment of the needs, values, and/or desired outcomes of others.

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At a *shogakai* held at a restaurant in Ueno in October 1870,<sup>8</sup> the widely admired Japanese artist Kawanabe Kyōsai (1831-1886), of whom the British archi-

<sup>8</sup> Popular, on-the-spot calligraphy and painting performances, with works available for purchase.

tect Josiah Conder was a devoted pupil and patron, was arrested and imprisoned for painting images that purportedly insulted top government officials. At the time there was a good deal of popular resentment about the fact that the Japanese government was still paying to maintain the British garrison in Yokohama. Kyōsai claimed in his defence that he could not remember much about what he had painted that day because he had been too drunk. The only pictures he could recall were of two people helping a «long-legged» person (Ashinaga) to put on his shoes, and another of a «long-armed» person (Tenaga) plucking hairs from the Great Buddha's nostril. Ashinaga and Tenaga probably represented foreigners behaving without respect or discipline, or perceived as taking advantage of the Japanese government. According to a different account of the incident, the offending painting depicted a person in court attire being penetrated sexually by a foreigner (Koto 2022, 25-29; 174).

To conduct transcultural analyses, historians need to be alert to the multiple ways, ill-concealed comic intents included, in which «difference is negotiated» within contacts and encounters – from selective appropriation to rejection or resistance. The image chosen for the cover of this volume is a detail from a fascinating painting by the eighteenth-century Japanese artist Shiba Kōkan depicting representatives from Japan, China, and the West (probably from Holland) gathered around a table (see Tarantino's essay in this volume). This grouping is a variation on popular illustrations of the unity of the three creeds showing the Buddha, Lao Tzu, and Confucius together, or, in eighteenth-century Dutch learning circles in Japan (*rangaku*), Buddha, Lao Tzu, and Jesus. Above the scene of the three worthies is one depicting the sometimes comic efforts being made by the fire brigades of the three countries to extinguish a fire engulfing a multi-storeyed pagoda. It is tempting to see the painting as a metaphorical representation of intercultural mirroring, containing the most inclusive of Gerd Baumann's «grammars of identity»: «What is lacking in us is (still) present in them» (Baumann and Gingrich 2004, 200). This entails the possibility of desire for the other, and sometimes self-critical relativism as well. Self-criticism, however, is not the same as self-denial.

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# «Robbe d'Europa»: Global Connections and the Mailing of Letters, Money, and Merchandise in the Eighteenth-Century China Mission

Eugenio Menegon

**Abstract:** Manuscript reports and letters written in China by the Propaganda Fide and Jesuit missionaries criss-crossed the oceans and the continents to reach Europe on ships, carts, horses, mules, and palanquins, using both European systems of transportation provided by the various East India Companies and governments, and other local public and private postal arrangements. Missionary agencies also mailed from the West *robbe d'Europa* («European things»), such as silver coins, foodstuff and drugs (chocolate, wine, cheese, olive oil, tobacco), medicines, *galanterie* (luxury items), books, devotional objects and prints. Chinese goods (tea, silk, medicines, luxury items, books) were sent in the opposite direction to please patrons in Europe. Without this multi-layered, imperfect, yet workable mailing system, the flow of information and articles fuelling early modern globalisation and, within it, the Chinese missions, would have been impossible.

**Keywords:** Global Connections, China Catholic Mission, Propaganda Fide, Jesuits

In an irate letter dated 17 September 1768, the Discalced Augustinian Giovanni Damasceno della Concezione Salusti described in detail to his direct superior, the Procurator of the Propaganda Fide Catholic missions in Macao, Emiliano Palladini, a recent mishap in the receipt of the annual funds for the small contingent of Propaganda in Peking (one Discalced Augustinian and two Discalced Carmelites).<sup>1</sup> As customary, a Christian courier and servant of the Peking missionaries called Agostino Pao had been sent on the long journey to Canton and Macao, which usually lasted two months. Once in Macao, Agostino received from the hands of the procurator the annual subsidy for the Peking mission. Agostino then travelled to Canton and, as was custom, left almost the entire sum to a Chinese merchant, Antonio Lieu, who issued him a *lettera di cambio* (bill of exchange) for the amount. Once in Peking, Agostino was going

<sup>1</sup> This episode is recounted in a letter by Giovanni Damasceno to Procurator Emiliano Palladini in Macao, Peking, 17 September 1768 (received in Macao on 25 November 1768), Archivio Storico della Congregazione per l'Evangelizzazione dei Popoli or «de Propaganda Fide», Rome (hereafter: APF), *Procura Cina*, box 18, fol. 1r-3v. For background on the office and functions of the Propaganda Fide procurators in Canton-Macao, see Menegon (2018).

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to track down yet another Christian merchant, a certain Ignatio Li, who would release the amount back to the mission upon presentation of the document. This mechanism, very common in China and Europe at the time, was obviously put in place for safety reasons, so that accidents or robberies would not endanger the precious silver coins, but also to allow these Chinese lay intermediaries to make some profit and reward them with some extra earnings. Christian couriers did receive funding to cover travel expenses from the mission's superiors, but did not get much in terms of wages, and the opportunity to invest the annual subsidy until the time it was due in Peking was a nice way for them to supplement their income and be rewarded for an arduous and time-consuming journey.

This time, however, something went terribly wrong. Agostino did not turn in the entire amount to the Canton Chinese agent of the mission. He kept around 200 *pezze* (*pesos*),<sup>2</sup> the portion of the subsidy meant for the Discalced Augustinian and clockmaker Sigismondo da San Nicola Meinardi, the most senior of the Peking missionaries, who had died in December 1767. Agostino invested the amount in merchandise which he loaded onto the tribute ships travelling to the capital on the Grand Canal. Then he journeyed separately and more rapidly by land, back to his home in Peking. However, as Damasceno put it, a big «*pasticcio*» (mess) occurred. A drought meant that rivers levels were low, and before he arrived in Peking, the custom officer in charge of the expedition decided to transfer the annual «tribute» gifts sent to the imperial palace from the south and all the merchandise of private individuals from the boats onto carts for the last stretch towards the capital, so as to avoid delays. Agostino was of course unaware of this change in plans. The imperial caravan eventually reached the «Ha Ta Muen» i.e. Hade men (哈德門, also called «Hata Gate»), the colloquial name for the Chongwen Gate (Chongwen men 崇文門 lit. «Gate of Respectful Civility»). This was the busiest gate in Peking, due to its proximity to the Tonghui 通惠 river, where entry and departure taxes were charged. Custom officers at the gate started calculating levies on the private merchandise, including Agostino's, and curses soon began to fly between the guards and the merchants crowding the scene, who felt they were being overcharged. The Superintendent of Customs (*sopraintendente de dazij*, probably a title corresponding to *guanshui jiandu* 關稅監督), a certain «Grandee Hao» (= Hao Tajin, i.e. 大人 *daren*), in Damasceno's words,

as a good Chinese, i.e. an excellent thief, realized this was a good moment to earn something, and had all the merchandise seized. He then informed the Emperor that the Cantonese who had brought the tribute to His Majesty were also transporting, under that pretext, a lot of private merchandise, and that they wanted to defraud the customs.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Margiotti (1958, 276n30): «The *real de a ocho* was a Spanish and Portuguese coinage. The Spanish coin [...] was minted in silver and weighed 27 grams. In Spain it was also called *peso duro*, *peso* or also simply *duro*. In Italy, however, it was called *patacca* (from the Portuguese *pataca*), *pezza da otto* or *piastra*».

<sup>3</sup> Giovanni Damasceno to Palladini, 17 September 1768, APF, *Procura Cina*, box 18, fol. 1v.

An order was issued to confiscate all private merchandise and to beat the boatmen who were responsible. Agostino, too, was unable to get anything back and ran to Damasceno to explain the incident. While he did return the subsidy for the living missionaries, he had to finally admit that the amount he had invested, corresponding to the late Sigismondo's subsidy, around 200 *taels* (116 *patacche* = same as *pezze/pesos*), had been lost together with an additional investment of 500 *taels* in personal funds. Damasceno and the Discalced Carmelite Arcangelo di S. Anna decided to pull some strings to recoup the loss to the mission and help Agostino as well. They first contacted an official called Huo, who promised to intercede with the Superintendent of Customs. When he ultimately did not deliver on his promise, the missionaries decided to write a memorial directly to the «Count Prime Minister» (*Conte Primo Ministro*), that is, the presiding senior member of the Imperial Grand Council Fuheng (傅恆, 1722-1770), with whom they were familiar as his suppliers of Western luxury items (especially clocks). But since the property of Agostino and that of the missionaries was mixed up with that of others, «Count Fu», as he was also known to missionaries, declared that he could not help. Moreover, as Damasceno observed, «the Count himself had lost more than anybody else in this incident, and he could not insist on this matter with Superintendent Hao, as he feared that he would be denounced to the emperor for having secretly received presents [from Canton]». <sup>4</sup> All was lost. When he learned this, desperate about this financial disaster, which apparently amounted to a total of 700 *taels*, Agostino started a violent argument with Damasceno. The latter, a fiery Roman prone to anger, admitted that «thankfully God tied my hands so that I would not do something excessive, even if I had the impulse to jump on him three or four times. To think of it, I believe it was the devil who was pushing me to kill him». <sup>5</sup> He ended up firing Agostino from his job at the mission, and chasing him from the church as a «dishonest Christian» (*iniquo Cristiano*). Soon afterwards, Damasceno dramatically relinquished his charge as Vice-Procurator of Propaganda in Peking, asking another senior missionary, the Discalced Carmelite Giuseppe Maria di S. Teresa Pruggmayr, to take over.

Silver coins, bills of exchange, European and Chinese merchandise, investments, transportation by sea, river and land, postal connections, networking among Chinese Christians, missionaries, and Qing officials: these are the ingredients we see in Agostino Pao's failed business scheme. Such a rich array of references makes this tragicomic episode a useful point of entry into the economic and structural mechanisms that supported the Catholic mission at the imperial court, and into the global networks that transferred information, funding, and *robbe d'Europa* (European things) from Europe to China and vice versa.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

## Materiality: State of the Field and the Contribution of the Propaganda Archives

This kind of economic and informational infrastructure had in fact been in place since the beginning of the earlier Jesuit mission in China (1550s). Scholarship on this material aspect of the Jesuit mission is relatively scarce. The main published resources are still Margiotti's chapter on the finances of the China Jesuit mission in *Il cattolicesimo* (1958); Dehergne's notes and studies, as mentioned in his *Répertoire* (1973); Alden's unfinished project on the Jesuit global finances, *The Making of an Enterprise* (1996); Golvers's study of a China Jesuit account book (1999); and references to exchanges of information and objects, as well as finances, in Standaert's *Handbook of Christianity in China* (2001). Only recently have a more focused dissertation and some essays on the economy of the China Jesuit mission been written (Vermote 2013, 2017, 2018, 2019). The final dissolution of the Society of Jesus in the 1770s caused the disappearance of most of the Jesuit economic materials, also as part of a plan of systematic destruction of records within the Portuguese mission, and, to a lesser degree the French mission. This dearth of sources and perhaps also a lack of scholarly interest in numbers and materiality until recently have hindered further research.

The Propaganda records, even if representative of a much smaller «enterprise», are fortunately much richer than what remains from the Jesuit mission. As part of my research on the communities of European missionaries living in Peking in the Yongzheng and Qianlong periods (1723-1799), I have explored the Propaganda sources for traces of a fuller picture of the daily workings of the mission, to illuminate the connection between what I call «materiality» of the mission, and the Europeans' social and political networking at the Qing court. The archives of the Propaganda Procurators have survived and contain a wealth of information on such details. Here I am concentrating on the letters written by the five most prolific Peking missionaries to their economic procurators in Canton-Macao between the 1730s and the 1780s:

- Serafino da S. Giovanni Battista, Discalced Augustinian OAD (?-1742; in Peking 1738-42), who acted unofficially as Vice-Procurator for Peking and the north China missions; miniature painter;
- Sigismondo da S. Nicola OAD (secular surname Meinardi, 1713-1767; in Peking 1738-1767), who continued in Serafino's charge; clock and organ maker;
- Giovanni Damasceno della Concezione OAD (secular name Flavio Giacomo Stefano Salusti or Salustri, 1727-81; in Peking 1762-1781) who was briefly Vice-Procurator and, later on, Bishop of Peking; painter;
- Arcangelo Maria di S. Anna, Discalced Carmelite OCD (secular name Vincenzo Bellotti, 1729-1784; in Peking 1762-1784); clockmaker;
- Giuseppe Maria di Santa Teresa OCD (secular name Josef Maximilian Pruggmayr, 1713-1791; in Peking 1745-1791) long-time Vice-Procurator, and Vicar of the Bishop of Peking at the time of the dissolution of the Society of Jesus; without specific court charges.

It is not possible here to cover all aspects of the mission's materiality, and therefore I will concentrate on the infrastructure and means utilised within the mission to send and receive information and resources, including funds and material objects. I will mainly discuss the postal system that we find described in the primary sources and especially how the Peking missionaries sent mail and parcels to southern China and on to Europe, and how they received them in the Qing capital. I will then explain what this analysis can reveal in terms of network creation and start unveiling the connections between Chinese Christians, missionaries, foreign and Chinese merchants, in Canton and elsewhere, and Qing officials in Canton and at the court of Peking.

#### The Mission's Composite «Postal System» within China

So far, our knowledge of the postal system serving the mission has been fragmentary. Noël Golvers in the *Handbook of Christianity in China* (2001) offered a useful synopsis about Jesuit correspondence. Letters in several European languages could be addressed outward to European addressees (including superiors and members of the order, other orders, the papal bureaucracy, family members, and lay people, including patrons and scientists); or inward within the China mission (to other Jesuits, members of other orders, European merchants and officials in Canton and Macao, and Chinese addressees, in which case, letters were also written in Chinese). Given my interest in the economic and material aspects of the Peking mission, I will mainly concentrate on this «inward correspondence» (Golvers in Standaert 2001, 163-66).

Most of the Jesuit inward-bound correspondence has perished, as it was preserved in the personal archives of individuals, the small archives of single residences (particularly important would have been those of the Peking houses), or in the archives of the French and Portuguese procurators in Canton and Macao. The dissolution of the Society of Jesus spelled the dispersal of those archives and much was wilfully destroyed by the former Jesuits themselves, although letters by former Jesuits who joined the Propaganda mission are preserved in the Propaganda archives. Nevertheless, as Golvers mentions, a reading of extant Jesuit letters can still reveal intriguing details about this internal correspondence, such as

the transmission in open or closed envelopes, «private» parts of some letters (*solli*), the use of regular mail services, both public and private, prescriptions [for those mail services], and the time needed to cover particular distances (Golvers in Standaert 2001, 163).<sup>6</sup>

The letters of the Propaganda missionaries in Peking offer a more comprehensive view of the mechanics of mailing than we have seen so far and, in the

<sup>6</sup> On the mechanics of Jesuit inward mail see also Golvers (1999, 333-34). On the Jesuit communication system, see Friedrich (2011).

following pages, I will try to reconstruct the mailing system in the second half of the eighteenth century from their testimonies.

### Chinese Couriers and Agents

Missionaries often used their own couriers to transport letters and parcels from Peking to Canton-Macao and vice versa. These couriers were mostly Christian men, sometimes employed as servants or sacristans by the missionaries, or simply lay converts, who exercised professions that naturally took them to the south. Sigismondo da S. Nicola, for example, referred in 1747 to «my servant Fan Giovanni, who went to Canton three years ago, and who is practical and prudent»,<sup>7</sup> and in 1763 to another courier, Pao Giacomo, whom he ordered to travel to Macao with two servants of the French Jesuits, so as to journey in good company, be safer in transporting the subsidy, and reduce travel expenses.<sup>8</sup> In fact, the Propaganda missionaries often asked the Jesuits to employ their couriers to transport mail, funds or merchandise. In 1774, for example, Giuseppe Maria di S. Teresa refers to a bundle of letters from Europe delivered in Peking by «the servants of Fr. Le Febvre» (Louis-Joseph Le Febvre, 1706-post 1783), procurator of the French Jesuit mission in Canton (1769-1775).<sup>9</sup> In 1775, the same Giuseppe Maria explained to the Propaganda Procurator, Nicola Simonetti, the relationship he had with one of his trusted courier-servants:

The carrier of this letter is my servant, but not a slave (*mancipio*), obliged to obey all his master's commands. I have deprived myself of his services for more than 6 months, until he can come back from Macao. I had no other who was knowledgeable [of the route] and trustworthy to send there. He undertook this troublesome and delicate journey out of love for me. But he is Chinese, he has a family, and owns some fields bought with my money which [unfortunately] have been sterile in the last three years, sometimes due to the drought, sometimes to the excessive rains. If our couriers do not get any gains from these journeys to Macao, who will want once again to undertake such a long and troublesome trip? I hope Your Reverence can help him, and make him return consoled and in the company of others.<sup>10</sup>

The «consolation» referred to here was a monetary reward. Clearly, this servant depended on the church's support. But the opposite was also true: unless these servants were treated well, they would no longer want to act as couriers

<sup>7</sup> Sigismondo to Procurator Arcangelo Miralta, Peking, 24 September 1747 (received in Macao on 17 November 1747), APF, *Procura Cina*, box 15, fol. 1r.

<sup>8</sup> Sigismondo to Palladini, Peking, 20 September 1763 (received in Macao on 3 December 1763), APF, *Procura Cina*, box 15, fol. 1r.

<sup>9</sup> Giuseppe Maria to Procurator Nicola Simonetti, Peking, 10 April 1774 (received in Macao on 7 July 1774), APF, *Procura Cina*, box 17, fol. 1r. A biographical note on Le Febvre in Dehergne (1973, 315).

<sup>10</sup> Giuseppe Maria to Simonetti, Peking, 18 October 1775, APF, *Procura Cina*, box 17, fol. 2v.

on behalf of Propaganda. Good treatment included a sufficient amount to cover the costs for the journey, which lasted a minimum of two months each way. At the bottom of the same letter was the cost of sending a courier to Macao: 50 *pezze*. Considering that the yearly subsidy of a missionary was 200 *pezze*, the expense for a courier's journey was substantial. Sigismondo mentioned that it was possible to find people who would do it for 20 *pezze*, but that these were not trustworthy messengers; rather, they were uprooted men who, in his words, were «miserably poor individuals, without capital and home».<sup>11</sup>

This reference to messengers investing their own capital reveals another important incentive for couriers: the possibility to earn a living by engaging in commercial activities between Canton and Peking. The same servant of Giuseppe Maria, for example, asked the Propaganda Procurator in 1775 for 300 *patacche* to buy «golden thread» in Macao, which he could then sell at a great profit in Peking.<sup>12</sup> Yet these ventures were not always profitable: «this servant of mine, notwithstanding his being faithful and prudent, is not a son of good fortune», continued Giuseppe Maria, referring to an investment of the subsidy the man had made earlier, which in the end earned him only a few taels and a lot of trouble.<sup>13</sup> The more successful of these Christian «courier-merchants» sometimes also acted as financial agents for the mission in Canton. Several letters, including the one used in the opening section, refer to a certain «Signor Lieu Antonio» as the mission's Chinese agent in Canton. Lieu started his «career» as a courier, travelling between Peking and Canton, transporting the mission's mail and funds. He soon used this position to begin his own business, maintaining a commercial relationship with a Christian correspondent in Peking. He invested the mission's silver in merchandise or, possibly, even commercial loans, and by 1766 had become rich enough to purchase, according to Fr. Arcangelo, «a mandarin's button for 500 taels».<sup>14</sup> Once he had been given that rank, Antonio Lieu refused to carry European letters, probably for fear of being intercepted by the authorities and losing his new official title. By 1776, he was residing mostly in Canton, acting as a sort of «bank» for the missionaries, issuing bills of exchange against the surrender of Spanish silver coins coming from Macao, to be transmitted to the missionaries by his Peking agent (as we saw in the incident narrated by Damasceno). That same year, Giuseppe Maria observed that «[Lieu] earns a lot by receiving there in Canton so much money in advance, which then he makes payable to us so late in Peking», moreover at the 93 carats exchange rate for silver current in Canton, but inferior to the rate accepted in the capital.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Sigismondo to Palladini, Peking, 3 May 1763 (received in Macao on 1 September 1763), APF, *Procura Cina*, box 15, fol. 1v.

<sup>12</sup> Giuseppe Maria to Simonetti, Peking, 5 May 1776, APF, *Procura Cina*, box 17, fol. 2v.

<sup>13</sup> APF, *Procura Cina*, box 17, fol. 2v.

<sup>14</sup> Arcangelo to Palladini, Haidian, 4 June 1766 (received in Macao on 21 August 1766), APF, *Procura Cina*, box 14, fol. 1r.

<sup>15</sup> Giuseppe Maria di S. Teresa to Simonetti, Peking, 5 May 1776, APF, *Procura Cina*, box 17, fol. 2v.

Some Christians may also have used their connections with foreign priests and merchants to obtain positions within the Office of the Hoppo in Canton (the title used by foreigners for the yamen of the Guangdong Maritime Customs Superintendent, *Yuehai guanbu* 粵海關部 or *Yue haiguan jiandu* 粵海關監督), and the staff of the governor-general of Liang-Guang (the «Two Guang» i.e. the provinces of Guangdong and Guangxi), also based in Canton. In 1766, for example, the Manchu Dekui 德魁, an official of the Imperial Household Bureau in charge of European court artisans (*Neiwufu lanzhong* 內務府郎中), was named as the new Hoppo.<sup>16</sup> Arcangelo mentioned him as «our friend [...] with whom] we used to meet and talk daily, and who by nature would not damage us Europeans, and who has offered to help us in all we might need [...]».<sup>17</sup> Two Christians joined his staff and left for Canton at his expense, later acting as informers and messengers for the mission. In 1781 Giuseppe Maria referred to one «Yao Mathia, baptized many years ago in Peking, who then moved with his whole family to Canton to become rich with the Customs».<sup>18</sup> At the end of that year, Yao was in Peking, ready to return to Canton with «recommendation letters to get a job in the Customs offices, written by a mandarin in Peking to the ‘Grand Customs Official’ of Canton, recently sent there by the Emperor».<sup>19</sup> In 1780 we find a reference to mail given to a Christian clockmaker named Luigi Kao, who was included in the retinue of the new governor-general of Guangdong-Guangxi (Gioro Bayansan 巴延三) travelling from the capital to his post in the southern province.<sup>20</sup>

There were far too few Christian servants, however, to support all needs. «What’s the use of money if we lack people to send?» («Ma a che serve il denaro, se manca la gente, non avendo chi mandare?»), asked Giuseppe Maria in 1777.<sup>21</sup> That is why the internal courier system had to be supplemented by other channels of transportation. This included trustworthy merchants who agreed to transmit mail, and especially arrange for the shipping of parcels and merchandise. Some were Christians, others were sympathetic non-Christians.

Arcangelo instructed the procurator in Canton, for example, to send his letters to a «shop of Christian merchants» in Peking, a safe address from where the letters could then be forwarded to the Propaganda residence in the capital.<sup>22</sup> A particularly useful group (probably a different one), connected by business

<sup>16</sup> For some bio-references to Dekui, see the database curated by the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica, Taiwan, *Personal Names Authority Database (Ming & Qing) – Renming quanwei ziliaoku* 人名權威資料庫, ID no. 008130.

<sup>17</sup> Arcangelo to Palladini, Haidian, 12 August 1766 (received in Macao on 9 November 1766), APF, *Procura Cina*, box 14, fol. 1r.

<sup>18</sup> Giuseppe Maria to Procurator Candido Paganetto, Peking, 12 February 1781, APF, *Procura Cina*, box 17, fol. 1r.

<sup>19</sup> Giuseppe Maria to Paganetto, Peking, 12 February 1781, APF, *Procura Cina*, box 17, fol. 1r.

<sup>20</sup> Jean Matthieu de Ventavon ex-SJ to Paganetto, Peking, 5 February 1780, APF, *Procura Cina*, box 16, fol. 1v.

<sup>21</sup> Giuseppe Maria to Simonetti, Peking, 29 June 1777, APF, *Procura Cina*, box 17, fol. 3r.

<sup>22</sup> Arcangelo Maria to Simonetti, Haidian, 29 December 1777, APF, *Procura Cina*, box 14, fol. 1r.

and blood ties to some local Christians, was based in Linqing 臨清, Shandong, the main site of the North China Franciscan mission, around 380 kilometres south of Peking (Mensaert 1958).<sup>23</sup> Linqing was at the juncture of the Wei 衛 river and the Grand Canal, and the location of an important custom house. Due to its strategic position, the town was a centre for the distribution of textiles and grain, and the production of bricks and tiles, including those used in the Forbidden City. The Linqing merchants travelled frequently to Canton via the Grand Canal and also had a shop in Peking. They served the needs of both the Shandong Propaganda Franciscans and the Peking Propagandists. Giuseppe Maria trusted their services and found that their rates of exchange for silver were more advantageous than those offered by Antonio Lieu. Other merchants, linked in the sources to the «Hademen», that is, the main custom house of Peking, seem to have served the needs of both the Jesuits and the Propagandists.<sup>24</sup>

Individual merchants of specialty goods were also sometimes used. One of the most profitable and fashionable Western items in Peking was snuff tobacco from Brazil, imported via Macao and Canton. One of the Christians of the Xitang (Western Church), the Propaganda church near the Xizhi gate 西直門, was a «merchant of European tobacco», a native of Shanxi who had a shop not far from the church itself. He was a close friend of Don Cassio Tai (a Chinese priest trained at the Collegio de' Cinesi in Naples), and could be employed to transport mail to Canton and back.<sup>25</sup>

### Public Postal System

Private couriers were not, however, the only way to mail letters. Missionaries could also employ the imperial postal system, as many officials did, in spite of the imperial prohibition on using it for private correspondence.<sup>26</sup> However, the experience was not always positive, as the official system was slow and letters sometimes got lost. In 1724, for example, Procurator Perroni commented on a sort of strike of the postal military personnel that was delaying the arrival of European letters in Peking, a sign that the system was then used by the mission. Apparently, the Grand Treasurer, newly arrived in Canton, stopped payment to the soldiers guarding the postal stations. The soldiers agreed among themselves to interrupt relaying the mail as usual. After receiving strong complaints from merchants in Peking, the Grand Post Master of Canton intervened with the governor-general of Guangdong-Guangxi to end the disruption.<sup>27</sup> In 1725, the procurator, who was still worried about the loss of letters to Peking, learned after «secret investigations» that the Post Master (*Postiere Maggiore*)

<sup>23</sup> Mensaert (1958).

<sup>24</sup> Giuseppe Maria to Simonetti, Peking, 28 December 1774, *Procura Cina*, box 17, fol. 1r.

<sup>25</sup> Arcangelo to Simonetti, Haidian, 17 May 1777, APF, *Procura Cina*, box 14, fol. 3r.

<sup>26</sup> Wilkinson (2018, 847-48).

<sup>27</sup> «Memorie della Cina», 1724, in APF, *Acta CP*, vol. 5 (1729-30), fol. 87v.

of Canton had discovered one of his low-ranking officials pocketing the money given to official couriers and omitting to register letters in the master books.<sup>28</sup>

The connections of foreign supercargoes with the officially authorised *hong* merchants in charge of supervising them within the Canton System established in 1757 became useful for expediting the mailing process through the official postal system. In October 1766, the emperor issued an edict ordering all letters for the Europeans in Peking to be forwarded by the chief *hong* merchant to the imperial post for delivery, without opening or delaying them. In 1767, missionaries commented that the most reliable channel for sending mail via this new system was the French supercargo and his *hong* merchants: that year, the French Jesuits received their mail from Canton in the record time of 59 days.<sup>29</sup> Ten years later (1776), however, the official mail seemed again to be slow and impractical: to send letters from Peking to Canton via the county magistrate (*ci hien* = *zhixian* 知縣) of Canton delayed their delivery, as they often sat a long time in his yamen.<sup>30</sup>

The secrecy of the mail was also an issue. At a time of conflict between Propaganda and the former Jesuits under Portuguese and French patronage, the Propaganda Procurator, thanks to the protection of the important *hong* merchant Pan Zhencheng 潘振承 (1714-88), better known by his commercial name as «Pam Ki Kua» (Pan Qiguan 潘啓官/觀),<sup>31</sup> decided to use the official post controlled by the county magistrate of Canton only for ordinary dispatches, as they were sent to the Imperial Astronomical Directorate in Peking, still controlled by possibly hostile former Jesuits. Correspondence on delicate matters was instead sent via faithful merchants.<sup>32</sup>

#### *What was mailed? Letters, parcels and merchandise*

The composite mailing system described was used to send not only letters, but also bulkier parcels and merchandise. While the letters could travel faster via land, merchandise moved mostly by river and the Grand Canal, using the slower imperial tribute ships and grain convoys (*liangchuan* 糧船). Sometimes smaller quantities of merchandise could be sent via land on mules, for at least part of the trip. The items sought after in Peking (besides silver ingots or coins) were Western products for consumption by Europeans, which could not be found

<sup>28</sup> Domenico Perroni, "Memorie della Cina dell'anno 1725 per la Congregazione di Propaganda Fide," APF, *Scritture originali della Congregazione Particolare dell'Indie Orientali e Cina* (SOCP), vol. 32 (1726), fol. 286r-v.

<sup>29</sup> See a Chinese-language memorial issued by Fuheng, ordering the implementation of the imperial decree, dated 10 October 1766, in Han (2011, 41-42); on the 59-day speedy delivery, see Sigismondo to Palladini, Peking, 24 September 1767 (received in Canton on 2 November and in Macao 16 November 1767), fol. 1r.

<sup>30</sup> Arcangelo to Simonetti, Haidian, 15 October 1776, APF, *Procura Cina*, box 14, fol. 1v.

<sup>31</sup> Wilkinson (2018, 3112).

<sup>32</sup> Arcangelo to Simonetti, Haidian, 17 May 1777, APF, *Procura Cina*, box 14, fol. 3r.

on the Peking market, or items that could be used as gifts to ingratiate the Qing nobility and the palace personnel.

Foreign foods and beverages were at the top of the list. Bottled wine, and occasionally wine in wooden barrels, travelled in great quantities, to be used for Mass, as well as for daily consumption. *Xeres* (i.e. Jerez) wine was prized for its durability and affordability. Giuseppe Maria observed that producing wine in Peking was possible, but the results were mediocre (he once mentioned he could use it only «to dress the salad», as it had evidently turned into vinegar!),<sup>33</sup> and in the end the cost of buying grapes, processing them and cooking the wine so that it would last was the same as for the *Xeres* available in Canton (2 *massi* per bottle). Bordeaux wine was the preferred choice of the French Jesuits. We also find mention of wines from Portugal, the Canaries and Persia.<sup>34</sup>

The other highly prized foodstuff was chocolate, which was shipped in airtight metal containers and prepared as small cakes, in at least two varieties, namely «European» chocolate (South American cocoa processed in Portugal, Spain or Italy), and Philippine chocolate, considered inferior. Occasionally rare items reached Peking to please the missionaries with some familiar comfort food: beer, cheese, olive oil and coffee. Arcangelo, a native of Milan, for example, wrote to the procurator: «I received the cheese, something I very much appreciated since I was born in a country where there is such abundance of it, but of which I have been deprived for so many years».<sup>35</sup>

Snuff tobacco was by far the most coveted luxury commodity. Initially imported by the Jesuits to the court of the Kangxi emperor in the late seventeenth century, it soon became very fashionable among Qing aristocrats, palace personnel, and literati. The best qualities came from the state of Bahia in Brazil, and there is not a letter to the Propaganda Procurator that does not mention the tobacco varieties most desired by Chinese nobles, such as *mostrinha* or *cidade*.

<sup>33</sup> The comment is found in a letter by Giuseppe Maria to Miralta, Haidian, 28 July 1748 (received in Macao on 10 September 1748), APF, *Procura Cina*, box 17, fol. 2v: «[...] pregandola di volere a mio conto inviarmi una trentina di botteghe di vino portoghese per le messe, mentre il vino da me fatto l'anno passato mi serve per mangiare insalata» [«I am begging you to send me at my expense about thirty bottles of Portuguese wine for the mass, since the wine I made last year is only good for eating salad»].

<sup>34</sup> On *Xeres* wine, see Giuseppe Maria to Palladini, Haidian, 28 July 1769 (received in Macao on 23 October 1769), APF, *Procura Cina*, box 17, fol. 2v; on Bordeaux wine, see Ventavon to Procurator Francesco Giuseppe Della Torre, Peking, 18 September 1783, APF, *Procura Cina*, box 16, fol. 3r; on other wines, see for example «Copia del Diario del Sig. D. Matteo Ripa, mandato a Cantone a Gennaro Amodei», Peking, 25 November 1710–November 1711, APF, SOCP, vol. 26 (1712–1713), fol. 368v. As we read in Margiotti (1958, 376n30), the *mas* was a subdivision of «the *tael*, the Chinese silver currency (*liang* 兩) that was so named by the Portuguese, probably from the Hindi *tola*, later passed on to other Western languages. In 1722 a silver *tael* weighed 16 ounces and was divided into 10 *mas*, 100 *condorins* and 1000 *li* or *casce* (*caixas*). In the same era the silver *tael* was worth 11 *paoli* or Roman *giulii* and almost a *baiocco*. The *mas* was worth 11 *baiocchi* and ½ *quattrino*».

<sup>35</sup> Arcangelo to Palladini, Haidian, 25 January 1765 (received in Macao on 10 June 1765), APF, *Procura Cina*, box 14, fol. 1r.

The missionaries and several Christians from the Peking community engaged in a brisk importation of the precious snuff, which could both be used as a gift to officials, eunuchs and palace servants, and sold on the market by missionaries and by Christian tobacconists for a handsome profit. This became one of the preferred methods to raise cash for the strapped Propaganda mission, and it appears that, as usual, the richer Jesuit mission was importing even larger quantities of it for internal consumption, for gifts and to sell.<sup>36</sup>

Other commodities that travelled towards Peking, but also in the other direction, were medicines and so-called *galanterie* or novelty items. European curiosities that reached Peking as gifts for the emperor, the court, and the open luxury market, included clocks, glassware, French scissors, Indian fine cotton cloth and handkerchiefs, European velvets, and enamels. Missionaries would also send back to their patrons, friends and relatives in Europe, Chinese and Japanese lacquerware, silk cloth, painted fans, Chinese paintings, porcelain sets, and special varieties of tea, such as Pu-erh (*puercha* 普洱茶).

Finally, missionaries also received European books, European writing paper, devotional prints and objects, and liturgical implements, items on whose circulation several scholars have conducted research in recent years. Those missionaries who had technical tasks at court requested and received whenever possible special tools, clockwork parts, mineral colours, chemical ingredients for the production of paints and glassware and so on.<sup>37</sup>

*How was it mailed? Transportation, addressing, packaging, time, and costs*

Means of transportation

In 1774, Giuseppe Maria di S. Teresa replied to the Propaganda Fide procurator in Macao in a somewhat irritated tone:

Here in China we do not have the ease of sending chests and cases like in Europe or in France, where every week anybody can send big trunks with the departing public coach, paying by the pound according to the weight of the container. I wish we had the same service also in Peking and Canton, and in such a case I would certainly send you some parcel, not just containing letters, but also some novelty items. But in these cities, we only have the post, and we can only use it to send letters.<sup>38</sup>

These words echoed some of his earlier comments made in 1771: «we are in China and here the opportunities to send merchandise are rare, so we must

<sup>36</sup> References to tobacco in the Propaganda correspondence are so frequent to defy citation. On the history of tobacco in China, see Benedict (2011); on Brazilian tobacco exports to Asia and China/Macao, see Amaral Lapa (1968, ch. 10, «Comércio com o Oriente», 253-300).

<sup>37</sup> References to these commodities and objects are scattered in the missionary correspondence I have read, and too diffuse and ubiquitous to cite here in full.

<sup>38</sup> Giuseppe Maria to Simonetti, Peking, 10 April 1774 (received in Canton on 7 July 1774), APF, *Procura Cina*, box 17, fol. 1r.

avail ourselves of any possible occasion offered to us». <sup>39</sup> These comments clarify that letters and merchandise had to take two different routes and that opportunities for shipping large parcels did not arise frequently. To send letters in small containers or wooden cases to save on postal fees, as the procurator had done, thereby irritating Giuseppe Maria, was a mistake, as it entailed sending the parcel with the slow tribute boats, rather than the faster private couriers or even the official postal system which only transported letters. Indeed, to send parcels, trunks and chests it was necessary to use the aforementioned «grain boats» or tribute boats (*leam chuen* i.e. *liangchuan*), or take advantage of special expeditions, such as the arrival of new missionaries directed to the imperial court. Transportation by mule was exceedingly expensive compared to the boats. In 1771, for example, the agent Antonio Lieu refused to arrange for the transport of two cases of wine from Macao to Peking because the cost of having them sent by mule, plus the custom duties, would have exceeded the value of the wine being shipped. <sup>40</sup> Moreover, travelling by land to Peking would have made it impossible to deliver some of that wine to the missionaries of Linqing in Shandong. To send a chest to Shandong from Peking was troublesome and required a cart and two men for a journey of ten days each way. The best way was to separate what was needed in Shandong from what was going to Peking and ship the chests for Shandong via Jiangxi, where they could be sent by canal and reach Linqing directly. In one instance, the sea passage along the coast to the port of Tianjin, three days away from Peking, was used to send some wine at the cost of 20 *pezze/pesos*, reaching Peking intact well before the arrival of the riverine tribute ships. <sup>41</sup>

#### Addressing and packaging

Preparing the letters and parcels so that they could be easily transported and reach their addressees was important as well. A bundle of letters, for example, was improperly prepared by Procurator Palladini in 1768 as a «large square parcel, too wide for the official post», and could not be sent with the imperial post because «parcels have to be prepared according to the Chinese fashion, long and narrow, with an address in Chinese». <sup>42</sup> The addresses were relatively generic, as was common in pre-modern times, yet precise enough to guarantee delivery. Arcangelo, for example, provided two Chinese addresses in Peking to the procurator: the first was the Propaganda church, that is, the Xitang (西堂, Western Church); the second was the address of the Peking shop of the Chris-

<sup>39</sup> Giuseppe Maria to Palladini, Peking, 29 December 1771 (received in Macao on 28 March 1772), APF, *Procura Cina*, box 17, fol. 1r.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 1r.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 1v.

<sup>42</sup> Giuseppe Maria to Palladini, Haidian, 27 February 1769 (received in Macao on 17 April 1769), APF, *Procura Cina*, box 17, fol. 1r.

tian merchants. A cover with the merchants' address in Chinese characters had to be pasted over the bundle. Once it reached the Peking shop, the merchants would open the bundle, to find a second cover with the church's address. Moreover, the name of the church, «Xitang», had to be specified. To merely use *Tianzhutang* (天主堂, i.e. Catholic Church) was confusing and, in the past, bundles addressed that way had been sent to the nearby Portuguese Jesuits of the Nantang (南堂, Southern Church), provoking delays and possible leaks of sensitive information. Vague addresses could indeed delay delivery and, on one occasion, «the poor guy of the post wasted lots of time till he could find the shop of the tobacconist to whom it had been directed».<sup>43</sup>

In the opposite direction, and when using the official post, it was necessary to find an agent in Canton to forward the mail to Macao, since letters would reach Canton, but no further than the postal yamen. The procurator had to send a cover in Chinese to Peking in advance, specifying the address in Macao for the commercial agent in the capital to use when returning mail in the opposite direction.

Bundles also had to be packaged to avoid drawing attention to them and thus pass as regular Chinese mail. Giuseppe Maria reminded the procurator «not to put the [European-style] seal outside the Chinese bundle as you did in your last letter, because that attracts attention in this postal office [of Peking], when they see a bundle of letters addressed to a Chinese with a European seal».<sup>44</sup> Obviously, Christianity was still a forbidden sect, and the Chinese government was somewhat suspicious of foreign intentions. Better to avoid any pretext for the mail to be intercepted.

### Delivery times

Delivery times differed depending on the route chosen, the specific historical circumstances and accidents of all kinds. Two conscientious procurators from the 1740s to the 1760s, Arcangelo Miralta and Emiliano Palladini, always noted on letters received from Peking the arrival date in Macao. We thus have an approximate idea of the average time it took for letters to reach the south. Typically, mail took just over two months to reach Canton and four to six days from Canton to Macao. The opposite route would take the same time, although delays or loss were possible due to many factors.

Complaints about loss of letters are to be found, though not in great number, during the tenures of Miralta and Palladini as procurators. The late 1750s to the mid-1760s, however, was a period of more irregular communication, especially after the Qing central government forbade direct correspondence between Ma-

<sup>43</sup> Quotation from Giuseppe Maria to Simonetti, Peking, 11 January 1778, APF, *Procura Cina*, box 17, fol. 1r; see also Arcangelo to Simonetti, Haidian, 14 January 1778, APF, *Procura Cina*, box 14, fol. 1r and Arcangelo to Paganetto, Haidian, 9 February 1779, APF, *Procura Cina*, box 14, fol. 1r.

<sup>44</sup> Giuseppe Maria to Simonetti, Peking, 27 September 1777, APF, *Procura Cina*, box 17, fol. 1r.

cao and Peking, ordering that all mail first be sent to the governor-general in Canton.<sup>45</sup> In that period, letters sent by Procurator Guglielmi in 1757 and 1758 via the official post were only received in Peking in 1760. In Guglielmi's case, the matter was made worse by the procurator's chronic lack of response to requests from the Peking missionaries. Guglielmi, a sloppy and dishonest procurator – the man whom Palladini had to remove from his post by secret order from Propaganda immediately after disembarking in Macao – quite likely did not reply to many letters from Peking, and possibly destroyed some of those he did receive to eliminate traces of complaints about his conduct (Guglielmi was accused of concubinage and engaging in private commerce in Macao).<sup>46</sup>

Many more factors played a role in delivery times. Chinese festivals delayed the arrival of post, especially during the New Year closure of the imperial administrative offices. Bureaucratic sloth in the office of the Canton county magistrate was blamed for delays. Corrupt servants of the missionaries would not deliver the letters to the post and pocketed the copper coins of the fees. Tensions with foreign merchants in Macao and Canton and wars in Europe and the colonies (for example the Anglo-French wars in the late 1750s and 1760s, and the American Revolutionary War in the 1770s) made the arrival of mail rare from Europe, but also within China. In spite of this, the number of letters travelling back and forth was still remarkable.<sup>47</sup>

### Costs

A fixed amount was charged for each letter sent or received through the official postal system. In the 1730s, for example, the amount was 300 copper coins (*ciappe*) per letter, corresponding to two *massi* of good silver. Another 300 coins had to be paid to a private courier, who would spend an entire day delivering the bundles from the postal relay station to the Propaganda churches, one in the city and the other in Haidian, close to the Suburban Imperial Palace of Yuanmingyuan 圓明園. In order to ensure prompt delivery, postal officials were also given

<sup>45</sup> Li Shiyao, governor-general of Guangdong and Guangxi, observed in a memorial dated 14 December 1759: «[...] it is reasonable that matters regarding foreigners should fall under the jurisdiction of local officials, and that [foreigners] should be prohibited from hiring locals when exchanging correspondence»; *Zhongguo diyi lishi dang'an* (1999, I:336).

<sup>46</sup> Palladini, «Supplemento alle Memorie [...] per l'anno 1761» APF, SOCP, vol. 52 (1760-63), fol. 400v.

<sup>47</sup> On Chinese festivals delaying the arrival of the post, see Rinaldo Maria di S. Giuseppe OCD to Miralta, Haidian, 1 March 1731 (received in Macao on 3 April 1731), APF, *Procura Cina*, box 29, fol. 1r; on servants embezzling money, see Serafino to Miralta, Haidian, 30 November 1738 (received 24 January 1739), APF, *Procura Cina*, box 30, fol. 1r; on the Anglo-French war's impact on mail, see Giuseppe Maria di S. Teresa to Simonetti, Peking, 9 September 1778, APF, *Procura Cina*, box 17, fol. 2r-v: «This year the French [Jesuit] Fathers did not receive the gazettes of the year 1776, which every year were sent to them from Europe, so we know nothing new of that year, principally due to the War of the English with their American subjects».

gifts three times a year, in the first, fifth and eighth months. The Jesuits usually tipped them generously with two *taels* each time. The poorer Propaganda mission, however, could not afford it and, in 1738, the Augustinians Serafino da S. Giovanni Battista and Sigismondo da S. Nicola blamed the stinginess of the Lazarist Teodorico Pedrini for the loss or delay of their letters, attributing it to «a certain Genoese liberality which is also rooted in the heart of those from the Marche» (in Italy, the Genoese are known for being stingy, and Pedrini was from the Marche region [...]).<sup>48</sup> When, on the fifth moon, the postal officials did their round of the Peking churches to collect gifts, Pedrini only gave them a tip of 500 copper coins. The postal officials commented: «if their letters will not be mailed or will get lost, they should not complain». Serafino then begged the Jesuits to forward also his own mail to Macao via their contacts.<sup>49</sup>

### Conclusion

My preliminary conclusions below suggest why researching these issues does indeed matter.

First, the reconstruction of the way the infrastructure for sending merchandise and letters worked reveals the degree of connectivity of missionaries within China, with Macao and with Europe. While sending and receiving letters to and from Europe could take years, within China the flow of information was generally much more continuous and abundant. This is no surprise, perhaps, but so far, we have had little precious proof to assert it with certainty. Noël Golvers already commented that the rate of survival of letters going to Europe (at least official ones), which were written in several copies and sent via several routes, is in fact remarkable. When we consider an internal administrative archive like that of the procurator of Propaganda, we realise that the quantity of correspondence reaching and exiting that office kept the procurators and their assistants quite busy. This also gives us a sense of how much must have been lost from the Jesuit mission's administrative archives.

Second, from references in the letters by Peking missionaries we have positive proof, including names, dates and circumstances, of specific instances of how mission networks were built, information was circulated, and gifts were exchanged. This was done to create connections (*guanxi* 關係) with Chinese government officials at the highest level, but also at lower levels, with supercar-goes of East India Companies, with Chinese merchants and Chinese Christians.

Finally, the importance of Chinese support in keeping this system working cannot be understated. Without Chinese converts acting as couriers and agents and without the support of imperial officials in key positions within the Impe-

<sup>48</sup> Sigismondo to Miralta, Peking, 26 August 1738 (received 4 October 1738), APF, *Procura Cina*, box 15, fol. 1r.

<sup>49</sup> Serafino to Miralta, Haidian, 25 August 1738 (received 4 October 1738), APF, *Procura Cina*, box 30, fol. 5r.

rial Household Bureau and other offices, mail and merchandise would have been impossible to ship.

The missionaries' technical and artistic skills deployed among officials in the capital (besides the emperor), but also material incentives, including the importation of luxury items (from clocks to Brazilian tobacco), were the lubricant that oiled the system. Ideas flowed, but only thanks to the very *materiality* of the system undergirding circulation, something that, as scholars, more often interested in ideas, we sometimes tend to forget.<sup>50</sup>

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# Representations of Tibet and Responses to Missionary Failure in Ippolito Desideri's Italian Writings

Linda Zampol D'Ortia

**Abstract:** This chapter considers the long shadow of failure on the 1716-1721 mission to Tibet by Italian Jesuit Ippolito Desideri (1684-1733). Analysing Desideri's letters, his missionary manual, and his *Notizie storiche del Thibet*, it focuses on the historical actors' perceptions of missionary failure, and on the expectations and biases these perceptions created, to expose otherwise neglected aspects of this intercultural encounter. It investigates the impact that these perceptions had on the tensions extant in the Jesuit Province of Goa, on Desideri's description of the populations of the so-called "Three Tibets" (Baltistan, Ladakh and Tibet), and on the missionary policy he proposed for creating a Catholic Christendom that could spread globally.

**Keywords:** Tibet, Ippolito Desideri, Eighteenth century, Jesuits

The eighteenth century was a period of crisis for the Society of Jesus.<sup>1</sup> Anti-Jesuitism had been on the rise during the previous century, while the Society had been losing influence in the highest spheres of Catholicism and support among the other Catholic religious orders (Pavone 2019; Lewis 2001). As the Iberian presence was becoming less prominent in Asia, and their patronage less able to support them, Jesuits lost optimism regarding the possibility of success for their missions. At the beginning of the 1700s, the negative resolution of the Rites Controversies that engulfed the Chinese and the Malabar missions, focused on the orthodoxy of Christian concepts translated into non-European cultures, was a blow to the Society's Asian missions and to its standing in Europe (Von Collani 2019). The Society was eventually suppressed by the Papacy in 1773 and would not be restored until 1814.

This chapter will consider the long shadow that failure cast on the eighteenth-century Jesuit mission to Tibet, more specifically on the work of Italian Jesuit missionary Ippolito Desideri (1684-1733), who lived in Lhasa from 1716

<sup>1</sup> Research for this chapter was supported by the generous «Centro Vittore Branca» grant at the Centre for Comparative Studies of Civilisations and Spiritualities of Giorgio Cini Foundation (Venice).

to 1721.<sup>2</sup> Following Hertel and Keevak, the analysis focuses on perceptions of failure by historical actors, aiming to expose otherwise neglected aspects of intercultural encounters, by unveiling expectations and biases that surround them (2017, 2). Desideri applied himself to the study of Tibetan religious beliefs and practices, composing various refutations in Tibetan,<sup>3</sup> but was forced to leave the country when Propaganda Fide confirmed that the mission was an exclusive of the Capuchin friars. This chapter will explore the impact that the perception of past and contemporaneous missionary failure had on the tensions extant in the Jesuit Province of Goa, on Desideri's description of the populations of the so-called «Three Tibets» (Baltistan, Ladakh, and Tibet), on his proposed missionary policy, and on his interpretation of the works of Providence. To do so, it will focus on some of Desideri's Italian writings, namely his letters, his missionary manual, and his retelling of his missionary endeavours, his *Notizie storiche del Thibet* (Historical Notices of Tibet).<sup>4</sup>

### The Long Shadow of Failures Past

The shadow of failure already looms over Desideri's early letters from India, written soon after his arrival on the subcontinent. Desideri opens his first letter of 12 November 1713, from Goa, by declaring that the Father Provincial has assigned him to Tibet. He is now seeking the additional support of the authority of the Father General, Michelangelo Tamburini, as «the most efficient among human means» (MITN, V:3), in the form of a written patent. Desideri explains that the dangers of travelling are not what worries him, although he recognises that certain obstacles might frustrate his ambitions: he will either overcome them or die, he declares dramatically. Regarding the latter outcome, Desideri states that he would be «very satisfied» with it, because it would allow him to attain «a death like that of the Redeemer, of the Saints, and of the true sons of my beloved Mother, the Society of Jesus» (MITN, V:3). Since such an end is adjacent to martyrdom (Räisänen-Schröder 2020), it is not envisaged by Desideri as a failure. What does worry Desideri is human meddling:

The experience of what happened to others, on other occasions, has taught me about obstacles of a different kind, the most fierce and therefore the most formidable, which require the greatest precautions: [these] are the decisions of Ours [i.e. their Jesuit confreres], who shackle those who run, and clip the wings of those who fly; in a word, they fiercely oppose the will of the zeal of Your Paternity, and therefore the manifest will of God (MITN, V:3-4).

<sup>2</sup> A detailed biography of Ippolito Desideri is available in Bargiacchi (2008).

<sup>3</sup> A brief introduction to Desideri's Tibetan works, their origins and their content is in Pomplun (2019). See also Lopez and Jinpa (2017).

<sup>4</sup> The English translations of the *Notizie storiche del Thibet* and *Tibet Missionary Manual* used in this chapter are from Sweet and Zwilling's *Mission to Tibet* (2010; henceforth MT). Critical editions of Desideri's correspondence and of the three *Defenses Against the Capuchins* are found in vol. 5 of Luciano Petech's *I missionari italiani nel Tibet e nel Nepal* (1952-1956; henceforth, MITN; translations mine).

Here, in the frank style that sometimes characterises his correspondence, Desideri explicitly depicts his confreres as working against God's plan and thus, implicitly, as the main cause («most fierce») of the failures that plagued the Tibet mission.

Previous attempts to reach Tibet had been beset by a shortage of funds and workers, by difficulties in coordinating operations with Rome, and by the deaths of several missionaries (Sweet and Zwilling 2010, 23; 26). Thus, the resumption of the mission, ordered by the General in 1706, had not yet come about, despite the local support of the Visitor, Miguel de Amaral, and of the Provincial, Manoel Sarayva. Now, it appeared to be a common expectation among the Jesuits of Goa that this latest attempt, too, would not only fail, but would be actively hindered by local superiors. «Everyone says here», writes Desideri, «[that there will be] an arrest along the way, after the letters to [the General] have already been sent» (MITN, V:4). A second letter, written three days later, reiterates this fearful expectation: «If, as happened on other occasions, and as they say will happen this time too, [...] what I am being ordered [to do] now is obstructed and impeded by Ours [...] what should I do?» (MITN, V:6).

Desideri's third letter to the General from the subcontinent confirms that pervasive negativity and lack of confidence surrounded the question of the Tibetan mission among Jesuits throughout the Province, not just in Goa. Written in Surat on 30 December,<sup>5</sup> this text offers a longer, more polished discussion of the main points found in the previous letters. Desideri's travels confirmed his fears:

In Goa and in the rest of the Province, I heard so much against [this mission to Tibet], and I know of so many examples of others who were first sent and then recalled, that, to speak frankly, I have a great fear of suffering a solemn arrest in Agra (MITN, V:7).

A patent from the General – he reiterates with a certain contempt – would allow him to ignore any counter-order «from these local Superiors and Provincials» (MITN, V:8).

Explicitly revealing a pattern, Desideri's writings point to some of the tensions that troubled the Goan Province at the beginning of the eighteenth century. The fact that – at least in Desideri's account – many Jesuits expected him to be stopped and reassigned to a different mission, suggests that there was opposition on the ground to Rome's ambition to expand her extra-European missions. Tamburini had indeed exhorted the missionaries in Asia and South America not to limit their activities to the care of local Christian communities, but to extend their work to the conversion of non-Christian people (O'Neill and Domínguez 2001, II:1651-52). The resistance met by Desideri indicates that some superiors considered such a plan too ambitious for the overworked Goan Province. A letter

<sup>5</sup> As Desideri only reached Surat on 7 January 1714, it is possible that he actually wrote this letter before arriving there (Pomplun 2010, 223n58).

written to the General in 1713 by Father Giuseppe Martinetti,<sup>6</sup> who had relinquished his appointment to Tibet for unspecified reasons, sheds some light on the causes of this opposition. First, the mission had recently been assigned to the Capuchin Fathers by Propaganda Fide. Moreover, supporting a mission in Tibet

is impossible for this Province, owing to the enormous distance to stay there, both because the expenses exceed its means, and because also it is short of subjects; and to make one reach there, it is necessary to send four [...] There are the true informations; and, if others are spread over there (always excepting a miracle of the divine Omnipotence), believe that they are fables, because I have well examined the point for three years (Hosten 1938, 590-91).

The lack of funds and workers was thus the other main objection raised by Martinetti. Although less beleaguered than the Province of Malabar, Goa had indeed seen a steady decline in workers since its peak in 1627 (Sweet and Zwillling 2010, 26; Alden 1996, 581-82). The limited availability of manpower explains the local superiors' needs to prioritise certain missions over others. For instance, in 1708, Sarayva had to redirect to Mysore two Jesuits, who had originally been destined for Tibet, to replace two recently deceased missionaries (Wessels 1924, 207). Unlike in Malabar, revenues in Goa were still significant in the mid-eighteenth century (Alden 1996, 582). Nevertheless, the expenses for the Tibetan mission were considered excessive, even for this relatively rich province.

Although it appears that Desideri never met Martinetti (Sweet and Zwillling 2010, 26; 69In577), the arguments he presents in his Surat letter counter the reasons invoked by Martinetti against the Tibetan enterprise. Indeed, the topics considered in the two texts mirror each other to a considerable degree of precision. Just as Martinetti decries the excessive expenses required for the proposed mission, Desideri provides assurances about the availability of special funds allocated to Tibet that had been provided by a noblewoman living at the Mughal court. The lack of manpower is counterbalanced by Desideri's dedication to the enterprise and his commitment to reaching Tibet.<sup>7</sup> While, according to Martinetti, the mission was under the authority of Propaganda Fide, Desideri explains that the Tibetans had requested the return of the Jesuit missionaries, and described Father Andrade's cassock in detail to clarify which religious order they had in mind.<sup>8</sup> According to Martinetti, the Capuchins there despaired of evangelising the country, owing to the pervasive «idolatry» of its inhabitants, which had resisted even the influence of Islam. Desideri, on the other hand, said

<sup>6</sup> Letter written on 29 November; edited and translated in Hosten (1938).

<sup>7</sup> The *Notizie storiche* gives an image of Desideri as an «ideal missionary and Jesuit», in contrast to the less efficient Capuchins (Pomplun 2010, 186). This trend already emerges in these early letters, where Desideri's dedication and enthusiasm seem to be presented as effectively making up for the limited number of missionaries.

<sup>8</sup> It is unclear where Desideri came across this (erroneous) information, as no request was ever made for missionaries, let alone Jesuits (MITN, V:226n6). It may simply have been a rumour used to counter the Capuchins' claim on Tibet.

that he had collected evidence that the Tibetans were «very much inclined» towards Christianity. While Martinetti believed that Tibet could only be entered from China or even Cochinchina (southern Vietnam), Desideri found more than one accessible route (MITN, V:8; Hosten 1938, 590-91).

In his third letter, Desideri lists all these supporting elements that should stave off the threat of failure during the journey, instead of dismissing certain hazards as mere mundane complications, as he had done previously. This suggests that he encountered more specific objections to his journey to Tibet and was keen not to let the General feel discouraged, should they have come to his attention. Martinetti's experience, therefore, and his account of it appear to have influenced the dominant narrative about Tibet in the Goan Province. As Martinetti interpreted his inability to reach his destination as due to «heavenly providence», he presumably took it to be a sign that God did not support the Jesuits' return to Tibet. Still, his remark about the possibility of conflicting information being circulated in Rome points to the presence of other, rival interpretations. Although such contentions were common enough when tensions emerged between the desire for missionary expansionism and the commitment to maintaining existing Christian communities,<sup>9</sup> Desideri was certainly among those who had a negative view of Martinetti's endeavour and added it to the list of the Society's failed attempts to reach Tibet.

Missionaries around the globe commonly reinforced their arguments with appeals to their own experience in the field, as direct observation had already become an acceptable source of authoritativeness in the early modern period (Pagden 1993, 52-57). For instance, in his *Notizie storiche*, Desideri referred to first-hand experience as the only trustworthy source of information about distant countries (MT, 451). However, in the years we are now considering, no Jesuit could claim eyewitness status in relation to Tibet. While Martinetti could at least boast of having spent three years collecting data in India, in his letters, Desideri emphasises that he had made «various inquiries with truly special attention», and refers to trustworthy fellow Jesuits as his sources. He deploys an arsenal of rhetoric centred on the other common source of authoritativeness of that period, the biblical canon (Pagden 1993, 52). He declared he was ready to go to Tibet, «even through Hell if necessary» in order to save the Society of Jesus from being blamed for the Tibetans' faithlessness before God (MITN, V:8). Just like the references to the glorious deaths of past Jesuit missionaries in Desideri's first letter, these allusions to the Society's responsibility before God with regard to the Tibetan mission are aimed at boosting confidence in the Society's sacred role in the world. Such a boost was especially needed at a time when missionary activities were posing problems that – if the negative attitude of the Goan Province is anything to go by – were undermining the Jesuits' belief in the uniqueness of their order and their ability to fulfil their mission. By

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, the consultation of Bungo called by Alessandro Valignano in Japan in 1580, which involved similar questions of funds and manpower (Schütte 1985).

echoing Tamburini's own letter of support for the establishment of new missions (MITN, V:5; 9), Desideri presents himself as the right man for a zealous cause, comparing himself to the Jesuits of old. As he repeats in a later letter, he has no doubt that God is calling him (MITN, V:14). He reminds the General of the Society's most important aim, the greater glory of God, in the face of what he considers to be mundane problems. Softening his tone through a final apophysis, Desideri even suggests that the General's charitableness and goodwill should be awakened by his brief description of the situation, with no need for any explicit request or explanation. Desideri refers to the raising of Lazarus by comparing his own request to the General to Martha and Mary's message to Jesus that «the one he loved» was sick (John 11:3). Like the two sisters, who refrained from begging for the immediate restoration of their brother's health and simply appealed to Jesus's love, Desideri's appeal should have been enough to move the General. This image will return in *Notizie istoriche*.

### The Ladakhi people as Potential Christians

As is clear from the letters just discussed, Desideri's main goal was to reach Tibet. Not much is said about his plans once he got there. His initial correspondence quickly dismissed the Tibetans. As shown above, he declared that they were well-disposed towards Christianity and awaiting the Jesuits. Some more information about the inhabitants of the Tibets only appears in his letter to the General from the city of Leh, on 3 August 1715. By this stage in his travels, Desideri had visited two countries called Tibet: Baltistan, also called «Little Tibet», which he crossed swiftly, since it was not his destination; and Ladakh (in Kashmir), «Great» or «Second Tibet». His 1715 letter quickly dismisses the former as lacking potential for conversion, since the inhabitants were Muslim: «therefore [the country], even if potentially fertile, gives no hope for the desired fruit» (MITN, V:23).<sup>10</sup> The people of Ladakh, on the other hand, received more attention. However, Desideri's depiction of Ladakhi religious practices and beliefs is merely a list of features that he traces back to Christianity. Most Ladakhis are «gentiles»,<sup>11</sup> the text begins, «and it appears that in ancient times they learned about the Holy Faith» (MITN, V:26). The Ladakhi people are depicted praying on a rosary to a triune god; worshipping a holy man, Urghien (Padmasambhava),

<sup>10</sup> This concept often occurs in connection with the Muslims of Baltistan. It appears in Desideri's *Tibet Missionary Manual* (MT, 635) and in his letter to the Pope of 13 February 1717, from Lhasa: «[in Baltistan] the blasphemous sect of Mohammed closes all doors to the work of the Evangelical missionaries» (MITN, V:41). Interestingly, to justify the fact that he travelled on to Lhasa instead of remaining in Leh, Desideri states that in Ladakh, too, the Muslim influence was such that it would be futile to attempt working there, for the time being (MITN, V:41).

<sup>11</sup> On the terms Desideri uses to refer to non-Christians and their religions, see Pomplun (2020). In my rendition of Desideri's texts, I try to provide as literal a translation as possible of such words.

who is both human and divine in nature, born of neither man nor woman approximately 1700 years earlier; worshipping other figures, identified as saints of God. Ladakhi churches, where God and Urghien are stated to dwell, have altars, altar frontals, and altar cloths. Their religious specialists («Lamma»), Desideri continues, are celibate and are distinguished from the laity by a special garment and tonsure; they study their Law in books written in a special language, different from that which they commonly use, and take part in ceremonies; they offer to their God and Urghien all kinds of foods, which are then eaten as holy things; they live together and recognise local superiors, as well as a universal one, «like the General or the Pope» (MITN, V:26-27). The king and his ministers are reported to recognise the Jesuits as «Lamma» and to have shown interest in the Christian breviary and to approve of the Christian religion, following a common topos of missionary literature (Sweet and Zwilling 2017, 8). Desideri's description concludes stating that local authorities have declared that their own religious book and the one owned by the Jesuits are the same and that they wish that better communication were possible (MITN, V:27).

The descriptions of the peoples of «Little Tibet» and of «Great Tibet» could not be more different. Notwithstanding his admiration for Jerome Xavier's work at the Mughal court and for his books refuting Islam, Desideri assumed that it was impossible to successfully evangelise the people of Baltistan precisely because they were Muslims.<sup>12</sup> Ladakh, conversely, is described as a much more fertile ground for evangelisation. As Desideri had anticipated (or rather, hoped) in his previous letters, its inhabitants showed some potential as future converts for two main reasons. First, as seen above, he held Ladakhi religion to be already very similar to Christianity, that is to say, Desideri does not mention in this letter any belief or practice that he cannot recognise as an echo of a Catholic one. Even the Lamas are depicted as long-lost Jesuits, in light of their habits, generals, and local superiors. The idea of Asian religious beliefs and practices as remnants of Christianity, as elements that had degenerated over time but historically derived from the Christian faith, had been a leitmotiv in Jesuit missionary literature since Francis Xavier's time.<sup>13</sup> The expectation of finding Christian countries outside Europe had been an important aspect of the ideology of Iberian expansion, and had accompanied the search for Prester John, a legendary

<sup>12</sup> In this sense, the attitude Desideri displayed was similar to the one that emerged in Spain in the early seventeenth century, after the failure to convert the Morisco communities (Colombo 2009, 207). The Society of Jesus's attitudes to Muslims in the early modern period were ambivalent, since it supported both military intervention and evangelising efforts (Colombo 2019). Desideri himself does not appear to have completely ruled out the prospect of missions to Muslim lands, and encouraged efforts to study Islam and the Qur'an in *Notizie istoriche* (MT, 570).

<sup>13</sup> A well-known episode in this respect is Francis Xavier's impression that the Japanese Buddha Dainichi Nyorai (Mahavairocana) was the Christian God, an impression which was soon changed, once he had the opportunity to converse with Japanese Shingon monks (App 1997).

king living in the Orient, whose amazing riches and pious devotion made him a desirable ally for Christendom. The myth of «hidden Christianities» appeared in Catholic literature on Asia in different forms and contexts, and was behind much of the Jesuit exploration of India and China (Didier 2000, 26-37). Thus, it was often the case that Jesuit missionaries believed they had found traces of Christianity during their initial contacts with cultures they were not familiar with. These misunderstandings were fuelled by language barriers and by the enthusiasm of the missionaries, who would hastily report the good news that their expectations had been fulfilled. On some occasions, such as Desideri's journey to Ladakh, the missionaries' discovery was accompanied by reciprocated recognition on the part of the non-Christians.<sup>14</sup> When, upon closer inspection, it became clear that it was a misunderstanding, the many similarities convinced the missionaries that they were witnessing either vague influences from an ancient form of Christianity (brought to India, for example, by Saint Thomas) or a devilish imitation of the true faith, the work of the *simia dei*. Overall, for the missionaries, belief in the existence of faded memories of Christianity was very encouraging, because it confirmed the possibility of salvation for those who subscribed to certain practices (Pomplun 2010, 76-77). It strongly anticipated the likelihood of success, being tangible proof of certain peoples' inclination towards Christianity. That this narrative was proposed more than once in missionary literature about different regions and religions speaks of the strength and malleability of this vision.

The second reason why Ladakh was fertile ground for evangelisation is presented in a few sentences at the end of one of Desideri's letters, intertwined with the description of a promising national character. Ladakhi beliefs and practices differed significantly from those found on the Indian subcontinent. They did not regard the cow as sacred, they did not allow more than one wife, and they did not believe in transmigration.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the Ladakhis were set apart from the other non-Christians of the Goan Province, including Hindus and Muslims alike, and were spared being associated with the kind of negative characteristics that Europeans attributed to both of these groups. This uniqueness held the promise of a fresh start, ensuring some distance from past failures with Hindus and Muslims: the old failures that had plagued the Goan Province outside the territories controlled by an increasingly weak Portuguese Crown; and the more recent ones related to the Jesuits' defeat in the Indian Rites controversy in the

<sup>14</sup> For an example related to the mission in Japan, see Zampol D'Ortia, Dolce, and Pinto (2021, 81-82). Just as the Japanese monks' identification of God with various Buddhist principles was mostly met with disbelief from the missionaries, Desideri states that he does not believe that his breviary and the Lamas' book are the same text (MITN, V:27).

<sup>15</sup> A published French translation of a very similar letter addressed to Ildebrando Grassi (Lhasa, 10 April 1716), makes the comparison explicit by stating that «these are three elements in which they completely differ from the Indian idolaters» (MITN, V:37; Pomplun 2020, 541n11).

Malabar Province. The supposed similarities with Christian beliefs and practices led Desideri to expect greater chances of success with the people of Ladakh.

Desideri's hopes were unfortunately cut short when his superior decided not to open a mission in Ladakh, but to proceed instead to the «Third Tibet».<sup>16</sup> «The Law or religion of this Third Tibet is precisely that of this Second one», concludes Desideri in his letter (MITN, 5:31), evidently hopeful of finding there the same predisposition for Christianity as he had detected in Ladakh.

### Images of the Third Tibet

The large amount of information collected in *Notizie istoriche* provides a far more complex and detailed picture of Tibet, its people and its religion than the few surviving letters written by Desideri,<sup>17</sup> which do not expound much on it.<sup>18</sup> Although he admits that he only has a superficial understanding of Ladakhi religion, Desideri still finds a perfect continuity between the Second and the Third Tibet as far as religious matters are concerned.<sup>19</sup> Except for the presence of the doctrine of reincarnation and the absence, on the other hand, of any belief in the Trinity, the fundamental elements he attributed to the Ladakhi religious landscape return in Desideri's considerations about the Third Tibet. This is unsurprising, considering that these characteristics still follow the aforementioned leitmotifs in the European representation of Asian peoples. Therefore, the Tibetans of Lhasa are likewise described as positively inclined towards Christianity. This is shown, once again, through the tropes of the royal favour displayed towards the missionaries and of interest in devotional images, in this case on the part of the king of the Third Tibet (Lajang Khan) and his court. Behind their keen interest and constant attention, Desideri saw divine grace at work in their hearts, which he found very encouraging (MT, 185). Ordinary people are similarly depicted as being interested in Christianity: they are eager to attend the Christian Mass and engage in worship, and more generally display a pious attitude towards the crucifix (MT, 265).

*Notizie istoriche* often highlights how the Tibetans are also different from the Hindus and Muslims: a point that Desideri was keen to make in his letters with regard to the Ladakhis, so as to present them as an easier target for evangelisation. The contrast is drawn quite explicitly in relation to Muslims:

<sup>16</sup> On this turn of events, see Sweet (2006).

<sup>17</sup> The bibliography on the presentation of Tibetan religion in this text is quite extensive. The most comprehensive analyses are Pomplun (2010) and Sweet and Zwilling's introduction in MT.

<sup>18</sup> Chiefly concerned with the disputes with the Capuchins over the right to remain in Tibet, these later letters highlight only two elements of Tibetan religion that Desideri seeks to confute in his books: reincarnation and the possibility of attaining salvation through different religious systems.

<sup>19</sup> See his third *Defense against the Capuchins* in MITN (V:109).

in the third Tibet, [Muslims] are universally considered an inferior and despicable people. [...] This aversion of the Tibetans toward Mohammedanism and their affection toward us Europeans and the mysteries of the Christian religion that they have sometimes seen practiced by us is, in my opinion, one of the best indications that these people are inclined to embrace the holy faith (MT, 265-66).

Another positive trait of Tibetan society highlighted by Desideri is that it was not divided into castes, so it would have been possible for missionaries to engage with all people, in contrast to what happened elsewhere in Asia. Furthermore, although historically they received their religion from India, they did not accept many elements of Indian religion «owing to their subtle intelligence and continual speculative activity» (MT, 341), rejecting its «imaginary and monstrous divinities» (MT, 374-75; 429). From these elements, Desideri is able to spin a positive narrative: even if Tibetan people believe in reincarnation, which was a major point to be debated with them, they rejected several basic beliefs that were generally perceived to be strong points of resistance to evangelisation, such as polytheism. Indeed, he declares the Tibetan religion to be a somewhat contradictory form of monotheism, purer and more rational than other Asian religions, when discussing accusations of atheism against the Tibetans.<sup>20</sup> «They do accept and recognize a deity confusedly, in practice, and implicitly», he writes, just as they accept «some object of refuge and prayer» whose perfections make it identifiable with God (MT, 375-76). Spiritual considerations aside, it was certainly beneficial to the Jesuits that the Tibetans seemed to disdain two neighbouring religions whose influence and power in the region might have otherwise attracted them.

Tibetan religion's relationship with Christianity is indeed a thorny issue in the *Notizie storiche*. In the case of Ladakh, Desideri had considered religious practices and beliefs insofar as they reminded him of Christianity. He would later condemn this reductive approach, and would particularly regret the error of seeing the Trinity in the Three Jewels of Buddhism, especially because his letter to Ildebrando Grassi containing this inaccuracy had been publicly distributed in a volume of *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses* (MT, 449-50). However, while Desideri ruled out the notion of Tibet having had a Christian past, he attempted to create another connection with Christianity which could be exploited, by explaining the similarities he had identified in a different way. He attributed certain practices, such as the use of a rosary and the presence of a religious hierarchy, to Hindu imitation of the visible components of Christianity, when the latter was preached in the subcontinent by Saint Thomas and others. Since Desideri had established that the Tibetans had adopted their religion from India, he believed that they had borrowed such aspects, too (MT, 443-44). He explained the Three Jewels in the same way. He wondered whether, rather than coinciding with the

<sup>20</sup> On Desideri's interpretation of Tibetan «atheism», see Pomplun (2010, 91-96).

Trinity, the Three Jewels might simply be consistent with it, similarly to how he saw the idea of God behind the Buddhist notion of refuge. He noted that each Jewel was characterised in ways that recalled the divine Persons: the Buddha as the Father, who delivers the faithful from evil; the Doctrine as the Son, providing a path to sanctity; and the monastic community as the Holy Spirit, since monks are bound to one another by love. This correspondence was likewise understood as being caused by an imitation of Christian tenets that had reached Tibet via India (MT, 385).<sup>21</sup>

While rejecting the idea that Christianity had taken root in Tibet in the past, Desideri still strove to create some connections between the two. As he suggested to the Tibetan court on one occasion, Tibetan practices could be accepted in some form by Christianity, since he believed they were not so different; conversely, he held their dogmas to be incompatible (MT, 185-86). Other favourable characteristics that Desideri attributed to the Tibetans of Lhasa were a profound virtue and devotion, traits that are never explicitly mentioned in his discussions of the Ladakhi people. This was another topos about certain «pagans», whose virtuosity was such as to shame Christian readers (Pomplun 2010, 171; MT, 283). Desideri is keen to present Tibetans as very devoted to the Dalai Lama and to Urghien. In Desideri's aspirations, these good religious practices of the Tibetans, which also included meditation,<sup>22</sup> could easily become good Christian practices by shifting their focus: «the only thing necessary to make the Tibetans into exemplary and fervent Christians would have been to change the object of their foolish devotions and vain observances» (MT, 284). Therefore, they had the potential to constitute a solid starting point for the country's conversion, which is why they are mentioned repeatedly in the *Notizie storiche*, a text penned in the hope that Jesuit evangelisation would be allowed to continue in the country.

Alongside the positive aspects that Desideri identified in the Tibetan religious landscape, and which might have been of help for spreading the gospel, was the pervasive activity of the Devil. While he believed that a lack of divine guidance meant that the Tibetans were left to follow natural reason, with the various errors that this entailed, they were also susceptible to the influence of the Devil, who was the source of most of the erroneous beliefs held by the Tibetans, such as the idea that there is no Creator (MT, 364). In another case, as *simia dei*, the Devil had mocked the Christ by creating the legends surrounding the figure of the historical Buddha (MT, 394-95). The Devil's most impressive feat in this narrative is the invention of the doctrine of reincarnation, especially

<sup>21</sup> According to Pomplun, the description of the Three Jewels as an «obscure symbol» or a «blind fable» pointed to its being either a reflection of the original revelation to Adam and Eve, or a form of «Greek idolatry». Both represent a more positive reading than attributing these similarities to imitation of Christianity by the Indians and the Tibetans, an interpretation that comes closer to the principle of the *simia dei* (Pomplun 2010, 89).

<sup>22</sup> Desideri does not explicitly list meditation as one of these practices, but he recognised that it served the same aim as Christian contemplation and that most of the advice and guidance provided by the Tibetans were valid (MT, 390-91).

regarding the Dalai Lama, where he shows the full extent of his persuasiveness and insidiousness (MT, 310-11). Thus, Desideri concludes that the Tibetans have been given spiritual means to live righteous lives. If they then refuse to be faithful to the very God who has granted them these gifts, «he is not only justified in not entrusting them with the fuller and more precious gift of the supernatural light of faith, but even more», he believes that they deserve to receive eternal damnation (MT, 440).

#### Like Judith with Holofernes's Sword

In a passage quoted above, Desideri points to his own unworthiness as the reason for God's lack of favour towards the Jesuit Tibetan mission. However, his writings in support of this mission during the disputes with the Capuchins show that this statement was not to be taken too literally, and that Desideri identified the real causes of his own (and the Capuchins') failures elsewhere. The three *Defenses* addressed to Propaganda Fide and the *Tibet Missionary Manual* focus on the activities of missionaries proper, but it is the final chapters of *Notizie storiche* that express Desideri's ideal missionary policy, illustrated through an array of biblical examples and references. Consistently with the value he assigned to direct experience, his suggestions are based on his work in Tibet, but specific, contextualised elements are presented as a case study to support a wider, even global, evangelisation plan. For this reason, too, the policies that Desideri proposes may be regarded as a response to problems he personally faced in Asia: the lack of funds and manpower, difficulties in understanding local religious practices and beliefs, disagreements with confreres and other missionaries, and tensions with the Church authorities. The main question that this section of *Notizie storiche* is answering, the question that Desideri asks at the end and runs parallel to his considerations on the refusal of Tibetans to accept Christianity, is why the world has not converted yet, if that is the plan of Providence.

Before discussing what is needed for a mission to succeed, Desideri makes several considerations regarding what constituted a failed mission: it is not realistic to expect that a missionary could preach the gospel for a short time and immediately convince his audience to embrace Christianity (MT, 559). If Desideri is replying here to accusations levelled against him,<sup>23</sup> this statement also addresses the exaggerated expectation held by the first Jesuits in Asia that entire countries would quickly convert.<sup>24</sup> It can be inferred, therefore, that, just because people were not immediately converting en masse, it did not mean that a mission was to be considered a failure. Missionaries, Desideri concluded, were certainly not like Orpheus and his lyre (MT, 562).

<sup>23</sup> Desideri and the Capuchins exchanged accusations of not being able to make any converts, as mentioned in the second *Defense* (MITN, V:105).

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, the high expectations for Japan that appear in early Jesuit correspondence (Ruiz-De-Medina 1990).

On the topic of successful missionary policies, Desideri believed that more than one kind of actor was needed for effective evangelisation. The first category he discusses is missionaries. With regard to them, his *Tibet Missionary Manual* states: «[they] must be (aside from inspired and virtuous) of the best temperament, have a robust constitution, great intelligence and learning, and a talent for learning languages». The text then briefly expounds on the importance of learning the Tibetans' language in order to be able to read their sacred books, to converse with people, to understand their «false religion» and to be able to debate subtle matters, especially with monks (MT, 637-39). The *Notizie storiche* explains that missionaries need to be like the Apostles, in that their role requires prudence, intelligence, and solid knowledge of theology (MT, 556-58). In addition to this knowledge, a thorough study of local religious beliefs and practices is needed. The information collected from Asian sacred books, Desideri claims, makes a novel Judith of each missionary: just as the biblical heroine used Holofernes's own sword to decapitate him, similarly the missionary would exploit Asian peoples' own beliefs to demonstrate their absurdity and erroneousness (MT, 563). Thus, Desideri decries the use of information about religions in Asia just to «increase the stock of knowledge concerning various systems, outlandish beliefs, and clever refutations» (MT, 568). Instead, this knowledge should be used as a weapon – to demonstrate effectively to Asian people the absurdity of their beliefs and the legitimacy of Christianity.

The effects of the Rites Controversy, which was raging at the beginning of the eighteenth century, are visible in Desideri's choice of Rebecca as the personification of the Church in his following example. In Genesis 27, Rebecca sends her favourite son Jacob to find two young goats for his father Isaac, so that he might receive the latter's blessings in place of his firstborn brother, Esau. Rebecca seasons the goat meat and disguises it as the game hunted by Esau. Jacob presents this dish to his father, obtains his blessings and is granted dominion over his brothers. In Desideri's convoluted interpretation, Jacob is meant to represent the missionaries chosen and sent by the Church (Rebecca) to collect information about Asian religions (the goats). Just as Rebecca cooked the meat brought back by her son, Church theologians should analyse the translated religious texts to create refutations «with the savory seasoning of natural reason, apt analogy, and clear consistency» (MT, 571). This official doctrine should then be used by the missionaries to evangelise, win converts and obtain blessings. As pointed out by Sweet and Zwilling (MT, 751n1364), Desideri's recounting of the biblical story implicitly endorses deception and thus, arguably, accommodation. According to this practice, which had come under fire with the Rites Controversy, Jesuit missionaries would adopt local dress and customs, generally accompanied by the study of relevant languages and religious beliefs, to obtain access to non-Christian societies. If a reference to accommodation is indeed present, it is impossible to detach it, in Desideri's text, from the need for the approval of the Church authorities. While he claims that, for a missionary endeavour to be successful, specific knowledge about the local religion needs to be acquired through the missionaries' direct experience, he also concedes that a common,

orthodox interpretation must be provided by Roman theologians. It was not necessary for Desideri to write explicitly that this way of operating was meant to foster cohesion and avoid disputes like the Rites Controversy that could undermine entire missions.

A lack of workers in the mission is identified as another cause of failure. Workers should be numerous, believes Desideri, like the men who built King Solomon's temple in Jerusalem, because they are building the house of God on earth (MT, 576-77). This problem leads him to discuss the role of the rich and powerful, who should support the work of conversion. These constitute the second category of actors who can support evangelisation. He points to the widespread negative attitudes, of the sort he encountered in India, towards missionary enterprises, and denounces the defeatism of those decrying the end of the age of pious kings who supported the missionary effort, such as John III of Portugal. He exhorts his readers to recognise the same zeal in contemporary noble patrons, who, he prays, will continue to show their support, knowing that the souls that they have helped convert will speak in their favour before God (MT, 583-88).

People who are unable to help in tangible ways are the third and final category of supporters discussed in the *Notizie istoriche*. Desideri states that these people, too, owe God their love and allegiance, and are called on to help as they can. Many practices involving penance and sacrifice can aid the salvation of souls, and prayers can be offered for one's (Asian) neighbour (MT, 592). In this group, Desideri includes the indigent, but also people whose responsibilities or lack of freedom prevent them from becoming missionaries and travelling to the Indies, such as women or members of religious orders who are bound by holy obedience (MT, 596). The inclusion of the latter group allows Desideri to discuss his own condition as a missionary who was forced to abandon his mission, and to find some resolve in the face of the materialisation of his fears, namely opposition from his confreres and superiors, which led to his failure. In this narrative, the practice of prayer takes on a markedly female dimension. In this context, women are the primary example of those lacking the autonomy and freedom needed for evangelisation among non-Christians.<sup>25</sup> Desideri's references to Baroque female sainthood appeared in the form of holy virgins, with Saint Mary Magdalen de' Pazzi deemed the best example to follow: secluded in her cloister, she worshipped Christ continuously for the sake of all the world's sinners (MT, 596-97). However, it is her biblical namesake, together with her sister Martha, who appears in Desideri's depiction of the successful mission: the emulation of the raising of Lazarus.<sup>26</sup>

As we have seen, Desideri had already referred to Jesus's love for Lazarus in his 1713 letter to Tamburini from Surat. In the depiction he provides in the *Notizie*

<sup>25</sup> The Counter-Reformation's evangelising enterprise dismissed almost completely the idea of female missionaries. On the exceptional convent of Marie de l'Incarnation and her nuns in Quebec, see Bruneau (1998).

<sup>26</sup> Mary, the sister of Lazarus, had been identified with Mary Magdalene since the Middle Ages.

*istoriche*, Jesus's love returns as a central feature, now with Lazarus as an explicit stand-in for all the non-Christian souls, considered sinful and wretched: in Desideri's own experience, therefore, Lazarus represented the Tibetans.<sup>27</sup> Various characters fill the stage of this biblical episode as it is recounted here: those who accompany Jesus to the tomb, those who call for Lazarus to come out, and those who run to free him from his bandages. These are the missionaries who travel to the Indies and preach the gospel «to invite idolatrous nations and deceived peoples to come forth from their errors and rise again to a new life by means of the true faith and holy baptism», freeing them from the «snares of vice and infidelity» (MT, 593). Desideri exhorts this third group of supporters, the faithful, who cannot be like these missionaries, to find examples to imitate in Mary Magdalene and Martha, who pray to Jesus to ask him to resurrect their brother. Furthermore, according to the *Notizie istoriche*'s narrative, Jesus's reluctance to intervene before Lazarus's death, despite having been informed about his sickness, explains God's hesitancy to convert non-Christians, even if missionaries are preaching to them. Jesus's intention is for Mary and Martha's prayers to be recognised as the cause of Lazarus's resurrection, and to be praised as such. In the same way, according to Desideri, Catholic Europeans' merits are recognised in heaven, where the souls they have contributed to saving testify in their support, just as they do for the royal patrons of missions. These prayers and sacrifices are the cause of the miracles that occur in missionary lands, such as changes of heart in staunch unbelievers, sudden conversions before death, and acts of benevolence by previously antagonistic rulers (MT, 594-95).

The narrative woven in these passages of the *Notizie istoriche* therefore offers a justification for the failures encountered up to that point by most Catholic missionary efforts in Asia.<sup>28</sup> By depicting missionary enterprises as communal efforts, Desideri distributes the responsibility of the failed actualisation of the divine plan among different actors and avoids putting the blame entirely on the missionaries' shoulders. The example of the raising of Lazarus attempts to convince society at large that, despite a general sense of failure pervading missions (and the Society of Jesus, more generally), as long as enough spiritual and material resources are mobilised at all levels of the community, the promise of salvation is always at hand. The example of Lazarus thus serves to dispel the threat of missionary failure by offering a promising prospect for the future. Preoccupations of missionary failure and its remedies fill the final pages of the *Notizie istoriche*, with a clear focus on Europe and its Catholic readership. After long, detailed descriptions of Tibet, its culture and its religion, the last representation of the Tibetans sees them in their tombs bound by their sins, dead for four days, awaiting salvation.

<sup>27</sup> Sin as death, conversion as resurrection, and Jesus's love for the sinful who had not yet converted are images from Paul's epistle to the Ephesians (see especially Eph 2:1-6).

<sup>28</sup> As Desideri laments at the beginning of the *Notizie istoriche*'s final chapter, «it is little less than a whole world that still remains oppressed by the hard yoke of infernal slavery» (MT, 576).

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# The Writing of County Histories in Early Modern England

Chen Rihua

**Abstract:** The writing of county history in England experienced its first boom from the 1570s to the 1650s, during which time a series of outstanding county histories were written, including William Lambarde's *Perambulation of Kent*, William Burton's *Description of Leicestershire* and William Dugdale's *Antiquities of Warwickshire*. All these works are manifestations of the phenomenon of 'county history writing by the gentry'. County histories are primarily about local place names and famous persons, but also give accounts related to rivers, mountains, land, architecture, real estate, family clans, regional customs and histories. This essay illustrates the sociocultural phenomenon of 'county history writing by the gentry' in the view of the formation of the nation state, and aims to demonstrate the significance and value of the writing of county histories by gentlemen, from the perspective of the 'community of county gentry'.

**Keywords:** Early Modern England, Gentry, Historiography

## Introduction. The Writing of Local History and its Development

Written history has a long tradition in England. Chronicles from the Middle Ages are full of local histories and matters,<sup>1</sup> the earliest example being the work by the fifth- or sixth-century monk and saint, Gildas, recording Britain's rivers, land, cities and castles. From the end of fifteenth century, topography was added to written local history. Later, Ptolemy's *Geography* was published at Vicenza in Italy in 1475 and brought to Britain. In 1547, the antiquarian Robert Talbot compiled his *Itinerary* in which he depicted Britain's landscapes and its customs. William Worcester's travel notes from the same period are also worthy of mention. Worcester is one of the fathers of English topography, which constitutes the foundation of local history. Worcester devoted his life to the study of English topography and history. His notes contain everything he saw on his travels, including natural landscapes, architecture, religions and the lives of ancient celebrities. W. G. Hoskins paid tribute to William Worcester as «the spiritual grandfather of all who read this book» (Hoskins 1959, 15).

<sup>1</sup> The relationship between chronicles and the writing of local history is complicated. See Helgerson (1986).

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John Leland was the first important writer of local history in early modern England. He was appointed by Henry VIII as the king's antiquary and was allowed to collect ancient manuscripts for the royal library (Toulmin Smith 1907, ix). Thus he travelled around Britain and visited numerous monasteries, churches and schools and discovered a multitude of antique works, especially manuscripts by ancient chroniclers. His travel notes contain information about English villages, towns, markets and castles, and also the genealogies of many gentry families. Leland was called by L. Toulmin Smith «the father of English topography» (Toulmin Smith 1907, XIII). He planned to write a book about Britain's ancient history based on its counties, in which he would cover the history and topography of English counties. Unfortunately, the proposed work was never finished, and the content remained in manuscript form. John Leland himself was widely regarded as a silent and dull scholar, as J. W. Thompson once commented:

to weave the «thing of shreds and patches» into a systematic and significant design was more than «the silent scholar» could do, and although great expectations were aroused in his contemporaries by his projected history and industry with which he collected material, his plan never came to fruition. His notes were made use of by every historian of the later Tudor period, and William Camden succeeded magnificently where Leland had failed (Thompson 1942, I:607).

Though his planned masterpiece never became a reality, Leland's travel notes were read by many of his contemporaries and younger local historians, whose own works often drew directly from this learned man's manuscripts. From the perspective of compiling paradigms, Leland is the pathfinder of the writing of British history by counties, and this method was inherited, perfected and enriched in subsequent compilations of local history. What is more, Leland's travels around Britain coincided in time with the English Reformation. Some of his travelling was before the dissolution of monasteries, which made it possible for him to reserve a great number of valuable medieval historical documents and manuscripts, and he himself also became an important witness of that time. Anthony Wood said: «At the time of the dissolution of monasteries, he saw with very great pity what havock was made of ancient monuments of learning, and if no remedy should be taken, they would al perish» (Wood 1813, 198). In this sense, Leland's work exerted a great influence on later writings of local history. But generally speaking, nothing but sporadic records related to local history appeared in Leland's age, and systematic narratives did not emerge until the next era.

The true landmark of the commencement of local history writing in England is William Lambarde's *Perambulation of Kent*, which was finished in 1570 and published six years later. Lambarde is thus considered the founder of modern writing of county history. Unlike earlier travels, the *Perambulation* is no longer a simple list of places and persons, but rather a systematic and detailed description of Kent's history, culture, natural conditions, geography, climate, administrative divisions, etc. In his work, he first enumerated all the peoples that filled and formed the history of Britain: Britons, Romans, Scots, Picts, Saxons, Danes

and Normans. As a jurist, he pointed out, in particular, that three important laws existed during the Heptarchy, namely, the Danelaw, the Wessex Law and the Mercia Law. In the following pages, Lambarde gave an overall profile of Kent and its history. The contents of this local history were briefly introduced, then the geographical position of Kent was given, after which came the origin of the name «Kent». According to Lambarde, there were two theories for the origin of the word «Kent» (Lambarde 1826, 2-3). As for the administrative division, Kent was divided into five lathes, under which were hundreds, and, at the bottom, villages or towns. Residents of Kent could be divided, according to Lambarde, into three categories: the gentry, yeomen and craftsmen, in order of social hierarchy. The gentry was the ruling class. Gentlemen were generally knowledgeable about law. By managing their land and family, they retained their wealth. They were also gentlemen with a strong sense of responsibility and participated zealously in public affairs. The yeomen enjoyed more freedoms and happiness than peasants from any other region, as they were no longer in bondage. Craftsmen included fishermen, masons, blacksmiths, carpenters and weavers. As far as the paradigm is concerned, the *Perambulation of Kent* is based on administrative divisions and describes villages, towns and ports one by one. These characteristics established the principles and ideas for compiling modern local history. From its publication, this work was highly applauded by its readers: William Camden praised that «in his researches that he has left very little for others» (Copley 1977, 1). Later scholars shared the high evaluation of the book, with Lambarde being defined by some scholars as «one of the giants among the historians of Kent» (Warnicke 1973, 35). The gentlemen from Kent also continued their narratives about their home county and built on the foundation laid by the *Perambulation of Kent*. Updated versions of this local history showed up in 1657, 1659, 1776 and 1798. According to Peter Laslett, it is no exaggeration to say that English local history was born in Kent in the late sixteenth century and was nurtured by its gentry in the early seventeenth century, in such a way as to become the point of departure for the entire modern movement of British institutional history (Laslett 1948, 159).

The key figure of local history writing in England at the start of the seventeenth century was the antiquarian William Burton. His *Description of Leicestershire* quickly became a model for the writing of local history, and also inspired and motivated many men of letters. William Dugdale's ambition to undertake some work of note was aroused by reading William Burton's *Description of Leicestershire* (Parry 1995, 219). Burton was initially interested in classical literature, then turned to genealogy and devoted himself to antiquarianism and writing about local history. The publication of the *Description* in 1622 brought him much acclaim and established him as a second-generation «father of local history». Under his guidance and support, the written county histories of Warwick, Worcester, Northampton and the Midlands were inaugurated. For example, *The Antiquities of Warwickshire* by William Dugdale, published in 1656, used material collected by Burton four decades earlier. From around 1636, Burton began to revise the first edition of the *Description* because of some inaccuracies in ge-

nealogies, completing the task in 1638. The revised work contained information about topography, county administration, churches and the genealogies of large Leicestershire families. An introduction to local religious groups and armouries, as well as a list of all the sheriffs were appended at the end of the book (Burton 1777, 296-302). In terms of the materials collected, the sources adopted by Burton ranged from official archives, contract documents and genealogies in the possession of gentlemen to newer archaeological materials and messages from his friends. Burton verified rigorously and critically all the materials collected and, by comparing different sources, he tried to sort out and eliminate fake information and ideas. As a result, *The Description of Leicestershire* was organised clearly and logically, and became quite a readable work and the most comprehensive county history of its time.

The representative figure in local history writing in the mid-seventeenth century was William Dugdale of Warwickshire, who gained lasting fame with *The Antiquities of Warwickshire*, which took him a quarter of a century to research and write. This immortal masterpiece was published in 1656 and was immediately met with an intense response and praise among the gentry. In his letter to Dugdale, Thomas Pecke, a gentlemen of Norfolk declared that

There are many brave spirited gentlemen who will questionlesse recompence your industrie; and all that I desire to be a gainer by that design, is onely the honour, which will redound to mee as the occasion of such an eminent worke (Hamper 1827, 353).

Dugdale inherited the local history writing tradition established by William Lambarde. His *Antiquities* was organised in the form of entries of hundreds, and described the geography, history, culture and customs of Warwickshire one by one. Genealogies of gentry families in Warwickshire were also recorded in this book, and Dugdale further investigated the history and marriage relationships of several major families and focused on the armouries of these clans. Numerous documents are referenced in this work to show an all-round picture of Warwick's history and culture, and it became an emblem of local history in the second half of the seventeenth century. Hoskins believes that «Dugdale's *Warwickshire* and Thoroton's *Nottinghamshire* are the two greatest county histories that the seventeenth century produced» (Hoskins 1959, 18).

#### Historical Writings by the Gentry in relation to the English Nation State

England's formation as a nation state roughly occurred during the two centuries after 1500 and specifically manifested in the Tudor revolution of government and the English Reformation. Understanding and reconstructing the history of the English people emerged as an important and significant mission for English scholars, including local history writers, antiquarians, and legal historians. As members of the national commonwealth, local history writers expressed their national feelings and patriotism through their compilations of history. A good example of the intertwining of the local perspective and the future of the nation

in early modern England is the county of Kent. As Rebecca Brackmann asserts, «In the *Perambulation of Kent* Lambarde settled on geographic organization, but it also wavers at times between local and national identity; the *Perambulation* is a local work with national aims. This is hardly surprising» (Brackmann 2012, 136). Neil Younger also believes that «here, Lambarde showed his engagement with the wider issues of English politics, and his appreciation that the local and the national were intimately intertwined» (Younger 2010, 78).

Kent has a long history. This shire is located in the south-eastern corner of England, an important dominant position, to the south of the mouth of the Thames, and thus offers easy access to London by water. The land of Kent reaches out to the Strait of Dover on the east, opposite Calais, which means that, since ancient times, Kent has served as an important point of transit for people entering Britain from the European continent. A dense network of castles, fortresses and beacons was constructed across Kent to look out for threats against London. In culture and religion, Kent established its key role early in the Anglo-Saxon period. Its convenient geographical position generally meant that Kent gentlemen had special connections with London. London capital flowed into Kent, as members of the London bourgeoisie, such as merchants and lawyers, bought monastery land there and took their place as landholders. The wealthy in Kent aimed to build connections with the capital city and the royal court, thus tended to send their offspring to London schools or noble families as retainers, in order to train and prepare their children for future opportunities and development. Many of Kent's gentry families could date their success to two or three generations earlier, and their fortunes were the largest in England. Indeed, at the time, a saying ran: «A Knight of Wales, A gentleman of Cales, A laird of the North Countree; A yeoman of Kent, Sitting on his penny rent, Can buy them out all three» (Campbell 1968, 77). And the Kentish gentry also had superior access to all kinds of domestic or international information. One reason was that Kent is located along an important route between London and the rest of Europe. Travelling envoys, tourists and merchants passing through brought all sorts of political and commercial messages. Furthermore, Canterbury was an important religious centre, which meant that communications between Kent and France were frequent. Also, many Kentish gentlemen owned estates in London for investment and recreational purposes, which expanded their source of information from London. Some gentlemen did not even identify themselves as specifically Kentish or Londoners, a fact that gives us a glimpse into the fusion between the two places. Even those who did not have their own house in London could get messages through correspondence with relatives and friends. It became common for gentlemen in Kent to go to London frequently or even reside in London at that time. They longed for news from the capital, whether political, social, economic or on the royal court, even if it was hearsay or gossip.

During the years of continental wars and the Reformation, England was constantly under the threat of invasion and was forced to strengthen its coastal defences. Kent was naturally a frontier, and its fate was closely tied to the fate of the entire kingdom. Thus, written local history was not merely descriptions

of the local area, but rather explicit or implicit expressions of authors' passions and historical views, based on a much broader social and historical context. If we go back to Lambarde's *Perambulation of Kent*, we can find Kent's geographical position introduced as follows: it was not only the Romans and the Saxons, but also the followers of Philip the Apostle and the messengers of Pope Gregory I all landed in Kent. Similarly, commodities and foreign visitors to England arrived first in Kent, then experienced the hospitality of English people, especially the Kentish (Lambarde 1826, 1-2). Lambarde's words reveal the significance of Kent as the south-eastern gateway to England and its strategic importance to national security. In preparing for the possibility of war with Spain, the royal government re-enabled the coastal beacons, so that intelligence could be sent swiftly to London and the central government could make appropriate deployments. Beacons in Kent are mentioned by Lambarde in his *Perambulation*, which provoked controversy at that time. Many people did not think it was appropriate for Lambarde to mark the location of beacons on maps, because the enemy would be able to learn about these military structures from his book. Lambarde, however, explained that, although the enemy might acquire the intelligence, it was more important to let more English people know the positions and functions of beacons, which were unknown to many of them before then. The beacons could give the alarm to warn of invasions from the sea, so that local inhabitants could arm themselves and defend their homeland. Even if these maps were not included in his book, foreigners could get hold of them by other means (Jessup 1974, 97; Warnicke 1973, 31). In a tense atmosphere of war, Kentish people protected their land for their own safety, as well as for the security of the entire country. Local and national identity reinforced each other and acted as each other's cause under multidimensional pressures and responsibility, which became the deepest reason and impetus for Lambarde to write his *Perambulation of Kent*. It was in this sense, too, that the *Perambulation* was called an excellent work of «patriotism»: «The patriotic element here operated on three different levels. First, it focused on the county itself; second, on the realm; and finally, on the queen» (Mendyk 1986, 472).

Local history publications in the early modern period also contained their authors' love and eulogy of their kingdom as a commonwealth. The sense of national pride presented by English scholars, including local history writers, was a common phenomenon during their time. The rhapsodic language William Harrison uses to present England is close to exaggeration.

There is no kind of tame cattle usually to be seen in these parts of the world whereof we have not some and that great store in England, as horses, oxen, sheep, goats, swine, and far surmounting the like in other countries, as may be proved with ease. For where are oxen commonly more large of bone, horses more decent and pleasant in pace, kind more commodious for the pail [suitable for enclosures], sheep more profitable for wool, swine more wholesome of flesh, and goats more gainful to their keepers than here with us in England? [...] In like manner our oxen are such as the like are not to be found in any country of

Europe, both for greatness of body and sweetness of flesh, or else would not the Roman writers have preferred them before those of Liguria. [...] Their horns also are known to be more fair and large in England than in any other places, except those which are to be seen among the Paeones, which quantity, albeit that it be given to our breed generally by nature, yet it is now and then helped also by art. [...] Our horses, moreover, are high, and, although not commonly of such huge greatness as in other places of the main, yet, if you respect the easiness of their pace, it is hard to say where their like are to be had (Harrison 1968, 305-306).

«Historical Writings of the Gentry» in relation to the Community of the County Gentry

The forming of the nation state in early modern times is the general background for «historical writing by the gentry». However, the direct cause of this sociocultural phenomenon lay in the so-called community of the county gentry, an idea proposed by Peter Laslett in the 1940s, when he was exploring the origin of the English Civil War. In Laslett's explanation:

In the middle of the seventeenth century there existed in the form of the communities of county gentry an important intermediary institution of this kind. If the conclusions about the gentry of Kent which are presented here are correct, and if the other counties were generally similar, it is possible to draw the following picture of one of the ways in which the «England» of the historians was constructed in 1640 (Laslett 1948, 158-59).

In my view, the community of the county gentry is the community of local gentry with a shared future in the formation period of the nation state. It is a gentry community held together by a shared sense of identity and local belonging forged and strengthened on the basis of sharing land estates within a county, kinship, similar social networks and identical educational experience, and was a relatively independent political force. The formation of the community of the county gentry was reflected by the widespread participation of members of the gentry in local governance and their appeals on behalf of the interests of the local community (Rihua 2016). The development and consolidation of the gentry's protestant sense of identity can briefly be illustrated in the example of the Thomas Wyatt Uprising. In July 1553, the young Edward VI died and was succeeded by Mary, the eldest daughter of Henry VIII. Mary I was a pious Catholic who became engaged to the Catholic Philip of Spain after her accession, placing England at risk of a Catholic restoration. And if it had become a reality, the gentry's interests would have been severely threatened, as the majority of the land released by Henry VIII's Reformation and the dissolution of monasteries fell into their hands after twists and turns. The marriage of Mary I was therefore extremely unpopular in England and resulted in several revolts in different regions, the largest of which broke out right in Kent, namely the Thomas Wyatt Uprising of 1554. Thomas Wyatt was a gentleman and a speculator who acquired a large expanse of monastery land during the Reformation. Yet these

estates would turn to nothing if the Catholic Church were to be restored in England, thus he revolted and became the leader of the rebellion. The rebel forces fought their way to London, but eventually failed, and Wyatt himself was killed. The uprising suggested that the gentry would resort to any means to safeguard their economic, political and religious interests, and marked the formation of county communities with the gentry at the core. Narrating local history also became a responsibility and a source of honour for gentlemen in a community led by them and was also the immediate impetus for the writing of local history by gentlemen, as represented by William Lambarde's work. The works by members of the gentry reflected gentlemen's sense of responsibility and honour as elites in local societies. Order, for instance, which was mentioned frequently in Lambarde's *Perambulation of Kent*, was a top concern of the gentry in that era. According to the count done by John M. Adrian: «order now required» (Lambarde 1826, 1), «I will observe this order» (Lambarde 1826, 87), «or to interrupt mine own order» (Lambarde 1826, 89), «and for the desire that I have to keep order» (Lambarde 1826, 100), «but chiefly for the observation of the order which I have begun» (Lambarde 1826, 119), «in the order of my journey» (Lambarde 1826, 178).

Local history compilations also reflected the gentry's sense of local identity. Lambarde mentioned beacons in his work and he believed the Saxons had been the earliest people to use them, an idea that was later challenged by Sir Roger Twysden. This detail indicated, from a certain perspective, the interest people had in local affairs and county history. Who would care about these trifles, unless they had a strong sense of local identity? Although the author of the *Perambulation of Kent*, Lambarde was not actually a native of the county. He lived in London before moving to Kent to inherit his father's property. Although the distance between London and Kent was not great, it was naturally a delicate matter for a former London gentleman to write the county history of Kent. Fortunately, Lambarde did not let the native gentry down. He was particularly well-informed about the topography and history of Kent. For example, he gave two explanations for the origin of the name of the river Medway: it seems to have been so named either because it ran through the middle of the Kentish kingdom, or because it ran between the two bishoprics (Lambarde 1826, 197). The *Perambulation of Kent* achieved great popularity after its publication. Its revised edition came out in 1596 and a fourth edition was introduced in 1640 and became a frequent reference for a large number of antiquarians, including many Kentish gentlemen. This also indicated that Lambarde had won the recognition of the gentry in the county community and was no longer considered an outcomer. The local identity of gentlemen was also seen in changes in the content of local histories. Richard Helgerson pointed out that, whereas earlier chorographers – Lhuyd, Lambarde, and Camden – focused on place names and made etymology their principal tool, later ones preferred genealogy and people's names. More and more, chorographies became books where the county gentry could find their manors, monuments, and pedigrees set out in detail. In just a few decades, chorography thus progressed from being an adjunct to the chronicles of kings

to being a topographically ordered account of real estate and family chronicles (Helgerson 1986, 73). The narration of the county gentry and famous persons in works of county history was actually related to the glory and sentiments of gentry families. Thus, the local history scholar, Thomas Westcote, continued the genealogies of gentry families in Devonshire and gave a comprehensive account of local gentry families in his *View of Devonshire* in 1630. This change endowed local history writings with more value. They started to contain social and political dimensions, rather than being kept as mere collections of explanations of geographical names. This new feature was typically shown in William Dugdale's *Antiquities of Warwickshire*, in which Dugdale offered sound historical explanations for the gentry's rule in local societies, by tracing back family histories and land tenures. Christopher Dyer thus states that part of the impetus behind local history lay in the desire for social recognition among the landed gentry. County histories traced the descent of manors and illustrated coats of arms, which provided the leaders of county society with pride in their ancestry and knowledge of the links between families. They were also reassured about their title to the land and rents on which their wealth and standing depended. A gentleman in possession of a county history would be able to read about his lineage and predecessors, admire engravings of their heraldry, and even (in the case of the very rich) see a representation of his house, all of which demonstrated his superior position in the world. It also reinforced the gentry's sense of identity, first by celebrating their membership of an elite, but also by defining their local roots through their lordship of manors and rights of patronage over parish churches. The gentry felt that they belonged to their neighbourhood and to the county itself (Dyer and Richardson 2009, 4-5).

«Historical writing by the gentry» in early modern England is a cultural phenomenon that shows the contribution of the gentry class to the civilisation of England. This phenomenon was not isolated at the time, but was combined and intertwined with antiquarianism. The study of antiquities promoted the compilation of local histories, and many antiquarians were also local history writers. Their speculations and descriptions of British history, customs, institutions and peoples fit in with the custom among the early modern English of re-exploring and re-evaluating their own history and tradition. When did our history start? Where did our ancestors come from? What kind of people are we, and what was the origin of our institutions? These were questions English people, particularly the intellectual class, asked during this transformational period of their society. The formation of the English nation state never eliminated local communities; on the contrary it tightened the relationship between local lives and national destiny, and these two elements became fused. Transitions in the local community impacted the future of the nation and vice versa. On this foundation, a brand new type of nation state appeared. These local history scholars were witnesses to a new era and, at the same time, the writers of that history. They recorded the history and culture of their country and nation by compiling local county histories and contributed to the progress and prosperity of English scholarship with their talent and wisdom.

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# Emotion and Female Authority: A Comparison of Chinese and English Fiction in the Eighteenth Century<sup>1</sup>

Wen Jin

**Abstract:** This essay considers how early modern Chinese romance novels conceive of female agency and how this conception was received by prominent cultural elites in eighteenth-century England. In his notes to *Hau Kiou Chooan*, the first English translation of a full-length Chinese novel, Thomas Percy referred to the novel's heroine as a «masculine woman», displaying a peculiar misreading of its trope of female cross-dressing. The essay argues that the increasing association of women with the private sphere in eighteenth-century English culture is a crucial context to consider when we study the initial spread of Chinese fiction in England.

**Keywords:** England, China, Eighteenth century, Fiction

The publication of *Hau Kiou Chooan* in 1761 as the first English translation of a vernacular Chinese novel has long been discussed. One pattern of mistranslation, however, has been paid scant attention. The Chinese novel figures a male protagonist who looks like an elegant lady and a lady protagonist with intelligence that exceeds those of all male characters. The English translation struggles to convey these details, with the editor Thomas Percy parsing them to mean that there is a lack of «gallantry» in the Chinese novel. Ironically, however, «gallantry» is a masculine ideal that steadily lost appeal in the eighteenth century in England. Despite the late-century exaltation of Gothic heritage, such cultural stereotypes as «gallant men» and weak damsels are continually reformed in English novels of the eighteenth century, culminating in Anne Radcliffe's resourceful ladies and sensible embodiment of female self-possession in Burney and Austen. This essay first discusses Percy's famous comment (and other related mistranslations in eighteenth-century England) and then traces how «strong women» who make gallantry seem outmoded function differently in eighteenth-century novels from China and England and how the differences illustrate a set of diverging cultural dynamics.

<sup>1</sup> The following essay is a revised version of Jin (2020).

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## British and Chinese Moral Fiction

In the beginning of Book II of *Hau Kiou Choaan*, the first English translation of *Haoqiu zhuan* (好逑), which came out in 1761, the male protagonist praises the female protagonist behind her back, as 闺阁中须眉君子 (translated as «who, with all the delicacy of her sex, hath all the capacity of ours»). Thomas Percy feels compelled to explain in his commentary that it constitutes «a high compliment among a people, who entertain so unfavorable an opinion of the ladies' understandings» (*Hau Kiou Choaan: or The Pleasing History* 1761, II: 10).<sup>2</sup> In making this comment, Percy seems unaware that the phrase and its variations made frequent appearances in *huaben* stories (stories based on scripts for oral storytelling) and prose romances since at least the Yuan Dynasty. That an expression sounding to Chinese ears, then as now, as a formulaic compliment should require an explanation makes one think. Percy's translation also indicates a misreading: 闺阁中须眉君子 (literally «a virtuous man within a woman's private chamber») is not a woman with masculine capacity, but a woman with as much courage and wit as an honourable man. Courage and wit, after all, are not male-gendered attributes in early modern China. *Haoqiu zhuan* falls squarely within the perimeters of *caizijaren xiaoshuo* (the scholar-beauty romance), a type of vernacular fiction popular in the second half of the seventeenth century, at the beginning of the Qing Dynasty. The male Chinese literati who authored *caizijaren* romances by no means endorsed masculine women. They merely articulated a notion of the ideal woman as having the ability both to provide good companionship and to be a moral model for men. Authors of these scholar-beauty novels display a high opinion of women and a certain identification with the opposite sex. In his commentaries, Percy did not grasp the fact that severe patriarchal norms could coexist with a tendency to endorse the wit and judgment that some women have, though this paradox did appear prominent in the fictional and theatrical works of late Ming and early-to-mid-Qing China (roughly early seventeenth to mid-eighteenth century). Percy's misreading betrays the central anxieties and concerns beguiling the cultural context into which *Haoqiu zhuan* was translated.

Elevating a female figure by giving her «masculine capacity» strikes Percy as requiring an explanation, because a masculine woman is a sociological category that emerged and was quickly vilified in eighteenth-century England. The genesis of women as a physiological category distinct from men and the separation of public and private spheres are seminal changes defining the historical moment in which Percy was writing. Armstrong set the tone for our understanding of gender in eighteenth-century English novels with her famous thesis on how the domestic novel as a genre endows women with elevated moral authority by making them the guiding light of the domestic, and the gist of this argument remains unchallenged. Later scholarship points out that women writing towards

<sup>2</sup> This edition alters the chapter structure of the original text.

the end of the eighteenth century exhibited tremendous agency, even though they were confined to certain norms of domesticity.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, domesticity played a crucial role in shaping women's writings from the mid-century onward.

Female agency was an equally vexed issue in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century China. Even though, throughout his commentaries on *Haoqiu zhuan*, Percy emphasised that China was ridden with a backward patriarchy, seventeenth-century and eighteenth-century China gave rise to many literary characters, like Shui Bingxin, who share with men some of the qualities most celebrated by the literati class. Now this is not to claim that Chinese women of this period had more access to personal freedom and social resources than their counterparts in England. The point is that there was ample cultural space to render women 须眉君子, and such fantasies were wildly popular. This is also a case of elevated female authority. Here, however, female authority is not associated with the hearth or the heart, as in Restoration and eighteenth-century England, which saw the rise of domesticity and domesticated women, but rather with abilities to navigate the world of learning, politics and shady social dealings.

Shui Bingxin, who saves herself from unwanted marriage proposals and becomes instrumental in propelling the male protagonist towards political eminence, represents a character type that permeates early Qing *caizhijaren* romances. Works falling under this category often involve an aspiring scholar yet to rise up the ladder of political power. And the female lead (with a few doubles in each case) is in possession of wit and judgment, romantically sensitive, though completely chaste, adhered to and defended Confucian mores governing women's behaviour, and was ready to help the male protagonists with love, loyalty and, at times, concrete assistance. Their union, just like the man's political career, is impeded by a thousand obstacles until all goes well in the end.

This is certainly not to say that late imperial China did not have a notion of women's proper place. Even though the female characters of scholar-beauty romances are often compelled to prove their worth by venturing into the world under the guise of a man, they are always brought back to the domestic sphere at the end. Here we see how this fiction exemplifies the same tension that crops up in eighteenth-century novels of sentiment in England, which also dramatise women who go out and about in the world only to end up as defenders of the conventional family.

This paper sets out to examine moments of female transgression in both contexts up until the mid- and late eighteenth century, with a focus on the theme of female cross-dressing. The cross-dressing theme prominent in *caizhijaren* fiction is equally prominent in eighteenth-century England, both as a theme in fiction

<sup>3</sup> Jane Spencer, Janet Todd, Madeleine Kahn, Dale Spender, Ros Ballaster, Margaret Doody and many other critics have investigated women's writings from the late seventeenth century and through the eighteenth century. They emphasise both women's confinement and their tactics for resistance, how they turned the sentimental novel into a new kind of novel «to discover society and history» (Doody 1980, 278). New waves of writing followed on their heels; see for example Gray (2007).

and as a social myth in essays and news writings. For example, in early eighteenth-century England, there were stories of real-life incidents of women cross-dressing as men to enlist in the army (most notably Kit Davidson and Hannah Snell). Just as the beginning of the century saw a burst of wayward female literary figures. Female and male writers alike, Elizabeth Haywood and Defoe for example, dramatised unruly women who venture outside of proper spheres for romantic or practical reasons.

What are the commonalities and divergences that make it important to investigate the two contexts in tandem? How would this comparative study help us move beyond Thomas Percy's understanding and reach a more nuanced reading of the different, though similar, ways in which British and Chinese women of the eighteenth century were associated with moral or intellectual authority in fictional narratives of selfhood? And, more significantly, how did the disparate ideas of selfhood and emotion in these two contexts inform women's writings of their own circumstances? The figure of the strong-headed, cross-dressing woman provides an inroad into a discussion of how notions of emotion and female authority become entwined in both contexts, though in different manners. Both China and England experienced a secularised cultural transformation in the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, but what it may have to do with conceptions of the inner mind and selfhood remains to be explored.<sup>4</sup> This essay only begins to address this very broad question. Its primary aim is to provide a schematic comparative account of the two cultural contexts as a way of building a framework for more specialised discussions in the future.

### A Tale of Two Cultures

In England, the rising popularity of the modern novel in the eighteenth century is integral to the evolution of a self-constructing, self-reflexive organism in search of new forms of social cohesion. The emerging novel responded to a set of new cultural developments, including broadening commerce, the print media, destabilised class structures, the relaxation of sexual mores, and women's increasing mobility, while becoming a key instrument of social regulation. This is a body of fiction highly conscious of the use of narrative perspective, often insistent on writing «to the moment» (in Samuel Richardson's terms), adhering closely to minute-by-minute permutations of feelings and emotions. The novel's reflexivity on emotions coincided with philosophical inquiries into inner life or mental life. Descartes's *cogito* (the capacity of «I think») initiated what Charles Taylor calls the turn towards «inwardness» in Western philosophy, founding a modern subject relying on its inherent rational capacity for acquiring knowledge and self-knowledge (Taylor 1989, 109-207). This modern subject is besieged by

<sup>4</sup> In the Chinese context, this is a time of dynastic transition, from Ming to Qing, but also a transition to a more secularised understanding of space, time, the political order, and scholarship. See, for example, Carrai (2019).

the «passions», changes in animal spirits communicated to the soul; but the passions are ultimately in service to the soul, allowing the body to coordinate its actions with the soul. That is to say, although the modern subject is reflexive and is thus internally divided by virtue of self-reflection, the observing and observed selves ultimately came together through the logic of analogy or simultaneity. This modern notion of selfhood was undermined by many strains of philosophical thought in the subsequent decades. Lockean materialism, which gives no transcendent ends to the self, along with the Scottish Enlightenment view that humans are naturally endowed with benevolent feelings that nevertheless need rational regulation threw the Cartesian notion of a united, self-regulating self into doubt. In other words, as emotion became a key issue when it came to envisioning a modern subjectivity and society, it presented a dual effect. It both affirms and precludes the coherence of selfhood.

Attention on the instability of the self is intimately tied to the status of women, women as authors, readers, and central characters in fiction. The late seventeenth century saw a large number of amatory novels penned by women and featuring daring, cross-dressing women, which criticised the culture of rakes, while giving voice to female desires. The late seventeenth century and the early eighteenth century are populated with tales of female desire that fit poorly into the formulae of the romance. Disappointed female romantics, jilted female lovers, and lower-class female outcasts abound. Elizabeth Haywood's famous characters, such as Fantomina and Moletta in *Love in Excess*, continued Restoration drama's long string of vivacious women (like those in Behn's *The Rover* and *The Widow Ranter*), cross-dressing to transgress the bounds of acceptable female desires and conduct. These figures are not subjected to the moral judgment that Defoe foists upon his low-class female outcasts like Roxana and Moll Flanders.

This exuberance was curtailed in the subsequent «cult of sensibility», which can be seen as a reaction to the unbinding of women. Starting from the mid-eighteenth century, we see an exaltation of refined, other-oriented sentiments that tame women's sensibility, laying the foundation for domestic fiction that privileges altruistic, sensible womanhood. The middle of the eighteenth century marks the culmination of a century-long concern with regulating the power of emotion in the production of modern selfhood.

The culture of sensibility and fiction reading engendered an emphasis on naturally purified feeling that affected both genders. The man of feeling became a new vogue and a new source of anxiety, as testified in debates over the figure of the «man of feeling» and reactions to it in thinkers like William Godwin. But it was women who became primarily associated with tender sensibility. We see the emergence of the notion of women's purportedly «finer, weaker nerves» as a conspiracy of medical and philosophical theories of emotion, early consumerism, and the new novel (Barker-Benfield 1992, 24). In this context, the female cross-dresser became a jarring social and narrative problem. As such heroines of sentimental fiction as Richardson's Pamela and Clarissa took pride of place, cross-dressing women became identified with overriding passions that preclude a coherent, solid subjectivity, and proper sensibility. As we see in Henry Field-

ing's *Female Husband* (1746), a fictionalised version of the story of Mary Hamilton, a woman who passes as a man is figured as masculine, «monstrous and unnatural», madly hankering after other women. What might have been fun and provocative a few decades earlier became equated with unspeakable desires and emotions. Gender ambiguities in gender identity were now rejected out of hand. Women also started writing novels castigating cross-dressing, as seen in such works as Elizabeth Inchbald's *A Simple Story* (1791), where Miss Milner's ambiguous costume signals her «inability to accommodate her fully to domestic life» (Craft-Fairchild 1998, 180).

We now turn to the other side of the comparison. By the eighteenth century, China had also experienced an awakening into emotion and mental life. The School of the Mind philosophy of the late sixteenth century, coupled with the flowering of literary genres like vernacular narrative fiction and drama in late Ming, gave rise to a complex culture of emotion in China. Short vernacular tales showing passions and their consequences flourished alongside the longer *Shiqingshu* (state of society novels), a category that emerged in the late Ming referring to fiction that details the manners, patterns of social interactions among different social classes, filled with self-serving or lusty shenanigans. But the glory of vernacular narrative fiction was interrupted by the tragic end of the Ming Dynasty and the advent of the Qing. The first hundred years of the Qing dynasty (mid-seventeenth to mid-eighteenth century) was a time of political turbulence, with severe political persecution of scholars and censorship of fiction. The literati felt disillusioned and aimless, their paths towards political advancement thwarted. Some of them turned to fiction writing to articulate their fantasies of being on the receiving end of luck. Though they were discouraged from approaching fiction as a serious, aesthetic pursuit, there remained big markets for fiction consumers by this point in imperial Chinese history, especially in the Jiangnan area (southeast China that became a centre of print culture in late imperial China, with many private imprints) and a broad readership cutting across class lines. *Caizijiaren* romances, with many ties to earlier love romances, flourished as an obvious viable commercial option. It also functioned as a depository of literati fantasies and an easy way of skirting censorship, since it consists of love romances that veer from the gritty, often sexualised styles of late Ming vernacular novels.

If *caizijiaren* romances articulate the fantasies of success on the part of disappointed scholars, then why strong, intelligent female leads? Wai-yee Li provides perhaps the best clues for answering this question. In *Women and National Trauma in Late Imperial Chinese Literature*, she outlines a historical junction little noticed by other scholars. The turn of the Qing dynasty coincided with a burst of poetry and plays authored by the male literati who pay tribute to women, either assuming a female persona or figuring strong female characters who put men to shame. The literati constructed a literary identification with women to give «indirect expression» to their own political frustrations and grief over the lost cause of the Ming or, in some cases (Wai-yee Li 2014, 5), to affirm aesthetic and sensual pleasure as a style of life that the deposed Ming represented. Therefore,

this historical moment witnessed the building of an imaginary bond between the male literati and women of mental strength and fine taste. This argument is central to our understanding of the presence of women of wit and judgment in *caizijiaren* romances. Though strong women – female swordswomen and rebelliously romantic women – appeared in earlier Chinese romances, their multiplication in *caizijiaren* romances was historically prepared by this identification cultivated between the literati and women. It was more than an imaginary identification. It also had an empirical basis. The early Qing saw an increase in educated women in the Jiangnan region from the middle Ming, many of whom no doubt inspired the superb female characters in *caizijiaren* romances. Smart and talented and faithful, these characters became, like Shui Bingxin in *Haoqiu zhuan*, ideal companions and models of personhood.

The way men and women are identified is what makes this genre so distinct from the novel of sentiment we see in eighteenth-century England. It is not only aimed at a female audience (sometimes through various theatrical adaptations more accessible to female audiences), but more importantly, such novels often use female desires as a vehicle for male aspirations. Emotional «awakenings» largely occur in the female characters, as they are made to appreciate aesthetic pleasure and actively pursue romantic/political opportunities, becoming a surrogate for the male literati. The imaginary connection between the literati and their female characters also explains why female transgressions, often in the form of cross-dressing for the purpose of increased mobility, are common. There are numerous examples besides *Haoqiu zhuan*, including the two leading examples of this genre, *Yu Jiao Li* (玉娇梨) (mid-seventeenth century, translated into English in 1827) and *Ping Shan Leng Yan* (平山冷燕) (mid-seventeenth century).

It is of course necessary to add that, despite the near interchangeability of male and female leads in *caizijiaren* romances, gender lines are ultimately drawn. By the end of the novel, the talented, strong-headed female protagonists happily return to the domestic sphere, content with a union with the male protagonist that they often have to share with other women. Their destinies mirror those of male leads, who are often guileless and naturally talented but have to depend on the court's recognition for a happy ending. *Wan Ru Yue* (宛如约), for example, spurns masculine women while endorsing a more balanced model of femininity. The female lead hates to be confined within the domestic sphere and yet is superbly suited to domesticity. In a way these writings register the awkward balancing act that the literati saw themselves doing at the beginning of the Qing dynasty. They painted fantasies of proving one's worth with a sensitivity towards aestheticised love and in the manner of a knight errant with incredible prowess, only to show that they are in fact the most fitting candidates for upholding Confucian traditions. The same balancing act can be seen in the approach to emotion in *caizijiaren* romances. *Haoqiu zhuan* contains a famous dictum: 调乎情与性, 名与教方成, «only when we reconcile feeling and nature, can we keep up the order of names and ethical teachings» (Míngjiāo Zhōngrén 1994, 114). The couple in the story choose to stay celibate in their marriage in case anyone cast aspersions on their conduct with each other before marriage. The feelings

displayed by the main characters are distinguished from unrestrained feelings driven by desires, but can sit well with Confucian morals.

Thus, although the scholar-beauty romance has a vexed relationship with Confucian orthodoxies, it ultimately seeks to restore the unity between aesthetic, amorous feelings and the conventional ethical code. We can draw an analogy between this type of narrative operation with neo-Confucianism's drive to bring the surface levels of the «heart-mind» (feeling) in harmony with its impartial, immaculate substratum (nature). Neo-Confucianism's view of feelings entailed a different approach to uniting the self than the Cartesian notion. Philosophy scholar Brian Bruya has compared Descartes's and neo-Confucianism's notions of *qing* (emotion) and emotional regulation. He points out that, in the context of neo-Confucianism, *qing* does not posit the division of soul and body. It is instead seen as the activated state of the heart-mind or the permutating surface of the heart-mind. According to the thought of neo-Confucian scholar Wang Yangming, in particular, selfish emotions (resulting from the embodied nature of all individuals) do not have to be deliberately contained or controlled. At least, in Wang's dialectical thought («numismatic» in Bruya's terms: 2001, 47), self-regulation is not the only way towards restoring the heart of Dao. Wang emphasises reaching impartiality through a kind of vigilance, a setting free of the individual's power to tap into the substructure of the heart-mind, allowing it to achieve the necessary dropping off of the extra desires. The same inclinations are necessarily registered, in a covertly politicised manner, in fiction writing, especially a literati-dominated genre like *caizijiaren* romances.

If, in the English context, the modern novel arose to regulate emotion and female authority, eighteenth-century narrative fiction from China both echoes and departs from this trajectory. On one hand, the women of wit and judgment found in *caizijiaren* romances underwent a «realistic» turn in the late eighteenth century, with *The Story of the Stone* (1754) depicting talented women from aristocratic families in quotidian scenarios who meet with tragic ends. One lesser-known response, however, comes from a set of female writers in the Jiangnan area, who created a new fiction genre, *tanci* fiction, which draws heavily on the *caizijiaren* romances' celebration of resourceful, cross-dressing women, often with significant subversive twists.

### Emotion and Female Authority

The foregoing comparison shows that, in both England and China of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, female agency and authority ascended in circumscribed ways, creating significant impact on the subsequent histories of narrative fiction. In the English context, the increase in female authority was made innocuous for the male-centred society by the cult of sensibility, which mutes the history of cross-dressing «viragos» in favour of domestic women. Their masks torn off, English women of the late eighteenth century emerged as manifestations of a certain admirable nature, compassionate, intelligent, emotionally impressionable, and yet equipped with fine judgment. In the

Chinese context, the popularity of *caizijiaren* romances and other romances in the early Qing made powerful women a common literary and cultural trope. It was continued and further politicised in fictional narratives created by women in late eighteenth-century China.

In both cases, the imaginings of female authority in both contexts were closely connected to prevailing understandings of emotion and the ways in which emotion can be integrated into a unitary sense of the self, which we might describe as a kind of intellectual and cultural infrastructure. What we see here are two competing «cults of sensibility» that rely to a great extent on the production of fiction narratives geared towards female readers. And yet, while English fiction quickly became integrated into dominant social discourses that legislated how both men and women should act and to what social spheres they should be allocated, in China, fiction stayed in a much more fraught relationship with Confucian thought and at the centre of the political and social life of the literati. As English women became «authorised» and contained by the newly rising realist fiction, Chinese women found new venues for self-assertion but also, in their own limited ways, new imaginings of selfhood.

Returning to the opening of the essay, Percy's response to *Haoqiu zhuan's* depictions of strong women can be situated at the intersection of these contexts. The English translation turned a female hero into a woman with masculine capacity, failing to capture the fluidity of gender identity in *caizijiaren* romances. Percy, in turn, thought it necessary to indicate that, counterintuitively, «masculine» women were highly valued in China, revealing the anxiety over masculine women characteristic of his own cultural moment. A thorough understanding of the two different contexts is, arguably, a necessarily circuitous way of fully interpreting what lies underneath the first English translation of an early modern Chinese romance.

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# Identités en flammes : Orient et Occident se rencontrent dans la palette de Shiba Kōkan (1738-1818)<sup>1</sup>

Giovanni Tarantino

**Abstract:** This chapter takes a hanging scroll by Shiba Kōkan (1747-1818) as a starting point to explore the emotional response of individuals and communities from distant cultures and places in the face of disasters, in particular earthquakes and fires. Images of disasters, and how they were dealt with, travelled through time and space, begging the question as to what role transcultural entanglements played in these responses.

**Keywords:** Shiba Kōkan, Japan, Emotions, Paintings, Edo

Guy Montag, le personnage principal du très célèbre roman dystopique de Ray Bradbury, dans lequel on brûle les livres, *Fahrenheit 451*, est pompier dans un monde où tous les bâtiments sont désormais ignifugés. Le monde de Bradbury est obsédé par la vitesse pour la vitesse : les gens doivent rester debout et courir toute la journée. C'est un monde abruti de passe-temps insipides, dans lequel la quasi-totalité des personnes vivent dans un bonheur apparent, notamment grâce à l'abolition de la lecture, de la réflexion et du dialogue. Il n'y a plus de porches, plus de jardins, plus de chaises à bascule pour s'asseoir et passer le temps : « Et ils avaient le temps de penser. Alors fini les porches. Et les jardins avec » (Bradbury 1995, 93). C'est un monde dans lequel les lettres n'ont plus leur place dans les programmes scolaires. Dans ce monde, certaines personnes continuent obstinément – en secret – de cacher des livres chez elles, au péril de leur vie. Dans ce monde, les pompiers allument des feux pour brûler les quelques livres rescapés et, s'il le faut, leurs propriétaires improductifs, transgressifs et criminels. Montag est l'un de ces pompiers qui allument des incendies. Il développera toutefois une forme d'insatisfaction et finit par se dire qu'« il doit y

<sup>1</sup> Cet article prolonge l'argument développé dans un précédent essai, "Disaster, Emotions and Cultures: The Unexpected Wink of Shiba Kōkan (1738–1818)", publié dans la *Rivista Storica Italiana* CXXVIII/2 (2016). Une version anglaise est parue dans *Fires Stories*, un numéro spécial de la revue *Occasion* (Volume 13, août 12, 2022), publié par Grace Moore avec le soutien du Stanford Humanities Center.

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avoir quelque chose dans les livres, des choses que nous ne pouvons pas imaginer, pour amener une femme à rester dans une maison en flammes ; oui, il doit y avoir quelque chose. On n'agit pas comme ça pour rien » (Bradbury 1995, 78).

En tant que représentation dérangeante et atemporelle du pouvoir totalitaire et de l'inévitable insignifiance d'une vie assistée par la technologie mais vidée de son histoire et de sa ou ses culture(s), *Fahrenheit 451* a toute sa place dans un essai portant sur le feu et les transferts culturels (et les réactions qu'ils provoquent), notamment en raison d'un passage du monologue hystérique du capitaine Beatty, le supérieur de Montag, déterminé à ramener son subordonné dans la croyance que les livres constituent un danger pour la société. Beatty affirme que les livres, et la pensée critique qu'ils encouragent, ne font que menacer l'égalité entre individus. Les « minorités » ont trouvé dans les livres tellement de matière à objecter que les gens ont fini par renoncer au débat et se sont mis à brûler les livres (Bradbury 1995, 85). La spécialiste d'Arendt, Simona Forti, a fait remarquer que les plus fins interprètes de l'idéologie totalitaire, dont Hannah Arendt et Claude Lefort, ont dénoncé « la radicalisation paroxystique et ultime de cette obsession moniste, d'abord métaphysique puis théologique, de l'unicité qui, pour produire une fonctionnalité identitaire sans résidus, doit éliminer les obstacles, réels ou présumés, d'une altérité souvent construite *ad hoc*. La pseudo-sacralisation de la communauté, de la dimension collective, se fait au détriment de la pluralité, de la contingence, du devenir » (Forti 2004, 228). La question des tensions récurrentes entre les aspirations universalistes et les spécificités culturelles – à commencer par les codes émotionnels propres à chaque culture – émergera dans les pages qui suivent, consacrées pour la plupart à une réflexion sur « les grammaires de l'identité/altérité » (Gingrich et Baumann 2004) inspirées par un rouleau japonais datant de la fin du shogunat Tokugawa et sur lequel figure un incendie.

Dans son ouvrage abondamment cité « *The Cultural Basis of Emotions and Gestures* » (1947), Weston LaBarre rappelait que l'auteur et éminent japonologue Lafcadio Hearn (1850-1904) avait autrefois observé que « le sourire japonais n'est pas nécessairement une expression spontanée d'amusement », mais plutôt une règle d'étiquette inculquée et cultivée depuis le plus jeune âge, soit une forme de communication non verbale qui semblait souvent échapper complètement aux Européens. Hearn avait ainsi remarqué que l'enfant japonais était toujours éduqué pour afficher une expression de bonheur afin de ne pas faire peser ses malheurs à ses amis : « On raconte qu'une servante avait demandé en souriant l'autorisation à sa maîtresse de se rendre aux funérailles de son mari. Par la suite, la servante était revenue avec un vase contenant les cendres du défunt et avait dit pratiquement en riant 'C'est mon mari.' Sa maîtresse de race blanche avait pris cette réponse pour du cynisme, mais Hearn suggère qu'il pourrait s'agir d'une forme d'héroïsme pur » (LaBarre 1947, 53).

Dans cet essai, je me propose d'offrir une analyse comparative et historiquement contextualisée des différentes stratégies d'adaptation employées par différentes cultures. Pour ce faire, je partirai du principe qui veut que les sentiments, comme l'explique très succinctement Susan J. Matt, « ont une base neurologique, mais sont modelés, réprimés et exprimés différemment selon le lieu et l'époque »,

et que l'historien, pour mener une analyse transculturelle, doit être sensible aux nombreuses manières de « négocier la différence » lors des contacts et rencontres entre cultures (appropriation sélective, rejet, résistance, etc.) (Matt 2011, 118).

Naturellement, la relation entre émotion et expression peut être fortement « contingente » (Neu 2000, 25). Mais abstraction faite de cela, il nous faut aussi admettre que la problématique historique suppose deux approches interprétatives distinctes mais intimement liées. D'un côté, la tendance à supposer que les stratégies émotionnelles mises en œuvre pour faire face aux traumatismes post-catastrophe sont universelles, ou tout du moins, transposables, ce qui revient à nier la spécificité et la valeur des cultures émotionnelles distinctes. De l'autre, la propension à une représentation paresseuse et stéréotypée des limites conventionnellement attribuées aux émotions (y compris les « [auto]stéréotypes émotionnels nationaux »), en évitant le problème des enchevêtrements historiques qui se pose nécessairement dès lors que l'on souhaite mener une bonne analyse comparative (Eustace, Lean, et al., 2012, 1493).

La prédominance de la « théologie des tremblements de terre » parmi les courants de pensée qui ont traversé le monde transatlantique au début de l'époque moderne n'a pas empêché l'épanouissement d'un débat scientifique, ou pour le moins philosophique. Bon nombre d'ouvrages comparatifs volumineux furent publiés au XVIII<sup>ème</sup> siècle, notamment après les tremblements de terre qui frappèrent Lisbonne au Portugal (1755) et la Calabre en Italie (1783), ainsi que d'autres séismes mineurs en Nouvelle-Angleterre (1727 et 1755). Ces travaux, qui décrivaient minutieusement les effets des tremblements de terre, s'attachaient par tous les moyens à ne citer que des sources fiables et à éviter les témoignages chargés d'émotions. Toutefois, les causes naturelles étaient généralement présentées comme secondaires, pour ne pas aller à l'encontre du consensus général selon lequel les tremblements de terre devaient être essentiellement interprétés comme une forme d'intervention divine. Si l'idée était que Dieu adressait ainsi une punition, ou pour le moins un puissant avertissement, aux humains, elle n'en recéléait pas moins une certaine ambiguïté quant au but ultime : châtiment ou rédemption céleste ?

À l'aube du 18 novembre 1755, la Nouvelle-Angleterre est frappée, pour la deuxième fois en trente ans, par une violente secousse. Malgré l'absence de victimes, les autorités locales imposent alors un jeûne de plusieurs jours et le pasteur puritain Cotton Mather s'empresse de minimiser les théories qui circulent alors sur les causes secondaires des tremblements de terre (Van de Wetering 1982, 417-438) : « On attribue généralement des causes naturelles à nos tremblements de terre. Mais il doit y avoir quelque chose de plus théologique qui va maintenant vous être présenté. Laissez les *causes naturelles* des *tremblements* de terre être ce qu'il plaît aux *sages investigateurs*. Sachez que *les tremblements de terre* et leurs *causes* restent du domaine de CELUI qui est le *DIEU de la Nature* » (Mather 1727, 15). Le fait d'attribuer les catastrophes naturelles à des comportements collectifs ayant suscité la colère de(s) Dieu(x), ou à des esprits malins devant être conjurés – tout en alimentant la peur de les voir se reproduire avec des effets encore plus dévastateurs – a toujours représenté un moyen facile de jouer sur les émotions pour renforcer le sentiment de dépendance psychologique vis-à-vis des autorités civiles

et religieuses établies.<sup>2</sup> Les tremblements de terre et les incendies qui les suivent souvent, ont toujours été particulièrement efficaces à cet égard et ce sous toutes les latitudes, et ont été utilisés pour manipuler la vulnérabilité émotionnelle des survivants et introduire des formes particulièrement intrusives de contrôle sur la sphère privée (jusqu'à la tenue vestimentaire).<sup>3</sup>

Prenons, par exemple au Japon, la fondation du sanctuaire Kitano, l'un des plus importants sanctuaires shinto soutenus par l'État. Le sanctuaire fut construit en 947 pour apaiser la colère de l'esprit de Sugawara no Michizane (env. 840-903), haut fonctionnaire du gouvernement impérial, érudit et poète, qui passa ses dernières années en exil, après avoir été victime d'une conspiration ourdie par la famille des Fujiwara, ses rivaux à la cour de Heian. Après sa mort, une série d'inondations, famines et incendies s'abattirent sur la ville de Kyoto, alors capitale du Japon, tandis que les personnes qui avaient comploté contre lui décédaient sans explication. Son courroux ne se serait apaisé qu'après son élévation posthume au plus haut rang civil et sa déification en tant que Tenjin, le *kami* shinto de l'érudition (le mot *kami* fait référence plus ou moins indistinctement aux esprits, aux forces puissantes, aux éléments terrestres, aux émotions humaines et, en général, à l'essence de tout ce qui suscite l'admiration).<sup>4</sup> Dans la mesure où elles étaient capables de déclencher les pires calamités, mais aussi de les prévenir ou de les faire cesser, ces victimes déifiées étaient entourées d'un voile d'ambiguïté. Herbert Plutschow a suggéré que les dirigeants politiques japonais cherchaient à « apaiser les esprits des victimes politiques », dans la mesure où cela leur permettait de justifier les événements catastrophiques tout en maintenant le statu quo politique. Le fait de considérer les calamités naturelles comme l'œuvre des victimes politiques revenait à reconnaître que ces calamités étaient en fin de compte subordonnées au contrôle politique des hommes et qu'une fois la catastrophe terminée, les dirigeants pouvaient s'en

<sup>2</sup> Les Romains croyaient que les éruptions volcaniques et les tremblements de terre étaient l'œuvre de Neptune, Dieu de la mer. L'image d'un dauphin trouvé sur plusieurs pièces de monnaie frappées sous les règnes de Titus et Domitien pourrait être l'expression d'une volonté d'apaiser Neptune après l'éruption du Vésuve en 79 apr. J.-C. Erasme affirma un jour (dans son commentaire sur l'adage *festina lente* dans *Adagiorum chiliades*) que Pietro Bembo (1470-1547), cardinal et érudit italien avait remarqué que le motif du dauphin enroulé sur l'ancre (la célèbre marque d'imprimeur d'Alde Manuce) sur un denier frappé sous Titus représentait les deux objectifs d'Alde : la rapidité de la production symbolisée par le dauphin et la stabilité du but suggérée par l'ancre.

<sup>3</sup> Pour en savoir plus sur la façon dont un tremblement de terre pouvait être utilisé comme une opportunité de faire pression pour imposer un contrôle plus strict sur la tenue vestimentaire des femmes, voir Walker (2008, chap. 7).

<sup>4</sup> Sugawara no Michizane est aujourd'hui encore largement vénéré au Japon comme la divinité protectrice de l'érudition. Le 2 janvier de chaque année, les élèves se rendent dans ses sanctuaires pour demander son aide lors des examens d'entrée à l'école, laissant en offrande leur première calligraphie de l'année. Il existe plusieurs versions du *Kitano Tenjin engi* (« Légendes du sanctuaire Kitano »), des séries de rouleaux illustrant la vie de Michizane (à commencer par l'épisode miraculeux où il apparaît à sa famille sous ses traits d'enfant de 6 ans), sa mort et la revanche posthume exercée par son esprit furieux. Ces derniers sont basés pour la plupart sur la version Jōkyū de 1219, conservée par le sanctuaire Kitano Tenmangū à Kyoto. Les rouleaux pouvaient avoir pour fonction à la fois d'instruire et d'apaiser. Voir Sumpter (2009).

attribuer le mérite, en vertu de leurs bons offices et de leur régime bienveillant et pieux. Les victimes déifiées constituaient donc un élément clé de la société et un point central de la croyance religieuse. Elles étaient également vénérées comme des divinités délivrant des oracles et, comme dans la Delphes antique, pouvaient être invoquées pour prédire le futur. Les dirigeants politiques japonais pouvaient ainsi manipuler les oracles pour servir les intérêts de l'État.<sup>5</sup>

L'idée que des rituels de purification devaient être accomplis après une catastrophe naturelle – une croyance persistante et profondément ancrée dans l'histoire du Japon – et que les épisodes de destruction à grande échelle pussent conduire à des changements sociaux et à une redistribution des richesses peut également être associée à *Namazu*, le poisson-chat du folklore japonais, vivant dans les profondeurs de la terre et responsable des tremblements de terre.<sup>6</sup>



Figure 1 – *Namazu-e* (estampe reproduisant un poisson-chat). Les estampes *namazu-e* des dernières décennies de l'époque d'Edo représentaient des poissons-chats géants mythiques (*namazu*), responsables – selon la légende populaire – des tremblements de terre. © Bibliothèque Nationale de la Diète, Tokyo, Japon.

<sup>5</sup> Contrairement aux Japonais, les Chinois ne transformaient pas les vaincus en héros, et considéraient la défaite comme un jugement divin et non comme un fait humain. Les confucianistes avaient tendance à en faire la « faute de la victime ». Les Chinois considéraient également les calamités naturelles comme le résultat du mécontentement d'un « ciel » vis-à-vis d'un comportement officiel « sous le ciel » plutôt que comme l'œuvre de victimes assoiffées de justice ou de revanche. Voir Plutschow (2000-2001).

<sup>6</sup> Des croyances populaires expliquant les tremblements de terre existaient aux côtés des théories basées sur les cinq éléments du Yin et Yang, un système d'idées datant de la Chine ancienne et selon lequel le monde et ses processus sont régis par des forces ou des tendances opposées complémentaires.

Au moins depuis l'époque du *Hyōnenzu*, la peinture à l'encre réalisée par l'artiste japonais Zen Josetsu (fl. 1405-96) représentant un homme en train d'attraper un poisson-chat avec une gourde – considérée comme l'une des œuvres d'art les plus énigmatiques du Japon – on pensait généralement que les tremblements de terre étaient le résultat du déplacement d'un dragon ou d'un serpent géant sous la surface de la terre. Sur les cartes géographiques, les îles japonaises étaient encerclées par un dragon aux allures de serpent. De manière générale, l'idée d'un dragon ou d'un poisson est apparue en Chine, où l'on imaginait que des dragons, tortues ou poissons géants portaient sur leur dos de mystérieuses îles habitées par les Immortels, telles que l'île de Penglai. L'île japonaise de Chikubu-shima sur le lac Biwa était représentée d'une manière similaire, flottant sur le dos d'un dragon/serpent. Au fil du temps, l'énorme bête se transforma progressivement pour prendre l'apparence d'un poisson-chat géant.

C'est au XVII<sup>ème</sup> siècle que commença à se développer l'art populaire des *ōtsu-e*, ces images produites par les temples de la ville d'Otsu sur les rives du lac Biwa, puis vendues aux voyageurs et aux pèlerins. Un des sujets récurrents est offert par un homme, ou plus souvent un singe, tentant d'attraper un *namazu* géant avec une gourde. Le message métaphorique de ces images était qu'il était possible, au prix d'efforts et de détermination adaptés, d'accomplir des choses apparemment impossibles. Au cours du XVIII<sup>ème</sup> siècle, l'idée fit son chemin selon laquelle la divinité du sanctuaire de Kashima, situé au nord-est d'Edo (Tokyo), exerçait une pression sur un rocher ovale appelé « pierre de fondation » (*kaname-ishi*), laquelle retenait la tête d'un immense *namazu* souterrain. Mais à chaque fois que la divinité était occupée ailleurs, ou simplement distraite, la pression se relâchait et le poisson-chat géant commençait à se débattre, ce qui entraînait de terribles conséquences, telles que les tremblements de terre qui provoquaient de graves dégâts aux bâtiments et déclenchaient souvent des incendies dévastateurs (Smith 2012).



Figure 2 – Kashima, *kaname-ishi* et *namazu*. Le rocher de *kaname-ishi* est représenté sous les traits d'un homme placé sur la tête du poisson-chat. © Bibliothèque Nationale de la Diète, Tokyo, Japon.

La période Tokugawa (ou époque d'Edo), comprise entre 1603 et 1868,<sup>7</sup> fut marquée par la domination du gouvernement militaire (*bakufu*) des *shōgun* (grands généraux), basés à Edo. L'empereur, qui régnait à Kyoto, la capitale traditionnelle, faisait principalement office de figure religieuse et symbolique et n'exerçait pas de véritable pouvoir politique. Toutefois, après l'arrivée du commodore américain Matthew Perry en 1853, les opposants au *bakufu* et partisans de la politique du *jōi* (« expulser les barbares ») se tournèrent vers l'empereur, qu'ils considéraient comme un contrepoids symbolique du *bakufu*.<sup>8</sup> À la fin de 1855, alors que l'ordre social et politique existant était en train de se déliter – au point qu'il sera finalement remplacé en 1868 par un État centralisé moderne –, un tremblement de terre dévastateur fournit le prétexte à une forme sophistiquée de protestation. Ce mouvement de contestation fut relayé par des estampes de poisson-chat (*namazu-e*).<sup>9</sup>

Pour échapper à la censure du gouvernement militaire, des commerçants anonymes utilisèrent le « poisson-chat des tremblements de terre » et d'autres sujets symboliques dans une infinité de variétés d'estampes qu'ils vendaient pour répandre des opinions politiques subversives à peine voilées. Plus précisément, les *namazu-e* devaient métaphoriquement mettre en doute la capacité du *bakufu* à gouverner efficacement, une forme de scepticisme qui avait déjà commencé à se répandre après la venue de Perry.<sup>10</sup> Certaines estampes représentent le caractère ambivalent du *namazu*, parfois représentés en train de sauver des personnes des décombres. Bien souvent, ces créatures étaient vénérées comme des « dieux de la rectification » entraînant des changements sociaux et une redistribution des richesses par des actes de destruction (Gould 2014). Or les *namazu-e* mettaient l'accent sur les personnes qui profitaient généralement des tremblements de terre. On trouve par exemple un poisson-chat déguisé en prêtre itinérant, tenant un chapelet bouddhiste, en train de prier avec un charpentier, un plâtrier, des cou-

<sup>7</sup> Dernière période du Japon traditionnel, cette époque, qui correspond au shōgunat établi par Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1616), fut une période de paix intérieure et d'isolement national.

<sup>8</sup> À partir de juillet 1853, le Commodore Perry arriva à Edo (Tokyo) avec sa flotte armée fait pression sur le gouvernement militaire pour qu'il signe un accord commercial avec les États-Unis. N'ayant pas la force de rejeter catégoriquement les demandes de Perry, le gouvernement se résigna à signer un traité préliminaire en mars 1854.

<sup>9</sup> Plus de 400 types différents d'estampes *namazu-e* furent produites pendant les semaines du tremblement de terre d'Ansei Edo qui ravagea la ville en novembre 1855. Il est intéressant de noter que les *namazu* représentés sont toujours de couleur noire, tout comme les bateaux à vapeur de Perry (voir Smits 2006, 1062-1066). Le phénomène des *namazu-e* prit brusquement fin deux mois plus tard, lorsque le gouvernement qui exerçait une censure très stricte sur l'industrie de l'édition, adopta des mesures pour en arrêter la production. Seule une poignée de ces estampes nous sont parvenues et la plupart peuvent être observées dans les collections numériques de la bibliothèque nationale de la Diète de Tokyo.

<sup>10</sup> À l'instar de la théorie politique chinoise classique du mandat céleste qui considérait les manifestations naturelles comme des messages pouvant justifier le passage du pouvoir d'une dynastie à l'autre, la plupart des Japonais interprétaient les phénomènes naturels soudains et désastreux comme les bévues d'un gouvernement incompetent ayant porté la société en déséquilibre avec la nature. Voir Groemer (1994, 245).

vreurs, un physicien, un marchand de bois et un tireur de pousse-pousse. Dans la mesure où toutes ces figures ont quelque chose à gagner des tremblements de terre, elles prient pour soulager leurs sentiments de culpabilité. Sur une autre estampe, une foule de poissons-chats vêtus de kimonos et d'ouvriers du bâtiment venant de s'enrichir célèbrent leur fructueuse alliance dans un quartier rouge. En particulier, les *namazu-e* révèlent une réponse émotionnelle clairement ironique et irrévérencieuse aux catastrophes naturelles (Ouwehand 1964 ; Smits 2006, 1047 ; 1055-1061, passim ; Steele 2003).

L'humour était une caractéristique assez typique des récits de catastrophes du Japon prémoderne, notamment dans les descriptions d'incendies qui constituaient un risque majeur dans les villes japonaises de l'époque d'Edo. Le grand incendie de Meireki qui fit rage pendant trois jours durant le premier mois de 1657 fut le plus catastrophique. Des mois de sécheresse avaient rendu les bâtiments d'Edo extrêmement secs, facilitant ainsi la propagation des flammes à travers les rues, si bien que des milliers de personnes furent prises au piège dans leurs habitations. Nombre de celles qui avaient réussi à fuir essayèrent de sauver des biens précieux en les entassant dans des coffres à roulettes, mais le feu avait progressé si rapidement qu'elles durent les abandonner derrière elles. Pour comble de malheur, l'incendie fut suivi presque immédiatement d'une violente tempête de neige. Au total, on estime à près de 100 000 le nombre de victimes ayant succombé soit directement à l'incendie, soit indirectement au chaos qui suivit, lorsque ceux qui avaient perdu leurs maisons et leurs moyens de subsistance moururent de froid et de faim. La reconstruction de la ville dura presque deux ans.

Tandis que la nouvelle de l'incendie d'Edo incitait le théologien et historien néerlandais, Arnold van den Berghe (1625-83), à rechercher des parallèles dans sa propre mémoire culturelle (pour lui, les incendies de Troie, Rome ou Londres n'étaient rien comparés à celui d'Edo)<sup>11</sup>, l'incendie de Meireki fit l'objet quatre ans plus tard, au Japon toujours, d'un étrange récit intitulé *Musashi Abumi* (« Les étriers de Musashi »)<sup>12</sup>, où des descriptions vivantes et détaillées de l'incendie se mêlent à l'histoire parfois ouvertement comique d'un homme appelé Rakusaibō. Après avoir perdu l'ensemble de sa famille dans l'incendie, Rakusaibō se retire du monde, prend la tonsure et entame un long pèlerinage solitaire, visitant temples et sanctuaires entre Edo et Kyoto, dont le sanctuaire Kitano.

L'histoire raconte comment Rakusaibō, le premier jour de l'incendie, part à la recherche de sa mère, se frayant un chemin parmi les cadavres, et finit par trouver ce qu'il croit être sa dépouille. Mais alors que sa famille s'est rassemblée

<sup>11</sup> Voir Montanus (1670, 411).

<sup>12</sup> Publié à Kyoto sous forme de livre, *Musashi Abumi* est généralement attribué à Asai Ryōi, l'écrivain populaire japonais le plus prolifique du XVII<sup>ème</sup> siècle. Une édition japonaise moderne de cet écrit parut en 1988 (éditée par Kōta Sakamaki et Takashi Kuroki). Dans le présent essai, nous nous appuyons sur une traduction sélective et une réflexion intéressante de Peter Kornicki dans son « Narrative of a Catastrophe: *Musashi abumi* and the Meireki Fire » (Kornicki 2010).

pour la pleurer, voilà qu'elle apparaît en chair et en os. L'ayant prise d'abord pour un fantôme, ils découvrent alors qu'elle a survécu à l'incendie et que les prières qu'ils ont offertes pour sa renaissance au paradis n'ont été qu'une perte de temps et d'énergie. Quant à Rakusaibō, il est tellement content que sa famille ait réussi à échapper à l'incendie qu'il est déjà ivre mort lorsque les flammes reprennent le soir même. Sa famille le fait alors monter dans une malle à roulettes pour le transporter en lieu sûr, mais la férocité des flammes est telle qu'ils sont contraints de l'abandonner à son sort. Lorsque Rakusaibō revient à lui dans la malle, il se croit dans son cercueil. Lorsqu'il en sort la tête et observe le paysage dévasté et carbonisé autour de lui, il s'imagine en enfer. S'ensuit alors une série de malentendus comiques que seule la rencontre avec un vieil ami finit par dissiper. C'est alors qu'il apprend que sa maison a été incendiée, que sa femme et ses enfants sont morts et que tout ce qu'il possédait est désormais perdu. Il décide alors de se raser la tête, de teindre ses vêtements en noir et de devenir moine. Comme le soutient très justement Peter Kornicki, l'humour du récit pourrait être interprété comme un parallèle séculier à la retraite bouddhiste : en d'autres termes, on évite ici l'implication émotionnelle en recourant à l'humour plutôt qu'à la religion. De fait, bien que la descente aux enfers soit un thème déjà bien établi dans la tradition littéraire japonaise, l'histoire de Rakusaibō semble se moquer gentiment des convictions bouddhistes relatives à l'enfer (Kornicki 2010, 351-352).

Avant de passer à un deuxième interlude humoristique – visuel cette fois – dans les récits de catastrophes du Japon prémoderne<sup>13</sup>, il me faut présenter une autre personnalité européenne : Jan van der Heyden (1637-1712), l'un des plus grands peintres de paysages urbains néerlandais. Van der Heyden est un personnage inhabituel, dont la renommée n'est pas seulement attachée à son art. Après des études de mécanique, il met au point un système d'éclairage public pour la ville d'Amsterdam, ce qui lui vaut d'être nommé directeur de l'éclairage (1669-70). Grâce à lui, Amsterdam devient ainsi la ville la mieux éclairée d'Europe et les lanternes qu'il a lui-même conçues font bientôt leur apparition dans les rues de Berlin, Leipzig et de nombreuses autres villes, notamment au Japon.<sup>14</sup> Puis, après avoir inventé un mécanisme de pompage, van der Heyden rédige et illustre un ouvrage sur les pompes à incendie (1690). Par la suite, il fait fortune en fabriquant et en vendant des équipements de lutte contre les incendies. Van der Heyden produisit une série de chroniques textuelles et visuelles d'incendies, qui se lisent comme de véritables reportages journalistiques, et les estampes qu'il réalisa pour montrer le fonctionnement de ses pompes présentent un intérêt qui dépasse la simple sphère de la technologie, dans la mesure où elles offrent une perspective presque intime de la vie quotidienne de l'époque à Amsterdam. L'illustration qui retiendra ici notre attention est *Comparaison entre les anciennes et*

<sup>13</sup> On en trouvera un autre exemple dans *Haru no momiji* de Kawasaki Shigeyasu, qui relate un grand incendie ayant éclaté à Edo au printemps 1829. Voir Kobayashi (1983-84).

<sup>14</sup> Sur l'expansion des « usages sociaux et symboliques légitimes de la nuit » en Europe au début de l'époque moderne, voir Koslofsky (2001).

*les nouvelles méthodes de lutte contre l'incendie*, qui compte parmi un ensemble de gravures préparatoires à son fameux *Brandspuitenboek* (« Livre des pompes à incendies ») de 1690, aujourd'hui conservé dans les collections du cabinet des estampes du Rijksmuseum à Amsterdam.



Figure 3 – Comparaison entre les anciennes et les nouvelles méthodes de lutte contre l'incendie (*Brandspuiten-boek*, 1690). Jan van der Heyden montre les avantages de ces dernières inventions : un tuyau flexible et un engin anti-incendie plus performant.

La partie gauche de la gravure représente les anciennes méthodes anti-incendie qui consistaient à prélever de l'eau dans un canal avec des seaux afin de remplir le réservoir d'une grosse et lourde machine de pompiers. Celle-ci était équipée d'une lance fixe ne pouvant exécuter que des mouvements circulaires. Sur la partie droite, on observe une nouvelle machine à pompiers beaucoup moins encombrante : l'eau est puisée dans le canal à l'aide d'un chevalet et d'un tuyau en toile flexible, puis pompée dans un tuyau d'incendie en cuir, plus fin que celui de la machine de gauche, et pouvant être amené directement dans le bâtiment (Sutton 2006 ; Kuretsky 2011 ; Kuretsky 2012). À l'instar de ses lanternes, les machines de pompiers de Van der Heyden arrivèrent jusqu'au Japon,<sup>15</sup> comme le montre un détail révélateur (sur lequel nous reviendrons plus loin)

<sup>15</sup> Des machines de pompiers construites d'après les plans de Jan van der Heyden sont conservées dans les temples Tenjuan Sekizan Zen-in à Kyoto.

présent sur un magnifique rouleau suspendu du peintre, philosophe et cartographe japonais Shiba Kōkan (1747-1818).<sup>16</sup> Le rouleau met en scène de manière très significative différentes stratégies d'adaptation culturelle et constitue une source précieuse pour tenter d'esquisser « une herméneutique de la différence historiquement ancrée » (Juneja et Schenck 2014, 20).

Père de la peinture japonaise de « style occidental », Shiba Kōkan était un membre éminent du mouvement intellectuel Rangaku, c'est-à-dire des « Études hollandaises » (*Ran* étant l'abréviation de *Oranda*, le mot japonais pour « Hollande », *gaku* signifiant « étude »). Ce groupe avant-gardiste de lettrés et artistes japonais était fortement influencé par les arts et les sciences du monde occidental, et nombre d'entre eux nourrissait des opinions antibouddhistes et surtout antichinoises.<sup>17</sup>

Le rouleau (qui représente peut-être une métaphore subtile d'un comparativisme culturel et médical plus large) donne à voir des représentants du Japon, de Chine et d'Occident réunis autour d'une table. Le Japonais occupe une place de choix au centre de la triade,<sup>18</sup> tandis que sur la gauche se tient l'Occidental (probablement un Néerlandais), un homme de médecine portant des vêtements datant du XVIII<sup>ème</sup> siècle, tenant un livre d'anatomie ouvert sur une page illustrant un squelette mâle appuyé sur une canne. Cette illustration peut provenir d'une planche tirée du *De humani corporis fabrica* d'André Vésale, parvenu au Japon par l'intermédiaire d'une

<sup>16</sup> Rouleau suspendu ; encre, couleur et or sur soie ; 401/8 x 19½ in. (102.2 x 49.3cm) ; signé *Shunparo jo Kokan Shiba Shun kore [o] utsusu*, scellé *Shiba* and *Shun no in*. Le rouleau a été vendu aux enchères chez Christie's à New York le 22 mars 2001 (Vente 9606 : lot 241). Initialement conservé dans la Ruth and Sherman Lee Institute for Japanese Art Collection (Clark Centre) à Hanford en Californie, il se trouve maintenant dans les collections du Minneapolis Institute of Arts. Une première reproduction du rouleau fut publiée dans Jackson et Jaffer (2004), en accompagnement d'une exposition du même nom organisée au Victoria and Albert Museum de Londres du 23 septembre au 5 décembre 2004. Il fut également utilisé comme image de couverture du numéro spécial consacré aux émotions (publié en 2016) de la principale revue d'histoire italienne *Rivista Storica Italiana*.

<sup>17</sup> Le mouvement Rangaku a été vu comme une tentative intellectuelle visant à critiquer et à minimiser l'influence écrasante de la civilisation et de l'écriture chinoise sur la culture japonaise. Ce courant fut quasiment contemporain du mouvement Kokugaku (« les études autochtones »). Voir Keene (2011) ; Goodman (1986, 103-104, 193-97) ; et Elman (2008). Sur Kōkan, voir French (1974) ; une critique de l'ouvrage par Waterhouse (1976) ; et l'introduction de Georg Wiessala (au titre évocateur « The 'Japanese Leonardo' and the Asia-Europe Conversation ») à Wiessala (2011).

<sup>18</sup> Le Japonais, visiblement un samouraï, appuie sa main sur une *katana*, un sabre traditionnel de forme courbe, avec une lame à un seul tranchant et une longue poignée permettant de le tenir à deux mains. Seuls les samourais, la noblesse militaire du Japon médiéval et prémoderne, avaient le droit de porter des sabres, même s'ils eurent peu l'occasion de l'utiliser pendant la longue période de paix sous le règne des Tokugawa. Beaucoup se consacrèrent ainsi à l'étude de l'archéologie, de la littérature, de la botanique, de l'anatomie et des sciences médicales. Leur intérêt pour ces dernières renforce la plausibilité d'une lecture de l'estampe de Kōkan comme une allusion aux différentes cultures médicales, où physiciens et pompiers sont déterminés à lutter contre la force impondérable, mais aussi les limites de la nature. Le serpent blanc enroulé autour du poignet du samouraï fait peut-être allusion à une divinité propice (*kami*) même si, dans l'Antiquité, il était associé à l'imminence d'un désastre.



Figure 4 – Shiba Kōkan, *Rencontre entre le Japon, la Chine et l'Occident*. © Minneapolis Institute of Arts.

traduction hollandaise signée Gerard Dicten (1734) de l'ouvrage d'Adam Kulmus intitulé *Anatomische tabellen* (1725), lui-même traduit en japonais en 1774 sous le titre *Kaitai shinsho* (*Nouvel Atlas anatomique*).<sup>19</sup> De l'autre côté de la composition, l'érudit confucéen observe solennellement les deux autres ; sur la table, sont posés un rouleau de ses écrits, un sceptre *ruyi* (« Que vos souhaits se réalisent ! ») et un vase chinois contenant ce qui semble être des herbes médicinales.<sup>20</sup>

Or cette triade ne représente qu'une partie d'un tableau beaucoup plus vaste et encore plus intéressant. Au-dessus d'eux figure une pagode à plusieurs étages, dévorée par les flammes et presque entièrement détruite. Des brigades de pompiers des trois pays s'efforcent d'éteindre le brasier. Chaque groupe adopte une approche différente, mais l'évidente disparité dans l'efficacité de leurs techniques trahit une intention comique mal dissimulée. L'équipe japonaise est présentée sous les traits de lourds lutteurs de sumo : imperturbables, ils observent la scène chaotique de loin et utilisent l'eau pour leurs ablutions personnelles.<sup>21</sup> Les Hollandais utilisent une pompe moderne dotée d'un tuyau qui correspond incontestablement à l'invention de Jan van der Heyden, tandis que les Chinois ont rassemblé une grande quantité d'eau qu'ils jettent sur les flammes à l'aide de seaux traditionnels.

<sup>19</sup> Suite à l'interdiction des livres étrangers en 1630, puis à l'expulsion de tous les étrangers à l'exception des marchands hollandais et chinois, les Japonais n'ont eu, pendant près d'un siècle, aucun accès aux connaissances scientifiques occidentales. En 1720, le huitième shogun, Yoshimune (1684-1751) finit par lever l'interdiction, sauf pour les ouvrages où il était fait expressément référence au christianisme. La première traduction (plus ou moins) complète d'un ouvrage européen fut le *Kaitai shinsho*. L'équipe de traducteurs fut dirigée par l'éminent physicien Sugita Genpaku (1733-1817), tandis que les gravures sur bois furent réalisées par le talentueux jeune samouraï Odano Naotake (1749-80), qui devint par la suite l'un des principaux artistes du style occidental. S'il existait à l'époque plusieurs termes pour désigner le mouvement, dont *Oranda-e* ou *Horuranda-e*, on parle aujourd'hui généralement de Ranga (ou « ga » signifie peinture). Fait intéressant, Kōkan, qui était un bourgeois, se plaignait publiquement du snobisme raffiné du *Kaitai shinsho* : d'une part parce qu'il s'adressait exclusivement aux cercles académiques, et d'autre part car il avait été restitué en *kanbun*, une forme de chinois très opaque, et non en langue vernaculaire. Voir Screech (2004, 318) ; Screech (2002, 89) ; et Van Gulik et Nimura (2005).

<sup>20</sup> Les mentions du catalogue de vente aux enchères en ligne Christie's suggèrent que les trois personnages sont une variation des illustrations populaires de l'unité des trois croyances, montrant Bouddha, Lao Tseu, et Confucius réunis, « ou, dans les cercles des études hollandaises dans le Japon du XVIII<sup>ème</sup> siècle (*Rangaku*), Bouddha, Lao Tseu et Jésus ». On trouve une curieuse allusion chinoise contemporaine au syncrétisme religieux, ou plutôt philosophique, sur un écran de lettré comprenant un double portrait de l'empereur Qianlong (1736-1795) et le poème dans lequel il questionne ses multiples identités : « Est-il un ou sont-ils deux ? / Ils ne sont ni identiques ni dissemblants. / L'un peut être confucéen, l'autre moïste, / Pourquoi devrais-je m'inquiéter, pourquoi même prendre la peine de me poser la question ? » (la principale différence entre ces deux anciens systèmes philosophiques étant la doctrine moïste (du nom de Mo-Tseu) de l'amour universel, incompatible avec la doctrine confucéenne basique de l'amour sans distinctions). Voir Meng et Pang (2015, 103).

<sup>21</sup> La lutte sumo tire son origine de la religion shintoïste, et toutes les cérémonies des sumos sont liées à des rituels de purification. Des formes de danse rituelle où un humain fait semblant de lutter contre un *kami* (un esprit divin shintoïste) continuent d'exister aujourd'hui dans certains sanctuaires shintos.



Figure 5 – Kōkan, *Rencontre entre le Japon, la Chine et l'Occident*, détail. © Minneapolis Institute of Arts.

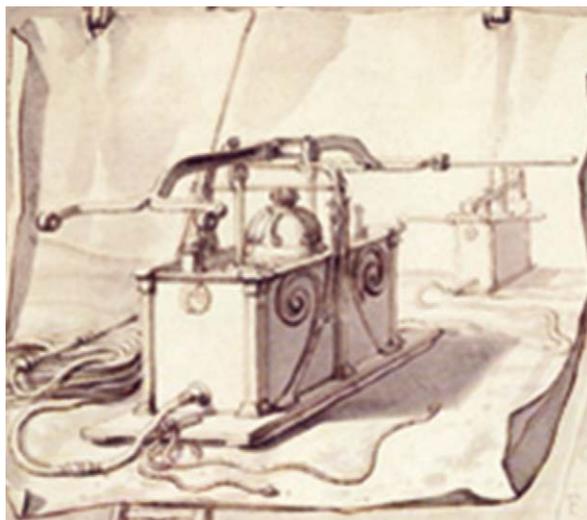


Figure 6 – Jan van der Heyden, *Comparaison entre les anciennes et les nouvelles méthodes de lutte contre l'incendie*, détail.



Figure 7 – Machine de pompiers, temple Sekizan Zen, Kyoto, Japon.



Figure 8 – Machine de pompiers, temple Tenjuan, Kyoto, Japon.

L'estampe a nécessairement été réalisée après la publication de la deuxième édition japonaise du *Kaitai shinsho* en 1798, date de la première apparition du « squelette laboureur ». <sup>22</sup> Elle remonte aussi probablement au dernier des trois

<sup>22</sup> Vésale pratique un genre typique que l'on appelle généralement « anatomie moralisée ». Son squelette prend appui sur une pelle de fossoyeur au bord d'un tombeau ouvert, les orbites vides relevées, la bouche ouverte comme dans un cri. Dans la transposition japonaise de la gravure anatomique de Vésale, la fonction scientifique de l'image est maintenue, mais non le paysage avec le tombeau. La pelle, dont la forme n'était pas connue des Japonais, fait uniquement office de support confortable à l'avant-bras plié du sujet. Voir Proust (2002, 205).

grands incendies d'Edo, le grand incendie de Bunka, qui ravagea la ville en avril 1806, causant 1 200 victimes. Au printemps de la même année, Kōkan annonça qu'il abandonnait la peinture (French 1974, 109). Si cette datation est correcte, il est intéressant et significatif de noter l'humour dont le peintre fait preuve encore une fois, si peu de temps après un événement des plus dramatiques, comme une distraction destinée à atténuer le choc émotionnel. Mais qui est la cible de la raillerie de l'artiste ? Malgré les apparences – notamment le fait que l'érudit européen soit assis visiblement plus près de son confrère japonais que de son homologue chinois, comme pour indiquer une proximité de vues entre les deux – la réponse à cette question est loin d'être évidente.

En 1788, Kōkan avait quitté la ville d'Edo pour se rendre vers l'ouest, à Nagasaki, le seul port japonais alors ouvert au commerce avec l'extérieur. Pendant son séjour, il visita l'enclave commerciale hollandaise sur l'île de Dejima, où il s'efforça d'absorber autant de connaissances occidentales que possible. Par la suite, il publia plusieurs volumes sur l'astronomie néerlandaise et réalisa des gravures pour illustrer la théorie héliocentrique de Nicolas Copernic sur le système solaire. Dans un manuscrit non publié, achevé en novembre 1811, il évoque les maux dont souffre sa société. Parmi les causes de ces maux, il mentionne l'absence d'une « tradition d'investigation scientifique au Japon et en Chine », ce qui expliquerait selon lui l'ignorance des Japonais. « Nous autres Japonais n'avons aucune propension pour la recherche scientifique. Nous nous préoccupons d'écrire des phrases fines et élégantes dans le but de paraître cultivés, même si ce que nous disons n'a aucun rapport avec la réalité. Nous avons des esprits de femmes. Toutes les femmes ont les idées confuses, croient à tout ce qu'on leur raconte et n'ont aucun sens des réalités » poursuit-il (French 1974, 153). Dans son œuvre, Kōkan semble donc insinuer que ni les Chinois, ni les Japonais ne peuvent rivaliser avec les Européens en matière de lutte contre l'incendie. De plus, le professionnalisme apparemment dénué d'émotions des pompiers hollandais apparaît comme étant la bonne attitude à avoir en cas d'événements catastrophiques de ce type.

Un examen plus approfondi révèle toutefois un détail qui nuance cette impression de manière assez inattendue, tout en ajoutant une pointe d'ironie, une sorte de clin d'œil de que Kōkan adresse au spectateur. Le détail en question est le squelette masculin représenté sur le livre tenu par le médecin occidental. La posture du squelette diffère légèrement de la gravure originale de Vésale, mais aussi de sa transposition japonaise. Sur le squelette de Kōkan, le dos de la main gauche est crânement posé sur la taille, le coude pointé vers l'extérieur, une position très courante dans les portraits hollandais mais qui reflète une certaine agressivité, la fameuse « *vita activa* » généralement associée à l'action militaire (Spicer 1991 ; Filipczak 2004 ; Chu ca. 2008). De toute évidence, nous avons donc ici affaire à une parodie.

Au-delà de cet humour typique des récits de catastrophes du Japon prémoderne, on serait tenté de considérer cette peinture de Kōkan comme une représentation métaphorique du miroir interculturel. Ainsi, on pourrait y voir la plus inclusive des trois « grammaires de l'identité » décrites de manière si

convaincante par le regretté anthropologue Gerd Baumann. Selon lui, il n'y a pas de démarcation exclusive entre identité et différence. Et de fait, identités et altérités devraient être considérées comme « mutuellement constitutives ou pour le moins résiduellement dialogiques ». En particulier dans la « grammaire orientaliste », « ce qui est bon chez nous, fait défaut chez eux ». Mais il ajoute : « [C]e qui fait défaut chez nous, est (encore) présent chez eux » (Baumann et Gingrich 2004, 4, 13, 20, 25, 200 et *passim*). Ce qui implique donc la possibilité du désir de l'Autre, et à l'occasion, peut-être même le potentiel d'un relativisme auto-critique. Néanmoins, auto-critique ne signifie pas auto-négation. Même l'Occident, malgré son incontestable supériorité scientifique et son aspiration à établir le contrôle de l'homme sur la nature, semble incapable d'indiquer comment gérer de manière sage les émotions provoquées par un drame collectif démontrant de manière si brutale la fragilité de la vie.

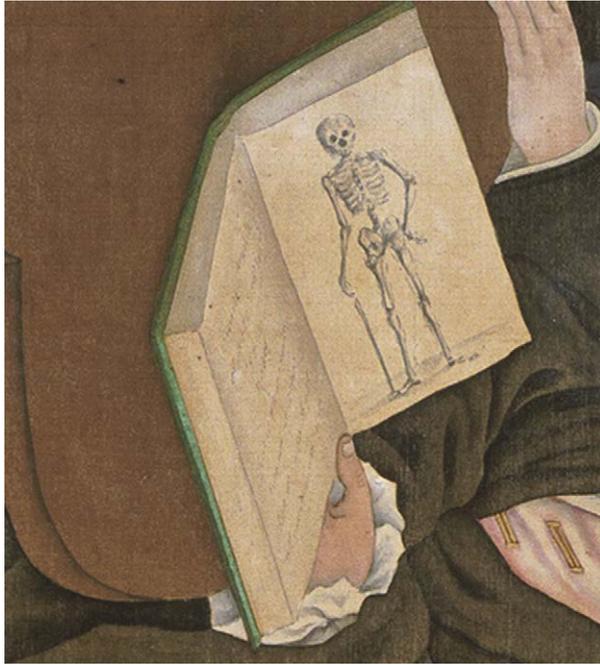


Figure 9 – Kōkan, *Rencontre entre le Japon, la Chine et l'Occident*, détail. © Minneapolis Institute of Arts.

Malgré sa profonde admiration pour le monde occidental, Kōkan a mené, dans ses dernières années, une vie retirée dans le temple zen Engaku-ji de Kamakura, où il consacrait une grande partie de son temps à la méditation. Las de l'érudition occidentale, de l'astronomie et des instruments étrangers, il portait la robe rude et grossière des prêtres et « trouvait une grande satisfaction à aider les autres à comprendre le sens de la vie » (cité en anglais dans French 1974, 159).



Figure 10 – Michele Sarcone, *Istoria de' fenomeni del tremoto avvenuto nelle Calabrie, e nel Valdemone nell'anno 1783* (Naples, 1784), Atlas annexe, planche 20, gravure d'Antonio Zaballi.

Au siècle des Lumières, les illustrations du tremblement de terre de 1783 en Calabre, commissionnées par l'Académie des Sciences de Naples – où le paysage traditionnel et les éléments narratifs n'étaient préservés que pour traduire l'ampleur de l'évènement – témoignent ainsi de la tentative audacieuse des érudits occidentaux de dominer intellectuellement la nature et de ne pas en être terrifiés.<sup>23</sup> La leçon que Kōkan semble avoir tirée de sa lecture avide et admirative des traités scientifiques occidentaux apparaît bien différente : « Quiconque a étudié l'astronomie et la géographie peut examiner le ciel et ressentir l'immensité de l'univers ; en comparaison, la terre semble à peine plus grande qu'un minuscule grain de millet. Les hommes qui vivent dans ce monde minuscule en rotation sont comme des particules microscopiques de poussière. Celui qui ne prend pas conscience de son insignifiance, qui a la prétention de se considérer comme grand, démontre simplement qu'il connaît bien peu le monde » (cité en anglais dans French 1974, 149).

On ne saurait trop insister sur l'importance du principe confucéen selon lequel l'harmonie passe par le respect des lois de la nature, tandis que le bien-être physique et émotionnel des humains dépend largement de leur capacité à établir une relation harmonieuse avec l'environnement. Ni ne faudrait-il oublier l'influence considérable du confucianisme classique sur le bouddhisme zen.<sup>24</sup> Dans un au-

<sup>23</sup> Voir par exemple Planche 20 dans *Istoria* (1784).

<sup>24</sup> « Contre ceux qui croyaient superstitieusement que prier le Ciel aboutirait à une bénédiction et que lui désobéir entraînerait un désastre », Xunzi (env. 300-230 av. J.-C.), en particulier, affirmait que « le cours naturel du Ciel ne pouvait être modifié par les affaires humaines, et les lois naturelles suivaient leur propre cours, que les humains se soient comportés moralement ou non. Dans la mesure où la nature n'a ni 'émotions' ni 'volonté', elle ne peut créer intentionnellement une harmonie pour les êtres humains. Pour garantir l'harmonie entre nous et la nature, nous devrions utiliser les lois de la nature à nos propres fins. Nous sommes les architectes de notre propre destin » (Yao 2000, 176-78).

toportrait de 1810, Kōkan adopte l'iconographie traditionnelle des érudits (*wen-ren*), les mains recouvertes par les manches de sa robe, affichant la modération et la distance émotionnelle du confucianisme qu'il évoque dans son extraordinaire rouleau.<sup>25</sup> Trois ans plus tard, alors qu'il est désormais déterminé à devenir un disciple du prêtre Seisetsu au temple Engaku-ji, Kōkan rédige sa propre nécrologie, signifiant sa mort aux choses de ce monde, et envoie des copies de cette annonce à différentes connaissances à travers le pays. À un ami, il remet en revanche une peinture représentant une marionnette (symbole de réussite mondaine dans une existence illusoire), une grue et un coq. La peinture est accompagnée de quelques courts vers évoquant le pouvoir destructeur du feu, et dans lesquels émerge la nouvelle conscience de Kōkan et son acceptation docile de la fragilité humaine :

Le feu brûle,  
Ne sachant ni d'où il vient, ni où il va ;  
Tant qu'il brûle  
Nous devons faire de notre mieux.<sup>26</sup>

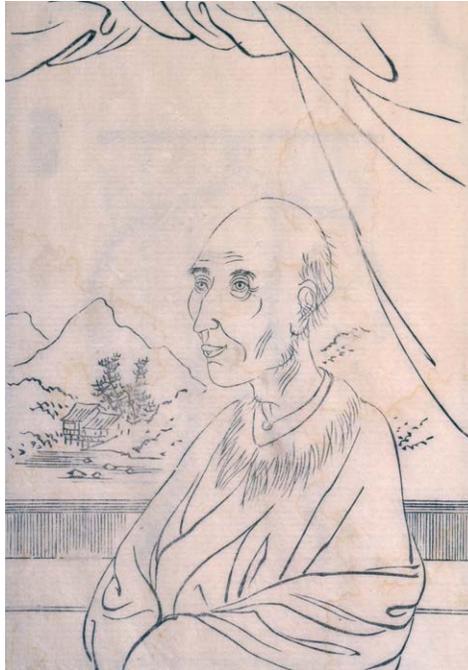


Figure 11 – Shiba Kōkan, autoportrait. © Musée municipal d'art Namban de Kobe, Japon.

<sup>25</sup> L'autoportrait de Kōkan est conservé au musée municipal d'art Namban de Kobe.

<sup>26</sup> Cité en anglais dans French (1974, 156-59). La peinture (couleur sur papier, 48 x 24.3 cm) existe toujours, et est conservée à l'université Waseda de Tokyo.

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# Voltaire historien, Voltaire auteur de théâtre : son attitude face à la Corée<sup>1</sup>

Jong-Ho Chun

**Abstract:** Voltaire is one of the few European authors of the 18th century to have dealt with Korea. In this study, we first propose to highlight, through an analysis of all of his work, the texts in which he mentioned Korea and how this country is represented there. We will then try to identify his documentary sources, and we will focus mainly on how the author created stories from historical elements. Our survey also aims to understand Voltaire's attitude to the historical-philosophical and dramatic genres, and to better understand his conception of these two genres.

**Keywords:** Voltaire, Korea, Historiography, Theatre

## Voltaire, auteur de théâtre

Grande figure de la pensée des Lumières, Voltaire est célèbre comme auteur de contes philosophiques tels que *Candide* (1759), *Zadig* (1747) et bien d'autres, ainsi que de traités visant à combattre l'obscurantisme et le fanatisme religieux de son époque – ce qu'il nomme lui-même « l'infâme » – comme les *Lettres Philosophiques* (1734) ou le *Traité sur la Tolérance* (1763). Cependant, pour les Européens de son époque, Voltaire était avant toute chose un poète épique et dramatique. Pendant toute sa vie, il a été passionné de théâtre. Dans ce domaine il était un auteur prolifique, avec à son actif pas moins de cinquante-deux pièces, dépassant ainsi largement les trente-trois de Corneille ou les douze de Racine. Sa carrière littéraire commence officiellement par le triomphe de sa première tragédie, *Œdipe* (1718) – il est alors âgé de de vingt-quatre ans – et c'est surtout en qualité d'auteur dramatique que l'Académie française l'accueille en 1746. Enfin, le 30 mars 1778, à l'âge de quatre-vingt-quatre ans, lors de la sixième représentation de sa dernière tragédie, *Irène*, il est couronné par les applaudissements

<sup>1</sup> Cet article constitue une version remaniée de l'étude publiée dans Chun (2018), où l'intérêt était focalisé en particulier sur les sources documentaires de Voltaire sur la Corée. Nous nous intéressons ici principalement aux rapports entre ce thème et les notions d'histoire et de théâtre chez notre auteur.

du public dans la salle du Théâtre-Français. C'est l'apothéose de sa carrière : « D'ailleurs, du vivant de Voltaire, le public mettait ses tragédies au même rang que celles de Corneille et de Racine. Bref, l'Europe des Lumières reconnaît en Voltaire son premier dramaturge » (Acke 1994, 231).

Voltaire visait à réformer le genre théâtral. L'innovation se trouve surtout dans le choix des thèmes représentés. Contrairement aux auteurs du classicisme français qui voulaient limiter le sujet ou la scène de leurs pièces aux Écritures saintes ou à l'Antiquité gréco-romaine, Voltaire tente d'élargir le contexte historico-géographique de ses tragédies. La scène de *Zaïre* (1732) se déroule à Jérusalem pendant les Croisades, *Adelaïde de Guesclin* (1734) en France pendant la Guerre de Cent ans, *Alzire où les Américains* (1736) au Pérou pendant l'invasion espagnole, *Zulime* (1740), *Le Fanatisme ou Mahomet le prophète* (1741) en terre d'Islam, *Sémiramis* (1748) et *Les Guèbres ou la tolérance* (1768) en Orient antique. Toutes ces pièces reflètent bien l'intérêt personnel de l'auteur pour l'histoire et la géographie mondiales et pour la diversité culturelle du monde. Parmi elles, *L'Orphelin de la Chine*, qui eut un grand succès le 20 août 1755 au Théâtre de la Comédie-Française, est la première tragédie française sur la Chine. Dans cette pièce se trouve une mention de la Corée qui nous intéresse. L'élargissement des thèmes entraîne un renouvellement de la mise en scène avec notamment un accroissement du réalisme dans la représentation des coutumes. Ces innovations étaient la raison principale du succès de ces pièces à l'époque. Tout cela sans perdre de vue que Voltaire utilise le théâtre pour véhiculer ses propres idées philosophiques, comme nous allons le voir.

### Voltaire historien

La contribution de Voltaire à l'évolution de la conception et de l'écriture de l'histoire – avec *Le Siècle de Louis XIV*, *l'Essai sur les mœurs et l'esprit des nations* et d'autres ouvrages – a également été considérable. Il ne faut pas oublier qu'il était historien officiel du roi et qu'il fut nommé « historiographe de Sa Majesté » par Louis XV le 1<sup>er</sup> avril 1745 : un rôle qu'il exerce jusqu'au 25 juin 1750, date à laquelle il part pour Berlin, répondant à l'invitation de Frédéric II, roi de Prusse. Il semble cependant avoir ressenti des limites dans l'exercice de cette fonction. Ainsi élabore-t-il sa propre conception de la figure de l'historien, en refusant tout d'abord de donner aux « historiographes » le titre d'« historiens » lorsqu'il définit leur fonction :

HISTORIOGRAPHE – Titre fort différent de celui d'historien. [...] Peut-être le propre d'un historiographe est de rassembler les matériaux, et on est historien quand on les met en œuvre. Le premier peut tout amasser, le second choisir et arranger. L'historiographe tient plus de l'annaliste simple, et l'historien semble avoir un champ plus libre pour l'éloquence (Voltaire 1877-1885a, 19, 371-72).

Refusant l'attitude des simples rédacteurs d'Annales, il demande donc aux historiens une certaine liberté de choisir et d'arranger. L'histoire est aussi pour lui une discipline dans laquelle peuvent se manifester des compétences rhétoriques et littéraires. Pour cela, il est nécessaire que les historiens fassent preuve d'esprit critique et philosophique :

Si on voulait faire usage de sa raison au lieu de sa mémoire, et examiner plus que transcrire, on ne multiplierait pas à l'infini les livres et les erreurs ; il faudrait n'écrire que des choses neuves et vraies. Ce qui manque d'ordinaire à ceux qui compilent l'histoire, c'est l'esprit philosophique : la plupart, au lieu de discuter des faits avec des hommes, font des contes à des enfants (Voltaire 1957a, 43).

Il réfute dans ce passage l'autorité des anciens en demandant comment « un homme de bon sens, né dans le XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle », « dans ce siècle éclairé » peut croire aux « fables » d'Hérodote et à celles de l'Antiquité de façon générale. Pour cette raison, il critique Charles Rollin, qui avait compilé ces fables anciennes sans esprit critique. Il propose donc de « discuter des faits avec des hommes » et de se consacrer à l'histoire moderne (Voltaire 1957a, 43). Dans son ouvrage intitulé *Nouvelles considérations sur l'histoire*, il précisera donc les bases d'un nouveau champ historique. Tout d'abord, il attend dans « la manière d'écrire de l'histoire ce qui est arrivé dans la physique » (Voltaire 1957b, 46). Pour lui, il devrait être possible de faire de l'histoire une science analogue à celle de Newton, en ramenant les faits aux lois. Au lieu de ramasser et de rassembler le fatras des événements particuliers, Voltaire cherche à « connaître le genre humain dans ce détail intéressant qui fait aujourd'hui la base de la philosophie naturelle ». Pour lui, « l'objet est l'histoire de l'esprit humain, et non pas le détail des faits presque toujours défigurés » (Voltaire 1957b, 46). Il élargit donc considérablement les horizons de l'histoire. À cette « connaissance d'une utilité plus sensible et durable » (Voltaire 1957b, 47), qui n'est plus « une faible partie de l'histoire des rois et des cours », correspond un ensemble constitué par les facteurs économiques et sociaux, les arts, ainsi que par le « changement dans les mœurs et dans les lois ». <sup>2</sup> Il faut « incorporer avec art ces connaissances utiles dans le tissu des événements » (Voltaire 1957b, 48). Voltaire appliquera ce principe notamment dans son *Siècle de Louis XIV*, qu'il présente comme « l'histoire de l'esprit humain, puisée dans le siècle le plus glorieux à l'esprit humain » (Voltaire 1957c, 605), et surtout dans *l'Essai sur les mœurs et l'esprit des nations* :

On a donc bien moins songé à recueillir une multitude énorme de faits qui s'effacent tous les uns par les autres, qu'à rassembler les principaux et les plus avérés qui puissent servir à guider le lecteur, et à le faire juger par lui-même de l'extinction, de la renaissance et des progrès de l'esprit humain, à lui faire reconnaître les peuples par les usages mêmes de ces peuples (Voltaire 1756).

<sup>2</sup> Voltaire énumère longuement les exemples de ces connaissances nouvelles : « Je voudrais apprendre quelles étaient les forces d'un pays avant une guerre, et si cette guerre les a augmentées ou diminuées. L'Espagne a-t-elle été plus riche, avant la conquête du monde, qu'aujourd'hui ? De combien était-elle plus peuplée du temps de Charles-Quint, que sous Philippe IV ? Pourquoi Amsterdam contenait-elle à peine vingt mille âmes il y a deux cents ans ? [...] Il [l'historien] cherchera quel a été le vice radical et la vertu dominante d'une nation ? [...] Il voudra savoir, comment les arts, les manufactures se sont établies ; il suivra leur passage et leur retour d'un pays dans un autre. Les changements dans les mœurs et dans les lois seront enfin son grand objet » (Voltaire 1957b, 47-48).

En résumé, l'intention de Voltaire est donc de fonder une étude de l'histoire utile et susceptible de contribuer au progrès de l'humanité. De plus, le contenu même de ses récits doit fournir la preuve des progrès de l'esprit humain. Néanmoins, au-delà de son intention initiale, la mise en œuvre de ce principe dans ses récits historiques pose beaucoup de questions. Tout d'abord, cette forte ambition de créer une nouvelle histoire en mesure de démontrer le progrès se heurte en elle-même au désir de raconter l'histoire de façon scientifique et objective. Ainsi, Myrtille Méricam-Bourdet (2008) montre bien comment Voltaire défigure ses sources dans ses récits historiques ; malgré l'insertion de nouvelles disciplines du savoir, par exemple l'« économie-politique », ses récits sacrifient souvent l'exactitude et négligent les détails des données historiques. De plus, puisque Voltaire s'intéresse surtout à l'actualité contemporaine, ses écrits sont inévitablement mobilisés par « une tentative de réponse à des débats qui intéressent globalement la sphère politique » : pour convaincre ses lecteurs, ou plutôt pour écraser ses adversaires, l'écriture de Voltaire devient forcément très polémique. « Il n'est alors pas certain que l'objectivité et la vérité historiques en sortent indemnes dans ses œuvres historiques » (Méricam-Bourdet 2008, 434). Pour cette raison, la spécialiste affirme qu'« une telle hypothèse nous invite dans tous les cas à revenir sur l'étude des perméabilités entre les grands genres, qu'il s'agisse du conte philosophique, de l'essai, du traité, ou du pamphlet, afin de réexaminer les différents types de discursivité au sein de l'histoire » (Méricam-Bourdet 2008, 445).

Notons pourtant que Voltaire n'a pas une vision systématique de l'histoire comme celle des historiens du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle (Augustin Thierry surtout, Jules Michelet à ses débuts) qui pensaient que chaque étape historique, chaque événement, pouvait entrer dans un système, comme si tout avait une finalité. Voltaire ne construit pas de système pour expliquer l'histoire, mais il croit à l'évolution globale de l'humanité. Sa vision téléologique est celle d'une inéluctable progression vers un bien-être moral et matériel, combat dont le terme n'est pas fixé, et qui comporte également des phases de régression. Il est donc préférable, pour faire la différence, d'utiliser l'expression « sens de l'évolution » plutôt que « sens de l'histoire », qui fait trop référence à ces systèmes de pensée du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle (Castagnès 2019, 269-70).

#### La Corée dans les œuvres de Voltaire : résultats de recherche

Dans notre enquête, nous avons utilisé deux bases de données : *Tout Voltaire*, pour analyser l'ensemble des œuvres de l'écrivain, et *Electronic Enlightenment*, de l'Université d'Oxford, pour consulter toute sa correspondance. Dans les résultats de recherche, au total, treize occurrences du mot-clé « Corée » ont été trouvées : huit dans l'*Essai sur les mœurs*, deux dans *L'Orphelin de la Chine*, une dans l'*Histoire de l'empire de Russie sous Pierre le Grand* (1759), une dans *La Défense de mon oncle* (1767), une dans la publication des carnets de notes manuscrits. Le mot-clé « coréens » apparaît une fois dans *L'Orphelin de la Chine* ; au singulier, « coréen » est mentionné sept fois en tout, cinq dans *L'Orphelin de la*

*Chine*, une dans la *Relation du bannissement des Jésuites de la Chine* (1768) et une dans la *Question sur l'Encyclopédie* (1770-1772). En revanche, aucune occurrence dans la correspondance. Parmi les ouvrages cités, *L'Orphelin de la Chine* est une pièce de théâtre qui passe pour refléter l'imagination de Voltaire ; les autres occurrences sur la Corée sont principalement au service de son point de vue sur l'histoire et la civilisation mondiales. Nous allons donc examiner la manière dont la Corée est présentée dans ces textes.

#### La Corée dans les récits historiques et philosophiques de Voltaire

*L'Histoire de l'empire de Russie* est considérée comme la première histoire moderne écrite à partir de l'examen critique de documents sur Pierre le Grand. La Corée y est mentionnée très brièvement dans le chapitre qui illustre le commerce avec la Chine : « Ils [les envoyés russes] y sont logés dans une vaste maison que l'empereur Cam-hi avait assignée autrefois aux envoyés de la Corée » (Voltaire 1957d, 570).

La *Relation du bannissement des Jésuites de la Chine* est un dialogue philosophique entre un jésuite et l'empereur de Chine ; la Corée n'y est mentionnée qu'en tant que nation impie :

FRÈRE RIGOLET. Auguste souverain des quinze provinces anciennes de la Chine et des quarante-deux provinces tartares, ma religion est la seule véritable, comme me l'a dit mon préfet le frère Bouvet, qui le tenait de sa nourrice. Les Chinois, les Japonais, les Coréens, les Tartares, les Indiens, les Persans, les Turcs, les Arabes, les Africains, et les Américains, seront tous damnés. On ne peut plaire à Dieu que dans une partie de l'Europe, et ma secte s'appelle la religion catholique, ce qui veut dire universelle (Voltaire 1877-1885b, 4).

Dans les *Questions sur l'Encyclopédie, par des amateurs* (1770-1772) et dans le *Dictionnaire philosophique* qui les précède, les Coréens (à l'article Enfer) sont présentés comme un peuple qui ne conçoit pas le monde « souterrain ». Il me semble à ce propos, comme en ce qui concerne les Japonais et les Chinois, que Voltaire limite dans cette œuvre la religion des Coréens au confucianisme :

ENFER – *Inferum*, souterrain : les peuples qui enterraient les morts les mirent dans le souterrain ; leur âme y était donc avec eux. Telle est la première physique et la première métaphysique des Égyptiens et des Grecs. Les Indiens, beaucoup plus anciens, qui avaient inventé le dogme ingénieux de la métempsycose, ne crurent jamais que les âmes fussent dans le souterrain. Les Japonais, les Coréens, les Chinois, les peuples de la vaste Tartarie orientale et occidentale, ne surent pas un mot de la philosophie du souterrain (Voltaire 1877-1885a, 18, 540).

Dans *l'Essai sur les mœurs et l'esprit des nations et sur les principaux faits de l'histoire depuis Charlemagne jusqu'à Louis XIII*, les allusions à la Corée sont plus nombreuses. Cet ouvrage – en préparation à partir de 1741, révisé pendant de nombreuses années et finalement publié en édition définitive en 1778 – est considéré comme l'aboutissement de la pensée de Voltaire sur l'histoire de

l'humanité. Dans la préface, l'auteur critique sévèrement la vision chrétienne, européocentrique, de Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet telle qu'elle apparaît dans le *Discours sur l'histoire universelle* (1681). Le premier chapitre de l'*Essai* est consacré à une présentation de la Chine (« De la Chine, de son antiquité, de ses forces, de ses lois, de ses usages, de ses sciences »), signe représentatif d'une nouvelle approche de l'histoire universelle de toute l'humanité, qui se distingue de l'histoire centrée sur l'Europe et le christianisme décrite par Bossuet. Quant à la Corée, elle est mentionnée dès la préface :

L'empire de la Chine dès lors était plus vaste que celui de Charlemagne, surtout en y comprenant la Corée et le Tonkin, provinces alors tributaires des Chinois. Environ trente degrés en longitude et vingt-quatre en latitude forment son étendue. Nous avons remarqué que le corps de cet État subsiste avec splendeur depuis plus de quatre mille ans, sans que les lois, les mœurs, le langage, la manière de s'habiller, aient souffert d'altération sensible. [...] Puis donc que l'empereur *Hiao*, qui vivait incontestablement plus de deux mille quatre cents ans avant notre ère, conquiert tout le pays de la Corée, il est indubitable que son peuple était de l'antiquité la plus reculée (Voltaire 1963, I : 206-208).

Voltaire reprend exactement ce passage sur l'histoire de la conquête de la Corée par Hiao (堯)<sup>3</sup> lorsqu'il rédige en 1767 *La Défense de mon oncle* (Voltaire, 1877-1885c, 390). Ainsi, présente-t-il les nations coréenne et chinoise comme étant les plus anciennes de l'humanité. La Corée est à nouveau évoquée dans le chapitre 60 de l'*Essai sur les mœurs*, intitulé « De l'Orient, et de Gengis-Kan », qui explique la conquête de Gengis Khan. L'expression « l'extrémité orientale de notre globe » montre bien que pour Voltaire la Corée est un pays particulièrement lointain :

Bientôt maître de tous les pays qui sont entre le fleuve Volga et la muraille de la Chine, il attaqua enfin cet ancien empire qu'on appelait alors le Catai. Il prit Cambalu, capitale du Catai septentrional. C'est la même ville que nous nommons aujourd'hui Pékin. Maître de la moitié de la Chine, il soumit jusqu'au fond de la Corée. L'imagination des hommes oisifs, qui s'épuise en fictions romanesques, n'oserait pas imaginer qu'un prince partit du fond de la Corée, qui est l'extrémité orientale de notre globe, pour porter la guerre en Perse et aux Indes. C'est ce qu'exécuta Gengis (Voltaire 1963, I : 607-608).

Dans le même contexte, au chapitre 88 intitulé « De Tamerlan », est mentionnée la conquête de la Chine et de la Corée par les Mongols (Voltaire 1963, I : 807). Voltaire parle encore de la Corée au chapitre 142 intitulé « Du Japon », où il présente sa conception de l'« histoire universelle » :

Je ne sais pourquoi on a appelé les Japonais *nos antipodes en morale* ; il n'y a point de pareils antipodes parmi les peuples qui cultivent leur raison. La religion la plus autorisée au Japon admet des récompenses et des peines après la mort. Leurs

<sup>3</sup> C'est moi qui ajoute entre parenthèses les caractères chinois.

principaux commandements [...] sont précisément les nôtres. Le mensonge, l'incontinence, le larcin, le meurtre, sont également défendus ; c'est la loi naturelle réduite en préceptes positifs. [...] Si leurs usages sont différents des nôtres, tous ceux des nations orientales le sont aussi depuis les Dardanelles jusqu'au fond de la Corée. Comme le fondement de la morale est le même chez toutes les nations, il y a aussi des usages de la vie civile qu'on trouve établis dans toute la terre. On se visite, par exemple, au Japon, le premier jour de l'année, on se fait des présents comme dans notre Europe. Les parents et les amis se rassemblent dans les jours de fête (Voltaire 1963, II : 312-13).

Pour un représentant de la philosophie des Lumières tel que notre auteur, les expressions « histoire universelle » et « histoire mondiale » concernent principalement l'histoire des peuples qui cultivent la raison. Pour lui, le désir de progrès moral et matériel est pratiquement consubstantiel à l'homme. Les mœurs sont donc basées sur les impératifs d'une morale naturelle qui est universelle. Mais pourquoi Voltaire n'essaye-t-il pas d'intégrer la Corée dans son plan de l'histoire mondiale ? Au lieu de la traiter dans un chapitre à part entière, pourquoi mentionne-t-il seulement la Corée comme un pays ancien au bout du monde ? Vers la fin de l'ouvrage, dans le chapitre 196 intitulé « Du Japon au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, et de l'extinction de la religion chrétienne en ce pays », Voltaire, en énumérant les pays qu'il n'a pas traités, avoue ainsi :

Je ne parlerai point ici du royaume de Siam, qu'on nous représentait beaucoup plus vaste et plus opulent qu'il n'est ; on verra dans le *Siècle de Louis XIV* le peu qu'il est nécessaire d'en savoir. La Corée, la Cochinchine, le Tonkin, le Laos, Ava, Pégou, sont des pays dont on a peu de connaissance ; et dans ce prodigieux nombre d'îles répandues aux extrémités de l'Asie, il n'y a guère que celle de Java, où les Hollandais ont établi le centre de leur domination et de leur commerce, qui puisse entrer dans le plan de cette histoire générale (Voltaire 1963, II : 798).

L'écrivain se montre circonspect lorsqu'il traite de ce pays dans le plan d'ensemble de son histoire générale, les documents concernant la Corée n'étant pas suffisants. On retrouve cette même attitude de prudence dans son travail d'historien, comme il le révèle dans ses notes :

Plus je voudrais étendre mes connaissances dans l'histoire, plus je vois qu'il faut les borner. Un asiatique, un habitant du vaste païs de la Chine sait à peine que nous existons, et nôtre Europe est pour lui ce que la Corée et le nord du Japon sont pour nous (Voltaire 1968, 632).

#### La Corée dans le théâtre de Voltaire

En revanche, dans *L'Orphelin de la Chine*, Voltaire présente l'image de la Corée avec une certaine audace littéraire. La pièce est interprétée la première fois aux Délices, la propriété de l'écrivain située aux alentours de Genève. Elle est jouée ensuite officiellement le 20 août 1755 à Paris. C'est la première tragédie française qui met en scène des personnages extrême-orientaux. Voltaire a pris

le modèle de cette pièce dans le drame chinois *Tchao-Chi-Cou-Cuth* (趙氏孤兒, ou *L'Orphelin de la maison Tchao*). La traduction de ce drame a été insérée par le père jésuite Jean-Baptiste Du Halde (1674-1743) dans sa *Description de l'Empire de la Chine* (Du Halde 1735, III : 339-66). Dans sa lettre dédicatoire au duc de Richelieu, Voltaire précise quel est le but de la pièce :

L'idée de cette tragédie me vint, il y a quelque temps, à la lecture de *l'Orphelin de Tchao*, tragédie chinoise traduite par le P[ère] Prémare, qu'on trouve dans le recueil que le P[ère] du Halde a donné au public. Cette pièce chinoise fut composée au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle, sous la dynastie même de Gengis-kan : c'est une nouvelle preuve que les vainqueurs tartares ne changèrent point les mœurs de la nation vaincue ; ils protégèrent tous les arts établis à la Chine : ils adoptèrent toutes ses lois. Voilà un grand exemple de la supériorité naturelle que donnent la raison et le génie sur la force aveugle et barbare ; et les Tartares ont deux fois donné cet exemple, car lorsqu'ils ont conquis encore ce grand empire, au commencement du siècle passé, ils se sont soumis une seconde fois à la sagesse des vaincus ; et les deux peuples n'ont formé qu'une nation, gouvernée par les plus anciennes lois du monde : événement frappant, qui a été le premier but de mon ouvrage (Voltaire 1877-1885d, 295-96).

Voltaire a voulu décrire dans cette pièce la victoire spirituelle de la nation vaincue – mais civilisée – sur le conquérant barbare. Il a conçu ce drame pour démontrer la supériorité de la raison, le triomphe de la civilisation sur la barbarie. C'est en fait l'un des plus importants principes de Voltaire historien. Pour l'illustrer, il recourt à des événements historiques : la conquête chinoise de la Mongolie en 1273 et la conquête chinoise des Mandchous en 1644. En somme, ce qu'il veut montrer, c'est que les Mongols et les Mandchous ont certes conquis la Chine, un pays plus civilisé, mais qu'ils ont fini par être assimilés à la culture supérieure chinoise. La pensée sur la civilisation de Voltaire et sa sympathie pour la Chine, pour la civilisation chinoise, sont bien représentées.

Les Coréens apparaissent dans l'intrigue de la pièce, mais ils sont physiquement absents de la scène et de l'action, même si l'on parle d'eux à plusieurs reprises. Pendant une grande partie de la tragédie, les deux personnages chinois, Idamé et Zamti, attendent les Coréens car ils doivent soutenir la dynastie chinoise des Song – qui représente la civilisation – alors menacée par Gengis Khan, qui incarne la barbarie. Les Coréens, quant à eux, n'ont d'existence que dans le discours. Bien qu'ils soient absents de la scène, Voltaire leur donne le rôle des sauveurs, car ils s'opposent aux Mongols destructeurs et cruels. Dans cette pièce, Voltaire présente les Coréens comme loyaux, généreux et courageux. Le chef de la Corée est ainsi un prince jugé insolent par le chef mongol :

ASSÉLI – Les Coréens, dit-on, rassemblaient une armée ; / Mais nous ne savons rien que par la renommée, / Et tout nous abandonne aux mains des destructeurs.

GENGIS – Allez, au pied des murs hâtez-vous de vous rendre ; / L'insolent Coréen ne pourra nous surprendre ; / Ils ont proclamé roi cet enfant malheureux, / Et, sa tête à la main, je marcherai contre eux.

ZAMTI – Cependant l’orphelin n’attend que le trépas ; / Mes soins l’ont enfermé dans ces asiles sombres / Où des rois ses aïeux on révère les ombres ; / La mort, si nous tardons, l’y dévore avec eux. / En vain des Coréens le prince généreux / Attend ce cher dépôt que lui promet mon zèle (Voltaire 1877-1885d, respectivement acte I, sc. 1, 303-304 ; acte IV, sc. 1, 335 ; acte IV, sc. 6, 343).

Le dénouement de cette pièce montre bien l’intention de Voltaire annoncée dans la lettre dédicatoire. Le héros Gengis Khan tombe sous l’influence de la culture chinoise, représentée par les mandarins Zamti et Idamé. Finalement le vainqueur est vaincu par la morale des Chinois et par la leçon de leur civilisation :

GENGIS – Tous deux je vous admire, et vous m’avez vaincu. / [...] Je fus un conquérant, vous m’avez fait un roi. / (*À Zamti.*) / Soyez ici des lois l’interprète suprême ; / Rendez leur ministère aussi saint que vous-même ; / Enseignez la raison, la justice, et les mœurs. / Que les peuples vaincus gouvernent les vainqueurs, / Que la sagesse règne, et préside au courage ; / Triomphez de la force, elle vous doit hommage : / J’en donnerai l’exemple, et votre souverain / Se soumet à vos lois les armes à la main (Voltaire 1877-1885d, acte V, sc. 6, 355-56).

On peut se demander comment Voltaire a conçu cette image de la Corée. Dans sa pièce, on voit des éléments qui relèvent de la vraisemblance : cela voudrait-il dire qu’il y a une vérité théâtrale ? Ou bien cette pièce n’est-elle qu’une pure « fable », comme il le dit dans sa lettre à Charles Augustin de Ferriol, comte d’Argental, le 19 août 1753 : « c’est la rêverie d’un vieux fou » (Voltaire 1753)?

Quelles sont les sources documentaires de Voltaire ?

Jang Jae-Yong, chercheur-bibliothécaire qui étudie le fonds sur l’Orient de l’Université de Berkeley, a recensé dans la base de données *WorldCat* les livres occidentaux antérieurs au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle mentionnant la Corée. Il a trouvé huit documents, mais dans sept d’entre eux – récits et relations de missionnaires jésuites italiens, portugais et espagnols – les références à la Corée sont très brèves et limitées.<sup>4</sup>

Pour avoir des renseignements plus précis il faut attendre le marchand hollandais Hendrik Hamel, qui fait naufrage en 1653 sur la côte sud de l’île méridionale de Jeju (alors nommé *Quelpaert* par les navigateurs occidentaux) ; retenu d’abord en Corée, il parvient à s’évader en 1666 en direction du Japon. Il a donc

<sup>4</sup> Ce sont les documents suivants : *História do Japão* (manuscrit, 1593-1597 ?), par le jésuite portugais Luis Fróis ; *Historia de las misiones* (1601), par le jésuite espagnol Luis de Guzman ; *De Christiana expeditione apud Sinas suscepta ab Societate Iesu* (1615), par les jésuites italiens Matteo Ricci et Nicolas Trigault ; *História da Igreja do Japão* (1620 ?), par le jésuite portugais João Rodrigues ; *Relação da propagação de fé no reyno da China e outros adjacentes* (manuscrit, 1641 ? ou 1637 ?), par le jésuite portugais Alvaro Semedo ; *De bello Tartarico historia* (1654), par le jésuite italien Martino Martini ; *Historia de la conquista de la China por el Tartaro* (1654), par le vice-roi de Nouvelle Espagne, Juan de Palafox y Mendoza (voir Jang 2016, 42-60).

vécu treize ans en Corée. En 1668, à Rotterdam, il publie le premier ouvrage occidental sur la Corée, qui connaît un succès immédiat et qui sera réédité à plusieurs reprises. En France, en 1670, paraît une traduction sous le titre *Relation du naufrage d'un vaisseau hollandois, Sur la Coste de l'Isle de Quelpaert : Avec la description du Royaume de Corée : Traduite du Flamand, par Monsieur Minutoli*. Cette représentation de la Corée proposée par Hamel est donc à la fois nouvelle, précise et surtout très largement diffusée. Notons cependant que Hamel y décrit la Corée sous un jour assez négatif.

En 1735 paraît la *Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique et physique de l'empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie chinoise* en quatre tomes par Jean-Baptiste Du Halde, jésuite du collège Louis-le-Grand. Composé à partir des *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*, documents produits par des missionnaires jésuites du monde entier (1703-1776), ainsi que de nombreux rapports inédits, et contenant des traductions de textes chinois, l'ouvrage a un impact considérable sur la société européenne du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Les philosophes des Lumières y puisent de quoi nourrir leurs réflexions et leurs controverses sur les religions, la civilisation et les mœurs. Pour les géographes, c'est la première « carte fiable et précise » de la Corée. Elle est accompagnée de quarante-deux cartes des provinces chinoises, par Jean-Baptiste Bourguignon d'Anville (1697-1782). La partie concernant la Corée (*Observations géographiques sur le Royaume de Corée, tirées des mémoires du Père Régis et Histoire abrégée de la Corée*, qui contient une carte du pays), compilée par le jésuite Jean-Baptiste Régis à partir de sources chinoises, se trouve dans le quatrième tome et comprend vingt-sept pages (Du Halde 1735, IV : 423-51). Régis décrit la Corée dans une optique favorable.

L'abbé Prévost (1697-1763), dans son *Histoire générale des voyages* en quinze tomes (1746-1759), introduit des références relatives à la Corée dans le tome VI (1748), où il traduit et « réduit » les ouvrages des deux auteurs mentionnés ci-dessus, Hendrik Hamel et Jean-Baptiste Régis. On peut donc dire qu'il s'agit d'une synthèse des connaissances sur la Corée d'alors. Cette double présentation a le mérite d'accueillir d'une part les travaux savants d'un missionnaire bien renseigné par de multiples sources chinoises et d'autre part le témoignage d'un marchand, en nous proposant de les comparer :

Nos Mémoires sont fort stériles sur la Corée. [...] On trouve à la vérité une Relation de quelques Hollandois, qui y firent voile, dit-on, d'une Isle nommé *Quelpaert*, & qui passerent quelque-tems dans les terres. Mais c'est au Lecteur à juger de la confiance qu'il doit prendre à leur témoignage, après l'avoir comparé avec les Observations dont leur récit sera précédé. Elles sont du Pere Regis, un des Missionnaires qui furent employés à dresser la Carte de la Chine, & le Pere du Halde en a publié l'Extrait (Prévost 1746-1754, VI : 500-501).

Voltaire était un grand amateur de livres. Le 30 mai 1778, à sa mort, son amie et admiratrice Catherine II de Russie acheta tous les livres, les lettres et les manuscrits présents dans la maison de Ferney où l'écrivain avait passé les dernières années de sa vie. Actuellement, grâce aux 6814 livres conservés au musée de l'Ermitage à Saint-Pétersbourg, on est en mesure de connaître quelles

étaient les lectures de Voltaire à l'époque. À partir de ces données, Basil Guy, qui a publié une édition moderne de *L'Orphelin de la Chine*, indique les sources possibles sur la Chine, pour *L'Orphelin* ainsi que pour *l'Essai sur les mœurs* (Guy 2009). Il s'agit essentiellement des *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses* citées plus haut, de *L'Empire de la Chine* de Jean-Baptiste Du Halde, de *l'Histoire de Gentchiscan* du jésuite Antoine Gaubil (1739), de *l'Histoire générale des voyages* de l'abbé Prévost et de *l'Esprit des lois* de Montesquieu. Comme nous l'avons vu, dans la lettre dédicatoire de *L'Orphelin de la Chine* Voltaire avait d'ailleurs déclaré avoir lu l'œuvre de Du Halde.

Comment Régis présente-t-il la Corée et les Coréens ?

Fidèle à la tradition des jésuites qui « flattent la nation chinoise » (Landry-Deron 2002, 12), Régis présente également les Coréens d'une façon très favorable :

Il faut maintenant donner quelque connoissance des peuples de la Corée : ils sont d'ordinaire bien faits, d'un naturel doux & traittable : ils aiment les sciences, & savent les Lettres Chinoises : ils sont adonnez à la Musique & à la Danse. [...] Quoique les révolutions fatales à tous les Etats, ayent un peu alteré cette première innocence, ils en conservent encore assez pour servir de modèle aux autres Nations (Du Halde 1735, IV : 448).

Le père jésuite affirme que la Corée est un très vieux royaume placé sous la domination chinoise depuis le temps de *Yau* (堯) ; c'est en le lisant que Voltaire acquiert la conviction que l'histoire de la Corée remonte aux origines de la Chine :

La Corée est un Royaume très-ancien, comme il est aisé de le montrer par les annales, & les plus anciens Livres de la Chine. [...] Les Peuples de la Corée furent soumis aux Chinois depuis *Yao*, qui commença à regner 2357. ans avant l'Ere Chrétienne (Du Halde 1735, IV : 426, 432).

On trouve également le thème des Coréens courageux :

Il sort de plus grands hommes des Province du Nord que de celles du Midi. Les peuples du Nord ont de l'inclination pour les armes, & deviennent d'excellens Soldats<sup>5</sup> (Du Halde 1735, IV : 448).

Régis estime que c'est avec la dynastie de *Tchao ssien* (朝鮮) et le « sage » prince chinois *Ki tse* (箕子) que commence la véritable histoire de la Corée, conformément à l'opinion des historiens chinois. Il y a donc une affinité culturelle entre la Corée et la Chine :

<sup>5</sup> Ce passage est cité par Montesquieu dans *l'Esprit des Lois*, à l'appui de sa théorie du climat en relation avec le courage des peuples : « Les peuples du nord de la Chine [en note : Le P. du Halde, tome I, pag. 112] sont plus courageux que ceux du midi ; les peuples du midi de la Corée [en note : Les livres Chinois le disent ainsi, *Ibid.*, tom. IV, p. 448] ne le sont pas tant que ceux du nord » (Montesquieu 1995, 517).

Mais on sçait si peu de choses de leur histoire avant la Dynastie des *Tcheou* (周), que les Historiens Chinois ont raison de commencer l'établissement de cette Monarchie par *Ki tse* (箕子) [...]. *Ki tse*, ce Prince si sage de la Dynastie des *Chang* (商), est regardé comme le fondateur du Royaume de *Tchaossien* (朝鮮). Ses avis salutaires & pleins de liberté, lui attirèrent l'indignation de *Tcheou* (紂) son neveu qui étoit Empereur de la Chine. Ce Tyran, loin de suivre de sages conseils qui l'auroient sauvé lui & l'Etat, le condamna à une étroite prison, où il fut détenu jusqu'à ce qu'il en fût tiré par *Vou vang* (武王), qui fit perdre à *Tcheou* (紂) & la Couronne & la vie, & fonda la Dynastie des *Tcheou* (周) l'an 1122. avant le commencement de l'Ere Chrétienne. *Ki tse* ne fut pas plutôt élargi, qu'il songea à se soustraire à la domination de celui qui avoit ôté l'Empire à sa Famille. Il ne trouva pas de lieu plus propre à son dessein que le *Tchao ssien* où il s'établit. *Vou vang*, loin de désapprouver le parti qu'il prenoit, le fit Souverain du Pays, pour délivrer du chagrin qu'il auroit eu de se soumettre aux *Tcheou* (Du Halde 1735, IV : 432-33).

Il est donc raisonnable de suggérer que, lors de la conception de *l'Orphelin de la Chine*, Voltaire s'est référé principalement aux travaux de Régis. La pièce présente les Coréens comme les sauveurs de la civilisation chinoise, en opposition aux Mongols destructeurs et barbares. Ce qui est très intéressant, c'est de constater qu'Hendrick Hamel dénonce, au contraire, la couardise des Coréens :

Ils [les Coréens] sont d'un naturel efféminé, sans aucune marque de courage. [...] Loin d'avoir honte de leur lâcheté, ils déplorent la condition de ceux qui sont obligés de combattre (Prévost 1746-1754, VI : 535-36).

Nous pouvons en conclure que Voltaire a puisé l'image des Coréens courageux dans la lecture du père Régis. De plus, dans *l'Histoire abrégée de la Corée*, le jésuite insiste sur la ténacité des Coréens qui luttent contre les invasions des pays étrangers, depuis la période de Hiao et ce jusqu'au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Pour Voltaire, les informations fournies par le savant jésuite sont donc plus crédibles que le récit d'un simple marchand hollandais. En réalité, sa confiance dans les documents des jésuites se manifeste à plusieurs reprises dans son œuvre.

Nous nous proposons maintenant d'aborder les procédés de l'écriture historico-philosophique et de l'écriture dramatique de Voltaire, et nous tenterons de comprendre comment l'écrivain conçoit ces deux genres. Commençons tout d'abord par examiner la distinction qu'il opère entre l'opéra et la tragédie :

L'opéra aime le merveilleux. On est là dans le pays des métamorphoses d'Ovide. La tragédie est le pays de l'histoire, ou du moins de tout ce qui ressemble à l'histoire par la vraisemblance des faits et par la vérité des mœurs (Voltaire 1877-1885e, 348).

Cette distinction entre l'opéra, domaine du merveilleux, et la tragédie, domaine de l'histoire, nous montre clairement comment Voltaire conçoit le théâtre : c'est par le critère de la vraisemblance et de la vérité des mœurs que la tragédie peut appartenir à l'histoire, avec laquelle elle entretient de fortes affinités.

Comme nous l'avons déjà remarqué, l'écriture historique de Voltaire ne s'attache pas aux détails comme le font les simples annalistes.<sup>6</sup> Pour lui, l'histoire est une discipline dans laquelle peuvent se manifester des compétences rhétoriques et littéraires. Dans cette optique, il insiste sur le fait que la vraisemblance vaut la vérité dans les récits historiques :

Presque rien de ce que les Occidentaux ont écrit sur les peuples de l'Orient avant les derniers siècles, ne nous paraissait vraisemblable et nous savions combien en fait d'histoire tout ce qui est contre la vraisemblance est presque toujours contre la vérité (Voltaire 1754).

Pierre Force a signalé l'importance du critère de vraisemblance dans les récits historiques de Voltaire, mais il ne s'agit pas là d'un critère esthétique : c'est une catégorie critique, et c'est ce qui permet de distinguer entre « faits vrais » et « faits faux » (Force 2014, 63). Ce principe nous aide à comprendre la fameuse distinction voltairienne entre la fable et l'histoire : « L'histoire est le récit des faits donnés pour vrais, au contraire de la fable, qui est récit des faits donnés pour faux » (Voltaire 1877-1885a, 19, 347). Ainsi, « il faut distinguer soigneusement la fable de l'histoire » et « il faut aussi discerner entre la raison et la chimère » (Voltaire 1877-1885g, 29, 280). Pierre Force nous montre que chez Voltaire et ses contemporains, « le jugement critique de l'historien ne porte pas sur l'établissement d'une "réalité historique" (concept étranger à la pensée du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle). Il consiste simplement à établir qu'un récit est préférable à un autre récit » (Force 2014, 61).

À travers l'analyse des documents consultés par Voltaire sur la Corée, nous pouvons constater que son écriture historique se fonde sur ces principes. Pour exprimer ses idées il cherche, parmi les divers récits historico-philosophiques, le mode d'expression qui lui convient le mieux. En ce qui concerne le théâtre, il a exposé sa propre conception de la vérité théâtrale, à savoir la vraisemblance :

J'avoue que j'aime à voir dans un ouvrage dramatique les mœurs de l'antiquité, et à comparer les héros qu'on met sur le théâtre avec la conduite et le caractère que les historiens leur attribuent. Je ne demande pas qu'ils fassent sur la scène ce qu'ils ont réellement fait dans leur vie ; mais je me crois en droit d'exiger qu'ils ne fassent rien qui ne soit dans leurs mœurs : c'est là ce qu'on appelle la vérité théâtrale (Voltaire 1877-1885f, 178).

Voltaire écrit *L'Orphelin de la Chine* en suivant le même principe. À partir des données fournies par les historiens jésuites, il met en scène les principaux personnages de la tragédie : le conquérant mongol Gengis Khan, le mandarin lettré chinois Zamti et sa femme Idamé, et les Coréens qui ne paraissent pas sur scène. Chacun représente la conduite, le caractère et les mœurs de sa propre nation, mais l'auteur n'hésite pas à modifier les actions qui ont réellement caractérisé leurs vies pour construire son récit visant à démontrer la victoire de la

<sup>6</sup> « Tout y est vrai – écrit-il dans les *Remarques sur l'histoire* – aux petits détails près, dont il n'y a que les petits esprits qui se soucient beaucoup » (Voltaire 1957a, 44).

civilisation et de la raison contre la barbarie : selon Voltaire, il s'agit d'une vérité théâtrale mais aussi d'une vérité historique.

Ainsi, nous pouvons constater – avec prudence – que pour Voltaire le genre théâtral est un excellent moyen d'exprimer son idéal en tant qu'historien.

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# Un lungo viaggio di *Res publica*: distanze e incroci linguistici fra la «Repubblica fiorentina» e il Giappone moderno<sup>1</sup>

Nozomi Mitsumori

**Abstract:** Contact with Western civilisation generated an enormous amount of translation of Western writings in Japan in the second half of the 19th century. Society and culture of modern Japan were built on this great undertaking, but discrepancies between the source and target languages can create complex entanglements. It is certainly fascinating to pay attention to the very entanglements created in the process of moving from the original language to the language of translation. From this point of view, one of the most interesting examples, the subject of this essay, is the term *res publica*/republic and its Japanese translation *kyōwa*, due to their linguistic distances and intersections.

**Keywords:** *Res publica*, Translation, *Kyōwa*, 19th century, Japan

## Introduzione

Il contatto con la civiltà occidentale generò un'enorme quantità di traduzioni di scritti occidentali su tutti gli argomenti nel Giappone della seconda metà del XIX secolo, e la società e la cultura del Giappone moderno si svilupparono sulla base di questa grande impresa. Nel processo di traduzione i giapponesi hanno coniato molte parole per esprimere concetti e cose che non si trovavano nella loro cultura e nelle loro tradizioni, e non è esagerato dire che esse hanno cambiato la lingua giapponese stessa. Adesso sarebbe inconcepibile parlare il giapponese senza questi vocaboli, che definiscono anche la società e la cultura giapponese contemporanea. I giapponesi odierni li usano senza rendersi più conto delle radici di essi e del divario tra la lingua di partenza e quella di arrivo. Questo è un atteggiamento normale nella vita quotidiana, ma a volte può creare seri problemi quando si traducono le opere occidentali, specialmente quelle premoderne, soprattutto a livello accademico.

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Naturalmente, come è vero per tutte le lingue, non si può semplicemente assumere che solo perché la stessa parola esisteva in tempi antichi, medievali o moderni, essa mantenga lo stesso significato. È ovvio che le parole presenti nelle fonti storiche non possono essere separate dal loro contesto storico e trattate con lo stesso significato che hanno oggi, ed esso deve pertanto essere riferito a come era inteso al momento del loro uso. Eppure, quando si scrive di storia medievale occidentale in giapponese, bisogna notare che oltre ai cambiamenti dovuti al passare del tempo, le discrepanze tra la lingua di partenza e quella di arrivo possono creare intrecci ancora più complessi, e può risultare molto interessante prestare attenzione agli intrecci stessi che si determinano nel processo di passaggio dalla lingua originale a quella di traduzione. Per una persona come me, la cui madre lingua è il giapponese e che si occupa di storia medievale e rinascimentale di Firenze, «repubblica» è sicuramente una di quelle parole che, nel corso delle varie traduzioni, ha subito molti cambiamenti di significato e che vanno quindi trattate con estrema attenzione. È superfluo dire che sulla repubblica e sul repubblicanesimo è disponibile un'enorme quantità di studi in vari ambiti, e soprattutto hanno avuto un impatto internazionale le ricerche sul repubblicanesimo umanistico dell'Italia rinascimentale, condotte prima da Hans Baron, poi da John G. A. Pocock e Quentin Skinner della cosiddetta Scuola di Cambridge, anche se negli ultimi anni sono state ampiamente riconsiderate (Mineo 2009; Hankins 2010, 2019; Pedullà 2020). Tuttavia, non è mia intenzione entrare qui in una discussione sulla storia del pensiero politico. Mi limiterò invece a fare una piccola riflessione sulle distanze e sugli incroci linguistici tra *res publica* / repubblica, e la sua traduzione giapponese *kyōwa* 共和.

### *Res publica* - Repubblica

Com'è noto, la parola «repubblica» deriva dal latino *res publica* che significa letteralmente «cosa pubblica». È famosa la definizione ciceroniana secondo cui *res publica* è *res populi*, la «cosa del popolo» (Cic. *De Re Publica* 1.39). Ma *res publica* era un termine molto ambiguo, e il suo significato si trasformò durante la lunga età romana. Gli antichi Romani non definirono il concetto di *res publica*, e non è neanche chiaro quando comparve questa locuzione (Moatti 2017, 2018, 2020). Secondo Claudia Moatti, «*res publica* does not have a precise meaning, it was what the citizens made it, through common action or through conflict» (Moatti 2017, 34). Piuttosto, ciò che caratterizza *res publica* può essere la sua grandissima ambiguità (Moatti 2017, 35; 2020, 122). È quindi una parola difficile da tradurre nelle lingue moderne, e i diversi significati contenuti in *res publica* si perdono quando si traduce in «repubblica». D'altra parte, però, fu proprio questo atto di traduzione (compiuto da Leonardo Bruni, il celebre umanista e cancelliere fiorentino del XV secolo) che, come vedremo più avanti, diede un grande impulso alla trasformazione che avrebbe portato al suo significato moderno di *res publica*, forma costituzionale non-monarchica.

Naturalmente anche dopo l'antichità romana il termine *res publica* non fu completamente dimenticato. Sant'Agostino trasmise la definizione ciceronia-

na, citandola nel *De Civitate Dei* (2.21). Durante il medioevo, *res publica* appare negli scritti politici e giuridici nel senso di comunità politica o, in altre parole, di unità transpersonale dell'ordine politico (Canning 2005, 65-66, 173). Di per sé il termine non connotava alcuna forma specifica di costituzione, ma rappresentava un'entità astratta e perpetua distinta dal sovrano o dal governo e si usava anche per il regno (*res publica regni*) o per l'intera comunità cristiana (*res publica christiana*).

A partire dal Duecento, i giuristi attribuirono gradualmente a varie comunità la qualità di *res publica*, e alla fine del Trecento definivano comunemente con questo termine la città autonoma (*civitas superiorem non recognoscens*) (Mager 1991, 233-36); però, la libertà di una città dell'epoca presuppone l'alta sovranità dell'Impero e della Chiesa (Mineo 2009, 136), e come scrive Ronald G. Witt, «In the legal language of the day Florence like Milan and other Italian city-states was a *provincia* or *civitas* within the *respublica* of the Holy Roman Empire» (Witt 1983, 385).<sup>2</sup>

Tuttavia dagli ultimi decenni del Trecento, secondo Riccardo Fubini, Firenze «si sarebbe riorganizzata non più nell'ambito delle aggregazioni e rappresentanze sociali del Comune, ma nei termini di una più salda e unitaria struttura di potere, quale appunto confacente alla "repubblica" o, altrimenti detto, al pubblico organismo, romanisticamente inteso, del "populus Florentinus"» (Fubini 1996, 43). Fubini inoltre fa notare la rivendicazione di sovranità del Parlamento del 1378, cioè, «totalis, plenissima et integra auctoritas et potestas populi Florentini» e il suo intento di radicale riforma: «cum [...] necesse sit quasi totam rempublicam communis reformare [...] pro bono statu civitatis Florentie et totius reipublice», supponendo che l'espressione *respublica communis* dovrebbe essere ricalcata su *respublica regni* (Fubini 1994a, 65).

In concomitanza con questa trasformazione istituzionale verso la nuova formazione statale, denominata dagli storici «Stato territoriale», nella documentazione cittadina *res publica* cominciò a comparire sempre più frequentemente. La costruzione del sepolcro dedicato all'illustre condottiero Giovanni Acuto nel Duomo di Firenze fu deliberata per le sue «Gesta magnifica ac fidelia in honorem et magnificentiam reipublice florentine» (Poggi 1988, 123)<sup>3</sup> e Coluccio Salutati è definito «honorabilis et dignissimus» cancelliere, che «in negotiis Reipublice Florentine laboravit assidue» (Gherardi 1893, 129).<sup>4</sup> Inoltre, la prima rubrica dello statuto del 1409, sospeso probabilmente per la sua notevole audacia, dichiara che Giovanni da Montegranaro, giurista incaricato della redazione, «ad florentinam rem publicam singularem benevolentiam gerebat» (Tanzini 2004, 31).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. anche Fubini (2003b, 131).

<sup>3</sup> Cfr. Archivio di Stato di Firenze (ASF), *Provvisioni, Registri*, LXXXII, c. 212r (22 agosto 1393).

<sup>4</sup> L'espressione si trova in una deliberazione della Balìa, consiglio legislativo straordinario, del 24 novembre 1400.

<sup>5</sup> Cfr. ASF, *Statuti del comune di Firenze*, 23, c. 1r.

All'inizio del Quattrocento, secondo Fubini,

per quanto le ambasciate fossero formalmente in nome del Comune («pro communi Florentie»), miravano ora a rappresentare un potere più ampio, in termini legali arduo da definire, e che perciò veniva detto di volta in volta, se in rapporto a una definizione dei confini e della relativa sfera giurisdizionale, il «territorium communis Florentie»; oppure, se in rapporto alla sovranità pubblica, il «populus», o la «respublica», o il «dominium Florentinum»; o ancora, infine, se in rapporto alla continuità del potere interno, il «Florentinum regimen» (Fubini 1996, 60).<sup>6</sup>

*Res publica* è, insomma, uno dei termini storici che venivano utilizzati per definire lo Stato territoriale che stava emergendo in quell'epoca.

A partire dalla cancelleria di Salutati, poi del suo discepolo Bruni, la rivendicazione statale si riflette nelle corrispondenze diplomatiche di Firenze, dove appare *res publica* sempre più costantemente al posto del tradizionale *res communes*, al fine propagandistico di vantarsi della libertà fiorentina e di rivendicare la legittimazione della sovranità statale. Questa rivendicazione si esprime pienamente nelle *Historiae Florentini Populi* di Bruni, un'opera fondamentale per la storiografia umanistico-rinascimentale e per la prima storia ufficiale di Firenze. Celebrando le conquiste territoriali e la grandezza dello Stato fiorentino, le *Historiae* offrono una nuova immagine storica di Firenze, che emergeva allora come una grande potenza in Italia, e che si andava a sostituire alla vecchia immagine comunale e mercantile, rappresentata dalle cronache cittadine di Giovanni Villani e dei suoi continuatori trecenteschi (Fubini 2003a; 2003b; 2003c).<sup>7</sup>

Nell'opera, l'espressione *res publica* conta all'incirca ben duecentocinquanta occorrenze, ma con vari significati. James Hankins, che ha tradotto le *Historiae* in inglese, sceglie infatti diverse espressioni per la traduzione di *res publica*, come *commonwealth*, *government*, *public affairs*, *public good*, *regime*, *republic*, *state* ecc.<sup>8</sup> e osserva che «in Bruni's original works, *respublica* maintains its ancient and medieval meaning of "any legitimate form of government serving the common good," or more neutrally as simply "the state" or "affairs of state"» (Hankins 2010, 464). Bruni, nel complesso, non usa *res publica* nel senso moderno proprio di «repubblica», ma con questo termine indica i poteri politici non-monarchici. A parte il libro primo che tratta il periodo antico e quello medievale anteriore al 1250,<sup>9</sup> dove con *res publica* si intende l'Impero Romano, Bruni usa *res publica* solo in riferimento a città come Firenze, Pisa, Arezzo, ecc. – anche se non tro-

<sup>6</sup> Cfr anche Fubini (2009b, 46).

<sup>7</sup> Bruni dovrebbe aver scelto per il titolo *populus* nel senso con cui i Romani indicavano lo Stato.

<sup>8</sup> Cfr. Bruni (2001-2007). Per inciso nella *Nuova Cronica* di Giovanni Villani (vedi Villani 1990-1991), peraltro molto più voluminosa delle *Historiae*, *republica* o *repubblica* compare solo all'incirca venticinque volte e significa prevalentemente «bene comune».

<sup>9</sup> Secondo Bruni, questo è l'anno in cui Firenze fu affrancata dall'autorità imperiale per la morte dell'imperatore Federico II. Cfr. Fubini (2003c, 174; 2003d, 202).

viamo la locuzione *Respublica florentina* come definizione dello Stato fiorentino – e non la usa mai, per esempio, per riferirsi al regno di Napoli.

Tuttavia, il contributo principale di Bruni per portare il nuovo significato di *res publica* alle generazioni successive sta nel fatto che quando egli tradusse la *Politica* di Aristotele in latino nel 1438, scelse *res publica* per la traduzione di *πολιτεία*. Aristotele classifica sei forme di governo: le tre rette forme di governo di uno, di pochi, di molti, e le tre corrotte di governo di uno, di pochi, di molti (*Politica* 3.7). E qui *πολιτεία* è usata non solo nel senso della costituzione di governo in genere, ma anche nel senso del retto governo di molti, cioè il «buon governo popolare». La traduzione bruniana godette di una fortuna strepitosa e venne diffusa e consultata ampiamente per tutta l'Europa nella prima età moderna, sostituendo *res publica* a *politeia*, traslitterazione di *πολιτεία*, scelta nella traduzione medievale eseguita dal domenicano Guglielmo di Moerbeke nel 1268 e adottata anche negli scritti di Tommaso d'Aquino (Hankins 2010, 464).<sup>10</sup> Nell'antichità romana *πολιτεία* e *res publica* non erano in un rapporto di traduzione univoca (Moatti 2018, 65-67). Così, fu proprio da Bruni che per la prima volta *res publica* fu pienamente identificata con *πολιτεία* come il retto governo di molti di Aristotele (Hankins 2010, 465-466). Anche se la scelta di Bruni potrebbe essere prevalentemente linguistica, come si evince nel suo trattato sulla teoria della traduzione, *De interpretatione recta* (1420-1426),<sup>11</sup> egli orientò l'uso di *res publica* nel senso della forma di governo popolare, e poi dello Stato repubblicano proprio.

Ormai, nell'Italia del pieno Quattrocento, gli umanisti solevano usare *res publica* per indicare la costituzione non-monarchica nei loro scritti politici, e le città di vario livello si chiamavano comunemente *res publica* per autodefinizione (Mineo 2009, 163). Eppure, nelle relazioni diplomatiche, la comparsa di questo termine come denominazione di Stato è tardiva. Come sopra menzionato da Fubini, le ambasciate erano «formalmente in nome del Comune» e Firenze continuò ad essere chiamata a lungo con la terminologia medievale, *Commune Florentinae* o *Communitas Florentinae*, nei trattati diplomatici con cui i poteri statali italiani si riconoscevano e si legittimavano reciprocamente.<sup>12</sup> Anche nel

<sup>10</sup> Sulla traduzione di Guglielmo di Moerbeke, cfr. Mager (1991, 236-37); Hankins (2010, 460-63); Schütrumpf (2014, 9-25). Vedi anche Rubinstein (2004, 370). Una delle ragioni per cui il domenicano evitò *res publica* sarebbe «il fatto che nel *Corpus iuris civilis*, *res publica* significasse l'Impero».

<sup>11</sup> Vedi Hankins (2010, 465-66); Schütrumpf (2014: 28-64). Bruni critica aspramente Guglielmo di Moerbeke, affermando che «[...] niente è detto in greco che non possa dirsi in latino [...] lasciare in greco parole di cui abbiamo ottimi vocaboli corrispondenti è segno di grandissima ignoranza. Perché, ad esempio, 'politia' me la lasci in greco [πολιτεία], mentre con parola latina potresti e dovresti dire 'res publica'?» La traduzione è in Bruni (2004, 121); vedi anche 208-11. Tuttavia, non c'è affatto da stupirsi se quando tradusse la *Politica* egli avesse in mente il reale governo della Firenze del tempo, osservato come cancelliere. Andrea Gamberini vede l'intento politico di Bruni nella scelta delle parole per la sua traduzione (Gamberini 2018).

<sup>12</sup> Di questo si trovano vari esempi, come nel *Codex Italiae diplomaticus* di Johann Christian Lünig, vol. 3 (vedi Lünig 1732).

testo della famosa Lega italica del 1454-55 Firenze rimane *Communitas Florentina* (Theiner 1862, 379-386).<sup>13</sup> Per quanto ne sappiamo, uno dei primi esempi dell'uso del termine *Respublica Florentina* si riscontra nei documenti relativi al trattato di pace tra le potenze italiane, concluso a Roma nel 1468 (Lünig 1732, 39-100)<sup>14</sup>. In seguito, negli anni Ottanta del Quattrocento, possiamo trovare alcuni casi, anche se sporadici, dove Firenze è riconosciuta come *Res publica*, per esempio, nella pace di Bagnolo per la conclusione della guerra di Ferrara nel 1484 (Lünig 1732, 125-146) e in una pace firmata fra il papa, Napoli, Milano e Firenze nel 1486 (Carusi, 1909, CIII-CXIX); ma il processo non è affatto lineare, e sebbene fosse possibile fra gli Stati italiani, a volte poteva non andare ugualmente bene di fronte al potere imperiale. Nel trattato con l'imperatore Massimiliano d'Asburgo del 1509, Firenze è denominata *Respublica* per i suoi cittadini, ma *Communitas* per l'imperatore (Fubini 2009a, 37).<sup>15</sup>

Dopo l'accumulazione di questi usi oscillanti nell'arena diplomatica, il nome *Respublica florentina* si affermò nei documenti diplomatici all'inizio del Cinquecento, cioè quando Machiavelli definì nel primo capitolo de *Il Principe* che «Tutti gli stati, tutti e' dominii che hanno avuto e hanno imperio sopra gli uomini, sono stati e sono o repubbliche o principati».

Come giustamente scrivono James Hankins e Gabriele Pedullà, nell'Italia del Quattrocento non esistono la repubblica né, ancor meno, il repubblicanesimo nel senso moderno che esclude la monarchia (Hankins 2010; 2019), ma soltanto un *weak humanist republicanism* (Pedullà 2020); tuttavia è pur vero che proprio allora viene aggiunto a *res publica* un altro nuovo significato con l'esigenza di dare un nome ad una forma statale emergente, di fatto non-monarchica. Così, due secoli dopo, la prima edizione del vocabolario della Crusca (1612) definisce la «repubblica» come «Nome generale, che significa stato di Città libera, governato da popolo, per ben comune» (Accademia della Crusca 1612, 695).

### *Kyōwa*

Mentre *res publica* è il vecchio termine scelto per definire una nuova realtà politica, *kyōwa* è il nuovo termine scelto per definire una realtà politica già affermatasi da tempo.

Durante il periodo Edo (1603-1868) il Giappone mantenne relazioni commerciali estere solo con gli olandesi, unici tra gli europei, nonostante la sua politica isolazionista. Lo shogunato Tokugawa acquisiva le sue conoscenze sugli affari europei attraverso le informazioni portate dagli olandesi, e la maggior parte degli studi e della tecnologia europei fu introdotta tramite i libri olandesi, for-

<sup>13</sup> Sulla Lega italica vedi Fubini (1994b).

<sup>14</sup> Sono casi eccezionali ed anche qui, nella maggior parte dei casi, Firenze è chiamata *Communitas*. Sul trattato di pace vedi Fubini (1994b, 212-13).

<sup>15</sup> Nel trattato esiste anche l'espressione «Rempubicam Florentinam et dictum Comune Florentiae». Il testo è presente in Rubinstein (1958, 175-77) (Appendice).

mando la base della rapida apertura intellettuale che accelerò con l'affluire dei nuovi studi inglesi, francesi, tedeschi, ecc. alla fine del periodo Edo, quando il Giappone aprì il paese. Così, dal Settecento in poi, ma particolarmente nella seconda metà dell'Ottocento, nell'arco di tempo fra i trenta e quaranta anni prima e dopo la Restaurazione Meiji del 1868, si tradusse in giapponese un'immensa quantità di scritti occidentali di qualsiasi genere, prima per avere informazioni sui paesi occidentali, poi per riformare le proprie istituzioni sul loro modello. Questa massiccia impresa di traduzione ebbe un tale impatto sulla società giapponese moderna che il critico letterario Katō Shūichi<sup>16</sup> e il politologo Maruyama Masao, due grandi intellettuali, dedicarono un intero volume alle opere tradotte dell'epoca, quando compilarono la collezione del pensiero giapponese moderno (Katō e Maruyama 1991).<sup>17</sup>

Entrando in contatto con gli scritti occidentali, i giapponesi scoprirono molti concetti decisamente importanti che non esistevano nella propria cultura e tradizione, e li assorbirono traducendoli grazie ai *kango*, vocaboli formati dalla combinazione di *kanji*, ideogrammi o caratteri cinesi, con la pronuncia giapponesizzata. Fin dall'antichità i giapponesi traducevano i concetti del confucianesimo e del buddismo con i *kango*, che quindi erano già largamente presenti nel vocabolario giapponese. I *kango* sono comodi, perché sono parole concise (la maggior parte è costituita da non più di tre ideogrammi, normalmente da due), possono esprimere concetti astratti e se ne possono coniare facilmente di nuovi con nuove combinazioni di ideogrammi cinesi. I traduttori giapponesi fecero pieno uso di questa proprietà dei *kango*. I *kango* ottocenteschi venivano spesso presi dalla traduzione cinese degli scritti occidentali, ma nei casi in cui non esisteva la traduzione, si attingeva ai classici cinesi, oppure venivano coniatati tramite nuove combinazioni di ideogrammi cinesi. In tal modo il Giappone acquisì vocaboli come *shakai* 社会, «società», *kojin* 個人 «individuo», *jiyū* 自由 «libertà», *tetsugaku* 哲学 «filosofia», ed anche, per «repubblica», *kyōwa* 共和.<sup>18</sup>

Già nella prima metà dell'Ottocento c'erano intellettuali che acquisirono conoscenze sul governo repubblicano tramite i libri olandesi, dove si trovavano descrizioni dettagliate sui neonati Stati Uniti. Era chiaro che nel mondo c'erano monarchie e repubbliche, però era estremamente difficile tradurre in giapponese la parola «repubblica», forma di governo del tutto ignota ai giapponesi, la quale all'inizio veniva tradotta descrittivamente come *ō nakushite shihai saruru kuni* (Stato governato senza re) o *sōgo ni tasuke au kuni* (Stato dove la gente si aiuta), ecc. (Saitō 1977, 118-19, 149).

<sup>16</sup> I nomi giapponesi in questo articolo sono riportati nello stile giapponese (ordine cognome-nome).

<sup>17</sup> Il dialogo tra Katō e Maruyama sulla traduzione nel Giappone moderno è presente in Maruyama e Katō (1998).

<sup>18</sup> Sulle parole coniate nell'era Meiji vedi Saitō (1977), in particolare su *kyōwa*, pp. 115-120, 137-83; Yanabu (1982). Sui rapporti e interazioni fra le parole coniate giapponesi e quelle cinesi nell'età moderna, vedi Chen (2019).

Si crede che il geografo Mitsukuri Shōgo sia stato il primo ad adottare il termine *kyōwa*. Secondo quanto scrisse Hozumi Nobushige, noto giurista delle epoche Meiji e Taishō, quando Mitsukuri, consultando diversi libri giapponesi ed olandesi, scriveva il *Kon'yozushiki*, un libro di geografia universale pubblicato nel 1845, si imbatté nella parola olandese «Republiek» e, cercandola in un dizionario olandese, trovò la definizione «forma di governo non-monarchica». Ma poiché l'idea di un governo senza monarca era qualcosa di quasi incomprensibile per il popolo giapponese di allora, Mitsukuri, non sapendo come tradurla, si rivolse al rinomato confuciano Ōtsuki Bankei per chiedere una traduzione adeguata. Ōtsuki disse che sebbene fosse anomalo un paese senza monarca, ce n'era stato un esempio in Cina. Durante il regno della dinastia Zhou, infatti, si era verificato un caso in cui il re Li, a causa del suo governo spietato, si era inimicato il popolo ed era stato costretto a fuggire. Il governo fu allora preso da due duchi, che collaborarono per governare senza re per quattordici anni, il che venne chiamato *kyōwa* 共和 (che letteralmente significherebbe *kyō* 共 «insieme» e *wa* 和 «pace»), perciò la forma di governo non-monarchica dovrebbe essere denominata *kyōwa seiji* (governo *kyōwa*). Seguendo questo consiglio, Mitsukuri adottò il termine per la traduzione di «repubblica» (Hozumi 1980, 204-205).<sup>19</sup> Egli infatti, nel suo *Kon'yozushiki*, usa *kyōwa seiji shū* (Stato del governo *kyōwa*) per chiamare la Francia repubblicana e gli Stati Uniti (Mitsukuri 1845-1847, II: 13v; IV: 3v).

Naturalmente *kyōwa* in sé non aveva nessuna connotazione del termine originale di *res publica*, cioè «cosa pubblica». Tuttavia, gli intellettuali dell'epoca, tutti di formazione (neo)confuciana, non consideravano la repubblica semplicemente come una forma di governo non-monarchica.<sup>20</sup> Con la lettura dei testi olandesi ed inglesi, alla luce dei valori confuciani che formavano la base ideologica del loro pensiero, essi iniziarono a rendersi conto che l'ideale confuciano di *jinsei* (politica di benevolenza) si stava realizzando nei paesi occidentali, e prestarono una particolare attenzione agli ospedali, agli orfanotrofi e agli ospizi per poveri istituiti nei paesi occidentali come a un tipico esempio di *jinsei* (Watanabe 2016b; Karube 2017, 234-36).<sup>21</sup> Il confucianesimo inoltre riteneva che la politica dovesse essere condotta in modo da eliminare completamente gli interessi privati e che a tal fine le decisioni dovessero essere prese dopo un ampio dibattito pubblico. Data questa tradizione ideologica, i sistemi politici occidentali, come parlamentarismo e repubblica, erano, non a caso, oggetto di simpatia e rispetto. Infatti, non pochi intellettuali confuciani lodavano la forma di governo repubblicana (Watanabe 2016b, 207-208).

Fukuzawa Yukichi, grande pensatore ed educatore, intellettuale rappresentativo dell'era Meiji, pubblicò i primi tre volumi del *Seiō jijō* (Fatti occidentali) nel

<sup>19</sup> Hozumi conobbe questo episodio dal linguista Ōtsuki Fumihiko, figlio di Bankei, che lasciò la stessa testimonianza (Saitō 1977, 182).

<sup>20</sup> Sul confucianesimo (neconfucianesimo) dell'era Edo vedi Watanabe (2010).

<sup>21</sup> Cfr. anche Watanabe (2016a).

1866, nei quali presentava vari aspetti della società occidentale, basandosi sulla vasta conoscenza acquisita tramite i libri olandesi ed inglesi e le due esperienze di viaggio nei paesi occidentali.<sup>22</sup> Nell'opera egli spiega tre forme di governo con la traslitterazione a fianco, «*rikkun (monaruki)*» cioè monarchia, «*kizoku gōgi (arisutokarashi)*» aristocrazia e «*kyōwa seiji (repoburiuku)*» repubblica, apprezzando gli Stati Uniti come «*junsui no kyōwa seiji [pura repubblica]*» dove i rappresentanti del popolo si riuniscono per discutere sulla politica nazionale, a prescindere da qualunque interesse privato (Fukuzawa [1866] 1958, 289). L'enorme successo dell'opera portò a Fukuzawa una grande fama, e il suo lavoro ebbe una tale influenza che la sua adozione di *kyōwa* potrebbe aver contribuito notevolmente all'affermazione di questa traduzione.

Gli intellettuali, come Fukuzawa, che studiarono seriamente le lingue e le culture occidentali dalla fine dell'Edo all'inizio del Meiji, erano stati allo stesso tempo plasmati profondamente dal confucianesimo (anche se Fukuzawa aveva un atteggiamento critico nei suoi confronti). Essi coniarono molte nuove parole attraverso l'uso di *kango*, pur rimanendo sensibili ai rapporti tra la parola originale e la sua traduzione e ben consapevoli della divergenza dal significato originale. Tra questi intellettuali si può annoverare il pensatore politico e giornalista Nakae Chōmin. Egli studiò nella Francia della Terza Repubblica dal 1872 al 1874 e introdusse in Giappone le idee di Jean-Jacques Rousseau, venendo soprannominato appunto il «Rousseau d'Oriente». In un articolo pubblicato sul suo giornale *Tōyō Jiyū Shinbun* (Giornale della Libertà Orientale), Nakae, seguendo il giudizio rousseauiano espresso nel *Contratto sociale*, si riferì al significato latino di «repubblica» come la «cosa pubblica» e affermò che qualunque fosse la forma di governo, se era ritenuta pubblica, era una repubblica (Nakae [1881] 1985, 22); e quando tradusse *Il contratto sociale*, scelse *jichi no kuni* (Stato di autogoverno) per la traduzione di «repubblica» (Nakae [1882-1883] 1983, 126, 196-197)<sup>23</sup>. Nakae nello stesso tempo credeva che l'idea di libertà, uguaglianza e fratellanza fosse in linea con il pensiero tradizionale cinese (Watanabe 2016b, 195).

Tuttavia, a partire dalla fine dell'Ottocento, il rafforzamento del sistema autoritario dell'imperatore come sovrano e il progredire del militarismo resero sempre più difficile un'aperta discussione sulla forma di governo, e la parola *kyōwa* finì per scomparire sullo sfondo. Inoltre il termine *kyōwa* assunse un'ambiguità particolare. Questa si usava anche per la traduzione di «democrazia», che era poco distinguibile dalla repubblica per i giapponesi, e si confondevano il regime repubblicano e quello democratico.<sup>24</sup> In seguito, con l'arrivo della traduzione cinese degli *Elements of International Law* di Henry Wheaton, *Bankoku Koho* (Katō e Maruyama 1991, 3-35; 402-405), opera molto influente per la comprensione

<sup>22</sup> Dopo l'apertura del paese, Fukuzawa visitò gli Stati Uniti nel 1859-1860 ed i paesi europei nel 1861-1862, facendo parte della missione diplomatica inviata dallo shogunato Tokugawa.

<sup>23</sup> Sulla traduzione di Nakae Chōmin cfr. Yamada (2009).

<sup>24</sup> Sull'evoluzione di *kyōwa* e *minshu* cfr. Chen (2019, 391-412).

del diritto internazionale nei paesi asiatici, si aggiunse il termine 民主 *minshu*, letteralmente 民 «popolo» e 主 «padrone», come traduzione di «repubblica». In Giappone, quindi, coesistevano i termini *kyōwa* e *minshu*, usati entrambi per fare riferimento alla repubblica o alla democrazia. Fu solo più tardi che *kyōwa* passò a significare «repubblica» e *minshu* «democrazia», come è ancora oggi. Questa definizione venne accettata anche in Cina, in seguito agli scambi culturali tra i due paesi all'inizio del Novecento.

Con la sconfitta nella Seconda guerra mondiale, l'Impero giapponese si dissolse e nacque il nuovo Stato del Giappone, che dava grande enfasi al valore della democrazia.<sup>25</sup> La costituzione, entrata in vigore nel 1947, dichiara la sovranità popolare, rispetta la libertà e l'uguaglianza, e definisce l'imperatore come il simbolo dello Stato e dell'unità del popolo giapponese, per cui l'imperatore non è più il sovrano. Eppure, la forma del sistema imperiale fu lasciata sopravvivere dagli Americani, i quali ritenevano che sarebbe stato utile per la loro politica di occupazione, e gli appelli giapponesi per l'abdicazione dell'imperatore e l'abolizione del sistema si placarono presto.

Nella società giapponese del dopoguerra l'idea di democrazia si diffuse, ma il repubblicanesimo non suscitava tanto interesse quanto il comunismo e il socialismo. Per un paese che non aveva né un partito politico che si definisse repubblicano né una esperienza repubblicana, il repubblicanesimo non era affatto familiare. Molti giapponesi tuttora sono poco interessati alla forma di governo del proprio paese. Nel sentire comune, il Giappone non è considerato una monarchia costituzionale, ma forse pochi saprebbero definirne con precisione la forma politica. L'ideologia del repubblicanesimo non ha mai preso piede in Giappone. Certo, i giapponesi conoscono la parola *kyōwa* e sanno benissimo che nel mondo ci sono tante repubbliche, come la Repubblica Italiana, ma hanno poche occasioni per farsi un'idea precisa del governo repubblicano o del repubblicanesimo nella società giapponese.

Anche nel mondo accademico, gli studiosi giapponesi sono stati lenti a interessarsi al repubblicanesimo<sup>26</sup>. È stato per esempio solo intorno al 2008, in seguito alla pubblicazione della traduzione di *The Machiavellian Moment* di John G. A. Pocock (Pocock 1975),<sup>27</sup> che gli studiosi di storia del pensiero politico hanno iniziato le ricerche sul repubblicanesimo su larga scala, stimolati in parte dalla situazione politica del periodo.<sup>28</sup>

Tuttavia in anni recenti la parola originale *res publica* ha di nuovo attirato l'attenzione degli studiosi giapponesi che si occupano di storia europea della prima

<sup>25</sup> Sugli orientamenti del pensiero giapponese sulla democrazia del dopoguerra ci sono numerose ricerche. Vedi ad esempio Dower (2004), Oguma (2002) e recentemente Yamamoto (2021).

<sup>26</sup> Ienaga Saburō è stato uno dei pochi storici che si sono interessati alle tracce del repubblicanesimo giapponese in epoca Meiji; vedi Ienaga (1958).

<sup>27</sup> La versione giapponese è stata tradotta da Tanaka Hideo, Okuda Takashi e Morioka Kuniyasu e pubblicata da Nagoya Daigaku Shuppankai (Nagoya).

<sup>28</sup> Vedi ad esempio Tanaka (1998); Saeki e Matsubara (2007); Tanaka (2008).

età moderna. Essa viene usata per definire una certa forma di governo dei paesi dell'Europa orientale basata sulla comunità aristocratica e la monarchia elettorale, come la *Rzeczpospolita (res publica)* della costituzione polacco-lituana.<sup>29</sup> Poiché il giapponese *kyōwa* non riesce ad esprimere questo significato ampliato di *res publica*, si usa a volte, in questo caso, la traslitterazione *Resu Puburika*. La traduzione aristotelica di Bruni, che non amava la traslitterazione, paradossalmente arrivò in Giappone nella versione di Moerbeke. Ultimamente la voce *Resu Puburika* è stata perfino inclusa in un manuale di storia occidentale per gli studenti universitari come uno degli argomenti di riflessione e discussione (Nakazawa 2020).

Inoltre, è stato pubblicato il libro intitolato *Repubblica con il re (Ō no iru kyōwa sei)* che esamina alcuni esempi di repubbliche e teorie repubblicane che non negavano la monarchia nell'Europa pre-moderna (Nakazawa 2022). La «repubblica con il re», un'espressione apparentemente contraddittoria e provocatoria, pur non includendo il significato originale di «cosa pubblica», può contribuire a far progredire la comprensione delle implicazioni storiche di *res publica*.

L'atto di traduzione crea incroci e distanze linguistiche di vario genere. Lo Stato territoriale della Firenze quattrocentesca adoperò per autodefinizione l'antica *res publica*, aprendole la porta per acquisire il significato moderno di repubblica, mentre il Giappone dell'Ottocento conìò *kyōwa* per afferrare il concetto di repubblica moderna, ad esso totalmente sconosciuto, utilizzando la lunga tradizione dei *kango*. Eppure, le memorie dello specifico contesto storico in cui ogni parola è stata scelta si affievoliscono con il passare del tempo e la parola diminuisce il suo spessore. Per questo bisogna sempre riportare alla luce e ripristinare la ricchezza di incroci e distanze linguistiche del passato

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# Encounter with «Moral science» in Late Nineteenth-Century Japan

Sayaka Oki

**Abstract:** The term «moral science» was used in universities and academies prior to the emergence of the expression «humanities and social sciences». However, its connection with the modern eastern Asian context has not yet been sufficiently investigated. This paper tries to fill the gap with a case study on its import and appropriation by late nineteenth-century Japan to its socio-cultural sphere, having lacked the framework of classifying the sciences into «moral» and «physical» ones. The study achieves this by examining the activities of *Meirokeisha*, a learned society created in 1773 to promote Western studies, and the writings of one of its leading members, Yukichi Fukuzawa, who tried to understand Francis Wayland's *Elements of Moral Science* (1835), a famous American textbook in his time.

**Keywords:** Moral Science, Meirokeisha, Francis Wayland, Yukichi Fukuzawa, Shigeki Nishimura

## Introduction

Recent historical studies have deepened our understanding of the history of social science in Europe and North America, from the late eighteenth century to the end of the nineteenth century. The terms «moral science», «moral and political sciences» (and its equivalents in other European languages), or «science of men» were used in universities and academies prior to the emergence of the expression «humanities and social sciences». However, the connection of these terms with the modern eastern Asian context has not yet been sufficiently established. This paper tries to fill this gap by conducting a case study on the import and appropriation of the concept of «moral science» by late nineteenth-century Japan to its socio-cultural sphere. The study achieves this by examining the activities of *Meirokeisha* or the Meiji Six society, a learned society created in 1773 to promote Western studies (*yogaku*), and the writings of one of its leading members, Yukichi Fukuzawa.

The origin of the expression «moral science» in the European context goes back to the medieval period, especially to the tradition of education for kingship, which included both political and religious moral education.<sup>1</sup> However,

<sup>1</sup> See for example, 'Autre declaration du roi, Louis XII. Du dernier aoust 1498', in *Recueil des actes, titres et mémoires concernant les affaires du clergé de France*, Paris (1716), t. I, p. 858. It

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during the Age of Enlightenment, the expression «moral and political sciences» gradually took on the meaning of an ambitious intellectual project for organising all the non-physical sciences, which were still emerging. Its scope covered a wide range of intellectual fields corresponding to ethics, law, political economy, economics, history, geography, and a sort of psychology due to the existence of several competing models.

Academies and private learned societies played an important role in the diffusion of these endeavours. As Julien Vincent says, the protagonists of «moral and political sciences» created a section in several academies on the European continent, especially during the first half of the nineteenth century, often imitating a model found in other countries. These institutions were places where not only researchers but also practitioners, such as politicians and bureaucrats, could gather, before the universities began to institutionalise social sciences at the end of the century (Vincent 2016).

Until the mid-nineteenth century, moral science had not yet diverged into specialised disciplines, and existed as fields of both philosophical and political negotiation between opposing reactions to the changes introduced by modernity. Some desired more rapid economic and political change for «progress», while others the re-establishment of the social order. The frontiers between conservatism, liberalism and socialism were not clarified and each segment proclaimed moral science as an extension of its own social reform programme rather than as a theoretical endeavour (Chappey 2006; Steiner 2006; Vincent 2007). When Japan opened the door to the external world around the 1850s, it encountered this complex intellectual landscape without grasping its complexity.

The Meirokusha began promoting Western studies by bringing together intellectuals and government officials, and tried to import Western moral science into Japan. In the following section, we first describe the process of its development and its possible institutional origin. Secondly, we explain the epistemological assumptions they shared on the structure of knowledge to understand their initial unfamiliarity with the intellectual framework of classifying the sciences into «moral» and «physical (or natural)» ones. Thirdly, we look closely at Fukuzawa's attempt to understand Wayland's *Elements of Moral Science* (1835), a famous American textbook on this subject in his time. We examine his attempts to modify Wayland's original arguments on moral science into those on

derives its principles from the 'moral' in a religious sense. It was also common practice to juxtapose three elements of 'morals' such as 'Ethics or Morals', 'Economy' and 'Politics', as seen in François de La Mothe Le Vayer's writing in the seventeenth century. While the sources cited are invariably ancient scholars such as Xenophon, Aristotle, and Plato, according to literature researcher Marie-Laure Acquier, this threefold constitution was in keeping with the schema propagated in the Middle Ages, particularly in the thirteenth century, by the theologian Giles of Rome, who wrote *De Regimine Principum*, a classic kingship text belonging to a literary genre referred to as 'mirrors for princes' (*specula principum*). Giles's work was republished multiple times up until early modern times; and during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, it influenced Spain's courtly culture and education of nobles. See Acquier (2010).

moral education, based on his interests, namely the modernisation of Japanese society. Apparently Fukuzawa had little interest in Wayland's Christian-minded concerns on the epistemological relationship between moral principles and natural laws, being more preoccupied with political concerns, such as national independence and the realisation of a market economy. Finally, we will attempt to create a brief sketch of the divergence among the members of the Meirokusha, following Fukuzawa's attempt to conceptualise a version of liberalism, in order to situate it as the starting point of the history of social science in Japan.

### The Meirokusha. The Protagonists of Westernisation

Meirokusha's statute from 1773 claims that its main purpose is to promote communication and discussions among learned volunteers on the issue of «the education of our nation».<sup>2</sup> According to Shigeki Nishimura, one of its founding members, it had the following two objectives: firstly, the promotion of learning, and secondly, the establishment of «moral norms» (Nishimura [n.d.], 34r; Nihon-gakushiin 1962, 9-10).<sup>3</sup> We can assume that this objective-setting was derived from its members' initial conviction that both were necessary to construct a «civilised» society in the nineteenth-century sense of the term (Tozawa 1985, 294). This interpretation was derived from contemporaneous definitions of «civilisation» in famous European or American texts. For example, Samuel Smiles, a Scottish reformer, says in his work *Self-Help* (1859), that «the nation is only the aggregate of individual conditions, and civilization itself is but a question of personal improvement» (Smiles 1859, 2). François Guizot in his *Histoire de la civilisation en Europe* (1828) emphasises the importance of «progress», enabled by the moral and intellectual improvement of each citizen (Guizot 1828, 16-17). Both authors would later be translated and read widely in Japan as manuals for understanding the notion of *bunmei* – civilisation.

It should also be noted that the definition of civilisation itself constituted a legitimate research object of moral science in the Euro-American context at that time, not only because moral science includes history, but also because historical studies of that period cannot be separated from the descriptions of the «moral» state of the populace. The so-called «moral state» was considered to directly influence the development of a society where one belonged, and is typified by Guizot's arguments (Zékian 2006, 55-82). Therefore, it is not surprising that Guizot, a historian, is the re-founder of the Moral and Political Sciences sec-

<sup>2</sup> The statute of Meirokusha, Art. 1. Though many studies exist in Japanese on each member of the Meirokusha, there are few on the Meirokusha as a group of intellectuals. In Japanese, the following two studies are well known: Nihon-gakushiin (1962), Okubo (1976) and Tozawa (1991). In other languages, the Meirokusha and its members appear mostly as a part of the general history of Japanese thought, such as the «Japanese Enlightenment». See Blacker (1964). The journal of Meirokusha, *Meirokuzasshi* is also well studied in media history. For example, see Braisted (1976).

<sup>3</sup> See also Tozawa (1985).

tion of the Institut de France, which would later come to be called the Academy of Moral and Political Science.

Thus, the Meirokusha was a learned society that sought to address the issues of national education under the strong influence of the Euro-American moral scientific discourses of the same period. The initial 10 members of the Meirokusha included many high-ranking officials, such as Arinori Mori, Shigeki Nishimura, Masanao Nakamura, Hiroyuki Katō, Masamichi Tsuda, Amane Nishi, Kyoji Sugi, Rinsho Mitsukuri, and the founders of private higher education institutions, such as Yukichi Fukuzawa and Shuhei Mitsukuri. The society grew to encompass more than 30 in the end, and it could cover a wide range of literature due to their expertise in English, French and German.

It was the youngest member, Mori, who first had the idea to establish an academic society, when he was in the United States as Japan's first chargé d'affaires in Washington at the beginning of the 1870s. Few previous studies have explained the source of his inspiration and only cite a later account by Nishimura, who himself cites Mori as having said:<sup>4</sup>

I should like to see our scholars organize a society, along American lines, in which they could gather for discussion and research. Moreover, the morals of the Japanese people have in recent years shown a steady decline, with the bottom yet in sight, and it is precisely our senior scholars who must come to the rescue (Nishimura [n.d.], fol. 33v-34r).

According to Nishimura, Meirokusha was the first «society of sciences and arts (*bungei no kaisha*)»<sup>5</sup> in Japan. Few historical studies, both in Japan and the West, seem to pay much attention to this expression. Its history reveals a process of importing the Euro-American model of learned societies and academies into Japan, as Meirokusha is the direct origin of all national academies in Japan, the Science Council, and the Japan Academy in Tokyo.

Our hypothesis is that the idea of establishing a society «along American lines» came to Mori under the influence of Joseph Henry, the first secretary of the Smithsonian Institution and Mori's intellectual guide and protector in Washington. Henry had founded the Philosophical Society of Washington in 1871, which corresponds with the beginning of Mori's stay in the American embassy. Henry's society was oriented more to the investigation of natural science, but it never narrowed its scope of interest, following the traditional model of learned societies, which were open to several different fields, typified by the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia, established in 1743 by Benjamin Franklin.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> See for example, Hall (1973, 235); Julsrud (2021, 5).

<sup>5</sup> *Meirokuzasshi*, I: fol. 12v.

<sup>6</sup> Many American learned societies followed the model of the American Philosophical Society or the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in Boston. See Bell (1972, 271-272, 269-278). As for Henry's intention to use the term 'philosophical' for his natural scientific society, see Henry (1874, 5-6).

The statute of Meirokusha shared many features with that of the traditional Anglo-European learned societies. It begins with the definition of the organisation's name, its structure, the types of membership, procedures for joining the society, the descriptions of its office-bearers, their roles and election process, and so on.<sup>7</sup> However, it is not a mere copy of its American counterparts and has several original characteristics. For example, the Meirokusha's statute presupposes honorary members (Art. 6), a feature not always common in Anglo-American learned societies, but more usual in the European continental academies. We can also say that it shares more features with the original statute of the Philosophical Society of Philadelphia (PSP) from 1769,<sup>8</sup> rather than the contemporary statute of the same society, which has a more complicated structure. Similarly, it differs from Henry's society, despite the similarity in the scale of the organisation.

According to its statute, unlike contemporary Euro-American academies or societies, the focus of its activities leaned heavily towards the promotion of education rather than that of research. We need to look closely at their cultural and intellectual context to understand their objective-setting.

#### Moral and Physical in the Japanese Context

The 10 founding members shared a similar cultural and social background. Except for the young Mori and Rinsho Mitsukuri, who were both in their twenties, the founding members were aged around 40 on average during that period and were at the height of their fame and social maturity. They all came from families of low-ranking officials or in the medical profession, who more or less made up the intellectual class among the samurai under the ancient regime. They received a general education in Confucianism in their youth and many of them, especially Fukuzawa and Nishimura, were well versed in that field.

The Meirokusha was created to promote Western studies and its members agreed on the need to import the whole set of Western sciences with its culture. Their attitude was thus naturally closer to that of intellectual social reformers than to that of amateurs and scholars gathering in learned societies. Education mattered more than research, at this stage, for this huge project of cultural importation to be possible.

Their actions were derived from their syncretic perception that found European civilisation to be a better model than the Chinese one for the realisation of Confucianist moral values. As noted by Hiroshi Watanabe, until the 1860s, moral value was the central concern of many Confucianist intellectuals who wished to modernise Japan. Their motivation did not come solely from a utilitarian attitude, but from a humanitarian (Confucianist) point of view as well. They thought Western countries, both in Europe and in North America, had a more stable and

<sup>7</sup> Statute of Meirokusha.

<sup>8</sup> The 1769 statute of PSP was published at the beginning of the first volume of *Transactions*, which was quite probably available to Mori in public libraries.

solid society, with better educated citizens and social safety networks, than any Asian countries, which were in political turmoil at that time. The advances created by the steam engine, and the number of hospitals, orphanages, and schools for people with disabilities in Europe and the United States impressed them as a form of achievement of the Confucianist moral values.

It goes without saying that the encounter with Western natural (or physical) science and technology had a great impact on Japanese intellectuals. However, it should also be noted that the distinction between the «moral» and the «physical» sciences was a totally unfamiliar framework for Japanese intellectuals before the 1860s. Confucianist intellectual culture did not separate nature from society. The most important aspect in this framework was to seek the right Path, *Michi* (or *Tao* in Chinese), which refers to the norms and moral principles necessary for human beings to live in harmony and prosperity. No other Japanese intellectual cultures, including those related to the local religions, such as Shintoism and Buddhism, contradicted this vision uniting nature and society (Watanabe 2010, ch. 17).

The problem is that historical studies paid little attention to the reception of Western moral science in Japan. The whole process made it inevitable for Japanese intellectuals to discover the dichotomic conceptual distinction between the «moral» and the «physical» (or «natural») both in the Westerners' worldview and in their vision of related intellectual fields. Masao Maruyama pointed out the importance of this discovery, which marked the thought of Yukichi Fukuzawa, one of the leading intellectuals of the above-mentioned Meirokusha. Fukuzawa discovered the concept of Nature, which was completely independent of any social or moral order, and governed solely by natural law, while studying Western natural science. He observed that this kind of conceptualisation of nature made it possible to assert the independence of human beings from any pre-existing social order (Maruyama 1995, 54-55).

The Meirokusha organised meetings and published its own journal, *Mei-rokuzasshi*. It contained more than 150 articles on various topics, although most shared the common feature of being introductory analyses of various Western systems and ideas. As a result, it covered a wide range of societal topics related to the moral science of the time. In its table of contents, we find such topics as professional ethics of scholars; family ethics – including discussions on equality between men and women, and the suitability of concubinage; educational issues, such as the need to invent a new Japanese writing system; arguments on legal institutions, such as the abolition of the death penalty; and the monetary and trade system.<sup>9</sup>

Despite leaning heavily towards the introduction of a foreign system, and its aim of «enlightening» the Japanese people, its contents have much in com-

<sup>9</sup> Meirokusha, *Mei-rokuzasshi*, April 1874–November 1875, vols. 1–43. The back numbers of *Mei-rokuzasshi* can be accessed at the following address: <https://dglb01.ninjal.ac.jp/nin-jaldl/bunken.php?title=meirokuzasshi> (last accessed 08/01/2023).

mon with those included in the discussion of a European academy of moral science. For example, in 1872, the meetings of the Parisian Academy of Moral and Political Science included discussions on such topics as the moral, intellectual, and material condition of industrial workers, attitudes in England to social and political questions, the principles of morality, discussions on the judicial system in France, monetary policy in France and Germany, forms of government in modern society, and so on (Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques 1872). Nonetheless, deeper analysis is necessary to ascertain the similarities and differences between the activities of the Meirokusha and the moral science section founded in Euro-American academies; however, our investigation reveals at least the overlapping elements in their choice of subjects.

#### Yukichi Fukuzawa's Interpretation of North American «Moral Science»

The first author to mention «moral science» is Yukichi Fukuzawa. At the end of the 1860s, he coincidentally obtained the fourth edition of *The Elements of Moral Science* (1865),<sup>10</sup> a textbook by Francis Wayland, an American Baptist educator and the fourth president of Brown University. Fukuzawa soon became interested in it and ordered about 60 copies. He perceived the book as holding «the code of ethics in general». Then, following discussions with his colleagues, he assigned the word *shushin* (修身) to the expression «moral science» (Fukuzawa 1995, 48). The term deriving from the Confucianist classic, the *Great Learning* (*Daxue*), means literary moral cultivation of the individual, which would be necessary for the ruling class.

Before examining whether Fukuzawa's choice of translation is adequate, we need to take a look at the history of moral science in the West during the nineteenth century. There were several different attempts in that category, and «moral», especially as an adjective term in English or French came to be polysemous, implying not only morality, but also the principles of human habits, or human capacity to understand the difference between right and wrong, which can be innate.

These attempts included the pioneering endeavour to create modern social sciences, adopting natural science methodologies, such as observation and quantification. French physiocrat Nicolas Baudeau coined the expression *sciences morales et politiques* in the middle of the eighteenth century, and became one of the precursors in the history of economics.<sup>11</sup> Then, Nicolas de Condorcet diffused the same expression through his attempt to apply probability theories to evaluate the probability of decision making in a range of social phenomena, such as political vote and judgements at court trials. Influenced by empiricist philoso-

<sup>10</sup> The first edition was published in 1835 and it contains an abridged edition for young readers.

<sup>11</sup> Authors like Nicolas Baudeau and Pierre-Samuel Dupont de Nemours used this expression to explain their theories of political economy, which was a newly emerging field at that time. See Steiner (1998).

phers, such as Locke, Hume, and Condillac, these attempts presupposed that moral principles, as well as laws of nature, could be obtained from the accumulation of sensations or repeated quantifiable observations and were a matter of knowledge (Baker 1975). Their successors congregated in the departments of «Moral and political sciences» in the academies of the European continent.

However, it is the other current of «moral science» that is directly related to Wayland. It dates back to the moral philosophy of common sense in the Scottish Enlightenment, as expounded by the likes of Thomas Reid, Dugald Stewart and their students. Opposed to the above-mentioned current, their emphasis was on philosophical endeavours to establish moral principles, without distancing themselves from traditional religious belief. Thus, moral principles are a matter of knowledge acquired not by the accumulation of sensations from external experiences, but by conscience, a capacity that is inseparable from the revelation given by God (Madden 1985, 301-302). After incorporating a number of aspects from the moral science of the continent, this trend was integrated into the curriculum of universities and colleges in English-speaking countries, for example, Cambridge University in 1848, and in many colleges in the United States, in the context of clerical education prior to the Civil War (1861-1865). Brown University was one such university and Wayland was in charge of the course, using his *Elements of Moral Science* as the textbook. Therefore, his works are situated in the tradition of Scottish realism, with particular influence from Thomas Reid and Victor Cousin, a French philosopher (Vincent 2007, 38-43; Martin 2019, ch. 2).

Returning to Fukuzawa's translation of the word «moral», understanding the word in English appears to have been problematic for him and his colleagues. Fukuzawa cites the term in the transliterated form, *moraru*, several times and attempts to interpret it. For example, he explains in one of his writings that «virtue (*toku*) implies codes of virtue (*tokugi*), which is called *moraru* (moral) in Western language. *Moraru* means the manners of a heart [or soul]» (Fukuzawa 1995, 119). His understanding finally settles on a very moralistic interpretation, guided by his Confucianist cultural background. Fukuzawa's concern focuses on «moral» as a level of one's virtues, relating it to a disciplined mental state with education, missing all other connotations of the term. In the same piece, he says that a virtuous act should happen voluntarily when one enjoys oneself, even behind closed doors without being watched by anybody, citing Chinese classics, such as the *Great Learning* and the *Doctrine of the Mean (Zhongyong)* (Fukuzawa 1995, 119).

While Fukuzawa did read *The Elements of Political Economy* by Wayland, it appears that he did not recognise «moral science» as a general framework encompassing a series of different social scientific fields. The same is the case for his colleagues, Nishi and Tsuda, who were familiar with several texts related to political economy, mainly via Dutch versions.<sup>12</sup> They recognised the existence

<sup>12</sup> They read Vissering, *Handboek van Praktische Staathuishoudkunde*, Hooft Graafland, *Grondtrekken der Staathuishoudkunde* (1852), William Ellis, *Outlines of Social Economy* (1846) from 1867 to 1868. See Mizuta (1999).

of specialised disciplines, but not the framework of «moral science» that linked them loosely to each other.

Fukuzawa's writings never incorporated the elements deriving from Christian theological arguments in Wayland's original writings. From the viewpoint of the history of moral science, it is to be noted that Fukuzawa never shared Wayland's main concern for reconciling scientific endeavours as the pursuit of laws of nature with religious faith, in which both laws of nature and those of morality were considered to be known to humans through Divine revelation. Wayland was against natural theology, disseminated with William Paley's *Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy* (1785), under the huge influence of John Locke's sensualist philosophy and utilitarianism. He dedicated pages to discussing how God assures the structure of a human mind enabling the latter to have knowledge by causal reasoning regarding both moral laws and laws of nature through sensations and perceptions (Martin 2019, ch. 4; Madden 1985).<sup>13</sup> Unlike them, Fukuzawa focused his arguments on more concrete, socio-political issues and skipped all the elements concerning the dispute about the nature of moral principles (whether it was a matter of knowledge obtained from the accumulation of sensations or from the revelation by God), despite the crucial role played by the argument in moral science. He seems to have been satisfied with not questioning the origin of human moral capacity, perceiving it as more or less a matter of education.

Putting aside all the theological and epistemological arguments, Fukuzawa focused on and absorbed fully from his readings of Wayland the ideas of liberalism and civil rights, as is shown by his famous book, *An Encouragement of Learning* (*Gakumon no susume*). In this book he explains that the ideas of equality and liberty are the necessary basis for a civilised society and its military independence. He had somewhat liberal feminist views and was opposed to violence against women and polygamy, unlike the majority of his contemporaries (Fukuzawa 1942, 90-91). However, the subject that occupied his mind the most appears to have been ridding the Japanese people's minds of what he perceived to be the remnants of the feudal mentality. He opined that the Japanese people of the time lacked the capacity for self-determination and were too servile to the upper classes. According to him, Japanese citizens were too immature to form an active bourgeois «middle class», a crucial driving force for achieving a prosperous commercial society and military independence (Fukuzawa 1942, ch. 5). It goes without saying that Fukuzawa did not see the contradiction between natural scientific endeavours and his version of «moral science», in spite of his interest in Wayland's writing. As he wished to separate the moral principles from traditional feudal moral values, he welcomed the dichotomic vision between human society and nature, which assured him of the existence of human liberty and rights, independent of any pre-existing social order.

<sup>13</sup> See also Mizuta (1999).

*Shushin* and Fear of Disintegration: Nishimura's Case

«Moral science» as a transitional conceptual framework failed to be fully incorporated into Japanese intellectual culture in the 1870s. However, Fukuzawa and his students gradually imported more specialised and disciplined forms of social sciences in the next decades. For example, they contributed to the first efforts to introduce the corpus of political economy in Japan. Eisaku Ishikawa, graduating from the University of Keio, founded by Fukuzawa, would partly translate Adam Smith in 1887.<sup>14</sup>

The year 1880 saw a divergence of opinion among the original members of the Meirokusha concerning acceptance of Western moral science, especially in the civic education of young people. *Shushin* became a subject in the newly introduced public education system, especially at elementary school level; however, Shigeki Nishimura, who worked for the Ministry of Education, had already criticised in 1875 the utilitarian mood of the government education policy, which encouraged only economic independence and promotion of new industries without «any single word on the education of humanity, justice, loyalty and filial piety (仁義忠孝)».<sup>15</sup> Indeed, during the 1870s, public primary schools in Japan used translations of foreign textbooks, including Wayland's *Elements of Moral Science* and French educator Louis-Charles Bonne's *Introduction au cours élémentaire et pratique de morale*. Despite these texts being used by local teachers in classrooms, their reception was not very successful (Martin 2019).

Feeling anxious about the «moral vacuum» in Japanese society, Nishimura turned to revitalising Confucianist values for better social integration. Nishimura was not a simple conservative; he wished to syncretise Western moral science and Oriental moral philosophy. He was not like Emperor Meiji and a group of his subjects who gave a high priority to Confucianism. Similarly to Fukuzawa, Nishimura appreciated the spirit of independence and patriotism in his reading of Wayland and other related Western documents. However, the key difference between the two laid in Nishimura being less tempted by the ethos of a newly developed commercial society and remaining more deeply attached to the mentality of the pre-existing ruling class, the samurai, and its moral order guided by Confucian values, such as loyalty and honesty.

He was more interested than Fukuzawa in the metaphysical and religious approach to moral issues (Manabe 2009). He failed to recognise the framework of Western «moral science» and constructed his own definition of the term *shushin*, after absorbing a series of classics in Western philosophy, including Aristotle and Plato. He classified *shushin* (moral science) under «moral» itself and above them placed *Ten* as the ultimate «reason of Heaven», «Great Path» or «Truth». *Ten*, derived from *Tien* in Confucianism, not only means a literal heaven, but also nature or creators. This juxtaposition is possible because

<sup>14</sup> He died before completing his work and his friend Shosaku Saga continued it, producing a version that was not a faithful translation.

<sup>15</sup> Cited in Manabe (2009, 77).

the Japanese general public of the 1870s did not distinguish clearly between nature, heaven, and creator, as is noted by Alberto Millán Martín (Martín 2019).

Although Nishimura clearly understood the difference between secular philosophy and religious thought, he did not hesitate to juxtapose religious and moral philosophy to achieve the education of the Japanese people. He suggested that even Japanese universities should have a faculty of «Holy science» (*seigaku*), to replace Europe's faculty of theology. This is because he believed it necessary for Japan to have a systematised ideological system similar to Christianity, reusing and revitalising pre-existing traditional religion, such as Shintoism. It should be noted that Nishimura admired August Comte, who also attempted to create a system of positivism as the ideological substitute for religion.

Nishimura believed that the education of younger generations must include *shushin* as a useful moral code for citizens, by which the people could unite and strengthen the nation and uphold its independence against the threat of colonisation. He was perfectly in line with the contemporary governmental policy of «*Fukoku Kyohei*», Enrich the Country, Strengthen the Armed Forces. He firmly believed that the military strength of Western nations derived from the high «moral» standard of the entire nation, as well as of each citizen, and that this had enabled them to maintain a civilised commercial society equipped with a trained national army. He agreed with Fukuzawa's argument that traditional Oriental moral philosophy, including Confucianism and Buddhism, made citizens less independent. Interestingly, he suggested that those traditional philosophical thoughts nurtured an individualistic vision of society, delineating moral issues as matters of personal consciousness. However, unlike Fukuzawa, Nishimura believed that Western moral science was too foreign for Japanese people to relate to. It is the influence of both his moderate nationalist school and the more conservative group associated with the emperor that led to the authoritarian moral education policy of the 1880s.

## Conclusion

Japanese intellectuals in the 1870s imported elements related to the history of moral science, such as the discourse on civilisation and a Western style of learned society, without fully recognising the underlying concepts of moral science. Involving a broad range of public officials and scholars, the Meirokusha undertook discussions on societal issues, which themselves were part of the moral scientific endeavours of the time. Through this process, all its members appropriated the imported «moral science» according to their own agendas, as typified by the case of Fukuzawa. He focused his attention on the ideas of social equality and liberty as important causes that would enable the Japanese people to unite and construct a prosperous nation, while his strong Confucian background made him miss the other important epistemological elements inherent in «moral science».

In the next decades, the orientations of Meirokusha members diverged according to their ideological positions on politics and national education, as a result of

having absorbed a range of «Western» social thoughts. On the conservative side, Nishimura felt it necessary to educate the next generation without the direct influence of the liberalism originating from imported Western moral science. Another member, Hiroyuki Katō, took a more extremist position, as he was attracted to the newly imported concept of Social Darwinism. In the 1880s, he tried to refute the idea of social equality by insisting that it lacked any scientific foundation (Watanabe 2010, 112-120; Takeda 2003). Katō served as a bureaucrat and later became a deputy of the Senate and president of the Imperial University in 1890. On the opposite side, others devoted themselves to the civil rights movement, which was seen as an almost anti-governmental position at that time. Chōmin Nakae, for example, a follower of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Du contrat social*, continued to embrace human rights theory and encouraged one of his disciples, Shusui Kotoku to become an anarchist. The latter would be executed for treason in 1911.

The period when the Meirokusha members gathered and diverged corresponds to the division within moral science in the West. European academia gradually abandoned this framework and developed several specialist disciplines, such as economics, sociology, anthropology, and so on, especially around the 1870s. The newly developed Japanese universities institutionalised these segmented disciplines more easily than the transitional conceptual framework of «moral science». However, the term *shushin* survived as the word representing the obligational moral education subject in public elementary and middle education in Japan, far removed from its original meaning as a translation of «moral science.» Later, the subject disappeared from public education suddenly after WWII because of its ideological role played under the totalitarian regime, and the history of the word sank into oblivion.

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# Captured Glimpses of Modernity and War in Late Qing China

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**Abstract:** This chapter evaluates the role of photography in witnessing the modernising process in China during the late Qing period and conflicts which stemmed from it. The camera, introduced in China during the First Opium War (1839-1842), allowed Western eyes to record the establishment of trade routes and associated facilities. The photos examined here were taken immediately before and during the Russo-Japanese War. The photographs appear to have been focusing on technological developments in trade infrastructure, but they also captured the conspicuous Japanese and Russian military presence. Consequently, the photographs reveal the Western role in the «development» of China by its incorporation into global trading networks and violent conflicts fought over control of this infrastructure.

**Keywords:** Photography, China, Russo-Japanese War, Infrastructure, Trade

*Some pictures are easily appreciated at first glance, but others  
– and these are often the most rewarding –  
require some exploration before they can be fully understood.*  
Susan Woodford (2018, 6)

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The history of photography in China started as a glimpse into the East for the West. The First Opium War (1839-1842) offered a chance to bring back photographic testimony of China. Although most of the photographs taken during the war are long lost, during the span between the First and Second Opium Wars, ephemeral and lasting photographic studios, and known and unknown photographers flourished in China. At the same time, the conflict initiated by Britain against China in order to open the Middle Kingdom to foreign trade, which had been confined to the port of Canton and its factory system, led to the irreversible decline of the last ruling dynasty. The Qing paid a high toll, because this clash between China and the West started a long series of conflicts, which opened China not only to foreign trade, but also to a permanent foreign pres-

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Stéphane Audrand for his help in identifying and checking the Russian Navy ships. Any mistakes, however, are entirely mine.

ence driving an inexorable modernisation process which inevitably proceeded on foreign terms. This modernisation process included and was documented by the technology of photography.

In the late Qing period, the Qing court was struggling with internal insurrections, such as the Taiping Rebellion, while external threats were eroding the tributary system on which they had established their dominant position in East and Southeast Asia. During the last 70 years of the Qing Empire, the Chinese fought against the British and French armies in the Second Opium War (1856-1860), against France for the dominion of Tonkin and Annam in 1885, against Japan during the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), and against a range of Western nations during the Boxer Rebellion of 1900-1901. Their reduced power was ultimately signified by the fact that, during the Russo-Japanese conflict of 1904-1905, they were mere spectators to a war fought by other states over their former territories in Manchuria and Korea. These conflicts were all products of Western forms of modernity and the technology of photography was part of the modernising process.

This chapter aims to analyse how photography was used to document the modernising process in China and the conflicts that accompanied it. To do so, it examines photographs belonging to the Sir Robert Hart Collection and specifically, a selection of snapshots taken by Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs officer, Richard H. Strangman, as well as a number of glass slides and photographs taken by other amateur photographers. All these photos are black and white and, despite involving different media – paper and glass – all bear witness to the period immediately preceding and during the Russo-Japanese War. These photographs offer a simple visual framing of the establishment of new trading networks in the concrete form of railways, warehouses and port facilities. They also reveal the conspicuous military presence both Russians and Japanese put in place around this infrastructure. The images taken by amateur photographers captured in material form a series of transitory moments, which reveal how wartime reality differed from that of peacetime.

The camera is a visual tool and, while photographs provide visual information, they are humanly produced artefacts that require interpretation through being contextualised and scrutinised in their medium, design, structure and composition. We should ask, then, what these photographs, in all of their dimensions, reveal about the modernising process in China and the accompanying conflict, including the role of photography in these processes. The chapter will answer these questions, first by discussing the state of the art of photography in China and the modernising process in the China of the late Qing period; then it will examine photographs as a witness of modernity and war, to finally pinpoint how photography in China can be considered a cross-cultural sight between China and the rest of the world.

### Photography in Late Qing China

The first photographic images of China to reach the West were taken by Westerners travelling in the country, described by Clare Roberts (2013, 7) as

«visiting military personnel, diplomats, traders and wanderers, who sought to document what they saw in the interests of geopolitical ambition and trade, and to satisfy the curiosity of people back home».

Photography was invented in Europe and it is widely agreed that the first successful photograph was produced by the French inventor Joseph Nicéphore Niépce in 1826. The technique was then refined over subsequent decades. In 1839, Louis Daguerre developed a new technique, known as daguerreotype, which produced a one-of-a-kind image impressed on a highly polished, silver-plated sheet of copper.<sup>2</sup> In February 1841, William Talbot patented the «calotype», a photographic impression obtained in seconds by exposure of chemically treated paper coated with salt and brushed with a solution of silver nitrate.<sup>3</sup> While Daguerre's invention was limited to a single positive, making each daguerreotype unique,<sup>4</sup> Talbot's invention allowed multiple positive images to be printed. The first photographic images of China were daguerreotypes, such as those taken by the French diplomat, Jules Itier, at the signing of the first Sino-French Treaty on board *L'Archimède* on 24 October 1844 (Roberts 2013, 10-12; Bennett 2009, 3-6).

While the initial phase of photography required complex processes to take and develop pictures, Roberta Wue (1997, 28) explains that the wet collodion process, invented in England by Frederick Scott Archer, «enabled an unlimited number of paper prints to be pulled from a glass negative, and it produced clear, useable images more efficiently and reliably than the earlier calotype, or paper negative, process». Consequently, «it is only with the invention and widespread adoption of the wet collodion process after 1851 that Hong Kong photographers can begin to be linked with surviving photographs». The greater practicality of the wet collodion process not only offered glimpses of China to the West, but also led to a growing interest in photography within China. Between the two Opium Wars, the first photographic studios opened, located in the Crown Colony of Hong Kong, as well as in the major treaty ports, such as Canton and Shanghai. While most were owned by foreigners, the Chinese photographer, Lai Afang had opened his own studio in Hong Kong by 1870.<sup>5</sup> Most of these photographic studios did not last long, yet they produced many of the historical images of China still known today. In addition to the studios, there were also itinerant photographers, who practised their art as pedlars. All of them contributed glimpses of China to Western audiences, and many, such as Pierre Rossier, who worked for the London-based Negri and Zambria com-

<sup>2</sup> Daguerre continued the work started with his partner Niépce who died in 1833. Together, they aimed to solve the question of «how to make a permanent image using light and chemistry». Though Niépce obtained rudimentary results in 1826, it was not until 1839, when Daguerre patented the equipment necessary to produce the daguerreotype, that the process of photography took off. See Daniel (2004a).

<sup>3</sup> For further information about Talbot, see Daniel (2004b).

<sup>4</sup> For more details on the two types, see Lai (2011, 20).

<sup>5</sup> Lai Afang (sometimes spelled Afong) is the best known of the early Chinese photographers.

pany, played a role in making the commercialisation of Chinese photographs a successful business.<sup>6</sup> While studio and itinerant photographers were all professionals, many more amateur photographers also enjoyed the new art, and their images also contributed to the picture of China available in the West at the time.<sup>7</sup>

Technological advancements in photography resulted in shorter exposure times and the production of multiple-prints became a common business in China. From the mid-1850s, *cartes de visite* became a popular usage of studio photos. These business cards, which included a photograph mounted on a sturdy board, were the first mass-produced portrait photographs. The success of the format rested on the fact that a single glass plate could cheaply produce up to eight different photos. Being cheap they could be sold and bought by the dozen and their dimensions were practical. It became fashion for both foreigners and Chinese alike to add an inscription, an autograph or a message to the cards, which were used as mementos or keepsakes, and they became collectible items from the start (Roberts 2013, 27).

Between the First and the Second Opium Wars, the foreign presence was limited to Hong Kong and the treaty ports of Canton, Fuzhou, Amoy (now Xiamen), Ningbo and Shanghai.

Foreigners were not allowed into inland China, and this was reflected in the pictures produced by foreign photographers during this period. The Second Opium War was a watershed for photography in China because, thanks to the Convention of Beijing signed in 1860, foreigners were subsequently allowed to travel and reside in inland China, and so new subjects appeared before the photographic lens. However, Hong Kong, Canton and Shanghai remained the most important locations for foreign photographic studios, thanks to their coastal locations. The treaty ports had a growing expatriate population who bought portrait sessions and scenic pictures enabling the studios to flourish economically (Lai 2011, 23-24). The opening up of the whole of China to foreigners created opportunities for other foreign photographers with no connections to the treaty port studios. The influx of new photographers can be divided into two groups: first, those who travelled to China to open a business and second, those who travelled to China with the intention of photographing the country and returning shortly to their countries. Well-known Western photographers who worked in China, sometimes maintaining their own studios for a period, were Louis Legrand, William Floyd and William Saunders in Shanghai. Among those who travelled and returned home, John Thomson is the most significant. All these Western photographers played a role in portraying China to the West, as well as offering their services to an expatriate clientele, and also training the first generation of native commercial photographers, including Wen Dinan of the Canton Pun

<sup>6</sup> For further information about Rossier's contribution to the photography of China as a profitable business, see Bennett (2009, 53-66).

<sup>7</sup> For more information about the first photographic studios, itinerant photographers and amateur photographers, see Bennett (2009).

Lun studio, Luo Yuanyou in Shanghai, Ren Jinfeng in Beijing and Liang Shitai (also known as See Tay), who first worked in Hong Kong, then Shanghai, and finally in Tianjin (Lai 2011, 26-9). The first Chinese photographers learnt the art from Western photographers based in Canton and Hong Kong in the 1840s and 1850s. From the 1860s onwards, Chinese photographers, attracted by new business opportunities arising from the increased trade between China and the West, secured training from commercial photographic studios wherever they were established (Cody and Terpak 2011, 35).

The Second Opium War saw the birth of war photography and, indeed, was the first conflict in which photographic images of war circulated widely among the Western public. Although two British army officers, Major George Malcolm and Dr Richard Woosnam, took a daguerreotype on board the British Fleet as it navigated the Yangzi River during the First Opium War in 1842, none of their images have survived (Lai 2011, 20).<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the very first images of war in China are those taken by photographers accompanying the British and French armies as they confronted the Chinese. These photographers included soldiers, some high ranking, and also diplomats. The most famous images of the Second Opium War, however, were taken by a commercial photographer, Felice Beato.

From 1860 onward, the whole of China was opened to Western merchants, traders, diplomats and missionaries. Although now at peace with the foreigners, Chinese military forces faced the massive and bloody Taiping Rebellion. The turbulence of the rebellion impacted photographic activity in the early 1860s. Terry Bennett (2010, xi) explains that business «was slow and the commercial viability of full-time studios in Shanghai and Hong Kong was not apparent until the end of the Taiping Rebellion in 1864». In fact, it was hard to make a living, and «when a photographer went out of business, the stock was generally sold, invariably becoming part of the buyers' inventory and traded under the name of the new studio, or just plain pirated». Roberts (2013, 27) underlines how such practices create difficulty in determining with any certainty which photographs were taken by which photographers during this period.

Despite the difficulties caused by the Taiping Rebellion, the growing interest in photography in China after the Second Opium War can be attributed, in part, to a new modernisation process known as the Self-Strengthening Movement.<sup>9</sup> Jeffrey Cody and Frances Terpak assert that the Self-Strengthening Movement was

a means of learning from foreigners so that ultimately Chinese practitioners could surpass foreigners in the use of technologies – military and otherwise – that foreigners seemed to have mastered [...]. Within this historic context, photography can be viewed as one of several technologies – along with weaponry,

<sup>8</sup> They are «recorded to have taken a daguerreotype of Se-shan while sailing up the Yangtze River on July 16, 1842, the eve of Britain's victory in the First Opium War. [...] Sadly the photographs they took have not survived; otherwise they would constitute the earliest known photographic images of China ever made». See also Bennett (2009; 2010).

<sup>9</sup> On the Self-Strengthening Movement, see Kuo and Liu (1978).

the railroad, and the telegraph, to name a few – that became significant catalysts for reform during a period of intense upheavals in late Qing China (Cody and Terpak 2011, 34-35).

By the end of the nineteenth century, another type of photograph had gained impetus: the lantern slide. Photographic lantern slides were invented in 1849 by the Langenheim brothers of Philadelphia. They replaced the hand-painted glass plates previously projected by use of a lens with photographs (Shepard 1987). The wet collodion process, discussed above in relation to prints, «enabled details to be captured in higher quality, using cheaper materials and shorter exposure periods» and was in turn substituted by the dry plate in the 1870s (UC Arts Digital Lab, n.d.). This process was even cheaper and more efficient, as the plates could be prepared in advance and the photographer did not need to transport the plates, chemicals or a conveyable dark room for immediate development, which would have been cumbersome for travellers. The reduced size of the lantern slides (for instance 8.25 cm square) made them light to transport and easy to take. A glass plate was covered with another thin layer of glass and both were kept together by strips of gummed paper tape. Originally in black and white, colour could be hand-painted using transparent oil paints, aniline dyes or water colours. In the twentieth century, paint specifically designed for lantern slides was developed. The technical evolution of lantern slides transformed them from a tool for storytelling to an acceptable instrument for education, scientific study and travelogues and they became a favourite device for missionaries, who used them in their evangelising lectures in China, as well as in fund-raising presentations in their home countries (Kuo 2016, 29).<sup>10</sup>

By the turn of the twentieth century, photography in China had again been transformed by the snapshot revolution resulting from the appearance of the cut-price Box Brownie camera, which allowed anybody to take cheap photographs in large numbers. Supplies of photographic materials and facilities for developing film rolls became available in all large cities in China (De Angeli and Reisz 2017, 4; De Angeli 2018, 164-65).

### Photographs and Historical Context

The sets of photographs presented in this chapter have not been selected so much for their aesthetic qualities as for the amount of information they can provide to the viewer and the historian. These black and white images were taken by amateur photographers in two different formats: paper prints and glass slides. Some printed photographs come from albums of snapshots taken by Richard H. Strangman, a customs official based in Tianjin.<sup>11</sup> Strangman took 98 pho-

<sup>10</sup> Cody and Terpak (2011, 53) provide the examples of the French Franciscan missionary Michel de Maynard who «used lantern-slide images to record daily life and, subsequently, to raise funds back in France for the work of his mission in China».

<sup>11</sup> For Strangman's career in the CIMC, see De Angeli (2018, 174).

tos on the border of Zhili Province on two occasions, the first in the winter of 1903-1904 and the second shortly afterwards, although the precise date was not recorded.<sup>12</sup> A second set of printed photographs belong to the personal collection of Sir Robert Hart. The photographer who took these pictures has yet to be identified, but it is thought that most were probably taken by an official in the Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs in order to illustrate to the inspector general the situation in Niuzhuang during the Russo-Japanese War.<sup>13</sup>

The glass slides are part of a collection which belonged to Kathleen Carrall (1883-1971) composed of three sets of slides. One set is hand-tinted and was produced by the Lantern Slide Bureau, the Methodist Episcopal Church in China and the Mission Photo Bureau, Shanghai, while the other two boxes contain black and white glass slides taken by another anonymous amateur photographer, apparently as mementos and keepsakes. These two boxes contain 118 glass slides, none of which are labelled or annotated. Nonetheless, these images were all taken in a short span of time just before or during the Russo-Japanese War, a period which foreshadowed the launch of the last reforms by the ultra-conservative Manchu court, which hoped to retain power. Although the conflict was a battle between two other powers in the Northeast of China, it was the fate of the regional trade and network infrastructure and its tax revenues that was at stake.

The Russians and Japanese battled on the plains of Manchuria and in the Yellow Sea following a surprise Japanese attack on the Russian navy docked in Port Arthur. The conflict was short but entailed heavy losses on both sides. From February 1904 to September 1905 the total number of casualties «fluctuates slightly according to the various sources, it is often cited at around 130,000-150,000, of which the Japanese lost about 88,000», of whom 70% in action or wounded, and 30% from disease (Kowner 2006, 80-81). The war resulted in a Japanese victory over Russia, whose imperial government in February of the same year had to face the First Russian Revolution. News of the attempted revolution of 1905 in Russia influenced the emerging Chinese bourgeoisie and students, who constituted the first form of modern public opinion in China. Internationally, the conflict was interpreted as the victory of a constitutional monarchy over an autocracy, and this galvanised anti-Manchu opinion in China and encouraged Chinese revolutionaries, who, in the 1900s, saw Japan as an example for their own revolution. Indeed, many Chinese radicals lived and studied in Japan during this period. In 1911, the Xinhai Revolution succeeded in bringing down the Qing court and establishing the Republic of China, the first republic in Asia. Qing China had survived the succession of internal rebellions scourging the country since the late eighteenth century, but it crumbled under the pressure of competing em-

<sup>12</sup> For more information about Strangman's collection, see De Angeli (2018, 163-65).

<sup>13</sup> MS15/6/4 is a collection of various formats and topics, mostly giving account of the foreign presence in China, for example, the commemoration at the arch dedicated to the German plenipotentiary Baron von Ketteler, killed in June 1900 (MS16/5/4/9-11, 13, 15-16), or the photos of the signature of the Boxer Protocol on 7 September 1901 (MS16/5/4/21-22).

pires which had «carved up the Chinese melon». The demands of war indemnity payments indebted China to European powers and Japan's bondholders, and a plethora of foreign powers established spheres of interest in China. From 1898 onward, Britain, France, Germany, Japan and Russia all established naval bases on Chinese shores, took control of railways running through most Chinese provinces, even the remotest, and obtained concessions for the exploitation of Chinese mines. Consequently, the already indebted Qing Empire was further impoverished. The Russo-Japanese War marked the end of an era, as it was the last major conflict between competing imperial powers in China before the Xinhai Revolution of 1911. Although the republic was an emerging weak power in the region, and its beginning was ravaged by a dozen years of warlordism, the established Western powers were, from that moment on, in retreat, while Japan emerged as the growing power in the region. The images of the Russo-Japanese War were an exceptional, first-hand account of the ending of an era.

#### How Photography Bore Witness to War in China

In China, war and photography were linked from the arrival of the technology in the mid-nineteenth century and, as noted above, war photography as a genre can be traced back to the work of Felice Beato. The images of the Second Opium War, which made Beato famous in the West, were taken with a technology that was primitive when compared to what was available during the Russo-Japanese War, almost half a century later. In 1858, Beato used albumen on glass negatives to produce albumen silver prints. Explaining Beato's technique, Anne Lacoste observes that the albumen technique available in the 1850s «allowed negatives to be made in advance before being exposed and was remarkable for its sharpness and overall penetration of details» (Lacoste 2010, 25), but that the process required long exposure and was more suitable for immobile subjects. From 1855, however, Beato started to use the wet collodion method, reducing the exposure times to very few seconds, «although the negative plate had to be prepared, exposed, and developed promptly while it was still damp» (Lacoste 2010, 25). Therefore, Beato's travelling photography still required him to carry «cumbersome and fragile equipment, including camera and tripod, a dark tent, potentially dangerous chemicals (collodion contained an explosive ingredient), and large, breakable glass plates of about 25 to 30 centimetres (the size of his final images). Beato had to adapt the complex processes involved to the field and weather conditions, which could interfere with the final result» (Lacoste 2010, 25). Besides the mastery of these challenging techniques, Beato is remembered for «his innovative work portraying death in war photography» and, therefore, for opening up a new pathway in the genre (Lacoste 2010, 28). He is considered the forerunner of war photojournalism. Owing to the technical limitations that existed at that time, Beato needed the image in front of the camera to be almost stationary. In time, however, the camera evolved to make photography instantaneous, thus able to cut through the heat of the battlefield and trigger the emotional reaction in the viewer that comes with the sight of death (Ritchin 2010, 119-20). By the late 1880s, commercial

photography had been democratised by the invention in 1888 of the Kodak, the first ready-to-use camera, by the American George Eastman. The next generation model of the Kodak was the one used by Richard H. Strangman for his snapshots.

The images of the Russo-Japanese War from the Sir Robert Hart Collection were the snapshots of amateur photographers, who appear to have taken them as mementos for themselves or to be seen by a close circle of people. The intention with these images does not appear to have been to please an audience or for them to be commercialised.

The glass slides of the Russian Imperial Navy ships, *Askold* and *Tsesarevich*,<sup>14</sup> present a different kind of war image from Beato's work. These photographs are historically significant as they are the only contemporary images of ships engaged in the Battle of the Yellow Sea, the first ever naval confrontation between modern steel battleship fleets. The *Askold* was a first-rank protected cruiser built by the Krupp Company in Kiel, Germany, in 1898, to fulfil the 1897 Russian special programme of accelerated shipbuilding for the needs of the Russian Far East (MS15/6/21B/3). The *Askold's* role was to carry out long-range reconnaissance for a squadron. The favourite ship of Tsar Nicholas II, who visited it twice while it was docked in Kronstadt, it sailed from the main base of the Russian Baltic Fleet to the Russian Far East, arriving six months later in February 1903 at Port Arthur, where it joined the Pacific Squadron.

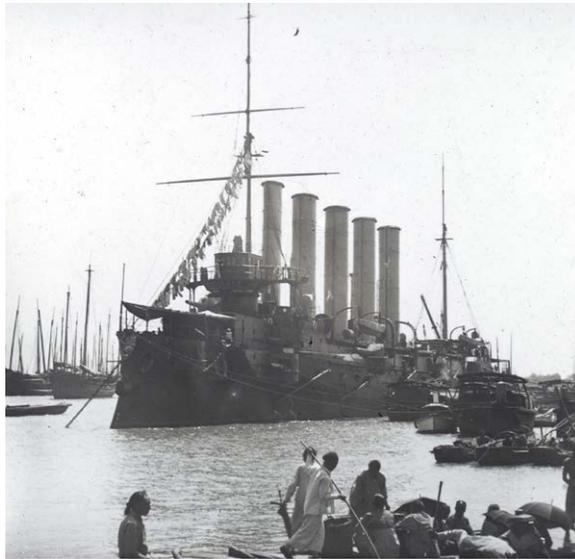


Figure 1 – The *Askold* in wartime black hull docked at Port Arthur harbour, summer 1904. MS15/6/21B/3.

<sup>14</sup> For a detailed account of the blockade of Port Arthur and the Japanese blockade involving the *Askold* and the *Tsesarevich*, see Grew (1904-1906, II: 28-45, 200-40).

The *Askold* appears in the glass slide with a newly repainted black hull used in wartime. It was docked in a harbour and it can be seen that the photograph was taken during the summertime, as the Chinese boatmen in the foreground were dressed in light summer clothes and the passengers in their boats were using umbrellas to protect themselves from the sun, while two lines of sailors' clothing had been hung up to dry from the bow to the mainmast. The *Askold* appeared to be in perfect condition, prepared for battle. In fact, the *Askold* had prevented a surprise attack by Japanese destroyers on the Russian ships in Port Arthur on the evening of 26 January 1904, though the Japanese succeeded in their second attempt on the night of 8-9 February, sparking the Russo-Japanese War. Then on 28 July, the Russians exited the harbour trying to break through to Vladivostok. The *Askold* led the line ahead of the cruiser squadron. When the Russian flagship lost control and the remaining ironclads turned back towards Port Arthur, the *Askold*, followed only by the scout cruiser *Novik*,<sup>15</sup> broke through under a hail of fire from the Japanese ships. Thanks to her powerful engine capable of reaching 24 knots, the *Askold* disappeared beyond Japanese range, but the damage was serious. Unable to reach Vladivostok, she retreated to the neutral port of Shanghai, where she was interned until 1905. Therefore, the image could only have been shot in Port Arthur before 27 July 1904 (Grew 1904-1906, II: 207-208).

The other glass slide shows a detail of the stern of the shelled battleship *Tsesarevich* (MS15/6/21B/7); one of the twelve Canet Model 1892 6-inch/45 quick-firing guns mounted on a turret on the upper deck; and one of the eight Maxim quick-firing 37-millimetre (1.5 in) guns placed in the superstructure next to the military mast.

The *Tsesarevich* was a Borodino-class battleship built in France and characterised by a «tumblehome» hull, meaning that it narrowed above the waterline. Launched in February 1901 from the French Forges et Chantiers de la Méditerranée shipyard in Marseille, the *Tsesarevich* entered service in August 1903 and sailed for Port Arthur to join the Pacific Fleet where, like the *Askold*, she arrived shortly before the Russo-Japanese War, on 2 December 1903. She was considered the best battleship of the Imperial Russian Navy.

The glass slide reveals details of the pounding taken by the *Tsesarevich* from the Japanese on 7 August 1904, during the attempted breakout from Port Arthur, when the temporary commander of the First Pacific Squadron, Admiral Wilhelm Withöft, was hit by shrapnel.<sup>16</sup> The *Tsesarevich* had just returned to service following five months in dock after being torpedoed by the Japanese on the night of the surprise attack which triggered the war. The paper photo, in contrast, shows the *Tsesarevich* harboured at Qingdao after the Battle of the Yellow Sea, when, on 10 August 1904, the Russian fleet, led by the *Tsesarevich*, was engaged by the Japanese fleet as it tried to exit Port Arthur harbour and sail to safety to Vladivostok. The heavy fighting saw the *Tsesarevich* hit on the conning tower by two heavy calibre shells. The effects can be seen in the photograph. Fragments bounced across the

<sup>15</sup> The *Novik* was the fastest cruiser of her time reaching 25 knots.

<sup>16</sup> He is also known as Wilgelm Vitgeft (1847-1904).

unprotected bridge, which was destroyed, instantly killing Withöft, as well as the helmsman and close to a dozen crew members. After the battle, most of the ships returned to Port Arthur, but during the night, the *Tsesarevich* had to take refuge in the Germany colony of Qingdao, where it was interned until the end of war, from where it sailed in early 1906 to join the Baltic Fleet.

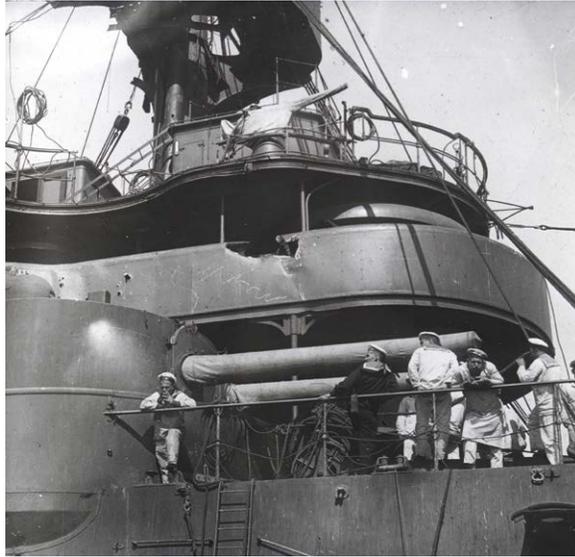


Figure 2 – Details of the shelled stern of the *Tsesarevich* after the pounding from the Japanese on August 7, 1904. MS15/6/21B/7.

These three images of Russian Imperial Navy ships are snapshots taken by amateur photographers standing on the pier and focusing on the Russian ships docking at Port Arthur and Qingdao harbours before or after the battles. The conflict was ongoing, but daily life continued as evidenced by the casual posture of people visible in the photographs. In the glass slide of the *Askold*, Chinese passengers can be seen boarding a boat and the sailors' laundry hangs in the sun on the stern, while in the other glass slide, Russian sailors stand in casual posture, chatting and smoking on the upper deck of the damaged *Tsesarevich*. The paper photo of the *Tsesarevich* at Qingdao harbour shows Russian crew members standing on the upper decks, while small steamboats approach the seriously damaged battleship, and a couple of rowing boats were taking on board and transporting part of the crew to shore. Meanwhile, other crew members were working on the starboard side of the upper deck towards the stern, covering shell damage to the hull. These details suggest that the photograph was taken soon after the *Tsesarevich's* arrival at Qingdao in mid-August.

The last photograph of the Russo-Japanese War depicts another type of scene. Taken from afar, it shows a Chinese crowd assembling in front of the main gate and along the fence surrounding the Russian Civilian Administrator's residence, where the French flag was flying from the flagpole.



Figure 3 – Capture of Newchwang by Five Japanese Scouts at 4.30 P.M. on Monday, 25 July, 1904. View of the Russian Civil Administrator's Residence (French Flag Flying) with the Victors at the Gate. MS15/6/4/5.

The photo was taken on the capture of Niuzhuang (now Yingkou) by five Japanese scouts, who are standing close to the gate at 4.30 pm on 25 July 1904 (MS15/6/4/5). The image is different from the others not only in subject matter, but also in size (28.5 cm x 21.2 cm) and it appears to have been taken by a camera using plates and not film, as suggested by the fact that people are not standing still, but rather walking or running, and thus appear as shadows. This theory is also corroborated by a second picture taken from exactly the same point one hour later, from which we can assume that the camera was mounted on a tripod.



Figure 4 – Capture of Newchwang by Five Japanese Scouts on Monday, 25 July, 1904. Deputation of the Native Guilds at 5.30 P.M. to invoke the protection of the Victors. MS15/6/4/6

This image again shows a crowd in front of the gate and it is captioned as the «deputation of the native guilds at 5.30 pm to invoke the protection of the victors» (MS15/6/4/6).

Lying on the right bank of the Liao River and on the north-eastern shore of Liaodong Bay, Niuzhuang was one of the treaty ports opened in May 1861 after the Second Opium War (China 1904, 1-2). This locality, renowned as the largest port for free trade in the north of China, remained unaffected by the Russo-Japanese War until late July 1904, when these two images were taken.

On 25 July, the newly arrived Japanese scouts saw the Russians replacing their consular flag with the French flag, as shown in the photograph, but the building was neither the French nor the Russian consular premises, but rather, the administration house and the Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs (CIMC) offices.<sup>17</sup> On July 29, the dragon flag of the CIMC was again hoisted over their property, and later on that very same day, the flag over the West Chinese Customs changed again from French to Japanese. By this time, the Russian consul and administrator, V. F. Grosse, and the manager of the Russo-Chinese Bank, Mr Blanche, had left Niuzhuang for Tianjin. By 7 August, the Japanese were in full control of the town (*North China Herald* 1904).

An insight into the event portrayed by the images is given by a Western correspondent:

Four Japanese scouts rode into the square. They were mounted on sorry, tired horses, all mud splattered, and rough. The men wore uniforms stained and torn by campaigning. The people regarded them with interest but without any display of emotion. They were not welcomed, nor was their intrusion resented. Then arrived four more, and later another four, with a non-commissioned officer. To him came the chiefs of the Chinese guilds with greetings. The foreign residents held aloof for the expected army, the officers and the generals. A short while before British ladies had provided free teas and free refreshments for the Russian troops arriving from outlying camps, and for recruits doing their drill-ground exercises. No one had anything to offer these tired, battle-worn men; they tendered not so much as a light for a cigarette, or a drink of water to the thirsting horses the men rode. The Chinese looked on with as much indifference as the foreigners showed (Grew 1904-1906, III: 60).

The account shows a rare display of bias against the Japanese according to Keith Stevens (2003: 144-45), and contrasts with the tone of the inscription in the photographs; but both agree on the fact that the Chinese guild representatives came to the gate of the seized CIMC premises to greet the Japanese scouts. This attitude of the Chinese guilds towards the Japanese army is explained by the fact that «Russian proclamations in the interior warned the people against conveying their harvest» to Niuzhuang, otherwise they would suffer loss, while the Japanese occupiers reversed the condition of trade, as they «closely invested, allowed unre-

<sup>17</sup> A similar action had been taken previously by the Russians on 4 August 1900, during the Boxer Rebellion (China 1904, 11).

stricted importation and shipment» (China 1905, 2). The images were taken either by a customs official or someone commissioned by the local customs in order to be sent to the Inspector General, Sir Robert Hart. They are not images of battle, but rather of actions contingent to the war itself. They do not represent the photojournalism of well-known professionals like Beato, but they do contribute to displaying accessory details of the conflict, such as how the legacy of the battles affected everyday life and business, and they can provide evidence against narrative bias.

#### Infrastructure Photography: Focus on Chinese Modernisation

The modernisation process in China started with the arrival of foreigners. After the Second Opium War, the Manchu court launched the Self-Strengthening Movement, a modernising programme in which Western technology was introduced into China in service to the country, but on the premise that such technology would only be adopted as a tool and not as an element for a change of mentality. The Chinese believed that, to fight and win against the Western powers, they had to use the same weapons and equipment. And so, the Confucian doctrine remained the central doctrine of the state until the abolition of the imperial examination system in 1905. It is undoubtedly true, however, that the modernisation of the country led to the final abandonment of that doctrine.

The Self-Strengthening Movement covered a long period of the late Qing era, as it was launched in 1860 and concluded in 1895 with the First Sino-Japanese War. The war was seen as proof of the failure of the Self-Strengthening Movement. Yet, this modernising process drew China out from isolation to launch itself on a path of technological progress. China started to build its first tranche of modern infrastructure, including railways, steamships, modern harbours and docks, lighthouses, telegraph and radio networks, shipyards and arsenals, to name but a few. Photography was an extremely useful tool for bearing witness to this modernising process. Photographs could show the advancement and accomplishment of projects, such as the construction of buildings, the laying of ballasts and rails, the reinforcement of wharves, and many more.

The set of photographs of modern infrastructure in China reproduced here belongs to an album compiled by a customs officer, Richard H. Strangman, from January to February 1904 and sent to the CIMC Inspector General. We know that Hart collected pictures of the customs service, because photographs of customs service compounds and related infrastructure allowed him «to keep a close eye on staff and operations in remote corners of China even after he largely gave up travelling in his later years» (De Angeli and Reisz 2017, 40). The album was compiled between December 1903 and Chinese New Year (16 February) 1904 and of its 50 snapshots, half focus on customs activities in Tanggu and Dagu, while the other half feature a train journey from Shanhaiguan to Qinghuangdao, including stops in locations along the Beijing-Mukden (Shenyang) line.<sup>18</sup> The

<sup>18</sup> For more information about Strangman's journey, its destination, and scope, see De Angeli (2018).

following images show the state of the railways and customs service infrastructure in the north of China just before the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War.



Figure 5 – Four fifth of Birds Eye View of Ching Wang Tao. C.E. s M C.so Ste Hsiping out hanging at Pier. Japanese Transport «Nagata Maru» at Anchor. One fifth of the Sea left out. Jan, 1904. MS15/6/11E/33

The first is a panoramic view composed of a set of four superimposed photos<sup>19</sup> entitled *Four Fifths of Birds Eye View of Ching Wang Tao* [Qinghuangdao] (MS15/6/11E/33). As the inscription explains, the fifth picture in the set was left out as it showed the sea view. In fact, the four photos are paired, and the part that is cut corresponds to the sea at the centre. The panorama taken from the height of the hill beside the coal yards depicts, on the right side, the town of Qinghuangdao, which, in 1904, saw the establishment of the Chinese settlement,<sup>20</sup> and on the left the pier and the harbour located far from the town centre. At the pier, the Chinese Engineering and Mining Company steamer *Hsiping* [Xibing] is discharging mechanics and materials for building the pier and the harbour infrastructure (China 1904, 147), while close by, the Japanese transport cargo ship *Nagata Maru* is at anchor, and a steam locomotive is drawing a train back to the station. In the foreground, a few men can be seen working on the rails. The quality of the panorama is excellent, though incomplete, and provides a good sense of the harbour and the rail infrastructure. Strangman's bird's-eye view imitates a style in vogue in Europe and North America since the 1860s, which aimed «to showcase the allure of cities in the context of industrial and capitalistic expansion» (Cody and Terpak 2011, 57). If the Western professional photographers and their buyers wanted to show the capital and the potential of their godowns, customs houses, churches, and steamers in China to Western viewers, it was, according to Cody and Terpak, because they «wanted to show the strength and anchorlike extent of the Western presence» (Cody and Terpak 2011, 57).

<sup>19</sup> The Kodak snapshots were cut to a different length, but all were 5.9 cm in height with a maximum length of 11 cm.

<sup>20</sup> Chinese settlement began in 1904 and by 1905 the town had a population of approximately 3,000 people (China 1904, 148; 158).

The next two photographs were also taken in Qinghuangdao, but they were close-ups of the construction and maintenance of the harbour and railway infrastructure. It seems that Strangman took the panorama view close to where the following photographs were taken.

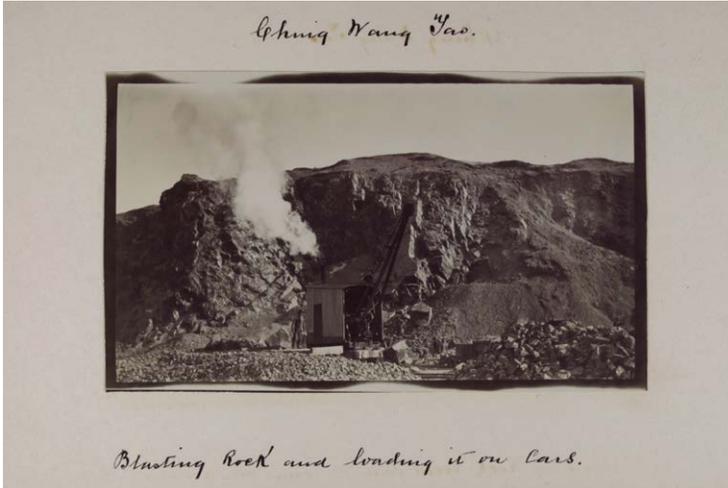


Figure 6 – Ching Wang Tao. Blasting Rock and boarding it on cars. MS15/6/11E/37.

In the first, a steam stone-breaker is blasting rocks on a barren hillside. On the left of the knapper a worker stands close to the gatehouse door, while on the right three workers are close to the cars, which are ready to load (MS15/6/11E/37).



Figure 7 – Ching Wang Tao. Dumping Rock from cars to form breakwater. MS15/6/11E/38.

In the second, entitled *Dumping Rock from cars to form breakwater* (MS15/6/11E/38), Strangman focuses his lens on the railway track, where the cars loaded with stones have reached the end of the pier. Three men are unloading a car, while on their left, another man works alone unloading another car. It is noticeable that the stones are being unloaded next to the rails, as a boat is docked at the bottom of the pier end, with only its mainmast visible. Built in 1901 and connected by rail to Tanghe station, the pier was partly destroyed by a storm that very same year, and so the photograph shows the ongoing repairs (China 1904, 147). Qinghuangdao harbour was built by the partnership of Sir John Wolfe Barry and Lt. Col. Arthur John Barry. Established in 1891, they had a long experience of engineering projects in China, such as the Shanghai-Nanjing and the Chinese Central railways, and the Chinese Engineering and Mining Company Limited.<sup>21</sup>



Figure 8 – Lanchow Bridge. MS15/6/11E/46.

The last photograph shows another panorama: the *Lanchow Bridge* (MS15/6/11E/46) located on the Luan River at Luanzhou. This locality, like Qinghuangdao and other sites visited by Strangman during his train journey in early 1904, was considered of strategic importance, due to its location on the still incomplete Beijing-Mukden railway line, which was built between 1881 and 1907. From the time that the line reached Mukden (now Shenyang), one of the major cities in Manchuria, Mukden became a crucial rail hub, serving those travelling from China, from Port Arthur (now Dalian) and from Harbin.

<sup>21</sup> For information about some of their activities, see Crisp (1906).

The Mukden rail hub was built along the Japanese-controlled South Manchuria Railway and was connected to both Beijing, via the Beijing-Mukden railway, and Harbin, 350 miles further north, which served a major station on the Russian-built Trans-Manchurian Railway. The Beijing-Mukden railway and Qinghuangdao harbour were both major strategic infrastructural assets, because they were vital to the transport and commercial networks connecting the Chinese capital with the Northeast of China. The Beijing-Mukden railway constituted the backbone of the railway system in Manchuria. Its first section, connecting Tangshan to the Kaiping coal mines, built in 1879 on the orders of Governor-General Li Hongzhang, was extended westwards towards Tianjin and eastwards beyond the Great Wall at Shanghaiguan. The section between Shanghaiguan and Tianjin came under British governance after the Boxer Uprising and the British extended the line to Beijing, while the Russians extended the section east of the wall at Shanghaiguan. Following the British restitution to the Chinese authorities in 1904, construction continued as far as Xinmindun (Constant 1933, 121; Huang and Chen, 2014). Moreover, Shanghaiguan was a key station on the Beijing-Mukden railway and an infrastructural hub connecting the railway line to Qinghuangdao harbour, which served both commercial and passenger steamers. Qinghuangdao was also the locality where the Great Wall of China entered the sea. Both physically and symbolically, it marked the border between Manchuria and Zhili province, the borderland and the centre.

The infrastructures of Qinghuangdao harbour and the Beijing-Mukden railway were significant strategic objectives for both the Russian and the Japanese empires in China. While Qinghuangdao was vital in linking maritime communication and trade networks to rail networks, the Beijing-Mukden railway offered a route penetrating deep into the Chinese heartland. The Chinese authorities were well aware of the potential military, strategic and logistic uses that Russia or Japan could derive from these infrastructures. Consequently, the CIMC tried to maintain close control of them. Strangman's photographic images reveal both the infrastructure itself and the presence of the CIMC to which he belonged.

#### Conclusion: Western Photography Appraising Chinese Modernisation

The series of images from the Sir Robert Hart Collection, despite being taken by different amateur photographers and developed on different media, were all taken during a short but pivotal period for China. These photographs record war-related scenes and infrastructures just before or during the Russo-Japanese War, the very first political conflict covered by an illustrated Chinese magazine, the *Shanghai Biweekly*. The photographs published in the *Shanghai Biweekly* were used to further debate around China's resilience in the face of the imperialist drive and the extent to which the Chinese had the ability to save their country and culture from foreign domination (Wu 2011, 15).

The Russo-Japanese War photographs were conceptually different from the images taken by Felice Beato during the Second Opium War, as, by the

turn of the twentieth century, the technology available to photojournalists had advanced considerably. Although not yet achieving the results attained with the 35mm cameras of the 1920s and 1930s, photographers during the Russo-Japanese War were able to capture images that were more spontaneous because they required less technical preparation (Ritchin 2010, 120). Kodak's Brownie camera provided amateur photographers with capabilities that made «snapshots» of the ongoing conflict possible. There are no images of battle, because the amateur photographers were not attached to any army involved in the conflict. Yet, the glass slides provide a significant early example of photojournalism, depicting the damage sustained by the Russian Imperial Navy on two of its Pacific Fleet ships, the *Askold* and the *Tsesarevich*. These images differ, however, from the voyeuristic cliché of war photographs, because there is no ongoing battle or depiction of death (Ritchin 2010, 120). Rather, they show some Russian mariners casually standing on the decks of the ships, laundry hanging from the superstructure and commercial boat passengers going about their regular business.

The two sets of photographs on paper offer a different perspective. Both can be attributed to people working for or connected to the Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs and offer a glimpse into the activities of the service before and during the conflict, which posed obvious dangers to Chinese sovereignty and customs infrastructure. These images differ from the stereotypical images of China that became widely available in the West following the Boxer Rebellion. Sarah Fraser (2011, 106) observes that «scenes of itinerant workers, destitute poor, and military captives at the time of the Boxer Uprising reflect racial debates about the modern Chinese subject prevalent in international power relations». The photographs taken by CIMC officials cover very different subjects, because the lens is focused on Chinese modernisation.

Chinese modernisation was one of the outcomes of the cross-cultural encounter between China and the West, which passed through the camera shutter. The impetus given to modern technology in China influenced the reforming Qing state and a new group of artisans, technicians and engineers emerged from the Self-Strengthening Movement, who recognised photography as a new tool for modernisation. Photography was not a core technology of the Self-Strengthening Movement «nor was it a technology like railroads or telegraph lines, which left an obvious footprint in the landscape». Nevertheless, it had already attracted the attention of some of the highest-ranking Qing officials by the 1860s (Cody and Terpak 2011, 44). In the mid-1870s at the Shanghai Polytechnic Institute, John Fryer and Xu Shou displayed «several dozen photographs supplied by English and Belgian firms of railway locomotives and cars, mining machinery, firearms, artillery, and iron-framed buildings» as a didactic tool (Cody and Terpak 2011, 45). Accordingly, photography was both a product and a tool of modernisation in China, and Cody and Terpak (2011, 47) assert that it eventually became an integral part of the Self-Strengthening Movement's culture and commerce. This in turn tantalised Western audiences, who were eager for images and information about China.

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# Fosco Maraini e la cultura giapponese.

## Note di lettura

Edoardo Tortarolo

**Abstract:** Nel Novecento italiano Fosco Maraini (1912-2004) spicca per la sua forte e creativa personalità di antropologo, fotografo, viaggiatore, alpinista e scrittore. Fattore unificante di queste attività fu il concetto di alterità delle culture, così come questo era stato elaborato dall'antropologia di Boas, Kroeber e Benedict. In particolare nei suoi scritti sul passato e sul presente del Giappone è riscontrabile una visione simpatetica e fondamentalmente essenzialista delle società umane. Formatosi soprattutto sui testi dell'antropologia americana del periodo tra le due guerre, Maraini affrontò una tensione difficilmente risolvibile tra la permanenza delle componenti originarie, che definiscono ogni cultura attraverso i secoli, e l'inarrestabile processo di trasformazione interno indotto dalla modernizzazione.

**Keywords:** Fosco Maraini, Giappone, antropologia

In ricordo di Eiji Takemura (1962-2020)

Nel panorama non ricchissimo relativo all'interesse dei ricercatori italiani per la storia e la cultura giapponese Fosco Maraini (1912-2004) spicca per la sua forte personalità, l'unicità esibita della sua visione del mondo asiatico, l'originalità del modo di raccontare le sue esperienze, riflessioni e considerazioni. Nella sua ampia produzione non mancano cenni sulla storia del Giappone, vista non da uno storico professionale ma da un esperto del Giappone con forti interessi per il suo passato. Certamente, è stato «solitario viandante delle montagne, estroso eremita fotografo, etnologo istintivo ed eclettico» (Cestari 2004, 125).<sup>1</sup> La sua vita è

<sup>1</sup> Sulla posizione di Maraini nella discussione internazionale sul Giappone può valere quanto scritto da Alan Macfarlane, per il quale, «essendo un antropologo che conosceva l'Italia e il Tibet, oltre ad altri paesi, Maraini appare il più preparato. I suoi scritti sono illuminanti e talora splendidi. Come Singer e Hearn, Maraini intuì chiaramente l'alterità del Giappone, pur non riuscendo a collocarla entro una struttura universale che l'avrebbe resa comprensibile anche a noi» (Macfarlane 2010, 248). Analoga la valutazione di Michele Monserrati, per il quale la conoscenza del Giappone da parte di Maraini fu profonda ed elaborata nel corso dell'intera sua esistenza (Monserrati 2020, 140-41). Per una bibliografia degli scritti su Maraini cfr. Colombo (1988); Maraini (1997); *Fosco Maraini* (1999); *Il Tibet fra mito e realtà* (2014). L'autobiografia in terza persona è Maraini (1999). L'edizione di una scelta rappresentativa delle opere è il volume dei Meridiani di Mondadori, Maraini (2007). Per le

stata avventurosa e piena di momenti drammatici e sorprendenti tanto da reggere un racconto autobiografico di svariate centinaia di pagine, in cui in terza persona Maraini ha reinventato la propria esistenza in un affascinante *mélange* di realtà e libera rievocazione di situazioni, dialoghi, imprevisti. La passione per la montagna, l'irrequietezza esistenziale, l'insofferenza per il fascismo, e soprattutto l'attrazione per l'altro e il diverso, vissuta come motivazione fondamentale per le scelte di vita, sono stati tra i temi più in evidenza nei commenti su Maraini. A queste ragioni di interesse si sono aggiunte le creazioni linguistiche che hanno dato un'immagine di Maraini scanzonata, ribelle irriducibile alle convenzioni più pedanti e accademiche, a cominciare dalla sua irresistibile divagazione metasemantica sul lonfo.<sup>2</sup>

Ormai a distanza di anni dalla loro prima pubblicazione, le monografie e i saggi pubblicati da Maraini sui due paesi che di più lo attrassero, il Tibet e il Giappone, meritano, tuttavia, di essere riletti con un'attenzione rivolta anche al loro contenuto e quindi al loro contesto scientifico e intellettuale. Quelle che seguono sono quindi note di lettura relative in particolare a una scelta dei testi di Maraini che si prestano a un'analisi di storia intellettuale. Si è scelto in particolare l'insieme dei testi che si riferiscono al Giappone, perché fu il Giappone a dargli l'occasione, in più momenti della sua vita, di formulare riflessioni sulla storia, l'antropologia e la politica. Il Giappone gli diede l'opportunità per argomentazioni di carattere sistematico che andavano aldilà del caso specifico in esame.

Va ricordato che Maraini ebbe modo di sperimentare la conoscenza dell'altro, «il periferico, il remoto, l'inusitato, l'esterno», con grande impatto, innanzitutto durante il viaggio in Tibet, accompagnando Giuseppe Tucci nella sua spedizione del 1937. Come è stato osservato, la genesi del viaggio di Maraini è molto più riferibile al ruolo notevole del padre Antonio, scultore di grande fama e molto ben inserito nella vita culturale del regime, che alle bizzarrie imprevedibili del destino (Nalesini 2013, 244-45). Tucci, come è stato ben descritto nella recente sua biografia da parte di Alice Crisanti, faceva parte dell'élite culturale raccolta nell'Accademia d'Italia e non poteva non avere ben presente il ruolo eminente di Antonio Maraini, che dal 1927 era, tra i molti suoi incarichi, segretario generale della Biennale di Venezia.<sup>3</sup> D'altra parte, prima della partenza per il Tibet, Maraini aveva avviato una cordiale consuetudine con Giorgio Pasquali, anche se Maraini si laureò, al rientro dal Tibet, in scienze naturali.<sup>4</sup> Certamente, come

tappe essenziali dell'esistenza di Maraini si veda De Martino (2007). Riguardano l'ambito familiare ed emozionale: Maraini e Maraini (2007); Maraini, Toni (2012); Maraini, Fosco (2012); Alliata e Maraini (2014).

<sup>2</sup> Vedi Cimini (2008) e, nella versione televisiva di Gigi Proietti, Gigliotube (2018).

<sup>3</sup> Cfr. <https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL0010031761/12/giuseppe-volpi-misurata-renato-ricci-antonio-maraini-e-autorita-fasciste-attendono-sul-molo-giardini-venezia.html#n> (last accessed 08/01/2023).

<sup>4</sup> Della familiarità con Pasquali restano alcune cartoline di Maraini al filologo presso l'Archivio dell'Accademia della Crusca per il periodo 1935-1950 (Fondo Pasquali 1882-1952. Serie 1-Corrispondenza 1901-1953. Fascicolo 742) e soprattutto le linee in ricordo poste all'inizio di Maraini (2016, 6).

è stato scritto, Tucci rappresentò una «iniziazione alla cultura, alle tradizioni ed agli stili di vita del Tibet» e più in generale allo studio dell'alterità culturale. Maraini sperimentò la ricerca sul campo e l'analisi etnologica autonomamente, trascorrendo un periodo nel Sikkim dopo la conclusione della spedizione al seguito di Tucci (Gei 2017, 121).<sup>5</sup> La seconda spedizione in Tibet con Tucci nel dopoguerra fu assai meno fortunata dal punto di vista dei rapporti tra il fotografo-cineasta-alpinista e ora antropologo con esperienza e lo studioso tanto erudito e competente quanto maldisposto a riconoscere l'autonomia e lo spirito d'indipendenza del giovane assistente-fotografo. Maraini nascose sotto il velo dell'inesauribile creatività espressiva e della felice vena narrativa – soprattutto delle due opere maggiori, *Segreto Tibet* e *Ore giapponesi* – una solida riflessione sulle coordinate intellettuali che hanno plasmato il suo sguardo sul Tibet e sul Giappone nel corso degli anni Trenta.

Il ruolo fondamentale di Giuseppe Tucci pare innegabile. Da Tucci Maraini apprese, per ammissione sua, una straordinaria quantità di informazioni e di prospettive, pur con modalità certamente spiacevoli di cui Maraini si risentì. Tucci fu una personalità estremamente complessa e per molti versi sfuggente. Tra i caratteri distintivi della sua visione c'erano certamente il tema della decadenza della società europea e l'idea dei caratteri innati in una determinata cultura, che rendevano un sistema culturale profondamente diverso da un altro, compatto e coerente, ma anche impervio e di difficile decifrazione (Nalesini 2013, 215-18). Ritroviamo posizioni analoghe in Maraini. È un tratto comune della cultura antropologica degli anni Trenta cui Maraini si è mantenuto fedele. Dal 1938 al 1946 Maraini lavorò in Giappone: la metafora più volte impiegata per esprimere il rapporto conoscitivo fu che si trattasse di un pianeta diverso, quindi un mondo distinto. Nel 1954 tornò in Giappone per una ricognizione nell'isola di Hekura per documentare la vita, la religione e l'economia degli Ama, basata sulla pesca di molluschi da parte esclusivamente delle donne. Come era il caso dell'interesse di Maraini per gli Ainu dell'isola di Hokkaido negli anni Trenta, Maraini vedeva nella cultura Ama un sistema che si avviava a scomparire. Nella sua descrizione degli Ama si inseriva una considerazione generale: «L'uomo si illude di guardare la vita con occhi suoi, di essere un individuo che giudica e classifica; in realtà è la cultura in cui egli nasce e cresce che guarda, giudica, classifica per lui» (Maraini 2001, 88). In quell'occasione un abbozzo di comparazione tra situazioni apparentemente simili in Giappone e Sicilia (che Maraini conosceva bene e direttamente) commentava che «diverse sono però la storia, la formazione mentale nei due gruppi umani; ciò che pare facile in astratto diviene impossibile in concreto» (Maraini 2001, 88).<sup>6</sup> E poco più avanti si lanciava

<sup>5</sup> Il risultato fu Maraini (1939), ristampato come Maraini, Fosco (2012).

<sup>6</sup> Sul progetto di una descrizione fotografica del Sud italiano perseguito ma non realizzato da Maraini cfr. Marfè (2019), che ricorda che l'editore de Donato sintetizzava l'intenzione sua e di Maraini come restituire «l'immagine unitaria di un mondo molto compatto: come se sotto una società si percepisse in filigrana il tessuto di una civiltà» (61).

in un'apodittica affermazione: «non esiste l'uomo di natura; esiste solo l'uomo di cultura» (Maraini 2001, 89).

All'inizio degli anni Settanta Maraini ha dedicato un libro ai *patterns of continuity* visibili all'interno della millenaria storia giapponese. A partire dal caso del Giappone, Maraini espone la tesi generale per cui ogni civiltà (*civilization* nell'originale) è un mandala, con la sua logica interna (con il suo ordine interno come un cristallo) (Maraini 1971, 48). Riprendendo ancora più tardi temi già trattati nell'autobiografia non-convenzionale, negli anni Novanta tornò sul tema della cultura come blocco costitutivo di una civiltà. Non sempre queste civiltà-sistemi resistevano all'impatto di altre entità concorrenti. Ma nel caso del Giappone si trattava di una realtà determinante. Il Giappone era una civiltà maggiore a tutti gli effetti (Maraini 1994). Si era precipitato nella guerra mondiale come esito di una lunga vicenda:

Fu un evento che subdolamente negli abissi della coscienza collettiva si preparava da due millenni, una prova che nella pienezza dei tempi poteva affrontarsi, ma che d'altra parte era assolutamente ineluttabile. Prima o poi, in quella fornace, ci si doveva buttare (Maraini 1994, 36).

La civiltà compatta dei giapponesi aveva prodotto «la mente giapponese», unica e consolidata nel tempo lungo. Disponeva di una cosmogonia, che è in realtà una nippogonia, avviata nell'ottavo secolo d.C. e si era dotata di una logica diversa da quella di origine greco-classica e dalle sue manifestazioni cristiane e illuministe.

La mente giapponese è retta da un altro clima, immutato nei millenni, quello dell'e/e: i diversi, perfino gli opposti, si adattano tra di loro, si fondono, convivono in pace, il principio di non-contraddizione [euro-aristotelico] si esercita con molto meno severità (Maraini 1994, 37).

La civiltà giapponese è pragmatica e realista, non astratto-teorica, come quella di origine europea. Per evidenziare l'importanza della cultura come prisma fondamentale Maraini ha inventato la distinzione tra esocosmo ed endocosmo, nella quale l'endocosmo incorpora e mette in primo piano l'idea della cultura e della civiltà come tutto ordinato e produttore di senso.

Per questa concezione della civiltà Maraini addusse due origini fondamentali. La prima è legata alla sua infanzia segnata dal legame a due mondi non comunicanti: quello della madre inglese, espressione non solo di un universo linguistico a sé stante ma di un sistema di vita e di valori in sé compiuto; quello della campagna fiorentina dei mezzadri e fittavoli, interpreti di una civiltà radicalmente diversa, contadina, vigorosa e radicata nei tempi lunghi dell'agricoltura. La seconda è legata all'impressione nel corso degli anni Trenta dall'impatto prima con il Tibet sotto la guida di Tucci e poi, in maggiore profondità, con il Giappone dove giunse con la famiglia a dicembre del 1938. Maraini aveva acquistato i rudimenti del giapponese nell'intervallo tra la presentazione della domanda per la borsa di studio e la partenza da Brindisi ma giungeva in Giappone, come ricordò, pensando che si trattava non solo di un'isola, non solo di un nuovo con-

tinente, ma di «un nuovo pianeta» (Maraini 1999, 385). Le spiegazioni basate sulla biografia e spesso sull'autobiografia possono avviare una riflessione e una ricerca, raramente, tuttavia, forniscono una spiegazione soddisfacente per scelte di prospettiva e di vocabolario mantenute per tutta una vita di analisi, osservazione e scrittura. Come già accennato, il tema della cultura come sistema unitario era nel periodo tra le due guerre presente nella cultura europea e americana in diversi ambiti. Le pagine di Tucci e Maraini su questo tema richiamano alla mente le grandi architetture di filosofia della storia nate durante e immediatamente dopo il conflitto mondiale. Spengler e Toynbee ne furono gli esponenti più noti durante il periodo interbellico. Per Spengler l'approccio morfologico alla filosofia della storia metteva in evidenza l'importanza delle civiltà, che sono realtà organiche unitarie che crescono e muoiono, ciascuna per conto proprio, con la propria logica e morale interna. La civiltà (*Kultur*) era l'unità della storia universale. Tra le otto civiltà superiori (egizia, babilonese, indiana, cinese, greco-romana, araba, messicana precolombiana, occidentale) mancava, va sottolineato, quella giapponese. Anche per Toynbee, che lesse il primo volume di *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* quando uscì nel 1918 (il secondo fu pubblicato nel 1922) le civiltà (*civilisations*) erano la chiave per comprendere il senso della storia e le manifestazioni della natura umana. Pur largamente accessibili a Maraini, Toynbee nell'originale inglese, Spengler nella traduzione americana, nessuno dei due – direttamente – pare lo abbiano interessato in quanto filosofi della storia.<sup>7</sup>

Tuttavia le riflessioni sulle caratteristiche della cultura come manifestazione della vita associata sono chiaramente percepibili nei suoi testi. Il tramite fu l'antropologia culturale americana tra le due guerre. Maraini indicò nelle interviste e nella sua autobiografia due riferimenti. Il primo è Franz Boas per i suoi studi degli anni Venti di cui, scriveva in un'intervista a Francesco Paolo Campione, «mi colpirono le acutissime osservazioni a proposito dei fenomeni artistici e dell'organizzazione sociale dei popoli dell'Alaska e della costa nord-occidentale degli USA» (Maraini 2001, 166).<sup>8</sup> Maraini si riferiva evidentemente agli studi di Boas sui Kwakiutl, apparsi dall'inizio del secolo in varie occasioni, in seguito alle sue osservazioni sul campo condotte a Fort Rupert, nella British Columbia canadese. Senza entrare in un'analisi dettagliata bastino tre rapide osservazioni. Maraini certamente condusse le sue osservazioni sugli Ainu avendo come riferimento Boas. Ugualmente trasse conferma da Boas per l'importanza della documentazione fotografica e visiva in genere.<sup>9</sup> A Boas, infine, guardò per trovare un appoggio alla propria inclinazione al relativismo, all'apertura verso le culture non europee, da capire nei loro termini innanzitutto e da apprezzare rifiutando pretese di superiorità morale e a maggior ragione razziale da parte

<sup>7</sup> Sulla ricezione di Spengler in Italia cfr. Thoendl (2010); Conte (2014). Tuttavia, va ricordato che Maraini utilizzò altri scritti di Toynbee per la preparazione del suo testo su Gerusalemme dopo il 1967 (Maraini 2022).

<sup>8</sup> Analogo il racconto in Maraini (1999, 441). Una ricostruzione parzialmente diversa in Caniglia (2014).

<sup>9</sup> Cfr. le osservazioni di Urru (2014).

degli europei. Maraini guardò anche due altri fondamentali autori della nuova antropologia culturale. La prima è Ruth Benedict, il secondo Alfred Kroeber. Il fondamentale *Patterns of Culture* di Benedict uscì nel 1935 e divenne il libro di riferimento per un'antropologia culturale che sviluppava le indicazioni di Boas. Di Benedict Maraini conobbe certamente l'applicazione dei principi al caso giapponese, presentato in *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*. L'assonanza tra le affermazioni generali riportate sopra e facilmente moltiplicabili e le dichiarazioni di principio dell'antropologa è indubitabile. Per Benedict tutte le culture sono di uguale interesse per l'antropologo. «The fact of first-rate importance is the predominant role that custom plays in experience and in belief, and the very great varieties it may manifest». Ogni individuo si trova dentro

a definite set of customs and institutions and ways of thinking. The life-history of the individual is first and foremost an accommodation to the patterns and standards handed down in his community. From the moment of his birth the customs into which he is born shape his experience and behavior (Benedict 1955, 2).

L'essenza culturale dell'essere umano è confermata dall'impossibilità di trasmettere la cultura biologicamente. Soprattutto l'osservazione mostrava che i cambiamenti percepiti come decadenza e insopportabile violazione della tradizione sono in realtà una trasformazione culturale.

The truth of the matter is rather that the possible human institutions and motives are legion, on every plane of cultural simplicity or complexity, and that wisdom consists in a greatly increased tolerance towards their divergences (Benedict 1955, 26).

Ricordando le pagine di Maraini sui Cafiri «neri», sui loro usi apparentemente molto bizzarri, che «si trasmettono immutati per millenni, dove le circostanze garantiscano l'isolamento dei gruppi umani» (Maraini 2001, 141), è impossibile non essere allertati all'assonanza con le pagine di Benedict. Per dichiarazione esplicita e reiterata di Maraini fu Kroeber a diventare il suo punto di riferimento formativo in particolare attraverso il suo *Anthropology*, uscito in prima edizione nel 1923 e ristampato più volte. Anche Kroeber fu, infatti, un autore in grado di accedere con uguale efficacia a due mondi culturali, nel suo caso, a quello anglo-americano e tedesco. Conosceva bene l'opera di Spengler; se ne distanziò, pur riconoscendone l'interesse, perché troppo incline a una forma di determinismo non dimostrato dai fatti empirici. Il suo libro aveva d'altronde l'organizzazione tematica, oltre che le dimensioni ragguardevoli, di una visione integrale, temporalmente molto profonda e ricca di informazioni come una enciclopedia della storia umana. Per Kroeber

in short, cultures are constantly and automatically acquiring or reacquiring a sort of integration. But this is a very different thing from the organic integration that holds together, say, a grasshopper or a rabbit. [...] Cultural integration – or for that matter social integration – is invariably of a much looser sort. It is an

accommodation of discrete parts, largely inflowing parts, into a more or less workable fit. It is not a growth of parts unfolding from a germ in accord with a pre-existing harmonious master plan. Such an unfolding has often been assumed, insinuated, or asserted by writers as diverse as Frazer, Spengler, and Malinowski. But it remains wholly undemonstrated, and history shows it to be at least partly untrue (Kroeber 1948, 287).<sup>10</sup>

La centralità del concetto di cultura venne a Maraini anche dalla mediazione di Kroeber che a sua volta assorbiva l'amplessima discussione europea e americana. Certamente Maraini riprese da lui il rigetto dell'etnocentrismo,

one of the great perverters of truth, alike in thinking and in acting; and the recognition of culture as being the conceptual means of breaking the hold of this shackle. To see and appraise humanity and its works, and men and their deeds, and beyond that man's relation to nature – to see these free from the distortions of ethnocentricity, with full acceptance of all attainable objectivity whether painful or pleasant; to contribute to such an attitude is perhaps the largest contribution of anthropology (Kroeber 1948, 849).

Durante la sua vita movimentata Maraini ha avuto l'opportunità di percorrere anche la via dello studio accademico, della ricerca universitaria e della scrittura storico-sociologica nella quale sperimentare la sua conoscenza diretta del Giappone e l'utilità delle convinzioni sulla coerenza dei sistemi culturali maturata attraverso la lettura dei classici novecenteschi dell'antropologia. In questo caso il tema della modernizzazione del Giappone dopo la catastrofe del 1945 fu affrontato da Maraini con l'appoggio di Richard Storry, l'eminente iamatologo che era stato suo collega all'università di Hokkaido alla fine degli anni Trenta. Nel 1940 Storry era riuscito a rientrare in Inghilterra, mentre Maraini e la sua famiglia erano rimasti in Giappone. Il legame tra i due era rimasto vivo e dal 1959 al 1964 Maraini fu fellow del St Anthony's College di Oxford, dove Storry fu direttore del Far East Centre.

In *Japan. Patterns of Continuity*, la monografia completata nel 1971, il tema della modernizzazione del Giappone fu posto a partire dall'idea dell'unità profonda culturale. La sensibilità per la concretezza della vita quotidiana giapponese, tipica di Maraini, si mette a confronto con la costellazione di concetti sociologici e storici necessari a inquadrare questo scarto della storia giapponese dopo la sconfitta militare. La modernizzazione rapidissima del Giappone, per la quale apparentemente non esistevano le premesse, mostra innanzitutto a Maraini la falsità dell'eurocentrismo. Riprendendo il tema di Kroeber e Benedict, Maraini insiste sull'alterità del Giappone rispetto al percorso europeo e al contempo sull'efficacia di questa modernità, eretica e non-euclidea (Maraini 1971, 13). Soprattutto il Giappone mostra la potenzialità di una civiltà non cristiana, in cui il nucleo profondo è in una visione della natura e della posizione dell'uomo nei

<sup>10</sup> Si veda eventualmente la traduzione italiana: Kroeber (1983).

suoi confronti. In questo testo, come in altre occasioni, Maraini insisteva sulla importanza dello shintoismo come culto della vita e unità tra uomo e natura e nucleo della civiltà giapponese. «La distinzione tra sacro e profano è un tratto culturale dell'Occidente; in oriente il divino è come diffuso dappertutto; quasi una corrente d'umile voltaggio, silenziosa e continua ma d'immensa capacità» (Maraini 2001, 86). Da questa posizione, antitetica al cristianesimo, derivavano il «pragmatismo lirico» e il realismo tipici dei giapponesi, l'attivismo negli affari, l'accettazione del lavoro come fonte di felicità, il rifiuto dell'ascetismo e la considerazione della prosperità come legittima e degna di essere perseguita e goduta fino in fondo (Maraini 1971, 30).

Questo è il nucleo della cultura giapponese: l'arrivo del buddismo dalla Cina nel sesto secolo ha comportato un suo adattamento e la fortuna dello zen si spiegava con la sua consonanza alle tendenze fondamentali della civiltà giapponese. La storia per Maraini si presenta come lo sviluppo di alcuni elementi già insiti nella cultura, mentre questa si mantiene essenzialmente uguale a sé stessa e crea una «unità sostanziale e formale». Nel caso del Giappone questa permanenza è documentabile, per le condizioni geografiche e l'isolamento autoimposto.

This is not something unique to Japan. Any civilization that has had a long time in which to flourish and mature becomes a vast mandala in which all parts respond and reverberate in subtle relationships with each other. In Japan, the interweaving is particularly tight due to the slow and steady development that has taken place over many centuries and for the greatest part in isolation (Maraini 1971, 36).

Per Maraini il nucleo profondo e religioso della civiltà giapponese è rimasto sostanzialmente immutato: la modernizzazione è neutrale rispetto ai contenuti culturali e non può essere equivocata con l'occidentalizzazione. L'adozione della tecnologia può al contrario portare a resistere meglio e più efficacemente all'adeguamento ai valori occidentali. Torna in questo snodo il richiamo alle teorie sui grandi cicli culturali degli anni Trenta, Spengler e Toynbee in primo luogo. Le culture ricevono sfide ad assorbire un flusso quasi infinito di intrusioni dall'esterno senza perdere molto della loro identità: questo è il caso dei giapponesi, che non si sono disintegrati culturalmente (Maraini 1971, 178) e contribuiranno alla creazione di una cultura mondiale, una *world culture* solo parzialmente occidentale. D'altronde, il Giappone per la specificità della sua storia culturale è molto più facilmente ricettivo nei confronti della scienza e della tecnologia contemporanee, nate in Europa nel passaggio tra Medioevo ed età moderna. Riprendendo Bertrand Russell e Joseph Needham, Maraini stilizzava drammaticamente la storia dell'affermarsi della scienza moderna in Europa contro le forze dell'oscurantismo. La regola per cui le conseguenze di una innovazione dispiegano tutte le loro potenzialità lontano dal luogo di origine si verifica chiaramente in Giappone. L'assenza di una religione, come il cristianesimo, basato sulla rivelazione divina e sulla separazione tra uomo e natura, fa sì che la cultura giapponese sia particolarmente aperta all'innovazione tecnologica perché essenzialmente tollerante, malgrado gli episodi di fanatismo politico.

In the West, the idea of divine revelation has been a pivot around which thought and history have revolved for twenty centuries. It has caused wars to be fought with bestial fury; it has justified persecutions and horrific massacres, as it has also inspired the greatest art, music, and literature. It has tortured the Western soul; it is torturing it still. Japan and the Far East in general have been spared much of the uglier influences of the concept of revelation. It is also possible that some higher and more brilliant flames of such demonic fire may have been lost, but assuredly there has been less persecution, fighting, maiming, and less suppression of fruitful ideas because of what was written in some ancient book or because of interpretations thereof. Japan, therefore, appeared on the modern scene with a mental look particularly adapted to accept in full the essence of the Western scientific cultural mutation and of its dependent technological revolution, leaving behind all the antagonistic and retarding elements that were, and still are, so deep a part of Western civilization (Maraini 1971, 187).

Il quadro della cultura giapponese proposto da Maraini assolveva quindi la funzione di mostrare all'Europa sia il suo merito storico di avere prodotto la scienza moderna sia, e forse soprattutto, le sue radicali debolezze. Per Maraini l'Occidente è stato «modernizzatore recalcitrante» (Maraini 1988, 48),<sup>11</sup> che a fatica smantellò il proprio apparato repressivo verso il nuovo e il creativo. Il Giappone è stato moderno sin dalla preistoria: il passato e le tradizioni giapponesi sono la base della modernità, non un ostacolo (Maraini 1971, 196).

Da ultimo Maraini considerò gli elementi specifici della cultura giapponese presenti nella consacrazione del figlio dell'imperatore Hirohito nel 1989-1990 (Hirohito morì il 7 gennaio 1989) (Maraini 2003). Forte della sua profonda e simpatetica conoscenza del Giappone, Maraini affronta il problema della continuità del rito di creazione del Tenno e le conseguenze sulla concezione del potere nella storia millenaria del Giappone. La spiegazione è tanto più difficile perché la terza fase del rito è privata, con parti non visibili dall'esterno, e perché la posizione costituzionale è cambiata, da ultimo con la trasformazione del Tenno da anello tra uomini e dio e deificato lui stesso a sovrano espressione del popolo. Hirohito era stato consacrato nel 1929, mentre il figlio Akihito si trovava in una situazione con forti elementi di discontinuità e non codificata per quanto riguarda la consacrazione imperiale. Tipico del modo di Maraini di vedere la storia giapponese è l'osservazione che il Tenno non è paragonabile a *caesar*-imperatore, ma ha conservato un alone sciamanico-religioso: è simile al Papa e al Dalai Lama. Il Tenno non è un sovrano temporale ma un «augusto e significativo ambasciatore dell'assoluto» (Maraini 2003, 18). Il Dalai Lama deriva il suo carisma dalla reincarnazione, il Papa per vicariato e rappresentanza, il Tenno riceve il carisma per discendenza e consanguineità: la peculiarità giapponese era confermata anche nel campo della concezione del potere.

<sup>11</sup> Maraini riprendeva i temi di Maraini (1971), rafforzando e dettagliando l'apparato di riferimenti bibliografici.

Nell'arco di un sessantennio Maraini ha riflettuto e scritto sul concetto di alterità delle culture, così come questo era stato elaborato dall'antropologia di Boas, Kroeber e Benedict. La sua conoscenza ravvicinata e simpatetica del Giappone, presente e passato, fu strutturata da una visione fondamentalmente essenzialista delle società, che gli lasciò grande spazio per esercitare la sua straordinaria capacità di cogliere nei campi più diversi gli elementi definatori della cultura giapponese. D'altro canto, questa stessa visione creò ripetutamente una tensione difficilmente risolvibile: Maraini cercò la permanenza delle componenti originarie che definiscono la cultura attraverso i secoli, e al contempo fu consapevole che l'articolazione interna della cultura e della società giapponese aveva accelerato il suo processo di trasformazione interno in un modo in realtà irreversibile.

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# Re-contextualisation of the Italian Risorgimento in Korea in the Early Twentieth Century. The Example of Chae-Ho Shin's *Three Great Founders of Italy*

Dong-Hyun Lim

**Abstract:** In 1907, Korean independence activist and nationalist historian Chae-Ho Shin translated the Chinese edition of *The Makers of Modern Italy* into a Korean-Chinese script and published it under the title *Three Great Founders of Italy*. This article aims to investigate Chae-Ho Shin's intentions and purposes, as shown in his *Three Great Founders of Italy*, to reveal how he re-contextualised the history of the Italian Risorgimento. Chae-Ho Shin's re-contextualisation was inextricably bound up with the historical setting of the political crisis that Korea faced after the Japan-Korea Treaty of 1905.

**Keywords:** Chae-Ho Shin, Qichao Liang, Risorgimento, Social Darwinism, Japan-Korea Treaty

## Introduction

Italy was one of the earliest European countries to establish diplomatic relations with Korea. Nonetheless, it is hard to say that commercial and cultural exchanges between the two countries have been vigorous compared to those between Korea and other European countries, such as the United Kingdom, Germany and France.<sup>1</sup> Korea and Italy have not prioritised each other politically or economically. Given this situation, it is somewhat exceptional that the achievements of the protagonists of the Italian Risorgimento are widely known in Korea. Korean people's knowledge of the Italian Risorgimento is undoubtedly due to *Three Great Founders of Italy* (*Italykōnkuksamkōlchōn*),<sup>2</sup> published by Korean independence activist and nationalist historian Chae-Ho Shin in 1907. This was a Korean-Chinese mixed edition of *The Makers of Modern Italy*, written by John A. R. Marriott and published in London in 1889.

<sup>1</sup> For the historical relationship between Korea and Italy, see Lim (2019) and Park (1987).

<sup>2</sup> All quotations of Chae-Ho Shin's work are from Shin (2001). All Korean words, other than proper nouns for which conventional Romanisation already exists, are converted to the Roman alphabet, according to the McCune-Reischauer Romanisation system.

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After the Japan-Korea Treaty of 1905 made Korea a protectorate of imperialist Japan, the main proponents of the Korean enlightenment, including Chae-Ho Shin himself, were dedicated to self-strengthening through Westernisation and mass education. Translation was a very effective tool for accepting Western science, technology, institutions and culture and for educating the public about Western civilisation. Owing to language difficulties, Korean intellectuals tended to translate from the Chinese or Japanese versions of Western works rather than from the original texts written in English, German, French and Italian. In many cases, translators modified texts according to their own intents and purposes. Chae-Ho Shin's *Three Great Founders of Italy* was no exception. This article will investigate Chae-Ho Shin's intentions and purposes, as shown in his *Three Great Founders of Italy*, to reveal how he re-contextualised the history of the Italian Risorgimento. As with other East Asian translators, Chae-Ho Shin's re-contextualisation was inextricably bound up with the historical setting of the political crisis that Korea faced after the Japan-Korea Treaty of 1905.

#### The Origin of *Three Great Founders of Italy*

Before we begin, it is necessary to examine the original script and the process by which it was translated into a Korean-Chinese mixed style by Chae-Ho Shin. This process represents how modern knowledge from the Western world was transferred to Korea in the early twentieth century.<sup>3</sup> The original script was *The Makers of Modern Italy*, published in 1889. It dealt with the achievements of Mazzini, Garibaldi and Cavour and was written by British historian and Conservative politician John A. R. Marriott. In his work, Marriott used the history of Italian unification to infuse national pride into the hearts of British people in the context of the competition among national states ignited in late-nineteenth-century Europe. Marriott's intention is already exposed in the first chapter, where he compares Italy and England. In the nineteenth century, Italy was still struggling for national unification, whereas England had formed its national identity as early as the thirteenth century (Marriott 1889, 2).

Marriott's *The Makers of Modern Italy* was translated into Japanese in 1892 by Japanese journalist Hisashi Hirata, whose intention for translation was similar to Marriott's writing intention. Hirata thought the Italian Risorgimento was a type of modern revolution and identified it with the Meiji Restoration of 1868 in Japan (also known as the Meiji Revolution or Meiji Reform). In doing so, he intended to place Japan among the ranks of Western powers, including Italy.

Among East Asian countries, Japan was the first to adopt Western sciences and culture, and Chinese intellectuals could gain knowledge about Western civilisation through Japan. Hirata's Japanese edition of *The Makers of Modern Italy* was translated into Chinese in 1902 by Chinese social and political activist

<sup>3</sup> On the process of translation of Marriott's work into East Asian languages, see Jeong (2015, 257-86).

and journalist Qichao Liang, who participated in a failed 103-day national, cultural and educational reform movement called the Hundred Days' Reform (also known as the Wuxu Reform) and then went into exile in Japan in 1898. During his exile, he translated many literary works on Western science and culture that were published in Japanese into Chinese, including the Japanese edition of *The Makers of Modern Italy*. In contrast to Marriott and Hirata, who intended to inspire national pride for their own countries, Liang perceived China as in a state of «ignorance» and «incapacity». In his translation, he identified China's sufferings, caused by the invasion of foreign powers, with Italy's situation before national unification and presented the protagonists of the Italian Risorgimento as examples that Chinese people should follow.

Chae-Ho Shin translated Liang's Chinese edition of *The Makers of Modern Italy* into a Korean-Chinese mixed style and published it under the title *Three Great Founders of Italy* in 1907. Before the publication of Chae-Ho Shin's *Three Great Founders of Italy*, several excerpts of Liang's Chinese edition had been published serially in modern Korean newspapers, such as *The Korea Daily News* (Daehan Maeil Sinbo) and the *Imperial Capital Gazette* (Hwangseong Sinmun), whose editor in chief was Chae-Ho Shin himself.

Compared to Liang's Chinese edition, several modifications are found in Chae-Ho Shin's *Three Great Founders of Italy*. Primarily, Chae-Ho Shin completely omitted Liang's preface and conclusion and replaced them with his own preface and conclusion. Chae-Ho Shin's intention, revealed in his preface, was the same as Liang's. Chae-Ho Shin urged Korean people to emulate the protagonists of the Italian Risorgimento to restore national sovereignty, identifying Korea under the invasion of foreign powers with Italy before national unification. Chae-Ho Shin also deleted some passages and inserted new ones into the body of the book. The most remarkable changes concern the roles of Mazzini and Cavour. Among the protagonists of the Italian Risorgimento, the achievements of Cavour were emphasised by both the original author and the East Asian translators Hirata and Liang. Liang, in particular, was a moderate reformer who had opposed the Chinese revolution of 1911 (also known as the Xinhai Revolution), which marked the collapse of the Chinese monarchy and the beginning of China's early republican era. He was a supporter of constitutional monarchy and Cavour was a figure who was most likely in agreement with Liang's political inclinations. Liang admired Cavour's achievements, comparing him with great leaders such as Otto von Bismarck, the prime minister of Prussia and founder of the German Empire, and Abraham Lincoln, the sixteenth president of the United States, who bolstered the federal government (Son 2007, 95).

However, Chae-Ho Shin, a Korean independence activist against Japan, thought that Korea needed revolutionary activists to fight for Korean independence, rather than conservative statesmen like Cavour. In contrast to Liang, moreover, Chae-Ho Shin pursued a republic as an ideal form of government for modern states, at least before he became an anarchist in the 1920s. Chae-Ho Shin believed a republic was a form of government in which «the public could

participate»<sup>4</sup> and asserted that public participation was important for overcoming national crises like the one Korea faced. Accordingly, in his *Three Great Founders of Italy*, Chae-Ho Shin deleted, or at least minimised, celebrations of Cavour's larger-than-life character, endorsements of constitutional monarchy and negative references to republics, whereas he touted Mazzini's role in Italian national unification. According to Chae-Ho Shin, «Mazzini ploughed a field and Cavour just harvested».<sup>5</sup>

#### Translation as a Means of National Salvation

Translation was a very effective tool for these three countries in East Asia for learning modern knowledge from the West. Japan began to translate literary works on modern Western civilisation and knowledge, with the aim of being incorporated into an international order in which Western powers took the lead. Then, Chinese intellectuals adopted modern knowledge through Japanese translations, since they were much more familiar with Japanese than with European languages. For example, Qichao Liang retranslated many Japanese editions of Western literary works into Chinese during his political exile in Japan after the failure of the Hundred Days' Reform. His intention was to introduce modern knowledge to Chinese society and educate Chinese people about Western civilisation through translation. Liang's attempt inspired many enlightened contemporary Korean intellectuals, including Chae-Ho Shin.

It was in the 1880s that the need for translation was recognised in Korea. As early as 1882, the royal court announced in the *Hanseong Ten Daily* (Hanseong Sunbo), the first Korean modern newspaper, its extensive plan to publish translated foreign books in the *Pangmun'guk*, the Korean government printing office. In 1896, an editorial in *The Independent* (Tongnipshinmun) argued that foreign textbooks should be urgently translated to help young people acquire modern knowledge without learning foreign languages (Kim 2014, 2-3). However, it was after the Japan-Korea Treaty of 1905 that translation began in earnest. Enlightened Korean intellectuals thought that the crisis of national sovereignty in Korea could be overcome by accepting modern Western knowledge through translation.

The most frequently translated works between 1905 and 1910 were biographical novels of great historical figures, probably because this genre was very useful for encouraging national pride in Korean people's hearts. Protagonists in biographical novels published in this period can be divided into three categories. The first category consists of European political leaders who successfully enhanced

<sup>4</sup> Korean intellectuals could get information about various political regimes other than monarchies through some modern newspapers published in the late nineteenth century. *Hanseong Ten Daily* (Hanseong Sunbo), whose first issue was published in 1883, introduced various political regimes. Here a republic was defined as a form of government in which «the president was elected by popular vote and political affairs were decided by the discussion of the public». Chae-Ho Shin absolutely echoed this definition.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted from Yang (2011, 318). English translation is mine.

national prosperity by any means necessary, in an age of political chaos, such as Bismarck, Peter the Great and Napoleon. The second category includes national heroes or heroines who showed no fear of death, such as Joan of Arc. The third category consists of folk heroes who struggled against tyranny, such as William Tell. These biographical novels not only played a substantial role in instilling national consciousness and infusing a fighting spirit into Korean people against imperialist Japan, but also made a decisive contribution to disseminating modern Western knowledge. From these biographical novels, many Koreans could learn about key notions of modern Western political thought, including liberty, equality, unification and republicanism.

Chae-Ho Shin's literary activities aligned with this cultural current. He studied traditional neo-Confucianism in his youth, but he also had the opportunity to learn about Western political thought and modern knowledge from *Ice-Drinker's Studio* (Yinbin shi heji), written by Qichao Liang. Chae-Ho Shin was seriously influenced by Liang, who advocated for adopting and educating people about Western civilisation. After the Japan-Korea Treaty of 1905, Chae-Ho Shin devoted himself to the campaign for Korean independence and the liberation of oppressed Korean people from imperialist Japan and published several biographical novels on Korean national heroes, including Sun-sin Yi, a Korean admiral famed for his victories against the Japanese navy during the Imjin war (1592); Mundeok Eulji, a military leader who successfully defended Korea against Sui China in the seventh century; and Young Choi, a general well-known for his meritorious service in several wars and rebellions in the fourteenth century.

Like many of his East Asian contemporaries, Chae-Ho Shin was a follower of the «great man» theory, the nineteenth-century belief that history could be largely explained by the impact of great men or heroes. In this period, many East Asian intellectuals frequently utilised narratives based on the great man theory, «with the educational purpose of inspiring a sense of patriotism and encouraging social participation attitude to the public» (Lee 2004, 165. English translation is mine). They not only published biographies of their own countries' heroes but also tried to unearth and introduce biographies of Western national heroes. Chae-Ho Shin did the same. The protagonists of Italian unification, described in Chae-Ho Shin's *Three Great Founders of Italy*, were aligned with Korean national heroes such as Sun-sin Yi, Mundeok Eulji and Young Choi, who had appeared in previously published biographical novels.

#### Italy, a Modern State that Embodied Social Darwinism

The diffusion of biographical novels about Western national heroes who succeeded in enhancing national prosperity in early-twentieth-century Korea was the product of a fusion between the great man theory and social Darwinism. Social Darwinism applied principles of biological evolution and natural selection to human societies. It was widely utilised to assert the superiority of a particular society, nation, state or culture in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For example, in the first chapter of *The Makers of Modern Italy*, John A.

R. Marriott ranked England, France, Spain, Germany and Italy in hierarchical order based on social Darwinism:

In the attainment of national unity some states were, I need not say, very much ahead of others. England, for example, compassed the realisation of her national identity as early as the thirteenth century; France and Spain not until the sixteenth; while other states, like Germany and Italy, have reached the same goal only within the last few years (Marriot 1889, 2).

Social Darwinism was first introduced to Korea via Japan in the mid-1870s and was spread widely in the 1880s among enlightened Korean intellectuals, who saw Korea's incompetence and defencelessness against foreign invaders. Regarding the diffusion of social Darwinism in Korea in the 1880s, it is sufficient to quote a passage from *On Competition* (Kyōngjaengnon), written by Kil-Chun Yu, a Korean independence activist, in 1883:

Everything takes a step forward by competition. Not only political affairs, but also private affairs, progress by competition. We can reach neither intelligence nor happiness without competition in our lives, and a nation can neither enhance prosperity nor gain honour without international competition.<sup>6</sup>

Kil-Chun Yu's view of competition was similar to that of the English biologist and anthropologist Herbert Spencer, remembered for his doctrine of social Darwinism, who believed that competition was the «law of life». The thesis of self-strengthening through Westernisation, shared by many Korean intellectuals between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, was based on this idea.

Italy, along with other western European countries, was a paradigm for Korea to copy. In several articles published in modern Korean newspapers, Italy was described as a modern state, recently established, that had overcome both internal feuds and the oppression of foreign powers such as France and Austria. According to an article published in the *Hanseong Ten Daily* (Hanseong Sunbo), «Italy was not united, being divided in various factions twenty-five years ago». However, the «Italian government enlightened people and made them comply with the ruler's orders. As a result, Italy became a modern state that got abreast of other Western powers».<sup>7</sup> Additionally, in many other articles published in the same newspaper, Italy was represented as a military power that dispatched a squadron to Tripoli, a diplomatic power that formed a military alliance with other European powers such as Germany and Austria, and a trade giant that signed a commercial treaty with the United States of America. In short, in the eyes of Korean journalists, Italy was a modern state that embodied social Darwinism and was a model for Korea (Yang 2011, 310). This image of Italy was repeated

<sup>6</sup> Quoted from Yu (1995, *passim*). This is my rather loose translation.

<sup>7</sup> *Hanseong Sunbo* (27 March 1884). English translation is mine. All historical Korean newspaper articles are found on the Internet Archive of Big Kinds ([www.bigkinds.or.kr/v2/news/oldNews.do](http://www.bigkinds.or.kr/v2/news/oldNews.do), last accessed 08/01/2023).

in another modern Korean newspaper, *Hanseong Ten-day Reports* (Hanseong Chubo), where Italy was described as a military power that was successful in reforming its military system and that tried to found a colony in Africa.<sup>8</sup>

In the early twentieth century, Korean intellectuals' interest in Italy as a model for Korea of the modern state was combined with the great man theory, which was diffused among Korean intellectuals in the early twentieth century. This was converted into interest in the protagonists of the construction of modern Italy. Chae-Ho Shin's *Three Great Founders of Italy*, which includes biographies of the protagonists of the Italian Risorgimento, was a milestone for this conversion.

#### The Identification of Italy in the Past with Korea in the Present

A noteworthy phenomenon, appearing in many articles about Italy published in Korea in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, was an identification of the two countries. This rhetoric also appeared in Chae-Ho Shin's *Three Great Founders of Italy*. This text includes an introduction written by Ji-Yeon Jang, a Korean nationalist journalist and one of the most important independence activists. He listed similarities between Italy and Korea: geography, population and political situation. Furthermore, he held out the hope that Korea would become the «Italy of the Orient». Chae-Ho Shin shared this idea. In the first part of *Three Great Founders of Italy*, which contains a general description of Italy, he inserted the following two phrases, which did not exist in Liang's Chinese edition: «Italy, originating from ancient Rome, was a peninsular state in Southern Europe», and «Italy declined after the invasion of barbarians from the North» (Shin 2001, 7-8). It is clear that these phrases are intended to highlight geographical and political similarities between the two countries.

Regarding political similarity, Chae-Ho Shin rigidly divided the political situation of Italy between before and after the three great founders. According to Chae-Ho Shin, the history of Italy before the three great founders was characterised by the glory of ancient times and the decline of the modern age. In ancient times, Italy «took the lead of civilisations in the world, establishing a great empire that annexed three continents, Europe, Asia and Africa»; but in the modern age, it degenerated into «a country invaded one day by Spain and France and the next by Germany, as if it was surrounded by tigers and wolves». At last, «in the early nineteenth century, Italy became nothing more than a ruination» (Shin 2001, 7-8). Conversely, after the three great founders, Italy was characterised by reconstruction. According to Chae-Ho Shin, Italy succeeded in reconstructing its past glory, and today it «has 500,000 soldiers and a population of 29 million». It would not be useful to examine the historical veracity of Chae-Ho Shin's description of Italy. Here I focus on examining the intention behind his dichotomous rhetoric of decline and reconstruction.

<sup>8</sup> *Hanseong Chubo* (22 February 1886, 24 May 1886, 31 May 1886, 23 August 1886, 7 February 1887, 11 July 1887, 18 July 1887, 25 July 1887, 1 August 1887, 6 February 1888).

Chae-Ho Shin's perception of the situation in Korea was not so different from Qichao Liang's. He identified the national crisis that Korea went through in his lifetime with the great hardship Italy experienced in the past, caused by foreign invaders and internal disunity. In his *Three Great Founders of Italy*, Chae-Ho Shin inserted a new description of Austria as an «enemy of liberty and independence», which did not exist in Liang's Chinese edition. Here he identified Austria, which had suppressed Italy, with Japan, which had violated Korea's national sovereignty. Such descriptions were repeated in a newspaper article, «Italy of the Orient», written by Chae-Ho Shin himself and published in *The Korea Daily News* (Daehan Maeil Sinbo) in 1909.

Chae-Ho Shin hoped that Korea would restore national sovereignty, just as Italy had achieved independence by going through hell and high water. He believed that, for this to happen, Korean national heroes would have to play a vital role, just like the protagonists of the Italian Risorgimento. In the preface of *Three Great Founders of Italy*, Chae-Ho Shin identified the purpose of his translation, which was none other than urging Korean people to be patriots:

Why do I translate *Three Great Founders of Italy*? It is because the three great founders are patriots. Why do I admire patriots? It is because patriotism was the pillar of the state, the bread of life and the root of knowledge [...]. If we learn political science, jurisprudence, engineering, commerce, art, technology and many other sciences without patriotism, we are just like a machine or slave. Is this right?

The term «patriots» is repeated twenty-seven times in the *Preface*, whereas it does not appear even once in the *Conclusions*, where instead the term «three great founders» is repeated twenty-eight times (Son 2007, 98). This shows that the term «patriots» was a synonym for national heroes and that, for Chae-Ho Shin, Mazzini, Garibaldi and Cavour were symbols of the ideal national hero. Remarkably, unlike other contemporary Korean intellectuals, Chae-Ho Shin did not limit the concept of heroes to only a few prominent figures. He expanded it to the nation as a whole. This is shown clearly in the *Conclusions*, where Chae-Ho Shin urged all Korean people to become national heroes like the three great founders of Italy:

Oh, my patriotic compatriots! You should hope to become like the Three Great Founders of Italy [...] So, you can save this country. This is what I wish from the readers.

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# The Approaches of Italian Historians to Chinese History in the Early Cold War Period (1950-1960s)

Guido Samarani

**Abstract:** During the 1950s and 1960s, in the international context of the Cold War and the decision of most Western countries, including Italy, not to recognise the People's Republic of China, some Italian historians and scholars became interested in Chinese history and historiography. The case studies presented here offer differing experiences and approaches to these areas of study. These include Enrica Collotti Pischel who, as a historian, devoted her entire life to the study of Chinese contemporary history; Luciano Petech, an orientalist and historian who focused his studies on Tibet; and Roberto Battaglia, an outstanding historian, who came into contact with China and Chinese history by chance, thanks to the important cultural and intellectual mediation provided by Centro Cina.

**Keywords:** Italy, People's Republic of China, Historiography, Twentieth century

## Introduction

After the birth of the People's Republic of China (PRC) on 1 October 1949, most Western countries, including Italy, decided not to recognise the new state. In such a difficult period marked by the intensification of the Cold War, several Italian intellectual associations and groups – often politically and ideologically linked to the Italian Left (communist and socialist parties, independent personalities, etc.) – made growing efforts to develop contacts and dialogue with China, while working hard to inform Italian intellectuals, politicians and, more broadly, the general public in Italy of the main cultural aspects and characteristics of the «New China». I will focus here on those Italian historians who, in those years, were able to produce interesting analyses and studies of Chinese history, thereby contributing positively to achieving a better understanding in Italy of China and its long and rich history.

## Culture and Politics in the Early Cold War Period: A Few Introductory Remarks

At the end of 1953, the Centro italiano per le relazioni economiche e culturali con la Cina (Italian Centre for Economic and Cultural Relations with China) – later known as Centro per le relazioni con la Cina (Centre for Relations with China, hereafter Centro Cina) – was established in Rome, at a time that was potentially the beginning of a new era for both Italy and China.

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In Italy, the early 1950s was a period when foreign policy was marked by a strong Atlanticist orientation. Rome was clearly committed to being one of the main actors in post-war Europe and was making great political and diplomatic efforts to enter the United Nations<sup>1</sup> (Varsori 1998).

Also, in 1953, Ferruccio Parri (1890-1981), who was to become one of the main actors in the creation of Centro Cina, joined the newly created *Unità popolare* (People's Unity) movement, which arose from the union of different political tendencies (Colozza 2011). In *Unità popolare*, Parri met Piero Calamandrei (1889-1956), Carlo Cassola (1917-1987) and other leading intellectuals who visited China in the 1950s and, in some cases, also wrote about their experiences in that country (De Giorgi and Samarani 2011, chap. 5).

Although, formally speaking, Centro Cina had no political aims, there was a clear link between its economic and cultural initiatives and the political and parliamentary activity of Ferruccio Parri and others, with the common aim of making political parties, associations, chambers of commerce, universities and intellectuals aware of the need to develop a strong and profound relationship with the People's Republic of China, thus creating the basis for its official recognition by Italy (Meneguzzi Rostagni and Samarani 2014).

Descriptions of the main activities and initiatives of Centro Cina can be found in the *Bollettino di informazioni* (Information Bulletin), whose first issue was published in the autumn of 1953. In the following years, the *Bollettino* was not published regularly and it was later turned into a regular newspaper called *La Cina d'oggi* (Today's China). The *Bollettino*, especially the first issues, included translations of documents and news from Chinese sources (in particular, Xinhua News Agency). *La Cina d'oggi* was first published in 1957 and continued until the early 1960s. The journal was published every three months, mainly under the direction of Sergio Segre (1926-2022), who, in the 1970s would head the foreign affairs bureau of the Italian Communist Party (Samarani 2014).

As for China, by 1953-54 it had largely left behind the difficult and dramatic years following the foundation of the PRC. In July 1953, the Panmunjon Truce Agreement practically marked the end of the Korean War and of China's involvement in it, while the introduction of the first Constitution in September 1954 would lead to the stabilisation of China's policies and institutions, marking the start of the period of «transition to socialism». A mostly ambivalent policy towards the intelligentsia was developed during those years. On the one hand, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) required their services, but on the other, serious suspicions were spread that many of them were untrustworthy, given their urban and bourgeois backgrounds. After 1949, the CCP launched major campaigns to «re-educate» intellectuals and later on the emphasis shifted to an intensive thought-reform movement. Literature without a clear class point of view received blistering criticism, as did any hint that the Party should not control art and literature. In early 1956, the Party publicly discussed the role of

<sup>1</sup> This, however, was only possible in 1955.

intellectuals in the new tasks of national construction and adopted the slogan «Let a hundred flowers blossom, let a hundred schools of thought contend», which basically encouraged «free-ranging» discussion and inquiry, with the explicit assumption that this would prove the superiority of Marxism-Leninism and speed up the conversion of intellectuals to communism. In the spring of 1957, however, the CCP Central Committee decided to launch a rectification movement involving the whole Party, thus opening the way to the development of the «Anti-Rightist Campaign» whose main targets were intellectuals (MacFarquhar and Fairbank 1987).

#### Italian Historians and Chinese History: General Evaluations

Against this broad political, cultural and intellectual backdrop, in the 1950s and 1960s, some Italian historians and scholars gradually began to pay more attention to Chinese history and published a series, albeit rather limited, of books and chapters in books. These focused on the overall history of Chinese civilisation, but also offered specific historical analyses and narratives about ancient China and/or modern and contemporary China.

At the time, knowledge of the Chinese language and use of Chinese language sources were extremely rare in Italy and more or less restricted to sinologists; and contacts with Chinese historians were also very difficult, if not impossible, due to the prevailing political and cultural context marked by the «Cold War spirit». Thus, generally speaking, these publications were based on works produced by American, British and French historians and scholars, but, at the same time, offered new perspectives and approaches to the field. However, translations of Chinese historical works – rather limited in number – became available in Italy from the mid-1950s.

Here I would like to mention two books. The first, published in 1955, was a translation from Russian of what seems to be a manual of history produced collectively by the Dongbei (north-eastern) Political-military Academy. It was a history of contemporary China with an introduction by Mario Alighiero Manacorda, a well-known Italian Marxist pedagogue and historian of culture and education, and was published in Rome by Edizioni di cultura sociale, a publishing company which became the nucleus of the Editori Riuniti publishing house<sup>2</sup> (Collettivo dell'Accademia politico-militare [Tung-pei] 1955). The second translation was much more important, considering that the original work was the product of three major Chinese historians. The most famous was Jian Bozan (1898-1968), an outstanding Chinese Marxist historian and scholar, who, in the 1920s, had studied at the University of California, became familiar with important Marxist works and taught at Beijing University, also serving as the

<sup>2</sup> In the following years and decades, Editori Riuniti, which was close to the Italian Communist Party, became the main instrument for the diffusion in Italy of Marxist thought and works related to the social sciences and political issues.

Dean of the Faculty of History and Vice-president of the same university. The others were Shao Xunzheng (1909-1973) from Qinghua University and Hu Hua (1921-1987) from Renmin (People's) University. Jian wrote the chapters on the early period, Shao contributed the section on modern history and Hu focused on the contemporary era. Two separate volumes were published in Italy in 1960 by Editori Riuniti with the title *Storia della Cina antica e moderna* and *Storia della Cina contemporanea*<sup>3</sup> (Chien, Shao, and Hu 1960), covering many centuries of history of Chinese civilisation, with the purpose, as indicated in the conclusions, to study the Marxist-Leninist point of view and method, and earnestly re-evaluate the cultural heritage.

A couple of rather important works were produced by an authoritative orientalist and historian, Luciano Petech, who gained recognition for his studies on Asian religions and on Tibet. In 1956, Petech published *Storia della Cina* (Petech 1956) and, in 1957, *Profilo storico della civiltà cinese*, as part of the prestigious editorial series «Civiltà dell'Oriente» (Petech 1957). In particular, his second work ranged from Chinese prehistory to the end of the Qing Empire, also offering an analysis of Manchuria and Tibet. This volume ended with a fairly short chapter on the Republican China period by Giuliano Bertuccioli, a sinologist who had spent some years working at the Italian embassy in pre-communist China.

Mention should also be made of two works which provided a very general overview of Chinese history, written by two non-specialists: Sandro Cassone, *Storia della Cina* (Cassone 1964) and Franco Martinelli, *Storia della Cina* (Martinelli 1967). Around the same period, Cassone published a series of books with the same publisher (CETIM) on different countries; whereas Martinelli proved to be a rather versatile writer addressing very different topics. His *Storia della Cina* was a weighty volume of about 1000 pages, which covered the history of China from ancient times to the start of the Cultural Revolution. Unfortunately, it provides no indication of the sources used nor a final bibliography. It starts with a discussion of Chinese pre-historical times, continues with a general overview in about 10 chapters of the Chinese Empire and, in the last eight chapters, covers the period from Western colonial penetration of China to the time of Mao Zedong. Chairman Mao is described as the only real historical protagonist of the Chinese communist revolution and, at the same time, is portrayed as being a nightmare for world peace and stability at that time, particularly for the Asian context (Martinelli 1967, 852 ff.).

#### Enrica Collotti Pischel and Roberto Battaglia: Two Different Approaches to Chinese History and Historiography

The first important work to mention is *Le origini ideologiche della rivoluzione cinese* by Enrica Collotti Pischel, a leading Italian historian – as well as being a

<sup>3</sup> The original text was *Zhongguo lishi gaiyao*, published in China in 1956.

left-wing militant – who greatly contributed to the knowledge, understanding and diffusion in Italy of the history and contemporary changes in modern and contemporary China. First published by Einaudi in 1959, the volume offered a very stimulating analysis of the ideological origins of the Chinese revolution, focusing on the birth and development of Mao Zedong's thought in the context of the diffusion of Marxist-Leninist theories after the October Revolution, the action of the Comintern within China and the birth of the Chinese Communist Party in 1921 (Collotti Pischel 1959, second revised edition 1979).

In this work and in later writings – particularly in *La rivoluzione ininterrotta. Sviluppo interni e prospettive internazionali*, in which she covered the period from 1956 on the question of the «identity» of the Chinese experience (Collotti Pischel 1962) – Collotti Pischel made an important and innovative contribution to our understanding of the Chinese revolution. However, some parts of her work display her strong ideological support for CCP policies, as seen, for instance, in her very positive evaluation of the Great Leap Forward (but here, we should say that, at that time, our knowledge of those events was completely lacking in terms of data and statistics on the Great Leap Forward, which we obtained later both from official and historical Chinese sources and from Western historiography).

As for the contribution made by Roberto Battaglia (1913-1963), he was a leading historian, a university professor and an anti-fascist militant who wrote fundamental books on the history of the Italian anti-fascist resistance.

His last important published work, *La seconda guerra mondiale. Problemi e nodi cruciali* (Battaglia 1960), is not generally considered to be on the same level as the previous ones. However, its special value consisted in the fact that it managed to raise the issue of the character of the Second World War, while emphasising the elements of continuity with and discontinuity from the First World War (Ragionieri 1963). Battaglia's volume was published in 1960 and included chapters on the war in East and South Asia, with special focus on Japanese expansion, Pearl Harbour and Hiroshima (chapters V and XIII). These chapters can be considered his first and only approach to Asian history, one which was also prompted by his strong passion for travel (Ragionieri 1963, 205).

His specific interest in Chinese history and historiography was linked to his trip to China in 1961 as part of a cultural mission organised by the above-mentioned Centro Cina.<sup>4</sup> The mission lasted from 23 September to 16 October 1961 and involved both a general and a specific programme of visits. The first part was for all three members of the delegation and featured major cities, schools, factories and people's communes and participation in the 1st October anniversary celebrations for the founding of the PRC, whereas the second was tailored to each member's interests and expertise.

<sup>4</sup> The other two participants in this mission were the Sicilian painter Saro (Rosario) Mirabella and Italo Rizzi, a well-known specialist in anatomical pathology.

Battaglia's programme included visits to historical museums and history research institutes, and meetings with Chinese historians. We will briefly discuss his main impressions and evaluations (Fondo Roberto Battaglia).

First, during his visits to historical museums in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, he highlighted the excellent didactic and pedagogical organisation, but also the total lack of any catalogue. After his meetings in Beijing and Shanghai with Chinese historians, he highlighted the following main elements:

- Chinese historical periodisation system: in fact, the historical research institutes within the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Beijing<sup>5</sup> were organised – for modern and contemporary Chinese history – according to a historical chronology with three main periods: 1840-1919, 1919-1949, and 1949-onwards. This periodisation, according to Battaglia, was rather simplistic, especially if compared with its very rich counterpart for European history;
- Chinese historians admitted that non-Marxist and idealistic thinking could also be considered; however, they maintained that idealistic thinking was the manifestation of backward thought that must be educated and developed, in much the same way that a child is educated;
- Chinese historians proved they knew more about Italian history than we did about Chinese history. This was highlighted clearly by a series of questions they raised during the meetings with Battaglia, particularly regarding the origins of fascism and the resistance movement in Italy, together with the influence of the October Revolution on the birth and development of the Italian workers' movement.

## Conclusions

I have tried to outline how some Italian historians and scholars became interested in Chinese history and historiography during the 1950s and 1960s, a period marked by the Cold War and by the political decision by most Western countries, including Italy, not to recognise the new circumstances in China and Asia, after the establishment of the PRC in October 1949. The political and diplomatic stalemate did not, however, prevent large numbers of Italian academics and intellectuals from making efforts to create contacts and opportunities for exchange with the New China.

The case studies presented represent a variety of experiences and approaches: Enrica Collotti Pischel, who, as a historian, devoted her entire career and life to the study of Chinese modern and contemporary history; Luciano Petech, an orientalist and historian who focused his studies on Tibet; Sandro Cassone and Franco Martinelli, who tried to offer their general views on the history of

<sup>5</sup> The Chinese Academy of Sciences (*Zhongguo kexue yuan*) was established in November 1949. Its Department of Philosophy and Social Sciences had fourteen research units, including, among others, one for history, one for modern history and one for world history. Only in 1977 was the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (*Zhongguo shehui kexue yuan*) established, replacing the old Department of Philosophy and Social Sciences.

Chinese civilisation from ancient times to the modern and contemporary day; and finally, Roberto Battaglia, an eminent historian who came into contact with China and Chinese history by chance, thanks to the important cultural and intellectual mediation provided by Centro Cina.

Although extremely different from each other, all these volumes – together with the translations mentioned here and several others – had the general merit of offering Italian historians and intellectuals various elements of knowledge on the history of one of the world's largest and oldest civilisations.

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Firenze, Istituto Storico Toscano della Resistenza e dell'Età contemporanea, Fondo Roberto Battaglia, File UA 9, sub-files 1 and 2

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# Digital Shogun and Electronic Imperialism: Japanese History through the Lens of Historical Videogames

Aldo Giuseppe Scarselli

**Abstract:** This chapter looks at how Japanese history is represented in videogames. The focus is on the difference between historical videogames produced in the Western world and those produced in Japan. I am going to highlight how videogames are often influenced by Orientalism and Eurocentrism and how this is quite evident for Western products set in historical Japan. After that, my focus will be on how Japanese game developers re-imagine their history, moving away from concepts of historical authenticity towards a freer and more elastic representation of the past.

**Keywords:** Historical videogames, History of Japan, Samurai, Cultural representations.

## Why Videogames?

First, we should ask ourselves why videogames should be researched from a historical perspective. Nowadays, videogames are a powerful, global, all-encompassing medium. The videogame industry is a worldwide colossus, competing with and sometimes surpassing other more classic industries, such as cinema and music publishing. Developing and publishing videogames is a complex process that not only involves great assets, but also boosts technological advancements, given the great number of different hardware supports they can be played on, including consoles, personal computers and mobile phones.

A large number of titles produced by the videogame industry are history-based. Humankind's past has always attracted videogame developers, who have looked to history for stories to create and narrate. History not only represents a source of inspiration, but also provides the background and the scaffold on which a game is created. In fact, many videogames feature in-game historical notions, sometimes taking the form of electronic encyclopaedias, which help the player feel part of a realistic historical setting. Precise depictions and descriptions of weapons and tools, historical events contextualised in the gameplay, insightful descriptions of economic and social processes: all these aspects are very often part of the structure of history-based videogames.

Given the popular dimension of this medium, digital games spread historical knowledge in a popular form. They represent a sort of cultural mirror: they

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produce views of the past, but also reproduce how we see, understand and manipulate the past itself. This aspect is fundamental in a history-related discussion on videogames.

In recent times, we have seen the launch of serious academic criticism on history-based videogames. In the last fifteen years, many historians have tried to address the theme of history as it is represented in videogames. In 2005, William Uricchio produced a contribution that is widely considered the cornerstone of a new historical approach to videogames: *Simulation, History and Computer Games* (Uricchio 2005.) In this article Uricchio highlighted the videogame as a tool for reproducing and simulating historical processes, as opposed to focusing on historical authenticity and accuracy.

Taking Uricchio as an example, a group of academics founded what they termed Historical Game Studies, publishing their manifesto in *Rethinking History*, titled *Introduction: what is historical games studies?* (Chapman, Foka, and Westlin 2017). In this manifesto, the authors describe their intentions and offer a way to approach videogames as the subject of historical analysis. The definition they suggested for historical games is very important for my research:

Though of course it is possible to forward many definitions of the «historical game», we work from the open definition of this as those games that in some way represent the past, relate to discussions about it, or stimulate practices related to history (Chapman, Foka, and Westlin 2017, 367).

The relationship with the past and the way it is portrayed in videogames is fundamental when we address the depiction of Japan in this medium. Japanese history is widely used as a setting for historical videogames. As previously said, this happens in different ways, depending on whether the producers are Japanese or Western. In the last thirty years, the history of the Japanese archipelago, and certain historical periods in particular, has become archetypal in the gaming dimension.

### Digital Games and Oriental Otherness

Before proceeding any further, it is fundamental to highlight a central aspect of our discourse: the representation of otherness in videogames. By default, videogames are constructed on a more or less rigid separation between the «identity» of the player and the ««otherness» of the artificial intelligence (AI) controlling the game mechanics. When we approach videogames, we often find that this separation is articulated on historical rails, like the contrast between West and East or civilisation and barbarism. In recent times, this aspect has become more and more central, very often making up both the narrative and the functional basis of many videogames. The player can take on the role of defender of an advanced civilisation against barbaric hordes, or brave leader of a simple tribe against an imperialistic oppressor. Both situations often make wide use of cultural artefacts rooted in dichotomies, such as civilisation-backwardness, liberty-oppression, or modernity-tradition.

Behind these elements it is not difficult to see the influence of a broader heritage of ethnocentric and colonialist mindsets. In many cases, stereotypical aspects are highlighted in order to depict certain entities within a videogame, with the result of stressing their otherness. Souvik Mukherjee explored this aspect in his book *Videogames and Postcolonialism: Empire Plays Back* (Mukherjee 2017), claiming that a post-imperialistic, Eurocentric mindset often gains a central role in the development of videogames, providing the inspiration for creating and structuring the aforementioned otherness. Orientalism is still very strong in videogames, with developers, publishers and gamers not always fully aware of it.

This aspect is incredibly striking when we look at historical games set in non-European contexts, especially in the Near and Far East.

The Eurocentric, or more generally, the Western-centric, mindset is mixed with a strong proneness for simplification. Historical games have to simplify aspects of the past so that they fit into the mechanics of games, but also to create a recognisable setting for the audience. This has led to numerous templates that have become archetypical across different game genres and platforms, and are exploited to create an immediate sense of recognition for the Western audience.

For example, an exploration of the way three Eastern civilisations are depicted in videogames reveals these templates or patterns of representation:

- India is often portrayed as a whole unified entity, with massive emphasis on spiritualism and mysticism as constituents of its identity, and with a large presence of warrior monks, use of war elephants and veneration of cows.
- China is usually described as a monolithic, sometimes excessively bureaucratic, entity, divided between the enlightenment of philosophy and the autocracy of emperors, with massive armies ‘seasoned’ with technological wonders, such as weaponised fireworks and repeating crossbows.
- Korea is often depicted as technologically advanced, fiercely independent and animated by a strong attitude in the face of threats from China and Japan.

Of course, these depictions draw inspiration from historical realities, but they push, stretch and manipulate them to create the aforementioned recognisable templates.

Japanese history is no exception, since the archipelago’s past has fascinated generations of game developers and gamers. One popular example is the extremely famous *Age of Empires* videogame franchise, a real-time strategy (RTS) series of historical games. Of the three main historical games in the series, the first instalment, *Age of Empires* (1997), is set in a chronologically broad ancient era, spanning geographically from the fertile crescent to Japan, which is depicted as the Yamato civilisation. The second game, *Age of Empires II: The Age of Kings* (1999), covers the medieval period and Japan is present as a playable faction. The third game, *Age of Empires III: Age of Discovery* (2005), is set in a period ranging from the discovery of America to the early nineteenth century. Initially it did not include Japan, which was added in a later expansion – an upgrade of the game with new features – in 2007, called *The Asian Dynasties*.

By analysing these and other games, such as those from the *Total War* turn-based strategy (TBS) franchise, *Shogun: Total War* (2000) and *Total War: Shogun 2* (2011), we recognise a number of recurring elements and patterns in the depiction of Japan in historical games. Initially we will focus on Western-developed games and later we will move to the Japanese native context.

### The East in the West

Most historical games produced in the West present a strong preference for a specific period of Japanese history, the Sengoku Jidai period (戦国時代, 1467-1603). This period saw a long civil war between Japanese lords interested in controlling the shogunate, the de facto ruling system of Japan. The Sengoku era offers one element in particular that has become pivotal for historical games set in Japan: the bushi. Bushi (武士), more commonly known as samurai (侍), were aristocratic warriors, already protagonists of countless cultural artefacts all over the world, and have become something of a mandatory feature of videogames. Bushi are central cogs in digital realities dominated by war, honour and chivalric values, becoming a transposition of European – digital – knights. Also, the emphasis is often on the warlords to whom the bushi pledged their loyalty, the daimyo (大名) and their struggle to subdue all their competitors to reach the position of Shogun.

Western-developed historical games frequently belong to two genres of games: real-time strategy (RTS) and turn-based strategy (TBS).<sup>1</sup> RTS and TBS both give the player a large degree of control, as a ruler or commander entitled to coordinate economy, production, army enlistment and logistics, diplomacy and strategy. These games often claim to be as faithful as possible to historical realism, priding themselves in having a large apparatus of in-game notes, notions and historical information, with great accuracy in the presentation of weapons, artefacts, buildings, traditions and events. In the case of Japan, for example, much attention is devoted to reproducing the samurai panoply, their famous swords and their traditional rituals. Although bushi-samurai are generally the main characters of these games, some attempts have been made to do justice to the historically accurate cannon fodder of the Sengoku period: the humble *ashigaru* (足輕), the peasant conscript who made up the largest part of the Japanese armies. This movement towards historical accuracy is quite evident in the aforementioned *Shogun: Total War* and *Total War: Shogun 2*, where the recruitment of *ashigaru* is fundamental to the creation of balanced and functional armies.

However, all these aspects of the Western-style historical game may produce a series of conceptual problems and some dangerous simplifications and cultur-

<sup>1</sup> The main difference between these two genres is that RTS enables direct, continuous control of the gaming action, whereas TBS forces the player to act only when it is their turn, like a massive game of chess, passing the hand to the AI every time. The *Total War* series is a hybrid of these two genres: control of the map view, the economy and diplomacy are turn-based, while battles are in real time.

al manipulations. First of all, the use of the Sengoku Jidai setting has flattened the entire history of a country over a couple of centuries which, although fundamental, cannot be taken as the entire history of Japan. A few attempts have been made to reproduce other periods, but the attraction for the Sengoku Jidai remains dominant. Secondly, the bushi-oriented approach is the result of the idealisation of these figures, which started in the West during the modernisation of Japan, between the second half of the nineteenth century and the First World War. This simplification cuts entire parts of Japan's society from the historical process, as reproduced in the games. Even if other figures from the period are included, such as the above mentioned *ashigaru*, or geishas, ninjas and monks, they are never as pivotal as the bushi-samurai.

Finally, various games use a great figure approach and base the in-game characterisation of Japan on a specific leader, usually a military one. The in-game historical process is only made possible by the presence of a great historical leader embodying all national and cultural aspects of a country. One striking example is provided by the *Civilization* franchise. This long-recurring North American series, launched in 1991 and counting six main instalments, allows the player to guide the development of historical civilisations from the prehistoric age and into the future. Within a process of blatant anachronism, historical figures are extracted from their times and positioned as the eternal rulers of a civilisation through the ages. The case of Japan is very interesting because five out of the series' six instalments feature historical figures from the Sengoku period. In fact we have the following characterisation for the Japanese leaders:

- *Civilization* (1991): Tokugawa Ieyasu
- *Civilization II* (1996): Tokugawa Ieyasu and the goddess Amaterasu
- *Civilization III* (2001): Tokugawa Ieyasu
- *Civilization IV* (2005): Oda Nobunaga
- *Civilization V* (2010): Oda Nobunaga
- *Civilization VI* (2016): Hojo Tokimune

With only the exception of Amaterasu, a divinity, and Hojo Tokimune, a key figure in the Kamakura Shogunate (1185-1333), Tokugawa Ieyasu and Oda Nobunaga are both leaders from the Sengoku Jidai. The «great figure» approach is not exclusive to videogames developed in the West, as we are going to see, but it has notably become a leitmotif of many American and European games.

### Japanese History in Japanese Videogames

If we look at Japanese historical games, we are going to encounter some interesting peculiarities.

First of all, although Japan is one of the leading countries in videogame development and publishing, a large portion of its market is domestic. Many titles developed in Japan are sold specifically to Japanese users, and usually reach the rest of the world sometime after their debut. Historical games are no exception. In comparison with Western products, Japanese videogames cover a broad

spectrum of historical periods and use different languages, genres and mechanics that are specific to this kind of production and apparently very distant from their European and North American counterparts. The Japanese videogame industry began quite early on to exploit the nation's past as a source of inspiration for games. The *Nobunaga's Ambition* series of strategy games launched in 1983, with fifteen sequels produced until 2017, and was one of the first to propose the glorification of historical leaders. In 1986, the Namco company published *Genpei Tōma Den* (源平討魔伝), a side-scrolling beat'em up game that has since become a milestone for the game industry. This title is set during the Genpei War (源平合戦, 1180-1185), but includes monsters, demons and ghosts as enemies.

Although the Sengoku period is the context in many titles, its centrality is challenged by the use of different historical contexts. The same happens with the bushi-samurai character, who is not always preeminent in the game mechanism, but may be obscured by other figures like the shinobi (忍び), a furtive secret agent or scoundrel, also known as the ninja. However, in my opinion, the most important distinctive aspect of Japanese games is their frequent disregard of historical accuracy and authenticity. Often magic, demons, monsters and other fantastic elements taken from Japanese folklore are given a place alongside historical figures. At the same time, a large degree of poetic licence can be found in the material representation of the past. For instance, if we look at the in-game representation of Tokugawa Ieyasu in *Age of Empires III*, we immediately recognise a realistic and accurate depiction of samurai armour. On the other hand, the Japanese videogame *Sengoku Basara* (2005) depicts the great general Oda Nobunaga in completely unrealistic attire, with armour resembling that of a European knight, only with a demonic form and oversized firearms. This is not a general rule, but shows the distance between the Japanese and Western videogame industries with regard to historical accuracy.

Japanese historical games are often centred around heroes and the historical references serve only as a backdrop to their deeds and actions, taking us back to the idea of poetic licence in relation to historical authenticity. In this regard, heroes may be portrayed as part romantic figure, part caricature, in striking contrast with the more serious and realistic approach usually on display in Western productions. The centrality of the hero is a feature of the most popular historical game genres in Japan: real-time tactics (RTT) and action games. In RTT and action games, there is a great deal of stress on the role of the single hero/player as a living and direct part of the action, whereas in many RTS games the player's role is that of an almost god-like overseer. It is useful to list a few examples of Japanese historical games that present many of the characteristics described so far: the *Onimusha* series (2001-2006), which combine the Sengoku setting with monsters and spirits; *Kessen* (2000), Sengoku-based and famous in the rest of the world; the *Way of the Samurai* series (2002-2012), whose titles are set between the Sengoku Jidai and the last days of the Tokugawa shogunate, with a narrative oscillating between dramatic and easy-going; *Nioh* (2017), where a European pirate becomes a samurai to fight demons and monsters for the Tokugawa shogunate.

The Japanese videogame industry is also popular for using Chinese historical works of fiction as backgrounds. The famous historical novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (三國演義), written during the fourteenth century by Luo Guanzhong, is the inspiration for the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* series (1985-2017) made up of twelve instalments. An older but similar text, *Record of the Three Kingdoms* (三國志) written in the third century by Chen Shou was used as the background for the *Dynasty Warrior* series (1997-2018) made up of nine instalments. These two pieces of Chinese historical literature, which are well known in Japan and Korea, were re-imagined, manipulated and re-told through the canons of Japanese videogames, including the centrality of the hero and the forgoing of historical accuracy (although not in all titles). Also notable is the enduring fortune of these series, which have had the same longevity we have previously seen in other titles.

Finally, I will look at one more particular game: *Hakuōki: Shinsengumi Kitan* (2008). This title is a successful *otome* game, that is, a dating simulator for young women. This genre is quite popular in Japan and involves a simulation in which the player is challenged to date and form a relationship by choosing dialogues and courses of action. The main characteristic of *Hakuōki* is the historical setting. The action takes place in the late Edo period, with the young female protagonist looking for her father in the city of Edo, where she meets a commando of the *Shinsengumi* (新選組), a sort of secret police in the Tokugawa shogunate. The objective of the game is to fall in love and interact romantically with these *Shinsengumi*. These have always been recurring figures in Japanese popular media, such as movies, novels and TV dramas, portrayed with heroic, masculine characteristics. In contrast with more traditional representations, *Hakuōki* transforms the *Shinsengumi* into a product for young women. Their appearance and behaviour in this game are charged with androgynous and erotic elements. The *Shinsengumi* are not threatening and imposing male figures, but charming, deceitful ephemic men. The game's sexual undertones, although never too explicit, create an ambiguous atmosphere, where genre boundaries shift and are eroded. This kind of approach is quite unthinkable in the West and has not been pursued by any developer of historical games. Kazumi Hasegawa explored these aspects of the game in "Falling in Love with History: Japanese Girl's Otome Sexuality and Queering Historical Imagination" (Hasegawa 2013).

### The Shadow of the Second World War

There is one final topic that I consider fundamental, namely how Imperialist Japan is represented in videogames. The Second World War is one of the most used – and sometimes abused – settings for historical games, especially for first-person shooters (FPS), that is, games where the player's perspective is that of a single soldier. While references to Nazi Germany abound and it is depicted as the only epitome of evil in the war, not many videogames take account of the other powers in the Axis, namely Japan and Italy. Some strategy games – like the *Hearts of Iron* series – present a very bland portrayal of Japan, with all problem-

atic elements removed, such as racism, massacres of civilians, experimentation on humans, and so on, while characterising Imperial Japan as a generic imperialistic, non-democratic nation. Researchers have devoted a certain amount of attention to the representation of Nazi Germany in videogames (Chapman and Linderoth, 2015). However we cannot say the same of early Showa Japan (1926-1945), as this period is rarely portrayed in videogames.

I have identified two titles that can be linked to our general theme, which specifically contain representations of Japanese martial models: *Medal of Honor: Pacific Assault* (2004) and *Call of Duty: World at War* (2008). Both games are Western-produced FPS and depict the American operations in the Pacific Ocean theatre during the Second World War. The Japanese Imperial Troops are represented as inherently evil, treacherous and fanatical. They set traps using the bodies of American soldiers, hide in the shadows in the jungle ready to jump out, they torture and execute prisoners in gruesome ways or shoot at drowning enemy sailors. But the most frequent element is how they attack the player, shouting their devotion for the emperor, wielding katanas or charging blindly with bayonets. These images are undeniably based on generally accepted historical evidence, but players are often under the impression that this evil characterisation is excessive and stereotypical. Japanese soldiers are portrayed as a corrupt and almost nonhuman version of the honourable and heroic bushi, so present in other games. In this respect, videogames draw inspiration from a long tradition of movies set in the Pacific Ocean theatre.

One final curious case is that of *Valkyria Chronicles* (2008), a Japanese game that re-imagines European elements of the Second World War. Set in a fictional European-like continent, *Valkyria Chronicles* follows the struggle of the small country of Gallia, a curious mixture of France and the Netherlands, thrown into the middle of a world war between the West Atlantic Federation, loosely based on the Allied Forces, and the Autocratic East European [sic] Imperial Alliance, a racist empire, halfway between Nazi Germany and czarist Russia. The game uses topoi and archetypes related to the Second World War in Europe – the rise of tanks as primary weapons, the persecution of a race of dark-haired people, the tragedy of civilian casualties – to create a peculiar war narrative, mixed with Japanese elements more common to other settings. This game attracted the attention of Johannes Koski in his analysis “Reflections of History: Representations of the Second World War in *Valkyria Chronicles*” (Koski 2017).

## Conclusions

In my analysis I have tried to show how historical videogames use different strategies to reproduce the past and how these representations can be influenced by the cultural perception of their producers, the demands of the audience or by deep-rooted social and cultural mechanisms. Japanese history is clearly not represented in videogames produced in Japan in the same way as it is in those produced in Europe or North America. Very often, cultural stereotypes and misconceptions about the past find their way into videogames, reinforcing them

in the collective mind. Different agencies around the world are involved in processes of rethinking, retelling and reproducing the past through the lens of videogames, whether it is their own past or that of others. Historians should play a key role in these processes, by addressing those segments of the videogame industry that use history to narrate stories. This should not be done to restrain or correct them, but rather to understand the different ways the past comes to life within popular media depending on cultural and social background.

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AFTERWORD

## Reflection on the Cultural Causes of War. From the Perspective of Peace Studies

Liu Cheng and Egon Spiegel interviewed by Guido Abbattista

**Abstract:** Culture, in the broadest sense of the word, is defined as a common or similar form of thinking and acting. In the context of our understanding of peace studies, we are primarily looking for the challenging opportunities of globalisation and the positive possibilities that come with it. Above all, we accept globalisation as a reality – we will not, indeed, we cannot, negate or turn our backs on it. We appreciate the chance to think and act globally as a consequence of global awareness, responsibility and solidarity, regardless of local and regional affinities. Internet activities will develop a worldwide transcultural, transreligious and transnational network that human beings have been dreaming of for a long time. On this basis, the diminution of conflict through non-violence may finally lead to the elimination of war and the creation of a permanent peaceful human community.

**Keywords:** Culture of peace, Peace studies, Taboo of war, Human community

Introduction (by Guido Abbattista)

The following pages present a dialogue with two authoritative exponents of peace studies, Liu Cheng, professor of British History and holder of the UNESCO Chair on Peace Studies at Nanjing University, and Prof. Dr Prof. h.c. Egon Spiegel, theologian and political scientist, holder of the Chair of Practical Theology at the University of Vechta, Germany, a former professor at the Technical University of Dresden, Germany, and titular professor at the University of Olsztyn, Poland, and now an adjunct professor to the Chair of Peace Studies at Nanjing University. Liu Cheng and Egon Spiegel are among the world's leading exponents of contemporary peace studies and have devoted important initiatives and publications to illustrating the basic principles of peacebuilding methods, in particular the important bilingual synthesis *Peacebuilding in a Globalized World: An Illustrated Introduction to Peace Studies* (Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2015). Their collaboration and engagement are in themselves a demonstration of both the effort of dialogue between East and West and that, at the heart of the issues of peace, its construction, its protection, and the need for it to be taught at every level of education, is the historical problem of diversity. The issue of

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diversity and the problem of coexistence with and understanding and governance of diversity has accompanied the entire course of human history and, after centuries of intolerance, conflict, oppression and violence, it still continues to represent the most difficult problem for humankind to solve. The problem of diversity undoubtedly arose within the small communities in which the original human beings were gathered, but it has taken on ever greater proportions as the interaction between human groups, their internal organisation, their cultural development, their capacity to construct identities, but also their ability to «think», to «conceptualise» the issue of diversity, have increased. The current world presents a paradox that has accompanied the phenomena of globalisation over a long period of time. On the one hand, we have the increasing intensification of relations, exchanges, and the worldwide dissemination and sharing of material and immaterial goods, and, on the other, the occurrence of defensive reactions of closure and hardening around the interests and identity profiles of individual groups, peoples and nations. This has led to the emergence of conflicting forces: one tending to bring closer together, if not to homogenise cultures, while the other distinguishes, strengthens and opposes political, cultural and religious particularities. The values and influence of universalism and relativism have constituted two of the major factors capable of orienting human action in every sector of associated life and have posed the question of the capacity of human beings to find a common basis for peaceful coexistence, or to surrender to the prospect of the inevitable opposition between interests and identities incapable of either finding a point of convergence or ensuring the fundamentals for peaceful coexistence in diversity. The problem has been addressed historically in both the political and speculative arenas through multiple efforts to build an international community peacefully governed by shared rules, and through the efforts of a noble intellectual tradition aimed at constructing utopian designs and committed to imagining the conditions for realising projects of «perpetual peace» in practice. That all this has come up against seemingly irresolvable contradictions has not diminished the importance of pursuing such goals.

What peace studies addresses above all is the question of what the most effective methods and practices are for generating an ever-stronger awareness of the elements of affinity and interdependence between human groups, and making them prevail over the sense of diversity. UNESCO's approval of the Peace Studies programme presented by Nanjing University and the consequent opening of the Chair of Peace Studies, currently held by Professor Liu Cheng with the collaboration of Professor Egon Spiegel, has made Nanjing a world reference point for peace studies, with the establishment of specific courses, the organisation of conferences, research seminars, workshops and the production of publications.

It is only right that a conference dedicated to the cultural relations between the East and the West and the complex confrontation that has historically taken place between these two extensive cultural areas, understood in a very broad sense, should include a contribution capable of showing how peace studies can help to imagine a future in which that difficult confrontation, which for so long has generated collective violence with dramatically destructive consequences,

can be replaced by forms of coexistence between human groups that are increasingly marked by the values of peace, exchange and free intercourse. The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, with its immediate effect of slowing down globalisation processes, has only strengthened the conviction that globalisation is now an irreversible dimension of collective life. Such a dimension forces us to think ever more creatively about the tools needed to govern it and to deal with phenomena such as pandemics, which are undoubtedly an unintended consequence of globalisation, but paradoxically also an opportunity to imagine a better future of global coexistence and cooperation.

What relationship exists between globalisation and the prospects for peace?

Our world is connected through a network comprising the same fashions, the same movies and the same music and video clips, common forms of consumption and similar lifestyles. What is hip in China is hip in Germany, and in Brazil and in USA and Korea and Nigeria and so on. Everywhere, young people hear and sing the same (Western) songs and nearly all T-Shirts worn by the youth in China are printed with English letters, not Chinese signs. At the same time, all over the world you can find tattoos of Chinese signs worn by young people on different parts of their body – on their face, their neck, their breast, their back, legs and arms. Not least, young people are connected through the worldwide web and in a vast network of mobile telecommunication. Technology, trade and tourism also have transnational dimensions. In terms of consumption, because exhaust fumes have to respect the same ecological conditions, the design of cars all over the world is becoming more and more similar. In this unified world, war has no place.

Do you think there are «cultural reasons» that tend to favour conflicts? And are there specific cultural attitudes that you would consider more or less prone to conflict?

There are four different constellations for understanding the relationship of cultures (religions) and nations. At the first level, the lowest level, it is the constellation of Ego. This describes the persuasion that your culture, religion or nation is the best and highest one. In this egocentric view, all other cultures, religions and nations are not comparable with your own. However, this archaic opinion is found increasingly seldom, especially among the young. The next constellation – under the term Multi – illustrates the ability for cultures and nations to live together side by side, a kind of coexistence that we find much more of nowadays. More often, we find constellations which are determined by various forms of Inter. For example, our cultural and national lives are defined by Inter-actions which involve communication and cooperation. Fortunately, in relation to religions, the development from Ego across Multi to Inter happens – however slowly – too (e.g. Religions for Peace, Parliament of the World's Religions). On the level of Trans – the highest level in our model – we feel we are all sitting in the same boat, living in one world, having the same experiences, sharing the same

wishes and also having the same troubles (e.g. ecological problems). From this perspective we are all connected and unified in a single global network.

Don't you think that historical, sociological, ethno-anthropological and cultural studies have usually focused much more on the problem of diversity than on the problem of common values and cultural affinities between societies? And haven't they rather thought in terms of separate and conflicting entities, such as nations, religions, cultures or even civilisations, than of a human community sharing common problems?

Academic discussions have been characterised by a focus on diversity (Smelser and Alexander 1999; Prentice and Miller 1999; Lederach 1995; Elmer 1993; Gressgard 2010; Camilleri and Schottmann 2013; Gay 2003; Abbattista 2011). This is good because it has been necessary. We need to have an awareness of people's different specialities, as this can bring acceptance of these and the understanding necessary to value them. But now that the process has been started by this awareness, we need to focus much more on unity, on universals and on universality, or on transversality. Because, if our discussions remain permanently concerned with diversity, they will engender the wrong impression: that the reality of our differences that such discussions highlight is the main reality. However, although it is no less important, these differences are peripheral to our main reality. In particular, the dense network of digital communication and economic relations (including their shadow, the ecological problems that we're now discovering) signifies that we now exist and live interdependently in a world we are characterising as transcultural, transreligious and transnational. These interdependencies demonstrate a unique drawing together of people that has not previously been experienced. Under these conditions, we need to discuss the possibilities of peacebuilding in a new way, especially its potential within the framework of social networking. Please note: in a world unified by common lifestyles, close economic ties and digital connectivity, we can expect that the basic phenomena of culture, religion and nationhood may continue to exist and function.

What do you think are the most important characteristics that can help to understand the human community in unitary terms?

Our existence is much more transculturally oriented than we usually believe. In fact, as the Olympic ideal shows, we have been transculturally oriented for a long time (International Olympic Committee 2020, 11-12). In arts, sports, and music we have a long tradition of exchange and meetings. Currently the East is much more influenced by developments in the West (for example in music). Basketball and football/soccer are increasingly becoming favourite sports around the world. Aerobics and Tai Chi, inline skating and breakdancing, disco fox and waltz, graffiti and punk – you can find all these in every corner of the world. The worldwide spread of common taste in fashion and food is largely rooted in the West and you can buy pizza as well as French-fried potatoes and

hamburgers in all countries. On the other hand, for a long time now, you could find Chinese restaurants all over the world. Similarly, there has been a tremendous global spread of Asian culture and a fascination for Asian traditions and customs. And of course, there is the distribution of products that are «Made in China». You can now get nearly every product all over the world. Amazon delivers books everywhere. A worldwide postal and parcel service ensures you get all you want wherever you are living or staying. Science, technology and travel have created a dense network of exchange and cooperation. One of the central visions of fairy tales is to go all over the world using seven-league boots, first here and then there. Similarly, the Little Prince in Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's famous story can move his chair all over the globe 42 times a day. This is living in TRANS. It is today's reality.

But war and violence never disappeared from human history, never ceased to accompany human existence in any historical phase. What tools do we have to eradicate the evil of war from relations between peoples, nations and cultures?

Very often violence is culturally based. Many wars have been, and still are, fought for cultural reasons (not least religious ones). These are exacerbated because a lot of people are looking for an identity by having or finding a sense of cultural belonging. Clearly, they are afraid of the dissolution of culture through cultural unification and relativism. From a psychological perspective, some people argue that the reason for this may lie in an ego weakness, expressed as: «I need some form of cultural affiliation to offset my own feeling of ego weakness». But a further, important question could be: «Is the culture I'd like to belong to truly a culture and does it really provide a cultural reason for making war?» From one perspective, similarities between the rural people of one culture, A, and the rural people of another culture, B, are much stronger than those between the rural people and urban people of the same culture. In the same vein, the commonalities of the urban people of culture A and the urban people of culture B are much stronger than between the urban people of culture A and their rural counterparts, or between the urban and rural people of culture B. True culture is not a territorial, vertical phenomenon but a horizontal phenomenon relating to similar living places and their common typical conventions and structures. So, in reality, one cultural «layer» tends to be in opposition to the other, thus, the elites of each so-called culture are fighting against the people in the common layer of that culture, but should not encourage people to fight against those sharing the common culture of the common layer.

A (poor) member of the lower class of one culture is likely to live, think and act in a much more similar way to another (poor) person in another culture than to a (rich) member of the higher middle or upper class of his own culture (and vice versa with middle and upper class people). The same oppositions function between educated people and uneducated people or – in terms of gender – between women and men. In Johan Galtung's theory of imperialism, the similarities between the economic elites in the countries of the northern hemisphere

and those of the southern hemisphere and the invisible bridge between them are the basis of the exploitation of the people at the periphery of these (Galtung and Fischer 2013, 11). In fact, the so-called «clash of civilisation» simply hides the tension between the rich centres of the world and the poor periphery; as well as the patriarchal oppression of the women all over the world. In reality, a culture of powerful people exists on one side and one of powerless people on the other. One of the main problems with comparing cultures, religions or nations is our concentration on so-called «differences» and their excessive emphasis. However, if we take the whole statistical illustration into account, we will get a very different perspective. In fact, the opposite impression: the alleged data are relatively similar. That is to say, when so-called differences are emphasised (especially as arguments supporting war) the commonalities, although far bigger, are actually obscured. Peace Studies need to show how disproportionate this is and the consequences of this. It also needs to reveal how the interests of some groups or individuals can create an imbalance in perspective like that described above. Such people, who attach utmost importance to differences that may in fact be quite minor, are really pursuing their own interests (whether ideological, economic or personal). The consequences for the recipients are immense as they become unwittingly fixated on a way of looking at a specific situation or constellation that doesn't reflect reality. They are therefore ready to act in the interests of the difference-makers under conditions that don't exist.

What concepts, forms and mechanisms of political cooperation – regional, transnational, global – do you think can be relied upon in order to foster peaceful conditions of life all over the world?

At the beginning of the twentieth century, when the first Israelis went to Palestine to settle there, claiming legitimacy because of their Palestinian Jewish roots, Martin Buber, the famous philosopher of dialogue, insisted that they intersperse themselves among the Arab people already living there by choosing a federal system of living together (Susser 1979). Later, Joseph Abileah, argued the same from a geo-political viewpoint; namely, that in a non-federal system the Palestinians would always be denied access to the sea and therefore to the trade they depended on (Bing 1990). However, both Abileah and Buber argued without success. Since then, there have been many wars in Palestine, and future developments will also prove both men right: maybe the only solution to the Palestinian conflict is federalism. Through this structure, the different groups of people can rule the country together and remain autonomous at the same time. Federalism is the political ideal, not only as a possibility to structure a country of autonomous parts, but also as an underlying principle. Federalism is a way of thinking and a moral understanding. You cannot realise it by only being concerned with the relationships between provinces and maintaining a common political structure, if the principle of organising political unity at all levels is not fully respected. Federalism only functions as a bottom-up system, realised from the smallest societal unity up to the largest one. Its inner principles are partici-

pation, tolerance and a great ability for compromise. An amusing illustration of this is to compare federalism with a jigsaw puzzle, as both need to have all the individual parts in place for the whole picture to be complete.

We actually have only two possible ways of managing how we live together politically: *confederation* or *separation*. We can find both in the context of contemporary globalisation. On the one side, there is a tendency to join national structures together (an example of this is Europe). On the other, contrary to this, there are attempts at political secession backed by military activities (an example of this is the Russian minority in Ukraine).

Unfortunately, in the case of the Russian people in Ukraine, there are two influences for integration: one is that of the Ukraine government, which wants to keep the minority as part of Ukraine (but has not done enough to support its existence in a federal sense), and the other is the Russian interest in integrating the minority into the Russian Federation. The non-violent, sustainable solution would be for the Russian minority to develop its intra-Ukrainian federal existence with a link to a federally structured Russia (and, at the same time, to a federally structured Europe). On the border of Ukraine and Russia, the Russian minority could exist politically in a form of bilateral confederation or a «double confederation». Moreover, confederation is the only sustainable solution for the Palestine area. Inevitably, the future of the world will be (con-)federal. Against this, separatist processes lead to eternal conflicts and to attempts to solve them using military violence. The policy of separation is not appropriate to globalisation and its challenges; however, it does highlight the need for a federalism that is defined by respect for minorities.

Your peace studies approach is essentially determined by the assumption of globalisation. But isn't the world currently strongly determined by the opposite, namely de-globalisation?

No one today would reduce communication systems to the technical possibilities of television, broadcast, print media or telephone and correspondence, let alone smoke signals, now that we have discovered, without excluding the use of these, the possibilities of interaction on a digital basis and thus the internet. Comparable to this is the situation with globalisation. We can, will and should continue to cultivate regionalisms (including, for example, linguistic, national or religious characteristics) and use them for specific purposes. No one will or can want to deny their functions for the future. However, we cannot, will not and do not want to fall behind a development that we encounter conceptually in «globalisation». Brexit phenomena or «exit» fantasies emerging here and there are not suitable for questioning globalisation both in terms of its reality, which can no longer be denied, and its meaningfulness. Globalisation can no longer be reversed, but only responsibly and creatively shaped in harmony with regionalisms. All current attempts to deny globalisation as an irreversible reality – we are currently experiencing its culmination in Ukraine – and which seem to counteract it, will sooner or later lead themselves ad absurdum. We have emphasised in our publications that it may take one last great war before humanity comes to the re-

alisation that war in general must be taboo. We had thought this possible for the Arab region, there on the Israel-Iran axis, but now we see it demonstrated on the European continent in the previously unthinkable war in Ukraine, which is completely out of time. If we see this together with the one still smouldering in Syria and coming to its end in Afghanistan, then humanity – even if it seems otherwise at the moment – should be on the home stretch to the realisation that war is no longer possible and is yesterday's news. War as the most terrible extreme of separation, and with it the chaos of, say, economic sanctions, demonstrates once again that, in the interest of all, we have only one choice of shaping life and the world: consistent action under the conditions of globalisation. There is no doubt that we still have much to learn here. Further developments will show that we are in the painful process of «trial and error», for example with regard to Ukraine and the danger of a World War III. De-globalisation processes, such as we are currently experiencing, are caesuras that will be overcome in a very short time and will underline all the more strongly the need to put all our potential, i.e. our ability and willingness to «mutual aid» (Peter Kropotkin) in contrast to the Darwinist principle of «all against all», at the service of globalisation in the sense of a culture of peace. In terms of the world economy and world politics, we will come back extremely quickly and once and for all to the achievement of a «human web» (McNeill and McNeill 2004) under the sign of globalisation and appreciate its value once again. As we say, we still have a lot to learn here.

What are the practical instruments for carrying forward cooperation?

Conflict transformation depends both on structural measures and on actional ones. The so-called round table (RT) stands for both. Bringing people together, that is coming together instead of trying to solve a problem by a constellation, which is determined by the separation of the conflicting parties, is a first structural measure. We may solve a lot of problems by structural decisions. For instance, if your very young child is irritating you by insisting on playing with a sharp object on your damageable glass table, you could use an actional solution and continuously criticise the child and so make it permanently stressed. Alternatively, you could take the glass table out of the living room, probably only for a while, and replace it with a cheap less damageable table. In this case a structural decision dispensed with the need for actional measures. So the establishment of a RT is already half the solution, in itself. A round table is both a structure and a method. RT discussions and decision-making are defined by the participation of all persons concerned, or their representatives. They are also realisable for all levels of peacebuilding. In particular, RT is an efficient way to transform conflicts as an alternative to attempts by institutions and movements that are normally determined by exclusion and confrontation. We can imagine a kind of RT that is used alongside or within the UN, where principled and only non-violent solutions are worked out by persons affected by the conflict, for example in a situation when civil war seems imminent. As it is, the UN is too quick to believe that only violent solutions are viable.

Currently, life on our planet is dominated by (international) political conflicts. A lot depends on how these conflicts can be resolved. Indeed, politics is essentially «conflict politics». As such, politics will always be indispensable, now and in the future. Because we will always have conflicts, we need to have a balance of the political forces through political struggle. But, in the future, the fate of the globe may not depend on the free play of political or economic forces but on an unstressed, efficient worldwide administration. This one small planet needs, firstly, a highly professional, well-functioning administration to solve the economic and ecological problems of life and, supporting this, a sub-administrative ethics constituting a culture and practice of political struggle. Thus, the priority is administration, not politics. Politics is oriented to a common, globally and federally organised administration that is only thinkable in terms of domestic world policy. The global atmosphere, in which politics acts and administration handles the challenges of daily life, is mainly determined by common cultures of interpersonal dealings, such as non-violent conflict transformations, working and consuming, education and learning, music and sports. The youth of the world is not only connected by the same fashion and taste but also by the same distance from politics and the same orientation to culture.

What historical examples and principles can inspire the UN and what kind of action do you think the UN should take?

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi formulated one of the most important laws of non-violent action: the causal connection between means and goals. He illustrated this by using the following metaphor: If you'd like to get a rose you must not sow a weed. And: The tree lies in the seed (Gandhi 2001, 10). Martin Luther King makes a similar point. If you want to create a non-violent society and world, you must not act violently. If you don't accept this principle, you will not achieve your goal (Carson 2000, 120-21). Violence leads to violence, non-violence to non-violence. Therefore, it makes no sense to mix non-violent means with violent ones. Whenever violence is included in the spectrum of non-violent means – even as a very minor part of the means – the goal and the power of non-violence are corrupted to their opposite. Non-violence only makes sense in its pure form. Obviously, this doesn't mean that people who act violently aren't allowed to use non-violent means. In order to explain it positively: the realisation of non-violence as a future goal depends on the realisation of non-violence today. Therefore, non-violence is a question of one's whole lifestyle. In our form of living and actualising the idea and practice of non-violence we anticipate non-violence as a goal. Non-violence is the result of our present doing. We have no influence on the outcome, but we do on the input. If we concentrate on a non-violent input, we may expect non-violence as the natural consequence. As Dom Helder Camara asserted, the most important question is not how to achieve success but how to act non-violently day by day, every hour and minute of our lives (Camara 1971; Salla 1993).

At the beginning of the new millennium, the United Nations started a decade with the precedent-setting title of Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the

Children of the World. The decade lasted from 2001 to 2010. Following on from this, the task is to continue and make deeper the progress achieved during these years, especially by developing peace science in the form of peace research, peace education, and peace activism. This involves motivating and initiating non-governmental peace movements, pressurising governments to support peace activities and to act in accordance with the principles of peacebuilding. To do this we need to offer peace studies and to study peace in all the complexity of a discipline linked with many other academic disciplines. Through all of these, the initiatives have to be internalised and to follow the understanding of peace in the meaning set out by the United Nations – and to develop it further. Peace, in the opinion of the UN is only thinkable as non-violence (General Assembly 2008). Indeed, it makes no sense to add non-violence after postulating peace. Non-violence is a tautological expression of peace. Obviously, in wording the aims of the decade, the UN saw a necessity to make sure that, in its perspective, peace can be understood only as non-violence. Therefore, the UN describes peace as non-violence and all activities working towards the global «culture of peace» have to recognise this. This postulate is a very high ethical standard, but based on our willingness and abilities, and – especially – on our daily experience, it is in fact very realistic.

What other sources of inspiration, secular or religious, can support efforts to build and spread a culture of peace?

Those who work towards a non-violent space and expect processes that deliver results all participants can accept to develop in this space believe in a power that is acting in the vacuum in the interests of both parties: a third, independent power, who both the non-violent agent and the conflict opponent or partner are subject to. If non-violence is to be more than merely a tactic or method to achieve an end, its agents have to believe in a power that is acting in the vacuum of non-violence, which the agent prepares through special non-violent actions. Thus, Gandhi's non-violent agents trusted in the power of truth (satyagraha): that there is a dynamic, a constructive potential that brings people together – a form of Third Power (Rogers 1989, 388; Thorne 2003, 113-15). In the biblical tradition, this is represented by the four letters, JHWH which means that there is something that exists in the interests of the people. In a South African theology, the name for this is MODIMO, which means that there is a God who collects friends and enemies within the same fence. There are many ways of naming it: Lao Tzu called it the Being beyond the whole being, Christians would say God, Muslims Allah, others believe in «Biophilia» as the centre of living together (Fromm 2010), or the Absolute Horizon of Being (Havel 1989). In a very original way, the Anglican theologian, Carter Heyward, signifies dealings that relate to the existence of such a Third Power, however it is named, by the verb «to god» (Heyward 1982; 1993, 247). From this perspective, every non-violent behaviour or dealing demonstrates an absolute trust in an inaccessible, in the between of all parties existing and acting Third. This spirituality is the core of a non-violence that is much more than only a method.

What do you see as the specific contribution, also in practical terms, that peace studies can make to the development of a culture of peace?

In the 1970s, peace studies developed non-military alternatives for military deterrence and defence (Barash and Webel 2018, 23-40; Wallensteen 2011; Webel and Galtung 2007). Military concepts are constructed as in wrestling, non-violent defence concepts are more like those in judo. In wrestling, one combatant makes a stand against the other; in judo, one gets the better of the other by letting him grasp at nothing. In the military system, a war starts whenever one party enters a foreign country with hostile intentions. The rulers of the country then react with a counterstrike at least as aggressive as the attack: if the country is bombed, the reaction will be bombs for the aggressor. So, the aggressor has to pay a high price for entrance when invading a country. In the concept of non-violent, social defence and deterrence the aggressor also has to expect a reaction. But not one of counterforce. Rather it would be by massive non-violent actions all over the occupied country (A), in the country of the aggressor (B) and in the world public (C). Thus, the aggression becomes undermined by consequent non-violent activities and the aggressor has to pay a high price for staying. These activities include many possibilities: making the injustices perpetrated («dramatising») by occupying forces publicly known; «fractionising» the people of B (enlarging the critical group which knows that its own country is doing anything wrong); and bringing the global public (C) on its side. Therefore, this concept is based on an approach that lets the enemy fall in his own strike, in the emptiness of non-violence. This is very different to a fatalistic acceptance of aggression and passivity; rather it is an endless abundance of efficient non-violent actions throughout the occupied country (A), including non-violent resistance (especially non-cooperation) and the establishment of alternate structures beside the structures the aggressor is trying to enforce.

Don't you think that a common feeling of rejection of death caused by intentional violence through war or any other kind of conflict between human beings should be established?

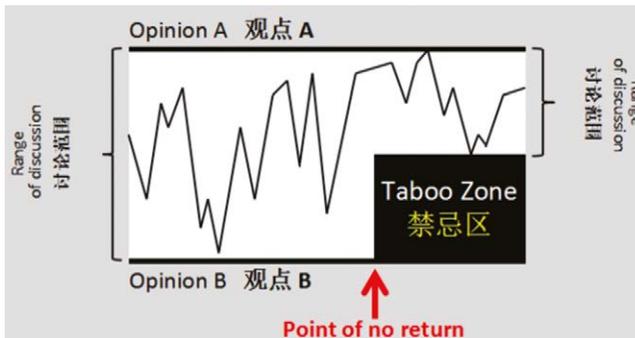
This is not the place to discuss how the humankind has dealt with the phenomenon of murder throughout history. But we may be sure that murder has always been a serious issue and has been punished everywhere and at all times. Murder is a worldwide taboo. Civilisation without this taboo is unimaginable. But if we could taboo murder, shouldn't we be able to do the same with war? By asking this, it's not our intention to claim that soldiers are murderers. What we are pointing out is only that, in both cases, killing other people seems the only or best way to solve a specific conflict (in their own interests). Nobody would argue that under special conditions murder is allowed, at least not publicly (although clearly sometimes people do allow it to happen). Obviously there are other possible means to solve problems than murder and moreover there must be a general acceptance of this. A theoretical parallel for political conflicts is obvious. And the time is ripe

to make all violence a taboo. The Viennese theologian, Kaspar Mayr, asserted this more than half a century ago, right after the Second World War (Solzbacher 1999).<sup>1</sup> He was right at the time. He is even more right today. And the conditions are on his side. Already at that time Mayr postulated the need to substitute war-orientated policies and military defence strategies with policies of conflict resolution using non-violent means and methods. Providing a wealth of information and special research, peace studies is working out how this substitution will work.

Are there examples to refer to of initiatives and practical methods to exclude and protect specific fields of action from the threat of war violence?

The Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict was adopted at The Hague (Netherlands) in 1954 after that massive destruction of cultural heritage had occurred during the Second World War. And it was ratified by China in 2000. This Convention, «the first international treaty with a world-wide vocation focusing exclusively on the protection of cultural heritage in the event of armed conflict» (UNESCO 1954), demonstrates that it is possible to create zones from which an ongoing war is excluded. Clearly, the establishing of keep-out-war zones is a realistic strategy to protect cultural property at least. Nevertheless, their existence proves that keep-out-war zones are possible.

Very often the public opinion-forming process proceeds between two extremes: between the two positions of extremely pro and extremely contra an issue. In the case of war and preparing for war, this means the plea for deterrence and defence on one side, and plea for non-violent conflict transformation on the other. All decision-making processes usually come to a point of no return when the question is decided. The process that leads to this point is described in the first, left-hand part of the graph below.



From a certain point on, the discussion carries on, but it is never allowed to run into the zone that was created by the previous discussion. The debate may

<sup>1</sup> Today: [www.worldbeyondwar.org](http://www.worldbeyondwar.org).

touch the border of this zone, but is not allowed to overstep the borderline of the taboo zone. Of course, the temptation of this exists for some people, but in public discussion this must be continuously resisted. Whether the once-achieved taboo zone cracks or remains resilient, and the possible impacts of this, depends on the discussion. The graphs in our model are created randomly. The curve of the line symbolises only the possibilities of movement between the two extremes of pro and contra, and later between the one extreme and the tabooed zone. The most significant point of this model is the beginning of the tabooed zone.

In the ancient world many people, especially philosophers, were convinced that the Earth is a globe and not a disc. But for the notion that the Earth is a globe to become accepted as common opinion, a great deal of time and many reflections, research and discussions are needed. Since the discoveries of Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543) and Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), we have been aware that the Earth is revolving round the Sun, and not the Sun around the Earth. However, because Galileo's books recognised this fact, they were put on the index of books that were forbidden by the Roman Catholic Church. First in 1992, when Pope John Paul declared that the ruling against Galileo was an error resulting from «tragic mutual incomprehension», Galileo Galilei was officially rehabilitated by the Church. This is a vivid example of how a public discussion can be brought to the «point of no return» by one side, and the entrenched ignorance of this by a specific group moving further in a direction of thinking that is already taboo. Similarly, shortly before 1865, there were numerous discussions in the USA that moved between approval and rejection of slavery. Consequently, since 1865 slavery has been forbidden by law. Since this time slavery is a taboo. Also, since 1948 the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has provided the reference point for dealing with human beings all over the world. At the beginning of 1970s, the Polish government started an initiative to record children's rights, and in 1989 this became officially enshrined in the United Nations' «Convention on the Rights of the Child». There are a lot of reasons for increasing understanding of the unsuitability of war. The danger, the psychological incapability of people and the emotional and economic costs are only the most important of these. All in all, we are becoming much more sensitive in relation to life and its violation by violence. And we increasingly don't like violence. From a local perspective, and from the perspective of outer space, we can state that there is the highest probability that, in huge areas, war will never happen again.

The recent Russo-Ukrainian conflict, originating from Russian aggression against a country looking towards the West under many respects, has radically changed the way we perceive war as a reality that can also affect the European continent. What does this mean from the point of view of peace studies?

We used to think that there were certain parts of the world where war was unlikely, such as the European continent. We also suspected that the world might need a major war to break out before people could truly realise that we humans could no longer bear the weight of war. Unfortunately, the recent Ukrainian-Rus-

sian war broke out. This war is similar to the beginning of the First World War. And the further development of the war is likely to trigger the Third World War. World War Three will be a nuclear war. We must replace war with non-violent ways to resolve conflicts, as peace studies advocates. We don't want the majority of the world, especially national leaders, to recognise this after this war, because it's too late and this Earth may not exist anymore. After World War Two, Albert Einstein warned people that: «We need an essentially new way of thinking if mankind is to survive. Men must radically change their attitudes toward each other and their views of the future. Force must no longer be an instrument of politics [...] Today, we do not have much time left; it is up to our generation to succeed in thinking differently. If we fail, the days of civilised humanity are numbered». It's clear that Albert Einstein cautioned a lot of people who didn't hear it. This shows the importance of the concept of peace that this paper emphasises, which is related to the life and death of human beings.

Do you think that peace studies could point anyway to a feasible way of ending the Russo-Ukrainian conflict with a non-violent solution? And, in your view, should the will of the Ukrainians not to give in to the violent aggression that is causing them so much destruction and suffering be taken into account when talking about peaceful solutions? In other words, how, by what means, could peaceful solutions have been sought in the face of so much violence?

Affected by the by-no-means-surprising expansion of the war in Ukraine that began with the occupation of Crimea, many have taken a position in favour of a military solution. System-transcendent (as opposed to system-immanent) peace and conflict research, which reflects on the phenomenon of war both generally and continuously and therefore does not have to react reflexively to concrete war events, has conflict resolution strategies ready, not only for wars in Afghanistan, in Iraq, in Syria, in Mali and finally also in Ukraine, which differ considerably from the traditional, military ones. Within the framework of countless individual studies and overall studies, it has been able to work out the practicability and effectiveness of «non-violent action» and illustrate principles and practices of non-violent resistance. Historical studies, in particular, such as those by Gene Sharp, among others, show that the spectrum and reservoir of non-violent conflict resolution action is almost inexhaustible. In view of the large body of literature on successful attempts at non-violent resistance and its constructive side, it is neither understandable in terms of the theory of science nor in terms of the ethics of science that, in the search for the best of all conflict solutions, non-violent resistance strategies and techniques are not only left out of the considerations, but are usually not even rudimentarily taken into account. This is just as true for the war in Ukraine and those responsible for it as it is for wars and those responsible for them elsewhere. Here as there, and in general, it is overlooked that what Max Weber separated, namely ethics of responsibility and ethics of mind (or of principle or of conviction), can be brought into congruence in an almost ingenious way in active non-violence (not to be confused with passivity, cowardice or fatalism): the

non-violent person follows his moral mind (not to hurt or even kill others) and at the same time assumes political responsibility (by facing social challenges and actively participating in political shaping processes). While the CIA has systematically prepared the military and intelligence services in Ukraine since the seizure of Crimea in 2014 for military resistance in the event of the obvious expansion of Russia's occupation policy, the opportunity to practice non-violent conflict resolution techniques – there would be no shortage of advisory staffs and trainers internationally – has not even been rudimentarily seized, and the potential for non-violent action that appears in isolated spontaneous actions among the Ukrainian population remains untouched. Instead of spreading resistance in society across all conceivable shoulders (including those of senior citizens, women, children, and the disabled), it is left to the scarce elite of young men fit for military service. Didn't Belarusian railroad workers who prevented supplies from reaching the occupiers by destroying the rail connection in the border region with Ukraine, and didn't the elderly lady who courageously confronted a Russian soldier and asked him to return home or at least put a sunflower seed in his pocket so that a sunflower might grow from it after his death, point out of themselves the direction to take in order to resolve conflicts in a sustainable way?

What do you think are the different degrees of acceptance and coexistence between different cultures? And what do you consider to be a desirable end point in the processes of cultural rapprochement?

All cultures are realisations of the human longing for unification and community. The lowest step is one of mutual interest and understanding. Understanding does not mean agreeing, but at least avoiding the fierce conflict between them. The next step is characterised by mutual tolerance, the following one by mutual acceptance, which involves much more than simple toleration. Similarly, to value other cultures and their special traditions and treasures is an even greater step, whereas the highest and last step is for the cultures to join each other. Of course, the assumption of superiority that the major cultures have held for so long does not make it easy to abandon the claim of exclusivity that all cultures more or less have. However, there are some inspiring examples and models of unification in actualised forms. These include China's initiative of the Community of Human Destiny. The Covid-19 outbreak has also shown once again that humanity is a community and that we must work together to overcome difficulties. We must come together, regardless of our cultural background, because that is the only way we can have a better peaceful future. If we say YES to Peace, we must say NO to War! No way to peace, peace is the only way.

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CONNESSIONI. STUDIES IN TRANSCULTURAL HISTORY

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«History has to reorient», as the historian and sociologist Andre Gunder Frank observed. In the global or globalised age, a culture is no longer regarded as a discrete entity, but rather as a hybrid formation that interacts with other cultures in an incessant process of multidirectional exchange. Bringing together «Eastern» and «Western» case studies ranging from the seventeenth to the twenty-first centuries, this volume reminds historians that to conduct transcultural analyses they need to be alert to the multiple ways, comic intents included, in which difference is negotiated within contacts and encounters – from selective appropriation to rejection or resistance.

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