

Constructing Confucius in the Low Countries

TRUDE DIJKSTRA and THIJS WESTSTEIJN

Trude Dijkstra is promovenda aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam binnen het NWO-Vidi project *The Chinese Impact. Images and Ideas of China in the Dutch Golden Age* (2014–2019). Haar onderzoek richt zich op de manier waarop China en met name Confucius tussen 1595 en 1721 in de Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden werden verbeeld in diverse soorten drukwerk.

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Abstract

The first translation of Confucius's *Analects* into a European language was a Dutch book by Pieter van Hoorn. Printed in Batavia in 1675, it predated the better-known Latin translation, *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* (1687). Whereas the introduction of Confucius in the West has often been regarded as a project of the Jesuit mission, an exploration of the Netherlandish situation points out that the 'manufacturing' of Confucianism was a variegated and multi-confessional affair. The process of transmitting, translating, publishing, explaining, and judging Confucius presented a challenge to Europeans from different backgrounds and allegiances, integrating not only Latin and vernacular scholarship but also Asian expertise.

Keywords: Confucius, Pieter van Hoorn, Philippe Couplet, Jesuits, VOC/East India Company, philosophy

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‘Confucius, known throughout China [...] planted golden morals’ two thousand years ago, according to Joost van den Vondel’s play *Zungchin* (1667), set in Beijing’s Forbidden City.¹ This praise echoed a history of philosophy of 1655 by the Harderwijk professor Georg Horn, who claimed that ‘the entire Chinese Empire is ruled only by Philosophers’ and extolled Confucius as ‘surpassing many of the pagans in morals and judgements’.² Admiration for Chinese philosophy was the rule rather than the exception in the Netherlands. By 1705 the antiquarian Gijsbert Cuper opined that Confucius had been ‘a great man who acknowledged but a single God’; it was ‘only after his death that brutal idolatry ha[d] arrived in that beautiful and exquisite [China] [...] at the same moment when the Greeks had Socrates, the Chinese had Confucius: but the latter had more followers and is still being held in great esteem.’³

When, in the seventeenth century, Europe was confronted with Eastern philosophy, Confucius (believed to have lived 551–479 BC) was the protagonist. The Jesuit missionaries and their learned publications were instrumental in this process: ‘Confucius’ is their Latinization of the original Chinese title Kong Fuzi (孔夫子), literally ‘Master Kong’. As one historian has put it, ‘by one of the stranger ironies of history, Europe first learned of Confucius from Jesuits who had been sent out to convert the “heathen”

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1 ‘[U]w Konfutius, gansch Sina door bekent [...] plante goude zeden, / Voor twintigh eeuwen’, J. van den Vondel, *Zungchin of ondergang der Sineesche heerschappye*, Amsterdam 1667, p. 21.

2 ‘Confutius [...] sane moralibus et sententiis plerosque Ethnicorum non aequavit modo, vero etiam superavit [...] In sola igitur Sina regnant Philosophi’, G. Hornius, *Historiae philosophicae libri septem*, Leiden 1655, p. 309–310.

3 ‘[D]at Confutius is geweest een groot man, ende dat hij erkent heeft maar eenen Godt, ende dat nae zijn doot eerst de groove afgoderije is gekomen in dat schoon en kostelijk landt ende het dunckt mij seer aenmerckelijk, dat op den eygensten tijdt bij de Griecken is geweest Socrates, en bij de Chinesen Confutius, doch dese heeft meer navolghers gehad, en is tot nu toe in groote weerde gebleven’, G. Cuper to N. Witsen, 3 November 1705, Amsterdam University Library, Special Collections, UBA Be 36, fol. 90r–91v.

Chinese.’⁴ From the late sixteenth century onwards the missionaries, as the only Europeans with access to the Forbidden City, had played a crucial part in the exchange of knowledge between China and Europe. The Jesuits realized that the Middle Kingdom could be changed only from within: they had to incorporate local cultural and philosophical traditions into their preaching of Christianity, whereby the ‘supposed compatibilities between Chinese and Christian concepts justified the accommodation strategies of the missionaries.’⁵

The missionaries tried to identify essential tenets that Chinese philosophy shared with Christianity, on which a project of mass conversion could be based. To defend this approach for a European audience, they decided on a publication in Latin of Confucius’s main works. Their edition, *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*, appeared in Paris in 1687. This was a seminal historical moment on a global scale: as the Dutch sinologist Kristofer Schipper emphasizes, Confucius was the world’s ‘first philosopher to become famous outside his country, in other continents and civilizations’. Arguably the impact of this ‘most influential thinker in human history’ on the cultures of Asia is ‘as big as the combined influence of Socrates and Jesus on that of the West’.⁶

In spite of such grand statements, Confucius’s original writings have not survived (only the records of his disciples have, which were compiled much later, during the Han dynasty), many historical details about his life remain unclear, and it is uncertain when, and whether, there was a coherent philosophical school that can be called ‘Confucianism’. Modern scholarship has debated whether the Jesuits in their translation effort may have ‘invented’ or ‘manufactured’ Confucianism.⁷ The present article intends to shed new light on this ‘invention’ by discussing some of the non-Jesuit actors involved in the process of translating, editing, publishing, explaining, and criticizing the Confucian writings. The focus will be on the Low Countries, where Jesuits interacted with a variety of people who were only indirectly related to the mission and often did not share their Catholic motivation. It was a ship of the Dutch East India Company (voc) that brought Europe manuscripts for *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*, which the authors intended to publish with a Protestant firm in the Dutch Republic. The first translation of the *Analects* – containing the essence of Confucius’s moral philosophy – in one of the European vernaculars, was actually in Dutch, predating the more famous Latin version by twelve years. Incidentally, it showed no traces of the Jesuit agenda. The well-known Jesuit depiction of Confucius on the title page of *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* (fig. 1) can therefore be compared with an earlier image, published in 1670 in Olfert Dapper’s report of a voc mission to China (fig. 2). In contrast to the missionaries’ portrayal of

4 B. Löwendahl, *China Illustrata Nova. Sino-Western relations, conceptions of China, cultural influences and the development of sinology; disclosed in Western printed books, 1477–1877*, Hua Hin 2008, p. 18.

5 N. Dew, *Orientalism in Louis XIV’s France*, Oxford 2009, p. 211.

6 K. Schipper, *Confucius. De gesprekken*, Amsterdam 2015, p. 13, 20.

7 P. Rule, *K’ung-tzu or Confucius? The Jesuit interpretation of Confucianism*, Sydney 1986; L.M. Jensen, *Manufacturing Confucianism. Chinese traditions and universal civilization*, London 1997; N. Standaert, ‘The Jesuits did not manufacture “Confucianism”’, in: *East Asian Science, Technology, and Medicine* 16 (1999), p. 129–69.



Fig. 1 Portrait of Confucius, engraving, in: P. Couplet and others, *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*, Paris 1687, University of Amsterdam, Special Collections.



Fig. 2 The Vairocana Buddha flanked by a general and three bodhisattvas (including Manjuśrī and Samantabhadra), with Emperor Huizong (Toghon Temür) and Empress Danashri, the Jade Emperor, Confucius, the Guanyin bodhisattva, and four Daoist spirit-generals. Seventeenth-century Dutch copy of a Chinese original dated 1340, engraving, in: O. Dapper, *Gedenkwaerdig bedryf der Nederlandsche Oost-Indische maetschappye, op de kuste en in het keizerrijk van Taising of Sina*, Amsterdam 1670, facing p. 106, University of Amsterdam, Special Collections.

Confucius as a European-style philosopher in a library, Dapper's 'Konfut' appears with an aureole in a devotional setting, paying his respects to the Buddha.⁸ The print is a mirrored version of an ancient frontispiece to a Buddhist sutra printed in 1340. Although Dapper was wrong in identifying the central figure in front of the Vairocana Buddha as Confucius, the philosopher is in fact depicted in the back row of the audience (third from left), in his standard iconography with bushy beard and black hat.⁹

⁸ O. Dapper, *Gedenkwaerdig bedryf der Nederlandsche Oost-Indische maetschappye, op de kuste en in het keizerrijk van Taising of Sina*, Amsterdam 1670, illustration facing p. 106; cf. p. 108: 'Voor de tafel vertoont zich d'aeloude Filosoof Konfut, in achtbaer gewaet, met zamen gevouwen handen, ten teken van eerbiedenis aen de Goddin [sic], en een bonet, na d'aeloude wijze op't hooft.' Dapper is not only wrong about the position of Confucius; the deity is not a female bodhisattva, but the Vairocana Buddha.

⁹ We owe a debt of gratitude to Lennert Gesterkamp for his detailed interpretation of this image. The Vairocana Buddha, seated on a lotus throne, is accompanied to his left and right by a general and a bodhisattva. The two bodhisattva figures in front of him seated on a black tiger and white elephant are Manjuśrī and Samantabhadra – here, however, depicted in Guanyin appearance. The figure in front of the Buddha, dressed as an imperial king or prince, identified by his *tongtian*-crown, is possibly the Daoist Jade Emperor. The audience is led by a Chinese emperor wearing a *mianliu*-crown, and next to him is probably the empress but depicted as a generic Guanyin bodhisattva recognizable from the little Buddha in her headdress. There are five more generals in the audience. The four in the rear are a standard group of Daoist spirit-generals, usually Marshal Yue Fei (with spear), Marshal Guan Yu (with halberd, next to him),

To complicate the Jesuit picture even further, one could point at a third portrait of Confucius, overlooked by modern scholarship. It was published in Leiden in 1660 by the Lutheran theologian Gottlieb Spitzel, who had studied Oriental languages with Jacob Golius, the first Dutch sinologist (fig. 3).¹⁰ This lifelike bust portrays a bare-chested man with no Asian physiognomy and without a beard. Only the long nails and the sash, decorated with scribbles, reference Chineseness. Spitzel explained, quoting a text by Nicolas Trigault printed in Leiden in 1639, how literati and students paid homage to such statues in temples devoted to Confucius, were mandatory in every Chinese city.¹¹ In contrast to the benevolently smiling sage of the Jesuits, Spitzel seems to draw Confucianism in the context of idolatry.¹²

This article will focus on the Netherlandish encounter with Confucius to make clear that ‘manufacturing Confucianism’ was a variegated, multi-confessional, European project – in fact, one of global importance, integrating Latin and vernacular scholarship, European and Asian expertise. The following will trace the role of the Low Countries in the different translation and publication projects that preceded the *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* before exploring the book’s agenda and casting a quick look at its afterlife.

The first Latin translations

The texts that were compiled in *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* were written over almost a century by at least seventeen missionaries from Austria, Italy, the Low Countries, and Portugal, assisted by numerous Chinese interlocutors.¹³ First attempts at publication

Marshal Zhao Gongming, and Marshal Kang. The spirit-general in front is probably Wang Lingguan. The colophon contains three columns of Chinese characters, as reproduced without understanding by the Dutch engraver, which are not entirely legible: ‘The Buddhist disciple from Shanghai, X Yanci (?) had this sutra printed [in order to] ... in the *gengchen* year of the Zhiyuan reign period (1340) ...’ The dating suggests that the emperor and empress in the frontispiece may be identified as Mongol emperor Huizong (Toghon Temür) and Empress Danashri but depicted in Chinese ceremonial dress.

¹⁰ The image was based on Athanasius Kircher’s more schematic rendition of an Indian deity, in *Oedipus Aegyptiacus*, Rome 1652–1654, vol. I, p. 399.

¹¹ G. Spitzel, *De re litteraria Sinensium commentarius*, Leiden 1660, p. 115–120, esp. 118: ‘De Statua vero Confutii non parum invicem dissentiunt scriptores. Trigault [...] refert, in celeberrimo Fani loco illam conspici, una cum Discipulorum etiam monumentis: Martinus vero [...] “Statuam (inquit) illi non efformant, sed solum nomen literis aureis exaratum Academiae fronti superimponunt” [...] Alii denique varias in templis illis Doctorum seu Philosophorum Sinicorum statuas reperiri testantur, quarum unam adjungendam esse existimavimus.’ Cf. N. Trigault, *Regni Chinensis descriptio*, Leiden 1639, p. 64, 83, 241, 267, esp. 241: ‘In celeberrimo fani loco statua illius visitur [...] Ad ejus latus statuæ adstant quorundam ejus discipulorum, quos Sinæ in Divos, sed inferioris ordinis, retulere. In hoc fanum novilunio ac plenilunio quolibet, conveniunt Magistratus omnes urbani, cum renunciatis Baccalaureis, Magistrum solitis inclinationibus, ac genuflexionibus, cereis etiam, ac suffitu veneraturi.’

¹² Spitzel’s main aim was to discuss Confucius in the context of the *prisca philosophia* evident in all the world’s cultures. See below, n. 81.

¹³ T. Meynard, *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* (1687). *The first translation of the Confucian classics*, Rome 2011, p. 2–18.

Fig. 3 Idol of Confucius, engraving, in: G. Spitzel, *De re litteraria Sinensium commentarius*, Leiden 1660, p. 119, British Library London.



involved printers in China and India. When, subsequently, a European audience was envisaged, the importance of the Netherlands for the publishing industry made itself felt.

According to Thierry Meynard's recent overview, for *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* 'the Jesuits accumulated one hundred years of expertise in reading the *Four Books* and

their commentaries'.¹⁴ Only three volumes of the *Four Books* (*Sishu* 四書), as the core of the Confucian canon, were translated into Latin: the *Great Learning* (*Daxue* 大學), the *Doctrine of the Mean* (*Zhongyong* 中庸), and the *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語).¹⁵ The missionaries' involvement with Confucius had initially been a practical one. They had started translating the *Four Books* for the immediate purpose of teaching the Chinese language to fathers newly arrived in the country. They had recognized that the education of the Chinese elite began with the Confucian canon. Without mastery of at least some of these texts, Europeans would fail in converting the literati.¹⁶

Owing to such practical purposes, few of the early translations have survived; the oldest one (at the Biblioteca Nazionale in Rome) is by the Italian Michele Ruggieri, who arrived in China in 1579.¹⁷ Only a fragment was printed in 1593 in a book on Jesuit education.¹⁸ A second, extant translation was made between 1659 and 1662 by the Portuguese missionary Inácio da Costa and the Italian Prospero Intorcetta. Their work on the *Great Learning* and the first half of the *Analects* was published in 1662 as *Sapientia Sinica* by a Chinese printer in Jianchang (a prefecture around Nanchang in Jianxi province). This book interspersed Chinese characters with a romanized phonetic transcription, the Latin equivalent, and Jesuit commentary.

Intorcetta proceeded to translate the *Doctrine of the Mean*, with an expanded biography of Confucius, which was finished under the title *Sinarum scientia politico-moralis* in 1667. Yet the complete book – a bilingual Chinese-Latin edition – would only be published two years later. The first half was printed in Guangzhou in 1667 and the second in Goa (India) in 1669, while Intorcetta was travelling back to Europe. One of his tasks there was to prepare a combined publication of the Confucius translations, intended for a Western readership, outside the context of linguistic education.

At this point it was hard to avoid Europe's main center of book production: the Low Countries. Da Costa's original collaborators in China had included François de Rougemont from Maastricht and Philippe Couplet from Mechelen, who suggested to involve the Amsterdam publisher Johan Blaeu. They had become acquainted with Blaeu just before their departure for China, when they awaited a VOC ship in Amsterdam, staying in the covert yet condoned Jesuit mission post (inoffensively named 'The Sunflower'). In 1663, having safely arrived in the Middle Kingdom, De Rougemont and Couplet sent Blaeu their greetings via a VOC official.¹⁹ Five years later, De Rougemont

¹⁴ T. Meynard, *The Jesuit reading of Confucius. The first complete translation of the Lunyu (1687) published in the West*, Leiden 2015, p. 18.

¹⁵ The Jesuits did not include the Fourth Book, *Mencius*.

¹⁶ L.M. Brockey, *Journey to the East. The Jesuit mission to China, 1579–1724*, Cambridge 2007, p. 243–286.

¹⁷ Meynard, *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*, p. 8; M. Ruggieri, 'China, seu humana institutio', *Biblioteca Nazionale*, Rome, Fondo Gesuitico (FG) 1185 (3314).

¹⁸ This was a fragment of *The Great Learning*, in A. Possevino, *Bibliotheca selecta quae agit de Ratione Studiorum t. 1*, Rome 1593, lib. IX, p. 583. See K. Lundbaek, 'The first translation from a Confucian classic in Europe', in: *China Mission Studies (1550–1800)* 1 (1979), p. 2–11.

¹⁹ Couplet wrote on 15 February 1663: 'soo soude wenschen van mynent wegen ende van wegen van mynheer Fanciscus Rougemont te groeten [...], mynheer Blauw.' AA.vv., *Dagh-register, gehouden in 't*

mentioned the Amsterdam publisher again as his preferred choice for publishing the Confucian texts.²⁰

Even though they were Protestants, Johan Blaeu and his father, Willem Jansz, were an obvious choice: their renowned firm was responsible for many publications by Jesuits, including the first atlas of China published in Europe.²¹ Based on Chinese cartographic sources, Martino Martini's *Atlas Sinensis* (1655) was noteworthy for its detail and accuracy. Afterward, Blaeu continued to act as a dependable middleman, enabling the Jesuits to send letters to and from China via the VOC. In turn, he counted on the privilege of being the first in Europe to publish important Chinese sources and studies.²²

Yet when Intorcetta returned to Europe in 1671, he came under the protection of the formidable polymath Athanasius Kircher, based at the Jesuit College in Rome, who took control of the publication of the Confucian texts. Kircher, frustrating the plans of the 'Padri fiamenghi', 'did not want Blaeu to withhold' the manuscripts and proposed that another Amsterdam publisher, Johannes Janssonius van Waesberge, take on the project. This was probably part of a business deal: Van Waesberge had paid Kircher 2,200 scudi for the publishing rights to all of his works.²³

After Intorcetta left in 1672 another Jesuit from the Netherlands, Godfried Henskens, considered printing the translations, but Kircher again intervened and had all the texts transferred from Amsterdam to Rome. The reasons for this shift remain unclear. Meynard speculates that it may have had to do with the current Dutch war with France and Britain, or that Kircher himself wanted to supervise the publication.²⁴ The first option seems plausible, were it not that Kircher continued sending his own manuscripts to Amsterdam during this period.²⁵ Owing to his old age and eventual

kasteel Batavia, 1633, The Hague 1904, p. 304; J.W. Wills, 'Some Dutch sources on the Jesuit China Mission, 1662–1687', in: *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu* 54 (1985) p. 267–294, esp. 271.

²⁰ Meynard, *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* (n. 13), p. 12; N. Golvers, 'The development of the *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* reconsidered in the light of new material', in: R. Malek (ed.), *Western learning and Christianity in China. The contribution and impact of Johann Adam Schall von Bell, S.J. (1592–1666)*, Nieuwkoop 1998, vol. 2, p. 1141–1164, esp. 1144.

²¹ P. Begheyn, *Jesuit books in the Dutch Republic and its Generality Lands, 1567–1772. A bibliography*, Leiden 2014, p. 44–45.

²² Intorcetta had already wanted to print the *Politico-moralis* in the Dutch Republic. See N. Golvers, 'An unobserved letter of Prospero Intorcetta, S.J. to Godefridus Henskens, S.J. and the printing of the Jesuit translations of the Confucian classics (Rome, Antwerp, 2 June 1672)', in: D. Sacré and J. Papy (eds.), *Syntagmata. Essays on Neo-Latin literature in honour of Monique Mund-Dopchie and Gilbert Tournoy*, Leuven 2009, p. 679–698.

²³ '[N]on vorria io che il Blaeu le trattenesse', Archive Pontifica Università Gregoriana, Rome, Misc. Epist. Kircher, 560, fol. 79r; see Golvers, 'The development of the *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*', p. 1145–6, 1149. On the publishing rights, see D. Stolzenberg, *The great art of knowing. The baroque encyclopedia of Athanasius Kircher*, Stanford 2001, p. 10.

²⁴ Meynard, *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*, p. 13, which refers to a letter from Kircher to Henskens, 2 July 1675; Golvers, 'An unobserved letter of Prospero Intorcetta'. Godfried Henskens (Henschenius) was born in Venray.

²⁵ Van Waesberge published Kircher's *Principis christiani archetypon politicum sive sapientia regnatricis* (1672), *Arca Noë* (1675), and *Sphinx mystagoga* (1676).

death, the manuscript would remain in Rome for over a decade. Couplet and the Antwerp-born librarian of the Vatican, Emmanuel Schelstrate, were the first to discuss publication again.²⁶

In the meantime, a copy of Intorcetta's translation had fallen into the hands of the Italian philosopher Lorenzo Magalotti, who gave it to Melchisédech Thévenot. This eminently connected scholar was working on a large book about the non-European world, *Relations de divers voyages curieux*. Its fourth volume (1672–1673) incorporated Intorcetta's Latin translation of the *Doctrine of the Mean*, printed without the Chinese characters but including the biography of Confucius in both Latin and French.²⁷ The *Relations*, counting 1,700 pages in total, also included French translations from Martini's Chinese atlas and Dutch sources, such as Willem Bontekoe's popular East-Indian travelogue and the report of a VOC embassy to Beijing by Johan Nieuhof. Apparently Christiaan Huygens had sent Thévenot clandestine excerpts from the VOC account in 1662 – three years before its publication in Dutch.²⁸ Within this large and multifaceted publication, the Confucian text was thus presented for the first time outside the missionary context to a wider European readership.

The 1675 Dutch edition

What purported to be a translation of the complete *Analects* appeared first in a Dutch translation by Pieter van Hoorn. Van Hoorn, an Amsterdam gunpowder manufacturer, had been appointed a member of the VOC's Council of the Indies and left with his family for Batavia (now Jakarta) in 1662. In 1666 he led an embassy – the third of its kind – to the imperial court in Beijing to gain right of trade. While the journey proved a political and economic bust, Van Hoorn's reports stood as the basis of the aforementioned book by Olfert Dapper, which would come to exert substantial influence on European images of China.

After his return to Batavia, Van Hoorn composed a verse translation of parts of Confucius's *Analects* entitled *Eenige voorname eygenschappen van de ware deugdt, voorsichtigheydt, wysheydt en volmaecktheydt* (Some principle characteristics of true virtue, prudence, wisdom, and perfection).²⁹ This small book in quarto contains only three gatherings on

²⁶ Meynard, *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*, p. 15.

²⁷ 'La science des Chinois, ou le Livre de Cum-fu-çu, traduit mot pour mot de la langue chinoise par le R. P. Intorcetta jesuite. Chûm yum Medium constanter tenendum', in: M. Thévenot, *Relations de divers voyages curieux*, Paris 1663–1696, vol. 4 (1672–1673), p. 1–24 (only the title is in French; the text itself is in Latin).

²⁸ Huygens to Thévenot, July 1662, appendix 'Ex itineraio Chinensi Hollandorum Anno 1656.57', in: C. Huygens, *Oeuvres completes*, The Hague 1891, vol. 4, nos. 1038–1039. Huygens wrote to his brother Lodewijk on 13 July 1662 (vol. 4, p. 169): 'je veux aussi luy envoyer un Extrait du Voiage en la Chine, que j'en ay tiré lors que je l'eus entre mes mains, je dis cette Relation qu'il a si fort desiré d'avoir.'

²⁹ P. van Hoorn, *Eenige voorname eygenschappen van de ware deugdt, voorsichtigheydt, wysheydt en volmaecktheydt. Getrocken uyt den Chineschen Confucius*, Batavia [Jakarta] 1675.

inexpensive paper, without illustrations, which is probably why historians have all but ignored it; in the words of the famous sinologist Wilt Idema, 'it is highly questionable whether Van Hoorn's faint echo of the nation's enthusiasm for China has ever riveted into patria.'³⁰ The forgotten booklet raises many questions.

Notably, Van Hoorn's translation was printed in Batavia – not necessarily a center of book production, but the Dutch had operated a small printing press there for some time. Supplies of printers' ink, the lye bath, plates, and paper all had to be ordered from Europe. The output of the Batavian press consisted mainly of treaties, regulations, and notices as well as some dictionaries, wedding poems, and catechisms.³¹ In 1674–1675 Johannes van den Eede – formerly of Middelburg – was printing for the VOC in the Princestraat under the imprint 'De Batavische Mercurius'.³² He printed only two other publications besides the Confucius translation during that time, which is in line with the general output of the Batavian press.³³ Because the publication of Confucius does not fit within the usual Batavian corpus of publications, it is possible that Van Hoorn paid for the publication out of his own pocket. This would also explain why he dedicated the work to his family instead of, as was the usual practice, to the VOC or its board of directors.

Van Hoorn's own explanation focused on the concept of virtue. He believed that Confucius's instructions on how to lead a virtuous life, which begins with self-reflection, were more adequate than any Western work: 'much has been written about virtue [...] But it seems to me that the Chinese Confucius has expressed and depicted it with words better and clearer than any European author.'³⁴ His open-mindedness towards Confucius went so far as to – according to one scholar – 'attempt to bridge the gap between ethical, social and societal principles propounded by the Chinese thinker and his own Christian culture.'³⁵ What is more, Van Hoorn's engagement with Chinese thought was markedly different from that of his contemporaries. Nowhere does he make the explicit comparison between Confucius and Christ or the Biblical

30 W. Idema, 'Confucius Batavus. Het eerste Nederlandse dichtstuk naar het Chinees', in: *Literatuur* 16 (1999), p. 85–89, esp. 86.

31 Short Title Catalogue Netherlands; place of publication = Batavia. <http://picarta.pica.nl>, accessed on 1 February 2016.

32 J.H. Landwehr, 'De VOC in de wereld van het boek. Sponsor en uitgever', in: *De boekenwereld* 6 (1989–1990), p. 134–145.

33 Between 1668 and 1708, forty books were printed in Batavia according to the Short Title Catalogue Netherlands. This number should be taken with some caution. Much of the print work never reached the Netherlands, and the climate in the Indies did not contribute to the durability of paper. Also, much of the Batavian print work was meant to be heavily used, and as a rule of thumb, things that were heavily used are seldom preserved in large quantities.

34 'Over de DEUGDT is veel geschreven [...] nochtans schynt my toe dat den Chineschen Confucius de selve meerder, en klaarder met woorden heeft uyt-gedrukt en afgemaelt als my van eenige Europische Scribenten is te voor gekomen.' Van Hoorn, *Eenige voorname eygenschappen*, p. 1.

35 P. Rietbergen, 'Before the Bible, beyond the Bible ...? VOC travelogues, world views and the paradigms of Christian Europe', in: S. Friedrich (ed.), *Transformation of knowledge in Dutch expansion*, Berlin 2015, p. 231–249, esp. 237.

prophets, which was popular among the Jesuits. In fact, even Europeans who were skeptical of the Jesuits did not hesitate to portray the Chinese philosopher as a kind of Christian saint.³⁶ By contrast, Van Hoorn lets the Confucian texts speak for themselves; he indicates that the author lived before Christ, but allows readers to draw their own conclusions.

Earlier historians suggested that Van Hoorn used a translation made by the Jesuits. This cannot have been the printed *Sapientia Sinica*, which translates only the first half of the *Analects* whereas Van Hoorn included passages from the whole text.³⁷ He may, however, have had access to a manuscript version of Couplet's complete translation.³⁸ Relations between VOC officials and Jesuits have been amply documented. Missionaries often travelled on Dutch ships, which also carried their mail. Martini, for instance, stayed for half a year in Batavia in 1653, and so did Couplet for thirteen months in 1682–1683. Governor-General Johannes Maetsuyker, a Catholic, was even suspected of actively supporting the Jesuits.³⁹ Van Hoorn likewise befriended Philippe Couplet, but he nurtured no evident sympathies towards Catholicism.⁴⁰ He may therefore have been interested in Confucius for very different reasons.

What indications do the different texts provide? A complicating factor is that in the seventeenth century, Confucius's statements were available in editions with elaborate commentaries.⁴¹ Perhaps Van Hoorn and the Jesuits used different editions. In James Legge's modern translation, the opening lines of the *Analects* read:

The Master said, 'Is it not pleasant to learn with a constant perseverance and application? Is it not delightful to have friends coming from distant quarters?' [...] Tsze-hsia said, 'If a man withdraws his mind from the love of beauty, and applies it as sincerely to the love of the virtuous; if, in serving his parents, he can exert his utmost strength; if, in serving his prince, he can devote his life; if, in his intercourse with his friends, his words are sincere: although men say that he has not learned, I will certainly say that he has'.⁴²

Van Hoorn's verse translation:

³⁶ In his *Vertu des païens* (1641), the libertine philosopher François La Mothe le Vayer (1588–1672) exclaimed (echoing Erasmus's statement on Socrates): 'Sancte Confuci, ora pro nobis.' P. Hazard, *La crise de la conscience européenne, 1680–1715*, Paris 1961, p. 21.

³⁷ *Sapientia Sinica* also includes the complete *Great Learning*, but Van Hoorn does not refer to it.

³⁸ Idema, 'Confucius Batavus' (n. 30), p. 86.

³⁹ M. Peters, *De wijze koopman. Het wereldwijde onderzoek van Nicolaes Witsen (1641–1717), burgemeester en VOC-bewindhebber van Amsterdam*, Amsterdam 2010, p. 226–227; F. Hertroijs, *Hoe kennis van China naar Europa kwam. De rol van jezuïeten en VOC-dienaren, circa 1680–1795*, Amsterdam 2014, p. 17.

⁴⁰ Van Hoorn met Couplet and De Rougemont during his sojourn at Fuzhou, according to L. Blussé, 'Doctor at sea. Chou Mei-Yeh's Voyage to the West (1710–1711)', in: E. de Poorter (ed.), *As the twig is bent ... Essays in honour of Frits Vos*, Amsterdam 1990, p. 7–30, esp. 14.

⁴¹ 'When the Jesuits translated the *Four Books*, it is very likely that they used an edition comprising both the *Sishu jizhu* [by Zhu Xi] and the *Sishu zhijie* [by Zhang Juzheng]', Meynard, *The Jesuit reading of Confucius* (n. 14), p. 40.

⁴² J. Legge, *The Chinese classics. With a translation, critical and exegetical notes, prolegomena, and copious indexes*, Taipei 1991, p. 116.

When you learn and follow the trail of the wise
 And remain constantly focused in this study
 Overcoming difficulties through practice,
 This will be of benefit to you and make you beloved;
 Yea if you want to obtain wisdom from hard work
 Then you can expect friends and companions
 Chosen from faraway countries and honored
 To be taught by you in the education of wisdom.
 [...] When someone is so devoted to men
 Of piety and virtue – just like the senses desire and love
 Something that brings beauty and sweet delight –
 And he devotes all his power, without diminishing it,
 To obeying his parents with all due respect,
 And he does not spare his own life for his country or prince,
 And has learnt faith and truth in his words,
 Then I think he has studied enough.⁴³

The same passage in *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* (in Meynard's English) follows:

Confucius asked: 'Will it not be a pleasure to strive to imitate the wise and to train constantly oneself in this effort of imitation? [...] After you have successfully cultivated yourself with this kind of effort and perseverance, then followers and friends will come from afar in order to consult you and to transmit your teaching' [...] The disciple, Zixia,⁴⁴ says: 'If someone is delighted by honest and wise people, changing and transferring into them his love for things which are beautiful and agreeable to see – *this means that a youth should desire virtue and wisdom with the same ardor and intensity of sensual love, since this period of life is usually controlled by the pleasure of the senses* [italics TD/rw]; similarly, if he is resolute in fulfilling his duty as an honest son toward his father and mother, exhausting all his energy; moreover, if he is resolute in fulfilling his duties as a subject toward his ruler or prince, not hesitating to risk his own person and life whenever needed; finally, if he makes promises to comrades and friends with whom he has good relationships, always keeping his promises with a shining trust and truthfulness; whoever is like this, even though some may say that he has not yet studied, I myself shall always say that he had studied.'⁴⁵

It is not difficult to see that both the Dutch and the Latin translations were in some measure faithful to the original Chinese, even though the Dutch verse text demonstrates more poetic license. The Dutch text also omits all proper names, which would have provided essential clues as to the translator's knowledge of the Latin version. Yet the fragments

⁴³ Van Hoorn, *Eenige voorname eygenschappen* (n. 29), p. 16: 'Indien ghy leert en volgdt het spoor der Wyse Mannen, / En in die study blyft volstandigh in gespannen, / En alle moeylyckheydt door oeffeningh overwindt / Dat sal u kost'lyck zyn, en maecken wel bewindt; / Ia als ghy Wysheydt door beneerstingh wilt betrachten, / Soo hebt ghy mede maets en vrienden te verwachten / Van verre Landen zelfs gesocht en oock vereerd / Om Wysheyds onderwys van u te zyn geleerd / [...] Soo ymandt sich bevindt tot vroom en wijse Menschen / Soodanigh toegedaen, gelyck de sinnen wenschen, / En minnen't geen dat mooy, en soet vermaeck toe-brenght / En voorts geheele kracht besteedt en geensints krenckt, / Om ouders volle plichts gehoorsaemheydt te geven, / Oock voor syn Landt of PRINS niet spaert syn eygen leven, / En in syn woorden trouw en waerheydt heeft geleert, / Die houd'ick dat genoegh en wel heeft gestudeert.'

⁴⁴ In the Latin edition this name is transliterated as *cù hia*. Meynard, *The Jesuit reading of Confucius*, p. 104.

⁴⁵ Ibidem, p. 97–105.

quoted here contain an indication that the Dutch version may have been concerned with the original Chinese. Van Hoorn's translation does not include the italicized sentence in the passage above that, in fact, was not in the Chinese original; Meynard states that it was an addition by the Jesuits on the basis of Western moral literature.⁴⁶

Van Hoorn would not have been capable of translating the original Chinese text directly; among Europeans, only the missionaries had mastered this skill. Yet by the time his text was printed, he had lived for over a decade alongside a sizeable community of Chinese traders, craftsmen, and laborers who were permitted to reside in the walled city. '[T]he whole upkeep of Batavia' depends on the Chinese, noted a minister in 1625, 'because without them there would be held no markets here, and no houses, no works would be built.'⁴⁷ By the end of the century the number of Chinese (almost 3,700) was more than twice that of Europeans.⁴⁸ Historians have portrayed Batavia as de facto 'a Chinese colonial town under Dutch protection [...] a cornerstone of the Chinese trade network in Southeast Asia.'⁴⁹ As governor-general, Van Hoorn must have had frequent contact with his Chinese majority, depending on Chinese interpreters for serious business-related translations. During the Dutch trade embassies to Beijing, negotiations and elaborate diplomatic documents, including letters to the emperor, were also mediated by interpreters; Van Hoorn's difficulties were sometimes attributed to errors of translation. A complicating factor was that most of the Chinese in Batavia, hailing from Fujian, would have spoken Hokkien dialect rather than the Guanhua variant used at the court in Beijing.⁵⁰

Although most of the Batavian Chinese would have been illiterate, those who could read and write would have learnt on the basis of the Confucian texts. This seems to have inspired the minister Justus Heurnius to make, with help of a schoolmaster trained in Macao, a word-by-word translation into Latin of the first chapters of the *Analects*, a copy of which, complete with the Chinese characters and phonetic transcription, he sent to his brother Otto in Leiden (fig. 4). He attached a number of translations of Christian works into Mandarin, such as the Ten Commandments, and a Dutch-Latin-Chinese

⁴⁶ It was 'probably a reference to Western moral literature, like in Plutarch'. Ibidem, p. 105.

⁴⁷ Justus Heurnius to the directors of the Amsterdam chamber of the VOC, 29 January 1625. See J. Grothe, *Archief voor de geschiedenis van de oude Hollandsche zending*, 6 vols., Utrecht 1890-1891, vol. 5, p. 226-27.

⁴⁸ In 1699 the population inside the walls consisted of 3,679 Chinese, 2,407 freed slaves, 1,783 Europeans, 670 mixed-race people, and 867 classified as others, according to a population census; see L. Blussé, *Strange company. Chinese settlers, mestizo women and the Dutch in VOC Batavia*, Leiden 1986, p. 84.

⁴⁹ Blussé, *Strange company*, p. 74; for more demographic details, see M.-S. de Vienne, *Les Chinois en Insulinde. Échanges et sociétés marchandes au XVII^e siècle, d'après les sources de la V.O.C.*, Paris 2008, p. 219-227.

⁵⁰ Van Hoorn, during his embassy to Beijing, threatened to replace his interpreter Gemko in the event of an inaccurate translation; Dapper, *Gedenkwaerdig bedryf* (n. 8), p. 304. He struggled with the Hokkien-Guanhua discrepancy at least once: 'Men twyffelde niet sonder reden, of d'oversettinge al wel en na behoren was gedaan, alsoo tot Batavia niemant was, die de hooghlandsche Chinesche taal grondigh verstont.' P. van Dam, *Beschryvinge van de Oostindische Compagnie, Tweede boek, deel 1*, The Hague 1927-1954, p. 740. Only incidentally did a Dutchman act as an interpreter in Chinese: a certain Mouri[t]s Jansz. Visch worked for Balthasar Bort as 'talk in de Sinese tale'. Dapper, *Gedenkwaerdig bedryf*, part 1, p. 339.

Confucij Doctrina Moralis.			
yeu	有	habere	
teu	子	filius	
yeu	日	est	
kei	其	ille	
guai	為	est	
guai	人也	homo	
yeu	孝	littera terminat punctum	
hiac	弟	obediens parentibus	
ti	而	obediens fratibus nativ. maioribus.	
thi	好	et	
hao	犯	(si) defilect	
fan	上	se opponere	
xam	者	superioribus	
che	鮮	relativum	
sien	矣	parvus vel est nullus est.	
y.	不	est punctum	
pu	好	non	
hao	犯	gaudere	
fan	上	se opponere	
xam	而	superioribus	
thi		et	
teu	自	ex	
yuen	遠	longinqua	
fan	方	terra	
lai	來	venientem	
pu	不	nomen	
yeu	亦	etiam	
lo	樂	latificat	
hu	乎	interrogatio	
guai	人	homo. l. aliquis	
pu	不	est non	
chi	知	agnoscitur	
thi	而	et	
pu	不	non	
uoca	愠	stomachetur	
pu	不	non	
yeu	亦	etiam. l. et.	
kinm	君	vir probus. l. sapiens.	
teu	子		
hu	乎	interrogatio	
hiu	學	Artificare	
thi	而	et	
ti	第	primus	
yeu	一	unus	
teu	子	Philosophus	
yue	曰	ait	
hiu	孝	artificare	
thi	而	et	
xi	時	semper	
hiu	習	accitare	
chi	之	illud	
pu	不	nomen	
yeu	亦	etiam	
yue	悅	latificat	
hiu	乎	Interrogatio	
yeu	有	habere	
pu	朋	amicum	

Fig. 4 'Confucij Doctrina Moralis' (Chapter 1 of the Analects), Chinese text with Latin translation by Justus Heurnius, in: Compendium Doctrinae Christianae, Batavia 1628, Leiden University Library, Special Collections, Acad. 225, fol. 11b.

dictionary.⁵¹ Although Heurnius adopted some of the religious terminology coined by the Jesuits, his texts were clearly intended for a Protestant context in which trade was paramount.⁵² The bundle of translations begun with a set of 'expressions for buying and selling' Chinese goods such as silk and porcelain; Heurnius wrote that his efforts would 'be of great usefulness to posterity, as soon as the Chinese trade is opened, as we hope.'⁵³

Did Van Hoorn's translation of Confucius fit a similar pattern – was he assisted by the Chinese in Batavia? If so, this would echo a common practice in Dutch literature: foreign texts were first translated into prose before a third party would put them into verse.⁵⁴ What lends particular credence to this hypothesis is that Van Hoorn's son proved to be able to have a complex Chinese literary text translated into Dutch. Johan van Hoorn, who had succeeded his father in Batavia as governor-general, received around 1700 an image of an inscribed Chinese mirror from the Amsterdam mayor Nicolaas Witsen. The mayor's learned European network, which included missionary scholars in Rome and Paris, had been unable to translate the ancient inscription, and he asked Van Hoorn to consult his Chinese community. Van Hoorn asked an 'interpreter in Batavia', but nobody could fully decipher the mirror's inscription in ancient seal script.⁵⁵ He therefore had the request forwarded to more literate Chinese on the mainland, possibly in Guangzhou, which had relatively common trade dealings with Batavia.⁵⁶ In 1705 Witsen recounted how he had 'sent [the image of] the mirror to Batavia where there are more than ten thousand [*sic*] Chinese. No one understands it, but the Governor-General [Johan van

51 *Compendium Doctrinae Christianae* (Batavia 1628), Leiden University Library, Special Collections, Acad. 225. It was probably sent by Justus Heurnius (Batavia) to Otto Heurnius (Leiden) in 1629. The bundle contains *Confucii doctrina moralis*, containing 5/6 of chapter 1 of the *Analects* (fol. 11v-14v) and 'Colloquium Confucii cum puero' (i.e., the text and translation of *Xiao'er lun* 小兒論, a discussion with the seven-year old Xiang Tuo during which Confucius is outwitted), fol. 6r-11r. On the dictionary (Acad. 224) and compendium (with copies in London and Oxford that contain a longer excerpt from the *Analects*) see K. Kuiper, 'The earliest monument of Dutch sinological studies. Justus Heurnius's manuscript Dutch-Chinese dictionary and Chinese-Latin *Compendium Doctrinae Christianae* (Batavia 1628)', in: *Quaerendo* 35 (2005), p. 95-186.

52 Heurnius, as 'the first Protestant missionary to be confronted with this difficulty', adopted the Jesuits' usage of the Chinese term Tianzhu 天主 (Lord of Heaven) to denote the Christian God; the terminology must have been suggested by the schoolmaster who had been trained in Macao, a center of Jesuit learning. J.J.L. Duyvendak, 'Early Chinese studies in Holland', in: *T'oung Pao* 32.5 (1936), p. 293-344, esp. 321, who also notes that the inclusion of the Ten Commandments signals Heurnius's Protestant focus.

53 Justus Heurnius to the directors of the Amsterdam chamber of the *voc*, 29 January 1625. See Grothe, *Archief voor de geschiedenis* (n. 47), p. 226-227.

54 Cf. the working practice of the Dutch poet Catharina Questiers. K. Porteman and M.B. Smits-Veldt, *Een nieuw vaderland voor de muzen*, Amsterdam 2008, vol. III, p. 572-577.

55 '[D]e uytlegger van dese mijne spiegel op batavia', N. Witsen to G. Cuper, 20 October 1705, in: J.F. Gebhard, *Het leven van Mr. Nicolaes Cornelisz. Witsen*, vol. II, Utrecht 1881-1882, no. 21, p. 307.

56 The *voc* did not establish a trading post until 1729, but earlier *vrijburgers* (free citizens) from Batavia were trading regularly with Guangzhou, a center of arts and crafts production. See Hertroijs, *Hoe kennis van China naar Europa kwam* (n. 39), p. 102.

Hoorn] had it brought to China to show to learned Chinese asking them for an explanation, and so it happened.’⁵⁷ The ‘geleerde Sinesen’ transcribed the ancient seal script into contemporary characters; the Dutch translation that followed was incorrect but certainly an attempt at accuracy. Incidentally, a faulty transcription of a single character resulted in the poem being read as a monotheistic paean, which fitted Witsen’s argument that the ancient Chinese had been similar to Christians.⁵⁸ He concluded that his mirror dated to the time of Confucius: ‘It is remarkable that these letters are more than a thousand years old and the common man cannot read them. This is a device or symbol from [...] around the time of the so learned and pious Confucius of whom was said, with more reason than was said once about Plato and Seneca, “O Saint Confucius!”’⁵⁹ Witsen’s translation only survives in Dutch, but there may have been other languages involved in the process, such as Malay or Portuguese.⁶⁰ In any event, this exchange proves that Chinese-Dutch collaboration on translating sophisticated Chinese literary texts was possible. A similar collaboration may have resulted in 1675 in the Dutch version of the *Analects*, which was, in fact, dedicated to Johan van Hoorn and his siblings.

Until late in his career, Johan van Hoorn referred to Chinese civilization when fashioning his professional identity. At the tender age of twelve he had been appointed a junior VOC official to accompany his father on the 1665 embassy to Beijing. Owing to his ‘intimate as well as businesslike’ contacts with the Chinese of Batavia, he became the richest man in the Indies.⁶¹ When, after spending thirty years in Asia, he returned to the Netherlands, he filled his Amsterdam mansion with staggering amounts of high-quality Asian – specifically Chinese – arts and crafts. His inventory included porcelain (570 sets of cups and saucers), furniture, and lacquerware, some of it customized for his children with the family’s coat of arms, as a material expression of the manner in which three generations had managed to negotiate the melting pot of cultures that was Batavia, the Dutch-ruled Chinese city.⁶²

57 ‘[I]k sont het dan na Batavia alwaer meer als tiendusent Sinesen sijn, nimant verstaet het, dog de generael dede het overbrengen na Sina om aen geleerde Sinesen te vertonen, en die explicatie te versoecken, so als geschiede’, N. Witsen to G. Cuper, 20 November 1705, in: Gebhard, *Het leven van Mr. Nicolaes Witsen*, no. 22, p. 308–309.

58 W. van Noord and T. Weststeijn, ‘The global trajectory of Nicolaas Witsen’s Chinese mirror’, in: *Rijksmuseum Bulletin* 4 (2015), p. 325–361, esp. 332–333.

59 ‘Het is bijzonder dese letters syn al over de duysent jaer verout, en de gemene man kan se gants niet lesen, het is een devies (symbolium) van [...] omtrent de tijt van de so geleerde en vrome Confutius, van wien men met meer reden als eertijds een ander van Plato en Seneca uytriep, O Heylige Confutius’, N. Witsen to G. Cuper, 20 October 1705, in: Gebhard, *Het leven van Mr. Nicolaes Witsen*, no. 21, p. 307.

60 Kuiper, ‘The earliest monument of Dutch sinological studies’ (n. 51), p. 112.

61 Blussé, ‘Doctor at sea’ (n. 40), p. 16.

62 J. van Campen, ‘The hybrid world of Batavia’, in: J. van Campen, F. Diercks and K. Corrigan (eds.), *Asia in Amsterdam. The culture of luxury in the Golden Age*, Amsterdam 2015, p. 47; Johan van Hoorn inventory, notary Michiel Servaas, Amsterdam City Archives, notarial archives, inv. no. 5006, no. 15, 20 October 1711. See also B. Brommer, *To my dear Pieterneletje. Grandfather and granddaughter in VOC time, 1710–1720*, Leiden 2015, and K. Zandvliet, *De 250 rijksten van de Gouden Eeuw*, Amsterdam 2010, p. 63–64.

The Confucius translation, which Van Hoorn senior had dedicated to his wife and children, may have been a similar customized piece of Chinese civilization to express the family's identification with Asia: he called it 'something beautiful that I have brought you from China, and if you use it well this will be better than if I had carried large treasures from that country'.⁶³ The family's intimate relationship to the Chinese comes into closer view only in documents relating to their return to the Netherlands in 1709. Johan van Hoorn, now of ailing health, was accompanied by a Chinese medical doctor, Zhou Meiye (周美爹). He seems to have been a personal friend, who could 'read and write everything in Chinese' while also being able to speak Dutch 'zo goed als een Hollander'.⁶⁴ During the long journey, the doctor held forth about the three Chinese 'sects' of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism, and explained to the governor-general the capital virtues outlined by 'den Chineesen leermeester Confutius'.⁶⁵ Dr. Zhou, however, did not stay long in the Netherlands: after only six weeks in Amsterdam he took the first ship back to China.

The 1687 Latin edition

After Van Hoorn's book it would take twelve more years for the Latin translation to appear. In 1683 Philippe Couplet, travelling on a Dutch ship, arrived in Enkhuizen to advertise the Jesuit mission on a European tour. He brought with him four hundred Chinese Christian books donated by a converted noblewoman and was accompanied by a young Chinese, son of Christian converts from Nanjing, Michael Shen Fuzong (沈福宗).⁶⁶ Thoroughly educated in the Confucian texts, he was to help with the publication of the *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*, which was intended to include Chinese characters.⁶⁷ Copies of the Chinese editions of Confucius with Shen's Latin annotations remain in the Bodleian Library in Oxford.⁶⁸

During their lengthy stay in the Dutch Republic, Couplet and Shen worked on an introduction to the book and in the meanwhile, it seems, discussed the matter with

63 'Ontfangt dit dan waerde Huys-Vrouw en Kinderen als wat mooyts dat ick uyt China Voor UE: heb mede gebracht, en soo ghij het U te nutte kunt maken, dat sal beter zyn als dat ick U groote Schatten van daer toe-gebracht hadde', Van Hoorn, *Eenige voornamen eygenschappen* (n. 29), p. 4.

64 'Dien Sinesen Heer konde alles lesen, en schrijven, dat Sinees was, indien hij langer gebleven hadde, ik soude van hem meer hebben verstaen', N. Witsen to G. Cuper, 5 December 1710, in: Gebhard, *Het leven van Mr. Nicolaes Witsen*, no. 36, p. 332-335. F. Valentijn, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indien*, Dordrecht, Amsterdam 1724-1726, vol. 1, p. 254.

65 Archival documents 'Aantekeningen van de Chinese arts Thebitia' are kept in the KITLV library, Leiden, DH 269. Quoted from Blussé, 'Doctor at sea', p. 21.

66 The noblewoman was Candida Xu (徐光啟, 1607-1680). See P. Couplet, *Historie van eene groote, christene mevrouwe van China met naeme mevrouw Candida Hiu [...] beschreven door [...] Philippus Couplet [...] ende in onse Nederlandsche taele door H.I.D.N.W.P. overgheset*, Antwerp 1694.

67 T.N. Foss, 'The European sojourn of Philippe Couplet and Michael Shen Fuzong, 1683-1692', in: J. Heyndrickx (ed.), *Philippe Couplet, S.J. (1623-1693). The man who brought China to Europe*, Nettetal 1990, p. 121-142.

68 Oxford, Bodleian Library, Sinica 2.

local scholars.⁶⁹ Yet this time Blaeu or another Dutch publisher was not an option. They looked to Paris instead where Thévenot, who had been appointed royal librarian, managed to acquire printing permission, and even financial support, from the French king. In August 1685 Couplet began sending his manuscripts to Paris, where he himself arrived half a year later. On 29 April 1687, the royal censor granted permission to publish. The honor fell to a Dutchman who had only recently converted to Catholicism: Daniel Horthemels of the rue St. Jacques. Printing, carried out by Andrea Cramoisy, was finished within a month. The book did not include the Chinese characters that Couplet had planned, even though the notation numbers for these had already been set in type in the first few chapters.⁷⁰

Couplet's extensive preface to this book merits attention as it explains the rationale behind the fraught translation and publication process that had taken a century to complete. To quote Meynard, 'the Confucian classics were called upon to testify to the legitimacy of the Jesuit missionary policy' in the eyes of the European ecclesiastic authorities, political powers, and the Republic of Letters in general.⁷¹

The preface essentially frames the translation as a philological project similar to those dealing with the Latin and Greek classics of Europe. Chapter one establishes the Confucian texts' 'First Authorship'. It places Confucius in his historical context and laments the difficulty in reconstructing ancient Chinese history owing to the paucity of written documents. A next chapter is on additional 'Evidence Drawn, Not from the Modern Interpreters, but, as Much as Possible, from the Original Texts'. By including comments from other Chinese authors, Couplet highlights that his interpretive work is confirmed by Chinese authorities. He emphatically tries to separate the oldest text from later additions.⁷² Apparently Couplet adheres to the 'principle of the oldest source' in philology, even though he uses stylistic and biographical arguments rather than those of stemmatic philology.⁷³ For one, he attempts to explain differences in style by connecting them to different periods in Confucius's life.⁷⁴ This leads to the

69 Meynard, *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* (n. 13), p. 16.

70 According to Golvers, 'The Development of the *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*' (n. 20), p. 1160, the choice of Horthemels (who had abjured Calvinism only in 1686) was inspired by Couplet's being 'attracted to his Flemish-Dutch countrymen'. Initially, the Latin texts were intended to be accompanied by the main terms in Chinese. However, at this time it remained costly and impractical for printers to found Chinese type. All Chinese characters in seventeenth-century European publications were therefore made in either woodcut or engraving. It would not be until well into the eighteenth century before Chinese leaden type could be produced, even though a printer from The Hague advertised his 'lettergieterye, waer in gegooten werden alle soorten van Letter [...] ook in 't Chinees, Japonees, en verdere Oosterse Talen' in 1729 (there is no evidence he ever produced such type). 's *Gravenhaegse Courant*, The Hague, 18 February 1729, p. 4. We are indebted to John A. Lane for providing this information. Also see K. Lundbaek, *The traditional history of Chinese script*, Aarhus 1988, p. 45.

71 Meynard, *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*, p. 10.

72 Ibidem, p. 101.

73 R. Bod, *De vergeten wetenschappen. Een geschiedenis van de humaniora*, Amsterdam 2010, p. 195.

74 For instance, Couplet sees the *Yijing* as a less authentic text without the status of a classic, arguing that 'though these poems have great authority, the style is quite difficult and obscure because of their

hypothesis that the sage himself had planned to write an elucidation, but his death had prevented it. 'Such ancient obscurity and such obscure antiquity!'⁷⁵ Couplet portrays the later Taoists and Buddhists as bad interpreters of Confucius because they failed to use the right sources in the right manner; their false religious assumptions apparently derived from false philological practices.⁷⁶

To support his approach, Couplet quotes Chinese writers who have themselves criticized the corrupt Buddhist interpreters. This enables him to argue that *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* presents pure Chinese thought. He emphasizes not only that the interpretation of Chinese philosophy should depend on the oldest Chinese sources, but also that the Chinese themselves are the best interpreters of Chinese philosophy:

I assure you that the most learned Chinese Doctors [...] have always shared the same opinion: we missionaries should not pay any attention to the commentators of the ancient books, but should adhere only to the ancient texts.⁷⁷ We should work on the basis of the ancient texts alone, and if we find something unclear, hopefully we will be able to find among the Chinese [...] some men of prime erudition and authority who can explain to us the most difficult passages.⁷⁸

The ideal missionary apparently excels in linguistic prowess and philological rigor:

A prudent man [...] [w]hen he has reached the region where he wants to convert the natives to Christ, if that people has many records of literature and wisdom inherited from their ancestors, then he should not decide for or against them by a quick and rash decision, nor should he blindly condemn or approve the interpreters, whether foreigners or locals, of their ancient books. [...] [B]esides asking for God's support, he should first try to carefully master their language and literature. Then, he can continually read the most important books as well as their interpretations, and examine and evaluate them thoroughly. Meanwhile, he can zealously investigate whether the sincerity and truth of the ancient text is confirmed, or, on the other hand, whether it has been corrupted by the mistakes and negligence of the later interpreters. He can investigate again whether those who work as interpreters have steadily followed the steps of their ancestors or whether they have distorted their teaching and twisted it to fit their errors [...] Finally he should judge whether it was the unanimous mind and doctrine of all, or whether they contradicted themselves and fought each other.⁷⁹

By presenting his book emphatically as a work of philology, Couplet intends to legitimize the Jesuit missionary work as something firmly grounded in the European humanities. Apparently, only the philological search for the oldest sources can uncover the hidden yet fundamental connection between Christian and Confucian texts. Couplet's reasoning depends implicitly on an invalid syllogism: 'All Christian

always-laconic shortness, of their usual metaphorical style and also because of their ornamentation with very old proverbs', P. Couplet, 'Preface/Proëmialis declaratio', in Meynard, *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*, p. 81-245, esp. 101.

⁷⁵ Ibidem, p. 102.

⁷⁶ Ibidem, p. 109.

⁷⁷ This was a true statement: the rejection of modern interpretations of Confucius was a Chinese tradition. See D. Mungello, *Curious land. Jesuit accommodation and the origins of sinology*, Honolulu 1989, p. 262.

⁷⁸ Couplet, 'Preface/Proëmialis declaratio', p. 217.

⁷⁹ Ibidem, p. 222.

books are pure; Some Chinese texts are pure; Therefore some Chinese texts are Christian texts.' This twisted reasoning allows the author to call on the authority of the Chinese themselves to plead for the similarities between Confucius's original writings and Christianity. He concludes that every missionary should focus on those elements in the Chinese texts that correspond to Christian teaching:

if [the missionary] realizes that nothing firm and true can be found in the above mentioned books and records, he should not touch them and should not make mention of them. But if on the contrary the kings and teachers of the ancients, led by nature, have reached many things which are not opposed to the light and truth of the gospel, but are even helpful and favorable so that it seems that they open the way for the early dawn of the Sun of Justice, then surely the preachers of the gospel [...] will not despise these things at all but shall use them regularly, so that they can instil in the tender minds of the neophytes, the foreign ambrosia of a heavenly teaching with the original sap of native teaching.⁸⁰

This stress on philology seems to have been directed not just at prospective missionaries themselves, but also at the Republic of Letters in Europe. Couplet, by claiming that philology had allowed him to unveil Christian elements in Chinese philosophy, gave Confucius the same status as some of the Greek and Roman authorities. Humanists in Europe would have recognized this strategy: it was identical to how pagan antiquity had been incorporated in Christian scholarship. As had been argued, some pagan texts had even prophesied the New Testament. Allegedly, the authors had had knowledge of *prisca philosophia*, primeval Christian wisdom before Christ's actual birth. Confucius could now be given a place in the same typology, on a par with the Hebrew prophets or, more radically, with the pagan Sibyls, the female soothsayers from places outside the Middle East who had preceded Moses.⁸¹

Even though Couplet himself did not explicate these ultimate conclusions,⁸² it is clear that he tried to fit Confucius into the scholarly framework that linked the philological principle of the oldest source to the quest for the most ancient wisdom. In fact, Couplet's most original addition to standard humanistic practices in Europe was not his search for proto-Christian elements but his stress on the Chineseness of his account. This latter emphasis was obviously a central aspect of his visit to Europe, envisaged as a display of authenticity with his cargo of Chinese books and the presence of Chinese assistants, one of them the aforementioned Shen Fuzong.

⁸⁰ Ibidem, p. 223.

⁸¹ Kircher had already interpreted Egyptian wisdom in this manner and used this approach as the basis for his Chinese studies. The French Jesuit Joachim Bouvet (1656–1730) was most explicit in linking Egyptian proto-Christianity to the ancient Chinese wisdom, using the hieroglyphical origin of Chinese writing as an argument. See Van Noord and Weststeijn, 'Nicolaas Witsen's Chinese mirror' (note 58), p. 345–347.

⁸² Couplet provides the framework for Bouvet's 'Hermetic' arguments pointing out that 'the holy Writers and Fathers [...] familiar with pagan testimonies remote from human reason but revealed by God, such as the prophesies of the Sibyls or the statement by Trismegistus [...] or the image of Serapis which is thought to show an image of the Most Holy Trinity', Couplet, 'Preface/Proëmalis declaratio', p. 216.

The route to Europe on a Dutch ship involved a stop in Batavia, where they first showed their copy of the Confucius manuscript to Willem ten Rhijne, a medical doctor in VOC service. He immediately wrote to a Protestant minister in the Dutch Republic, warning him against a topic as ‘dangerous’ as Chinese philosophy and against the author:

there comes a Jesuit father, Philippe Couplet, the collector of this work about which he will undoubtedly boast highly, in the company of two young Chinese, one of whom has some knowledge of the basics of medicine, which will seem a miracle in Europe [...] [Couplet] will go to Rome to report on his business and the state of the Roman church in China [...] [O]n the whole he is very affable and, if he will stay for a while in Amsterdam, you will surely be entertained in his company, for which my business with him will provide sufficient occasion; but in one word, he is a Jesuit.⁸³

Despite such anti-Jesuit sentiment, the missionary propaganda proved not without success in Protestant circles. Rembrandt’s pupil Godfried Kneller portrayed Shen full-length in his Chinese robes. Although displayed at Windsor Castle, the painting was discussed in the Netherlands too.⁸⁴ One of the Dutchmen who were impressed by the Jesuit performance was Nicolaas Witsen, who spoke to Couplet in Amsterdam in 1683, while Shen Fuzong helped him with a Chinese map for his monumental book on Tartary (Siberia and Northeast Asia).⁸⁵ The missionaries gave Witsen an ancient Bible, found in China and purportedly testifying to ancient indigenous Christians, and the manuscript of the Latin Confucius translation (which probably circulated in several copies). Witsen apparently had occasion to peruse it in detail, which awoke his interest in Chinese wisdom through the Jesuit lens:⁸⁶ as discussed above, by 1705 he connected

83 ‘Van het tractaet de cultibus Chinensium, (dat ik voor weynig dagen eens doorblaet hebbe, en int korte verwachte) is het noch myn tyt niet iets int werk te stellen, nam etiamnum mea onestis in herba esse, de tyden sorgelyk, voor my immers in dat subject dangereus [*sic*]; daer komt nu een pater Jesuit, Philippus Couplet (die den Collecteur van dat werk is, daer hy breet buyten twyffel van sal opgeven) met dese schepen over, hebbende twee jonge geboren Chinesen by sich, waer van den eenen soo iets van de beginselen der Medicinen verstaet, ’t welk in Europa eerst een miracul [*sic*] sal schynen, maer nader ingesien nae syn waerdy geacht worden; hy gaet nae Romen om van syn bedieninge en staet der Roomse kerke in China rapport te doen, en alsdan over land nae China te retourneren; hy is anders seer affabel en sal Ued in syn geselschap, soo tot Amsterdam sich wat mocht ophouden, goet genoeg, daer onsen ommegang Ued genoegsame aenleydinge toe sal kunnen geven; maer met een woort, hy is een Jesuit.’ British Library, Sloane MS 2729, fol. 130r, Willem ten Rhyne (Batavia) to Casparus Sibelius (Deventer), 25 February 1683, fol. 130r.

84 R. Dekker (ed.), *The diary of Constantijn Huygens Jr., secretary to Stadholder-King William of Orange*, Amsterdam 2012, p. 72. On 8 January 1689, Huygens Jr. refers to a man called ‘Fresor’ who ‘said he had also been closely acquainted with the Chinese man whose portrait hangs in Windsor. He had memorized two thousand characters of Chinese. He told me that Father Couplet had told him that the Chinese were great practitioners of astronomy and mathematics.’

85 ‘[V]eele der Sinesche benamingen my door zeker gebooren Sineesch zijn vertaelt geworden’, N. Witsen, *Noord en Oost Tartarye*, Amsterdam 1705, p. 966; Peters, *De wijze koopman* (n. 39), p. 227, 480 n. 103.

86 ‘Ik hebbe het origineel nu tot parys gedrukt eenig tijt onder mij gehadt, want Couplet was myn goede vrint’, Witsen to Cupper, 9 April 1713, in: Gebhard, *Het leven van Mr. Nicolaes Witsen* (n. 55), no. 51, p. 364.

the ancient Chinese mirror in his collection to the teaching of 'Saint' Confucius. He had shipped from Batavia a set of Confucian writings in Chinese, fourteen volumes in total, for his friend Gijsbert Cuper.⁸⁷ In 1710 he arranged another meeting with a Chinese man, the doctor who had accompanied Johan van Hoorn to the Netherlands. They discussed the chronology of the Chinese dynasties and traditional medicine. Witsen lamented that, had Dr. Zhou not departed so soon, he would have been able to learn much more;⁸⁸ he apparently tried to set up a correspondence and in fall 1713 received a letter from Zhou.⁸⁹ Yet after the Van Hoorns' departure from Batavia, cultural exchange with the Chinese seems to have waned. Witsen wrote, 'it is only money and no knowledge that our people are searching there, which is a pity.'⁹⁰

In the Netherlands, Chinese wisdom continued to attract a handful of scholars such as Cuper's friend Adriaen Reland, who made a few annotations in a handwritten book with phrases from the *Analects* in Chinese – it is unclear how he acquired it (fig. 5).⁹¹ Philippe Masson, a minister at the Walloon Church in Utrecht, bought a copy of the aforementioned manuscripts by Justus Heurnius, including a transcription and translation of the first four chapters of the *Analects*.⁹² But as these scholars' actual knowledge of Chinese was very limited, their speculations shunned philosophy and remained focused on the nature of the language and its script.

Conclusion and aftermath: Confucius and Spinoza

The first European translations of Confucius involved printers in Amsterdam, Batavia, Goa, Jianchang, and Paris; missionaries from Austria, Italy, the Low Countries, and Portugal; and a variety of intermediaries from Godfried Henskens in Antwerp to Athanasius Kircher in Rome. This global dimension is not surprising in the light of the seminal role of the Jesuit order, which drew members from a variety of European and non-European countries. Yet the fact that the Dutch Republic, an area of serious missionary concern, features so prominently in this network suggests that the Jesuit

87 'Ik heb met de laeste Oostindische schepen de werken van de Filosoof Confucius in t Sinees gedrukt in 14 stukken ontfangen', Witsen to Cuper, 3 November 1705, Amsterdam University Library, Special Collections, UBA Be 36.

88 Witsen to Cuper, 5 December 1710, in: Gebhard, *Het leven van Mr. Nicolaes Witsen*, no. 36, p. 332.

89 Witsen to Cuper, 17 September 1713, *ibidem*, no. 53, p. 367.

90 '[G]eleerde curieusheyt van Indiën [...] het is alleen gelt en geen wetenschap die onse luyden soeken aldaer, 't gunt is te beklagen', Witsen to Cuper, 1 August 1712, *ibidem*, no. 41, p. 341.

91 Leiden University Library, Special Collections, Nr. Acad. 223. See K. Kuiper, *Catalogue of Chinese and Sino-Western manuscripts in the central library of Leiden University*, Leiden 2005, p. 68–69. For Cuper's and Reland's correspondence about China, see a letter by Reland to Cuper, 11 February 1712, Royal Library The Hague, KB 72H11.

92 The manuscripts were taken to England, probably by his son; now in British Library, Sloane ms 2746, p. 217–256, fol. 310v–329v, 'Confutii Doctrinae Morales'. See Kuiper, 'The earliest monument of Dutch sinological studies' (n. 51).

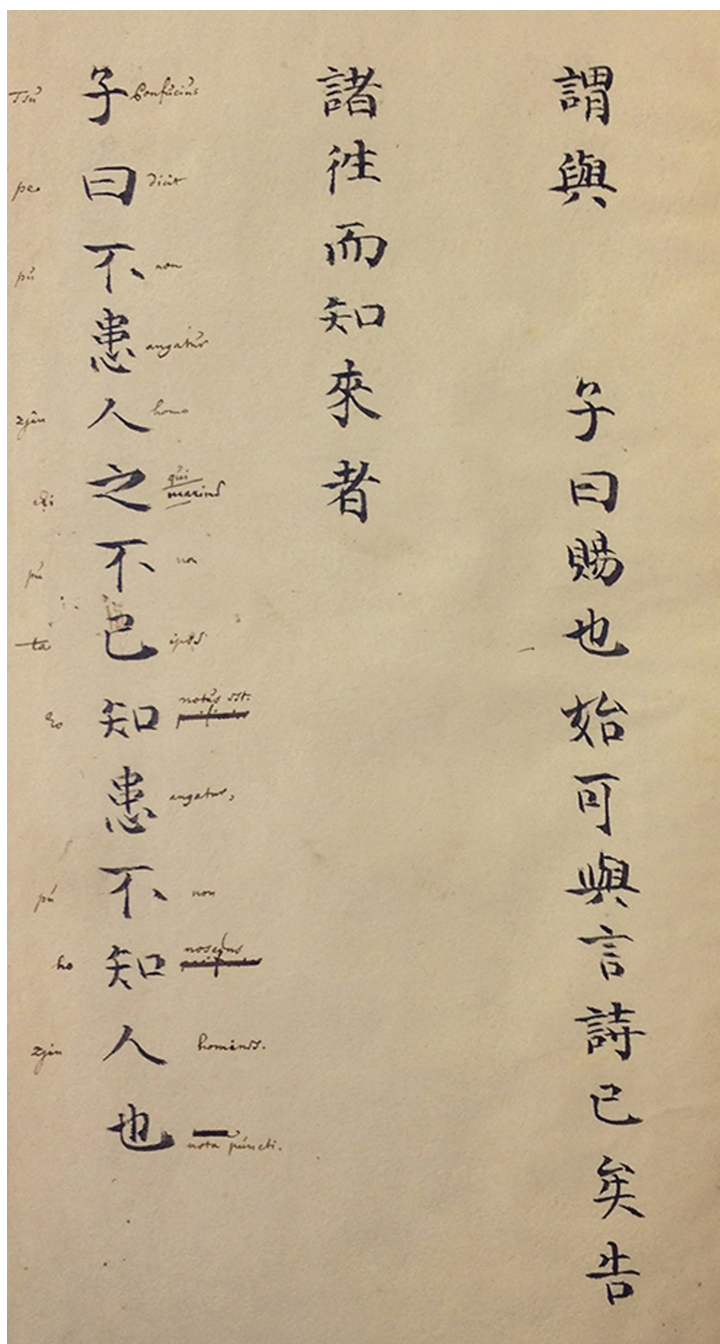


Fig. 5 Quotations from the *Analects* with notes in Latin by Adriaan Reland, 1676-1718, in: *Sententiae quaedam ex operibus Confucii collectae*. Hadriani Relandi, Leiden University Library, Special Collections, Acad. 223.

agenda of propagating the True Faith was not the full story. The order needed logistical support from Protestant intermediaries, traders, and publishers for such an unprecedented publication. Moreover, the Jesuits were not the only Europeans interested in Confucius.

Owing to the liberties Pieter van Hoorn took in translating Confucius from prose to verse, it is probably impossible to establish whether he worked from one of the Jesuits' Latin manuscripts or from a Chinese source. Yet to assess the importance of this Dutch edition one should take account of the symbiosis between the Dutch and Chinese in Batavia, and the manner in which the Dutch connected their self-image as a global trading power to Chinese material culture – not just in the Indies but also in the Dutch Republic, where tens of millions of pieces found their way to households of different social classes. This must have had its intellectual impact – from Vondel's play, quoted above, that was the first European literary work set entirely against a Chinese background, to the Amsterdam humanist Isaac Vossius's unique Utopian description of Chinese art, science, and politics, published in 1680.⁹³

The Dutch involvement suggests that Confucius was a point of multi-confessional concern for Europeans, something that seems to be confirmed by the reception of the translations. Although the original *Sapientia Sinica* of 1662, written for the benefit of missionaries in China, was extremely rare in Europe, it (or the *Sinarum scientia politico-moralis* of 1667–1669) may have been the source for the London-based Dutch merchant James Boevey, whose manuscript 'Life of Cum-fu-zu' has, unfortunately, not survived.⁹⁴ A scholar at Cambridge, Nathaniel Vincent, acquired the *Sapientia Sinica* from 'an ingenious Merchant, a Fellow of the Royal Society, who hath put into the hands of one of his Collegues [*sic*], several of CUMFUSU's Books, brought from Siam [*sic*], where they were printed, in order to [make] an English edition of them, [...] and to [discover] a new World of Learning.'⁹⁵ In 1674 Vincent himself translated a few fragments to be 'sent abroad [...] out of a just respect to the worthy Owner of the only Copies in this part of the world.'⁹⁶ Within the Dutch trading company, the only documented reader of the *Sapientia Sinica* was the German medical doctor Engelbert Kaempfer, based in Japan.⁹⁷ His elaborate notes, mostly concerning Asian medicine,

⁹³ T. Weststeijn, 'Vossius' Chinese Utopia', in E. Jorink and D. van Miert (eds.), *Isaac Vossius (1618–1689). Between science and scholarship*, Leiden 2012, p. 207–242.

⁹⁴ See the list of James Boevey's works of c. 1677 in the Bodleian Library, MS Aubrey 7, fol. 13v. Cf. W. Poole, 'Heterodoxy and sinology. Isaac Vossius, Robert Hooke and the early Royal Society's use of sinology', in: S. Mortimer and J. Robertson (eds.), *The intellectual consequences of religious heterodoxy, 1600–1750*, Leiden, Boston 2012, p. 135–153, esp. 142–143.

⁹⁵ N. Vincent, *The right notion of honour. As it was delivered in a sermon before the king at Newmarket, 4 October 1674*, London 1685, p. 15–25.

⁹⁶ Ibidem, p. 25; cf. M. Jenkinson, 'Nathanael Vincent and Confucius's "Great Learning" in Restoration England', in: *Notes and Records of the Royal Society* 60 (2006), p. 35–47, esp. 39.

⁹⁷ British Library, Sloane MS 3064, fol. 69r, Johan Hermann K[a]empfer to Dr. Steigerthal, 4 September 1725, in a list of volumes to be sent to Hans Sloane: 'A Chinese book with the Latin Translation entitled *Sapientia Sinica*, exponente R.P. Ignatio a Costa Lusitano Soc. Jesu a P. Prospero Intercetta [*sic*] siculo, ejusd. Soc. Orbi proposita. Contains 50 leaves. Printed at Kien Cham in the Province Kiam.

contain four pages of remarks about Confucius and Chinese philosophy, but they left little trace in Kaempfer's posthumously published *History of Japan*.⁹⁸

The afterlife of *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*, published with European readers in mind, was much more momentous. It was never reprinted, but the initial print run must have been sizeable considering the number of copies still found in European libraries.⁹⁹ A number of Dutch-based journals in French, catering to a European-wide audience, all published reviews, as would the *Philosophical Transactions* in London, the *Journal des sçavans* in Paris, the *Giornale de'letterati* in Parma, the *Acta eruditorum* in Leipzig, and the *Monatsgespräche* in Halle. In August 1687 the book was first announced in Pierre Bayle's *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres*, indicating that copies were to be acquired at Henri Desbordes in Amsterdam (incidentally also the publisher of the *Nouvelles*).¹⁰⁰ A month later the first real review was published in the Rotterdam-based *Histoire des ouvrages et de la vie des sçavans*. In December Amsterdam's *Bibliothèque universelle et historique* followed suit.¹⁰¹

The reviews printed in the Netherlands of *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* recognized the Catholic slant the Jesuits gave to their translation ('le P[ère] Couplet [...] mêle peut-être un peu trop d'idées Chrétienne[s] aux expressions Chinoises'),¹⁰² but did not bother to deconstruct this interpretation or Couplet's false syllogism that suggested Chinese texts contained a Christian message. Criticism focused instead on a very different suspicion with potentially radical consequences. To some reviewers, the book pointed at an analogy between Confucianism and libertine tendencies in current Dutch philosophy, including atheism and the identification of God with nature. The *Histoire des ouvrages et de la vie des sçavans*, remarking on the Chinese people's 'extreme attachment' to Confucius, deemed the teaching of his followers (the Neo-Confucians) comparable to that of a Spanish heretic, Michael Servetus, who had denied the Christian trinity and 'argued against Calvin that God was a stone in a stone, and a tree trunk in a tree trunk'.¹⁰³ Even more outspoken was the *Bibliothèque universelle*'s sixty-eight-page review by the Amsterdam-based Calvinist scholar Jean le Clerc, who gave a precise summary of the views of Confucius and his followers, including passages

In 1662.' The original German of this letter in Sloane MS 4065, fol. 338r-339v. Kaempfer's copy of the *Sapientia Sinica* may be the one that survives in the British Library (shelfmark C.24.b.2), which contains no relevant usage marks.

98 British Library, Sloane MS 2910, fol. 217rv; E. Kaempfer, *De beschryving van Japan*, Amsterdam, The Hague 1729, p. 114, 125, 150.

99 Thirteen copies remain in present-day Belgium. See C. Sorgeloos, 'Lire la Chine dans les Pays-Bas autrichiens et la Principauté de Liège', in: B. D'Hainaut-Zveny and J. Arx (eds.), *Formes et figures du goût chinois dans les anciens Pays-Bas*, Brussels 2009, p. 123-148.

100 *Nouvelles de la République des lettres*, vol. 2, Amsterdam 1687, p. 910.

101 *Histoire des ouvrages et de la vie des sçavans*, vol. 1, Rotterdam 1687, p. 65-79; *Bibliothèque universelle et historique*, vol. 7, Amsterdam 1687, p. 332-390.

102 J. le Clerc, review of *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*, in: *Bibliothèque universelle et historique*, vol. 7, p. 387-455, esp. 348.

103 '[Q]ui soutenoit a Calvin, que Dieu etoit pierre dans une pierre, et tronc dans un tronc', *Histoire des ouvrages et de la vie des sçavans*, vol. 1, p. 67.

translated from the Latin into French.¹⁰⁴ He highlighted the similarity between modern Dutch radicalism and the corrupted philosophy of the Neo-Confucians, 'which is not very different from the system of the Spinozists, if they have one.' This philosophy, apparently shared in the East and West, holds that there is nothing but

a certain void and a real nothing [...] [and that] we, all the elements and all creatures, are part of that void; that there is in fact nothing but a same and single substance, which is different in the particular beings because of the individual figures, of their properties, or their internal configuration; a bit like water, which is always water in its essence, regardless of whether it takes the form of snow, hail, rain, or ice.¹⁰⁵

The comparison between Chinese and Spinozist doctrines in terms of their alleged monism would be taken up by others in the Netherlands; most striking was Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1702), which discussed Spinoza in its entries on East Asia.¹⁰⁶ This raises the question of the extent to which praise of Confucius became something libertine and radical around the turn of the century. In 1705 the aforementioned Gijsbert Cuper, who waxed lyrical over an abbreviated French translation of *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*, seemed unaware of any association with radical philosophy.¹⁰⁷ Yet for some contemporaries it must have been so evident as to need little explanation. By 1708 the Zwolle surgeon Hendrik Smeeks, in a fantastic novel, *The Mighty Kingdom of Krinke Kesmes*, referenced Confucius as the source of inspiration for a political experiment in the uncharted Australian territories. This Utopian state was apparently guided by Confucius's favorite student, Krakabas.¹⁰⁸ Echoing Georg Horn's description, quoted above, of China as ruled by a Platonic philosopher-king, in *Krinke Kesmes* a board of philosophers keeps watch over the sovereign. The kingdom is so radical as to even house a women's university.¹⁰⁹ Against this imagined Oriental

¹⁰⁴ *Bibliothèque universelle et historique*, vol. 7, p. 400. The citations from the *Analec*t are on p. 441–450. Cf. Mungello, *Curious land* (n. 77), p. 289–291.

¹⁰⁵ '[U]n certain vuide & un néant réel [...] Que nous, tous les éléments & toutes les créatures, faisons partie de ce vuide; Qu'ainsi il n'y a qu'une seule & même substance, qui est différente dans les êtres particuliers, par les seules figures & par les qualitez ou la configuration intérieure; à peu-près comme l'eau, qui est toujours essentiellement de l'eau: soit qu'elle ait la forme de neige, de grêle, de pluie ou de glace. Ceux qui voudront s'instruire plus amplement de la Philosophie des Indiens & des Chinois, qui n'est pas fort différente du système des Spinosistes, s'ils en ont un', *Bibliothèque universelle et historique*, vol. 7, p. 348–349.

¹⁰⁶ T. Weststeijn, "Spinoza sinicus." An Asian paragraph in the history of the Radical Enlightenment', in: *Journal of the History of Ideas* 68.4 (2007), p. 537–561.

¹⁰⁷ '[S]ijne morale gelesen, getrocken uit een grooter boeck, tot parijs [...] gedrukt', Cuper to Witsen, 3 November 1705, Amsterdam University Library, Special Collections, UBA Be 36, fol. 90r–91v. The reference is probably to J. de la Brune, *La Morale de Confucius, philosophe de la Chine*, Amsterdam 1688; Couplet himself also envisaged making a French translation, which did not materialize. See Golvers, 'The development of the *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*' (n. 20), p. 1163.

¹⁰⁸ '[D]en goeden Filosooph Krakabas, deesen was een lieveling en Discipel van den grooten Wijsgeer Confucius in China.' H. Smeeks, *Beschryvinge van het magtig Koninkryk Krinke Kesmes*, Amsterdam 1708, p. 242–243.

¹⁰⁹ A.A. Sneller, 'Utopia of een vrouwenuniversiteit omstreeks 1700', in: *Literatuur* 5 (1988), p. 141–148.

background, the novel's central theme is a plea for the religious, political, and societal freedom of citizens in the face of worldly and ecclesiastical authorities. Unsurprisingly the author was, on the basis of this Chinese-inspired Utopia, suspected not of Jesuit sympathies but rather of Spinozism.¹¹⁰

As the Netherlandish context clarifies, the 'Confucian moment' in Europe around 1680 was not solely a Jesuit affair, and not even a Catholic one. The process of transmitting, translating, publishing, explaining, and judging Confucius presented a challenge for Europeans from different backgrounds and allegiances. At this key moment in intellectual history, when Asia's main philosopher was introduced in the West, increased global connectedness clearly resulted in new mental horizons – which tested traditional wisdom more explicitly, it seems, in the Dutch Republic than elsewhere. Eventually, when the Antwerp Jesuit Daniël van Papenbroeck conveyed a copy of *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* to the philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, the fulcrum of the debate would shift from the Low Countries to the German states.¹¹¹ The German interest in Confucius in the early eighteenth century culminated in Christian Wolff's famous defense of the Chinese as rational beings who had no need of the Christian god. In 1723 Wolff was condemned as an atheist and expelled from Prussia under penalty of death. To Jonathan Israel, this was 'one of the most formative cultural confrontations of the eighteenth century'; but that is a different story.¹¹²

110 A.J. Hanou, 'Verlichte vrijheid. Over een denkbeeld in imaginaire reizen', in: *Nederlandse literatuur van de Verlichting (1670-1830)*, Nijmegen 2002, p. 73-94, esp. 80.

111 Van Papenbroeck first told Leibniz of Couplet's intention to publish the translation on 26 January 1687. See Li Wenchao, 'Confucius and the Early Enlightenment in Germany from Leibniz to Bilfinger', in: K. Mühlmann and N. van Looij (eds.), *The globalization of Confucius and Confucianism*, Berlin 2012, p. 9-21, esp. 11.

112 Ibidem, passim; J. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment. Philosophy and the making of modernity (1650-1750)*, Oxford 2002, p. 544.