

A Mirror for the Monarch: A Literary Portrait of China in Eighteenth-Century France

During the largely contemporaneous reigns of Louis XIV (r. 1643–1715) and the Kangxi emperor (r. 1662–1722), Jesuit missionaries employed at the Qing imperial court in Peking provided a conduit through which information was passed back and forth between France and China. In France, this exchange provided the medium in which images of an ideal monarch were fostered for the edification of Louis XIV. This article focuses specifically on images of China, and its emperors, mirrored in six European works of the early-modern period published between 1654 and 1736. By including works from an earlier period as well, and some published outside of France, we see the development of the distinctive framing of such late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth-century French writings.

Both Louis XIV and the Kangxi emperor, whose reign periods coincided for fifty-three years, prided themselves on their positions as patrons of the arts and sciences, and as arbiters of taste. They also both envisioned their influence extending beyond their own kingdoms into the wider world. As part of this global awareness they each held a keen interest in the other's accomplishments. The Kangxi emperor employed French Jesuits to assist with accurately scaled cartographic projects depicting China and beyond, and he retained a European Jesuit as head of the astronomical bureau. He imported French artists trained in techniques of realism, learned from them first-hand about scientific techniques, had a keen interest in European time-pieces, and sponsored the building of Western-style palaces within the grounds of the imperial summer palace, the Yuanming yuan 圓明園.¹ The emperor

¹ Another foreign style of palace construction was a replica of the Potala, the Dalai Lama's residence in Tibet, that became part of the Qing palace complex in Rehe. We should note that contacts with France and Europe were only a small part of Qing China's international connections. On Sino-European exchange in the arts and sciences, see Benjamin A. Elman, *On Their Own Terms: Science in China, 1550–1900* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 2005), especially part 2, "Natural Studies and the Jesuits"; Howard L. Goodman, "Paper Obelisks: East Asia in the Vatican Vaults," in Anthony Grafton, ed., *Rome Reborn: The Vatican Library and Renaissance Culture* (Wash. D.C. and New Haven: Lib. of Congress Publishing Office and Yale U., 1993), pp. 251–92; Catherine Jami and Hubert Delahaye, eds., *L'Europe en Chine: Interactions scien-*

even considered the establishment of a Chinese Academy of Sciences on the French model.²

Louis XIV self-consciously promoted his image both at home and abroad, and in 1644 he founded the Compagnie des Indes Orientales under the influence of Jean-Baptiste Colbert.³ During his reign he sponsored cartography projects of China, as part of an attempt to map the world more accurately, and thereby France's position in it.⁴ He also began a collection of Chinese books in the royal library, hired a Chinese bibliographer, and exchanged gifts with the emperor of China.

These mutual interests and activities were not a matter of coincidence. The two rulers engaged in conscious comparisons and competed with each other, particularly in regard to patronizing the arts and sciences. Further evidence of exchange is found in engravings that undoubtedly circulated between the two courts. Their subject matter ranged from garden scenes, to battles, to maps.⁵

tifiques, religieuses et culturelles aux XVII^e et XVIII^e Siècles, *Memoires de l'Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises* 34 (Paris: Collège de France, Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises, 1993); Catherine Jami, "L'Empereur Kangxi (1662–1722) et la diffusion des sciences occidentales en Chine," in Isabelle Ang and Pierre Etienne Will, eds., *Nombres, astres, plantes et viscères: Septs essais sur l'histoire des sciences et des techniques en Asie orientale* (Paris: Collège de France, 1994), pp. 193–209; Carroll Brown Malone, *History of the Peking Summer Palaces under the Ch'ing Dynasty* (New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corp, 1966 [1934]); Lewis A Maverick, *China: A Model for Europe* (San Antonio: Paul Anderson Company, 1946); Eugenio Menegon, *Un Solo Cielo. Giulio Aleni S.J. (1582–1649): Geografia, arte, scienza, religione dall'Europa alla Cina* (Brescia: Grafo, 1994); Catharine Pagani, *Eastern Magnificence and European Ingenuity: Clocks of Late Imperial China* (Ann Arbor: U. Michigan P., 2001); Matteo Ripa, *Memoirs of Father Ripa During Thirteen Years' Residence at the Court of Peking in the Service of the Emperor of China*, trans. Fortunato Prandi (London: 1855; rpt. China, 1939); Charles E. Ronan, S.J., and Bonnie B.C. Oh, eds., *East Meets West: The Jesuits in China, 1582–1773* (Chicago: Loyola U.P., 1988); Jonathan D. Spence, *To Change China: Western Advisers in China 1620–1960* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969), esp. chap. 1; and idem, *The Chan's Great Continent: China in Western Minds* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1998); Joanna Waley-Cohen, "China and Western Technology in the Late Eighteenth Century," *The American Historical Review* 98.5 (June 1993), pp. 1525–44, and idem, *The Sextants of Beijing: Global Currents in Chinese History* (W. W. Norton and Company, 1999); Young-tsu Wong, *A Paradise Lost: The Imperial Garden Yuanming Yuan* (Honolulu: U. Hawai'i P., 2001).

² Claudia von Collani, ed., *Ein wissenschaftliche Akademie für China* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1989).

³ Peter Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1992); Ellen McClure, *Sunspots and the Sun King: Sovereignty and Mediation in Seventeenth-Century France* (Urbana: U. Illinois P., 2006); Dirk van der Cruysse, *Siam and the West, 1500–1700* (Chiang Mai, Thailand: Silkworm Books 2002).

⁴ Louis XIV sponsored the first survey maps of France. The surveys of China were completed before those of France. See Laura Hostetler, *Qing Colonial Enterprise: Ethnography and Cartography in Early Modern China* (Chicago: U. Chicago P., 2001), p. 74. See also Josef Konvitz, *Cartography in France, 1660–1848: Science, Engineering, and Statecraft* (Chicago: U. Chicago P., 1987).

⁵ See, for example, Evelyn S. Rawski and Jessica Rawson, eds., *China: The Three Emperors 1662–1795* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2005), pp. 169 and 407, on the influence of French battle sketches on later Chinese engravings, and Nathalie Monnet, ed., *Chine, l'empire du trait:*

The primary channel through which information was exchanged between France and China was the French missionaries sent to China during the reign of Louis XIV, many of whom were members of the Society of Jesus.⁶ The Jesuits had gained access to the Ming and Qing courts in earlier decades, but they enjoyed especially extensive patronage during the Kangxi emperor's reign. Their publications were the primary source of information about China available in Europe up to the eighteenth century. Their presence also provided a major source of information about Europe for China.

In order to explore how information about China was framed for a European, particularly a French, audience, we examine the dedications and relevant prefatory material in six important works about China published between 1654 and 1736. Four works are in French, the other two in English. They are, in chronological order:

- 1654: Martin Martini, *Bellum tartaricum*;
- 1655: Alvaro Semedo, *History of that Great and Renowned Monarchy of China...*;
- 1688: Pierre Joseph d'Orléans, *Histoire de deux conquerans Tartars qui ont subjugué la Chine*;
- 1692: Martini, *Histoire de la Chine*;
- 1699: Joachim Bouvet, *Histoire de l'Empereur de la Chine*;
- 1735: Jean Baptiste Du Halde, *Description... de la Chine...* (four volumes).⁷

The two earliest works were translated into English from Latin and Italian, respectively.

Calligraphies et dessins du V^e au XIX^e siècle (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, 2004), pp. 193–96, for engravings of garden scenes made both by Chinese and by Matteo Ripa.

⁶ The Jesuits were of course not the only religious order in China, but they left a prodigious written record about China and actively sought the patronage of both the king of France and emperor of China. The Missions Etrangères was also founded under Louis XIV and sent missionaries to China from France. This was a Catholic, but not a Jesuit, organization. For accounts of the 1685 voyage of French Jesuits to China via Siam see Isabelle Landry-Deron, "Les Mathématiciens envoyés en Chine par Louis XIV en 1685," *Archive for the History of Exact Sciences* 55 (2001), pp. 423–63, and John W. Witek, S.J., *Controversial Ideas in China and Europe: A Biography of Jean-François Fouquet, S.J. (1665–1741)* (Rome: Institutum Historicum S.I., 1982), esp. the introduction and chap. 2. For the mission, see also Catherine Jami, "From Louis XIV's Court to Kangxi's Court: An Institutional Analysis of the French Jesuit Mission to China (1688–1722)," in K. Hashimoto et al, eds., *East Asian Science: Tradition and Beyond* (Osaka: Kansai U.P., 1995) pp. 493–99, and Florence C. Hsia, "French Jesuits and the Mission to China: Science, Religion, History," PhD diss. (University of Chicago, 1999).

⁷ Palafox y Mendoza's *Histoire de la conquête de l'empire de la Chine par les Tartares* (1729 [1670]), is not discussed here because the edition to which I had access was reproduced without the all-important prefatory material. The same sort of deficit existed in the editions of Martini's *Description géographique de l'empire de la Chine* (1696) and his *Relations de la Tartarie orientale* (1732) that I saw.

All of these works pay lip service to the importance of first-hand observation. Visual imagery (of both lands and peoples) occupies a prominent place. Their contents show an interest in the rulers of China, the country's form of government, its geography and history. The front-matter of the earliest works promises to excite the curiosities of the readers and to disclose the unknown. With the advent of the reigns of Louis XIV and the Kangxi emperor another element comes into play. The late-seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century French works contain explicit comparisons between the qualities and roles of the two monarchs. The emphasis moves from general focus on the two countries and cultures to the person of the reigning monarch. In the later works, metaphors of desire have been exchanged for promises of first-hand knowledge through faithful reproduction of what has been observed. Scientific knowledge comes to take precedent over the allure of the unknown.⁸

The six texts show that during this period comparison to other monarchs in far away places was important to the construction of a monarchy at home. The authors framed their works with self-conscious comparison in mind. This early-modern exchange, which provided a window onto another world, also provided a mirror in which each monarch might see himself as through the eyes of the other. Thus achievements at home became measured in terms of what was known

⁸ An increasing emphasis on scientific method has been connected with early modernity in Europe. Scholars of Ming and Qing China have also begun to explore China's connectedness with the early-modern world from a variety of angles, challenging any exclusively European claims to early-modernity. See, e.g., Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: Europe, China, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 2000); Lynn A. Struve, ed., *The Qing Formation in World-Historical Time* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2004); R. Bin Wong, *China Transformed: Historical Change and the Limits of European Experience* (Ithaca: Cornell U.P., 1997); Waley-Cohen, "China and Western Technology" and *Sextants of Beijing*; Craig Clunas, *Pictures and Visuality in Early Modern China* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1997); Hostetler, *Qing Colonial Enterprise*, and "Qing Connections to the Early Modern World: Ethnography and Cartography in Eighteenth-Century China," *Modern Asian Studies* 34.3 (2000), pp. 623–62. Two papers presented at "The Age of Antiquaries in Europe and China" conference at the Bard Graduate Center, March 25–27, 2004, also take up themes relating to early modernity in the study of botany in China: Kenneth Hammond, "Wang Shizhen and Li Shizhen: Archaisms and Scientific Thought in Sixteenth-Century China," and Georges Métaillé, "The Botany of Cheng Yaotian (1725–?1814): Multiple Perspectives on Plants." For debates regarding the use of the term and a useful entree into literature on early modernity that does not exclude the non-West, see Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia," *Modern Asian Studies* 31.3 (1997), pp. 735–62; Jack A. Goldstone, "The Problem of the Early Modern World," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 41.3 (August 1998), pp. 249–84; Felicity A. Nussbaum, ed., *The Global Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U.P., 2003); and David Washbrook, "The Global History of 'Modernity': A Response to a Reply," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 41.3 (August 1998), pp. 295–311; and the related essays in this special theme issue (edited by Harriet Zurndorfer) of the same journal.

(or imagined) about points of reference abroad. Although beyond the scope of what I can demonstrate in this article, I would also suggest that both in Europe and in China global awareness of one's own realm in relation to that of the larger world was a hallmark of early modernity reaching into many facets of the period, including trade, technology, diplomacy, and the representation of state power in art.

MARTIN MARTINI'S *BELLUM TARTARICUM*

Martin Martini's (1614–1661) *Bellum tartaricum* is the earliest work under consideration.⁹ Martini entered China in 1643, one year before the collapse of the Ming dynasty. He traveled extensively through numerous provinces, and visited the capital and the Great Wall. He took advantage of these travels to determine the precise astronomical position of a number of cities for his *Atlas Sinensis*. In 1646 he settled for a time in Hangzhou where he founded a new church and devoted himself to mission work. When the Manchus arrived he came under their protection.

He continued to work among the Chinese to gain conversions until 1650, when he was chosen by Rome for the position of Procurator. On his return trip to Europe to communicate the needs of the mission, he traveled through northern Europe, making plans in Amsterdam for the publication of his *Atlas*. He did not actually arrive in Rome until 1654.

In 1657, having received a favorable decree from Pope Alexander VII allowing converts to practice the Chinese rites, he returned to China via Portugal. He was warmly welcomed by the Qing emperor on his return, invited to the court, and given permission to practice his mission work. He resided mainly in or around Hangzhou until the end of his life in 1661. In addition to the two works examined in this article, Martini also authored treatises on the proof of the existence of God and of the soul, on friendship, and a number of other works.¹⁰

As suggested by a portion of the extended title of *Bellum Tartaricum*, “...or the conquest of the great empire of China by the invasion of the Tartars, who in these last seven years, have wholly subdued that vast empire...,” part of the interest driving Martini's work was a concern with the emergent

⁹ *Bellum tartaricum, or The conquest of the great ... empire of China, by the invasion of the Tartars... Written originally in Latine by Martin Martinus... and now ... translated into English* (London: J. Crook, 1654).

¹⁰ Louis Pfister, S.J., *Notices biographiques et bibliographiques sur les Jésuites de l'ancienne mission de la Chine, 1552–1773* (Shanghai: 1932), pp. 257–62.

Manchu power that had conquered China. The likeness, or “Lively Effigies of.. Ye present Emperour of the Western Tartars, who hath Lately overrun and Possesst himself allmost of the whole Empire of China” appears on the frontispiece illustration across from the title page (figure 1). This choice of image is significant, for it conveys that the Tartars are peoples that “we” should know more of, and that their ruler is worthy of representation as an “Emperour.”



Figure 1. Portrait from Frontispiece of Martini's Bellum tartaricum

Photograph courtesy The Newberry Library.

The final lines of the extended title read: “*Together with a Map of the Provinces, and chief Cities of the Countries, for the better understanding of the Story.*” This turns the reader’s attention to geography and to its important role in understanding far-away places and the events taking place in them. The fold-out map (figure 2) is designed to assist readers in following the progress of the victorious army across China, or, in Martini’s words, to “serve as a guide to conduct the eye of the understanding, in the pursuit of the mentioned victories.” This sort of visual aid was deemed especially necessary because of the unfamiliarity of Chinese geography and place names.

Yet, Martini, who was also in the process of preparing much more detailed maps of China, did not want to give too much away in this context. The language in his note “To the Reader” captures the relationship between the thrill of exploration of unknown territories, on the one hand, and the privileged position that derives from knowing, on the other. With the dissemination of that knowledge, something is gained, but something is given up as well. In his own words:

As for more exquisit, and rare Maps both universal and particular, as well of the Countries, as of the Cities, and of the rarities they contain, together with the exact knowledge of the Longitudes and Latitudes, and of all that does belong either to Astronomy or Geography in relation to them; with what may be expected from Natural or Humane History, I reserve all these rarities and curiosities to my Atlas of China which I am composing; taken from their own antient records ever since the time of Noah; all which I have with incredible pains, and industry both gathered up together, and transported with me to Europe. I will not therefore for the present deflower that worth of its greatest beauty, by an unseasonable exposition of it to the Readers view; but expect till it grow to that perfection, as I hope will ravish the unsatiabable appetits of this our curious Age.¹¹

What are we to make of this metaphorical language – the map as a female body that, once known, loses its allure? The object of Martini's

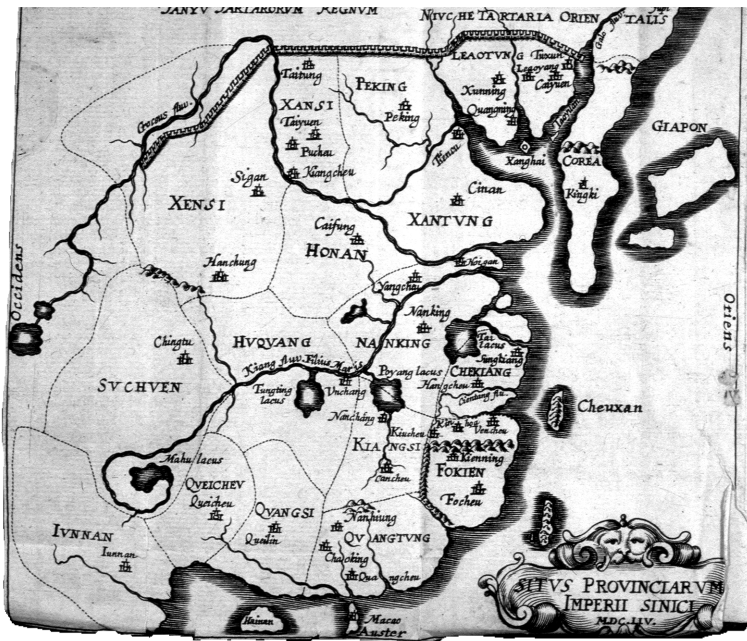


Figure 2. Map from *Bellum tartaricum*

Photograph courtesy The Newberry Library.

¹¹ Martini, *Bellum tartaricum*, "To the Reader" (italics in original).

concern is his forthcoming *Atlas*, and the information the maps will convey. Maps are representations of territory. Was China, too, an object to be known, whose interest and allure would fade as its mystery decreased? Whether or not the map and the land it represents were interchangeable, clearly there is a trade-off here: the explorer cannot experience both knowledge and its anticipation at the same time. Martini, a product himself of what he calls “this our curious Age,” tempts his readers with a peek at the flesh without uncovering it completely, to keep alive the anticipation of what is to be unveiled.¹² Naturally, he wishes to whet his reader’s appetite for the larger work yet to be published. However, I think there may be a deeper, unintended, significance to his comment. The seductive nature of the unknown, which engenders a desire to see and to know, is not uncommon to the literature of exploration in early-modern Europe. Once territories were known and dominated through colonial practices, they tended, by contrast, to be exploited and their inhabitants denigrated.

The imagery of exploration in the front-matter of Martini’s work notwithstanding, the immediate reasons for producing *Bellum tartaricum* were more directly politically motivated by current events. In light of the 1644 invasion of China by the Manchus, his pressing questions are “Who is this great power who was able to conquer China?” and “What now?” for the Jesuit missions that had gotten a foothold in China during the previous, Ming, dynasty (1368–1644). Would the new rulers honor existing agreements allowing Jesuit residence? How could he work toward his own continued favorable reception in China?

¹² Martini’s comparison of the map, and by extension the territory it represents, to the female body is by no means unique. Sander Gilman, in “The Hottentot and the Prostitute: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality,” writes of the connection between representations of prostitution in 19th-c. Germany and the metaphor of unknown territories to be explored. Gilman’s context deals with the fear of pathologies in the forms of sexually transmitted diseases, comparing them to the unknown dangers of the “dark continent,” but the body/territory metaphor remains significant. There is no prostitute in Martini’s metaphor, but certainly knowing the map (or the territory) is compared to “knowing” a woman, who is not the same (deflowered) afterwards, deprived both of mystery and innocence, thus deprived of her appeal. Yet, even in Martini, the lure of the attraction is too strong to resist the deflowering for long, even though the consequences are recognized for her/for territory. What is not articulated is the result from the point of the “explorer.” Gilman studies the fear of syphilis; for Martini, the consequences are not spelled out. Would greater power or reputation accrue, or, once “had,” is the map and what it represents in a sense spoiled for others and all time? See Sander Gilman, ed. *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness* (Ithaca and London: Cornell U.P., 1985), pp. 76–108. Portrayals of the map of the country as the body of the monarch are yet another twist on this comparison of the body and the map.

ALVARO SEMEDO'S *HISTORY OF THAT
GREAT AND RENOWNED MONARCHY OF CHINA*

Alvaro Semedo (1585–1658) was a native of Portugal. He embarked for Goa in 1608, completed his studies there, and was sent on to Nanking in 1613. During the Jesuit persecution of 1616 he was imprisoned and eventually exiled to Macao. He returned to China in 1620 with a new Chinese name. In 1636 he was sent back to Rome as Procurator of the so-called vice-province of China. He completed his *History* in 1638 while in Goa on this return trip. He arrived in Portugal in 1640 and in Rome in 1642, where he reported on the needs of the mission and requested additional recruits. In 1644 he set out once again on the long voyage to China, accompanied by two additional missionaries.

After his return to China the south was still in the midst of war. The Manchus arrested him in their 1651 conquest of Canton, but later released him after he had been identified as a “brother” of Adam Schall. He passed away in Canton in 1658. In addition to the *History*, Semedo composed a Portuguese Chinese vocabulary, and left many letters.¹³

Semedo's *History of That Great and Renowned Monarchy of China...* was first published in Italian in 1643. The first French edition followed in 1645, and an English translation appeared in 1655, one year after Martini's *Bellum tartaricum*.¹⁴ Semedo's image as Jesuit Procurator of Japan and China appears across the title page. In the illustration he holds a writing brush and an open rice-paper book with what are meant to look like (but are not actually legible as) Chinese characters.

The book consists of two parts. The first is highly ethnographic. In it the author undertakes to describe all that he has observed in his twenty-two years in China, as well as what he has learned from his study of Chinese books. As the extended title suggests, this includes a description of “all the particular provinces” as well as the “dispositions, manners, learning, lawes, militia, government, and religion of the people.” The second part is an account of the history of Jesuit mis-

¹³ See Pfister, *Notices*, pp. 143–47, for a more extensive biographical sketch and complete bibliography.

¹⁴ Semedo, *The history of that great and renowned monarchy of China. Wherein all the particular provinces are accurately described: as also the dispositions, manners, learning. Lawes, militia, government, and religion of the people. Together with the traffick and commodities of that country. Lately written in Italian by F. Alvarez Semedo... Now put into English by a person of quality, and illustrated with several mapps and figures... To which is added the history of the late invasion, and conquest of that flourishing kingdom by the Tartars. With an exact account of the other affairs of China, till these present times* (London: Printed by E. Tyler for I Crook, 1655).

sions in China. This edition also includes a reissue of Martini's *Bellum Tartaricum* with corrections.

As with *Bellum tartaricum*, Semedo's *History* (London, 1655) contains a fold-out map located just following the table of contents. Described as "An Exact Mapp of China, being faithfully Copied from one brought from Peking by a Father lately resident in that Citty," it was undoubtedly based on that of Martini. It is not, however, a strict replica. The most noticeable difference is the inclusion of pictures of "A King of China," "A China Man," and "A China Woman" – no doubt reflecting the author's interest in the customs and peoples of China. In the words of the extended title of the English-language edition, the maps and illustrations are included to "to satisfie the curious, and advance the Trade of Great Britain."

The 1655 edition of the *History* also contains an unsigned "Epistle to the Reader" that appears to have been added by the printer or editor, rather than penned by the Jesuit himself. It describes "that Great Monarchy of China; in its circuit little less than all Europe" as a place that "zealous of its rare treasures" had "heretofore" been "locked up from the curious eyes of strangers." The Epistle promises that Semedo's book will "yield" to the reader "a full discovery" of those treasures. Interestingly, this "discovery" is placed in the context of the discovery of the New World, and is described as "the most valuable that this our world hath been acquainted with, since that of America; whereby now the furthest East, as well as West, is disclosed, and laid open to the present age." China's distinctiveness, once uncovered, becomes understood not on its own terms, but in the context of other places that have also been the object of European exploration. Unlike the description of Martini's map, which gives some general idea of China's shape but holds his readers in anticipation of fuller disclosure later, "this book," we are told, yields "a full discovery" of the "Lawes, Government, Manners, and present state and condition of the Great Monarchy of China."¹⁵ In both books we see an appeal to the reader's curiosity and the use of language with sexual implications.

The book is not presented only as an object of curiosity, but as a tool for learning and thus a means to self improvement, and potential economic gain. We have seen that the allure of the Chinese derives from their difference. This difference does not make them inferior. On the contrary, the readership "of whatsoever profession" can learn much and profit by reading about their "Politicks, Oeconomicks, Sci-

¹⁵ Semedo, *History*, "Epistle to the Reader."

ences, Mechanics, Riches, Merchandise, &c.” thereby “reap[ing] no small benefit.” In moral virtue too, we are told, the Chinese are to be admired: “though wilt find them so far to transcend us therein, that they maybe proposed as an excellent patterne, (as also they are a shame) to Christian States.” The logic here parallels that of Confucius whose *Analects* state “Even when walking in a party of no more than three I can always be certain of learning from those I am with. There will be good qualities that I can select for imitation and bad ones that will teach me what requires correction in myself.”¹⁶ Put differently, in learning about other peoples we can learn from both positive and negative examples. This kind of comparison of human qualities crops up again in later works, but not in the context of the peoples of the countries so much as in their individual rulers.

At any rate, as these pragmatic considerations of self-improvement might suggest, the editors of the volume valued reports of far away lands not only as entertainment, but as information. Claims to difference, or to virtue, among the Chinese may have piqued the seventeenth-century reader’s interest, but it was Semedo’s self-described role as a “diligent Observator and Collector of all their manners and customs...” that was to give the book credence. The “Epistle to the reader” makes the claim that unlike “some former relations,” the contents of his book are based on his personal observation and study. Sight was the foundation both for the collection and verification of information. In the last paragraph of the preface Semedo speaks directly of the importance of on-sight observation in an extended appeal to the reader:

I hope this work shall gain some esteem and credit, if not for the greatnesse of the Appearance, at least for the certainty of the reality of it; having taken what I write, from the infallible Testimony of mine eyes; which though they may not be of the quickest sighted, yet have had the advantage to reiterate very often their speculations. And if he which vieweth for a long time, although his sight be not of the best, doth commonly see more, then he who looketh in haste, be his eyes never so good...”¹⁷

Such claims are, of course, just that. Yet their presence demonstrates the emergence of an epistemology where proof through the eyewitness takes precedence over other forms of knowledge. This emphasis on sight also signals us to pay special attention to the engravings

¹⁶ *Lunyu* vii/21; trans. Arthur Waley, *The Analects of Confucius* (New York: Vintage Books, 1938), p. 127.

¹⁷ Semedo, *History*, preface (unpaginated).

included in these early-modern works on China. The representation in visual form of what had been observed was an important way to present a specific view of China to the reader.

Yet seeing, whether by the eyewitness or the reader, should not be naively equated with “objective” knowledge. A double standards exists in the logic of the introduction. For we are told as well, that, “in this piece is happily united, with the truth of History, the delight of a Romance: where it will be no small pleasure to thee to *see* their braines, as well as their bodies” (emphasis mine). The “History” derives from the certainty of direct observation and study, the “Romance” from seeing the unfamiliar. Both kinds of vision are integral parts of the work. Emphasis on the empirical does not, in Semedo’s work, efface other visual pleasures; the gaze also facilitates a certain voyeurism and sensual fascination with the exotic.

PIERRE JOSEPH D’ORLÉANS’

HISTOIRE DES DEUX CONQUERANS TARTARS

Pierre Joseph d’Orléans, the author of the next work we will consider, was born during the 1640s, the decade during which the Manchus took Beijing, and died in Paris in 1698. He was a member of the Society of Jesus, and is best known for his role as a historian. His published works range from religious biographies to political histories. In addition to his *Histoire des deux conquerans Tartars qui ont subjugué la Chine*, they include *Histoire des Révolutions d’Angleterre*, *Histoire de M. Constance, premier ministre du roi de Siam*, *Histoire des Révolutions d’Espagne*, and a biography of Matteo Ricci.¹⁸ Unlike Martini and Semedo, he did not visit China.

Histoire de deux conquerans Tartars first appeared in 1688.¹⁹ Whereas the topic of Martini’s work was the conquest of China, here the focus shifts to the conquerors themselves. They are depicted in an overwhelmingly positive light. (Claims made in the dedication are not substantiated by references to direct observation!) The dedication by Orléans, addressed to “My Lord the Chancellor,” begins as follows:

¹⁸ *Nouvelle biographie générale* (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1855).

¹⁹ I used the 1854 edition printed in London for the Hakluyt Society. After an introduction explaining why this work was reproduced, the original title page in French appears from the Paris edition of 1688. Presumably everything that follows is a complete translation of the work (via the Dutch). The 1854 edn., translated and edited by the Earl of Ellesmere, includes the full original dedication, in translation. The dedication does not appear in the 1725 edition found in *Recueil de voyages au Nord*. I have not had access to the original 1688 edition.

My lord, among the rarities of China, there are none which better deserve to be presented to persons of your rank and taste, than those which I here offer to you. China has nothing to surpass the history of the two kings who conquered it; and the rest of the world would have had nothing to equal it, if Louis the Great had not reigned in France.

Uncovering the “rarities” of China remains an important theme, but perhaps more significantly, for the first time we see a direct comparison between the early-Qing emperors and Louis XIV.

As the dedication continues, the author chooses to highlight not so much the youthful achievements or military successes of the “two kings who conquered it” but their “wisdom.” In choosing to portray this quality, Orléans at once paints an image of his own king; one who has the qualities to appreciate what is reflected by these far-away emperors. Thus we see here a kind of double portrait emerging, one that in capturing (or creating) an image of the Tartar emperors also reflects qualities the French king is praised for possessing.

... But that which cannot be sufficiently admired, and which I am sure, my lord, will interest you much, is the wisdom of these monarchs in governing this vast empire, and the infinite multitude of people which Heaven has subjected to their administration.

There cannot be any one better fitted than yourself to appreciate their wisdom, and therefore I have thought that I could not present the portrait of these two heroes to the eyes of any person more capable than yourself of rightly estimating their virtues. That clear intelligence which has so long enlightened your career in so many different occupations, without your having hitherto taken any of those dangerous steps which the most clear-sighted cannot always avoid, will cause you to follow with pleasure, in the conduct of these princes, the traces of a policy which has been skillful without cunning, and efficacious without violence.²⁰

Attempting to avoid too didactic a tone, Orléans’s rhetoric imbues his own king with qualities that enable him to “admire” those of other wise and successful monarchs:

The inflexible equity which you profess, and which has induced the most just of kings to place you at the head of all the tribunals of justice in his kingdom, must awaken your esteem for those con-

²⁰ Pierre Joseph d’Orléans, *History of the Two Tartar Conquerors of China...* (London: 1854), dedication.

querors, who during their conquests held the balance while they wielded the sword, and seemed only to gain subjects in order that they might dispense happiness to a greater number of people. Great without pride, strict without rigour, exact observers of the laws, but without that cruel harshness which excited hatred while it established authority, you will admire in them that pliance of genius which has been able at the same time to civilize the Tartar warriors, and so socialize the emperors of China.

Orléans creates, through flattery, an image that he would like to see his own king live up to. He works toward this goal by holding up qualities in the Tartar emperors that he finds admirable. He does not state explicitly that they are worthy of his own king's emulation, for to suggest this so directly would be too close to an insult. Rather, he endows his own king – through the Lord Chancellor – with qualities that can appreciate what he sees reflected in others of a similar stature. The historical accuracy of what Orléans relates about the emperors of China takes a secondary role to hoped for consequences of this image as put forth for Europe.²¹ The role this work plays is clearly a political one shaping an international scene in which the French monarch is encouraged to view himself in relation to peers abroad.

The final paragraph of Orléans dedication professes the French king's "zeal" for religion. As for the emperors of China, while it is to be regretted "that the one should have died an idolator, and that the other should not yet be a Christian," they are nonetheless praised "for the liberty which they have allowed to their people to profess Christianity, and for the powerful protection with which they have always honoured those who preached it." In light of Louis XIV's 1685 revocation of the edict of Nantes, under which Protestants in France had been protected in France, the Chinese emperor's toleration of Catholicism does indeed seem quite liberal. Following the French king's action between 200–300,000 Protestants fled the country for more hospitable environs. Although the mention of religion is *de rigueur* in the context of a dedication by a member of the Jesuit order to the king of France, religion itself seems to play a relatively minor role in framing the overall purpose or content of the book.

²¹ Francois Quesnay's *Le Despotisme de la Chine* (Paris: 1767) reveals the same approach. See the translation in Maverick, *China: A Model for Europe*.

MARTIN MARTINI'S *HISTOIRE DE LA CHINE*

Histoire de la Chine, published in Paris in 1692,²² is different from the other works because it concerns the early history of China rather than contemporary events. Nor is it a timeless ethnographic account based on a mixture of texts and observation, as are the other examples we have considered. The work reflects a growing interest in areas of theological controversy: namely early chronology and in the name of God in Chinese. Because of the nature of its contents I touch on it only briefly. However, the closing paragraph of the notice to the reader on the factual reliability of the contents of the work is relevant to our discussion. In this context we see another comparison between the glories credited to the French monarch and those reported from China:

If, however, incredulous minds reject the sincere witness of a man of faith who was not so injudicious as to report fables from a country to which he went to teach the truth, let them reflect on what has happened under the glorious reign of Louis le Grand, which they would also treat as the prodigious events of fantasy if they had not themselves been witness thereto.²³

The French readership is told that if they have trouble believing the truth of what is recorded about Qing China, then they would feel the same incredulity were they to read about the glories of the reign of their own king had they not experienced them first hand. Once again, Louis XIV and his counterpart in China are seen as belonging to the same category and explicitly compared.

JOACHIM BOUVET'S *HISTOIRE DE L'EMPEREUR DE LA CHINE*

This royal comparison becomes much more personal in Joachim Bouvet's (1656–1730) *Histoire de L'Empereur de la Chine*, which was first published in Paris in 1697 under the title *Portrait historique de l'Empereur de la Chine, présenté au roy, Par le P. J. Bouvet, de la Compagnie de JESUS, Missionnaire de la Chine*.²⁴ Bouvet was part of the group of

²² Martin Martini, *Histoire de la Chine*, trans. l'Abbé Peletier (Paris: 1692). The work first appeared in Latin.

²³ Martini, *Histoire de la Chine*, "Avertissement." The original French reads: "Si cependant les esprits incredules, rejettent le témoignage sincere d'un homme Apostolique, qui n'étoit pas si peu judicieux que de rapporter des fables d'un pais où il étoit allé pour enseigner la verité, qu'ils fassent reflexion sur ce qui se passe sous le regne glorieux de Louis le Grand, dont ils traiteroient aussi les prodigieux evenemens d'histoires faites à plaisir, s'ils n'en étoient eux-mêmes les témoins."

²⁴ I have worked primarily from the 1940 Tianjin reprint of the 1699 edition printed in the Hague, which is the one I cite here. I have, however, also consulted the 1697 *Portrait histo-*

Jesuit mathematicians sent to China at the expense of Louis XIV in 1685. After passing through Siam, where one of their number stayed, the others reached Ningbo by July of 1687, and Peking in February of 1688. Fathers Bouvet and Gerbillon were to serve at the court of the Kangxi emperor. The others were allowed to enter the provinces to preach the gospel. At the court, Bouvet had personal access to the emperor, whom he instructed in geometry. He also learned Manchu, the language in which they conversed. The close proximity with the emperor is what made it possible for Bouvet to author his portrait of the emperor of China.

In 1693, Bouvet departed Peking for France as Kangxi's ambassador to the court of Louis XIV. He carried with him gifts from the Chinese emperor for the king of France – including forty-nine volumes that had been printed in Peking, and a request for more missionary scientists. He arrived in France in 1697 and was received and endowed with return gifts for the emperor of China. One of these was a complete volume of Louis XIV's engravings.²⁵ Bouvet's group, including ten other missionaries, arrived safely in Canton in 1699.

In spite of tensions between Rome and the Qing court, Bouvet remained in the good graces of the Kangxi emperor. He participated in the surveying of China, and also took an acute interest in China's early classics where he, like a number of other Jesuits, expected to find evidence of early Christian belief in China. He died in China in 1730 having produced a number of scientific treatises, as well as *Histoire de L'Empereur*, various observations that appeared in Du Halde's *Description...de la Chine*, and many letters that have come down to us today.²⁶

Whereas Martini's *Bellum tartaricum* concerned the conquest of China, and Orléans's work the conquerors, Bouvet's *Histoire* follows the same trajectory even further. His interest is not in the unnamed "conquers of China" generally, but the Kangxi emperor specifically. The level of interest in the person of the emperor is exemplified in the frontispiece engraving titled "Cang-Hy. Empereur de la Chine et de

rique de l'empereur de la Chine. Apart the from title, the contents of the two editions, including dedication, text, and "Avertissement" at the end of the work, appear to be the same. The pagination of the two editions differs.

²⁵ Pfister, *Notices*, p. 434: "Le roi de France avait fait remettre au Jésuite un recueil de toutes ses estampes."

²⁶ For full bibliographical references to his work, and a more complete biographical sketch see Pfister, *Notices*, pp. 433–39. For more on his work with early Chinese texts see Minghui Hu, "Accommodation and Conflict: The Paradoxical Dynamics of Joachim Bouvet's Classical Studies, 1700–1730," paper given at the conference "The Age of Antiquaries in Europe and China."

la Tartarie Orientale Agé de 44" (see figure 3).²⁷ The degree of direct comparison between the Kangxi emperor and Louis XIV is even more explicit, and the "portrait" more complete and personal. It is significant that the first edition of this work actually appeared under the title *Portrait de l'Empereur de la Chine*. The dedication, addressed directly to the king, also uses the word "*Portrait*" to describe the work.

In Bouvet, themes that we have seen in the dedications to Martini's *Bellum Tartaricum* and Semedo's *History* are continued, and honed. These include the "rare" nature of the contents of the work, as well as the now quite open comparisons between the two monarchs:

The portrait which I today take the liberty to present to your Majesty, is surely the rarest thing that has yet been brought back from the Orient. Memoirs of far away countries or of distant times, offer few subjects that could be more worthy, dare I say it, of your attention. *It suffices that this is the portrait of a monarch who, having the good fortune to resemble you in a number of ways, enjoys approximately the same advantage among the infidel princes that Louis the Grand enjoys among the Christian princes.*²⁸ (emphasis mine)



Figure 3. "The Emperor of China... at the Age of Forty-four"
From Bouvet's *Histoire de l'Empereur de la Chine*, 1699.

²⁷ It in fact bears no resemblance to portraits painted of the emperor by Jesuit artists in China skilled in techniques of realism. See, e.g., the exhibition catalog *Kangxi Empereur de Chine 1662-1722: La Cité interdite à Versailles* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 2004), catalog numbers 44, 47, 49.

²⁸ Orléans, *Histoire...*, Dedication. The original French reads: "Le Portrait, que je prens aujourd'huy la liberté de presenter a Votre Majesté, est assurément la chose la plus rare, qu'on ait apportée jusqu'icy de l'Orient. Et les Memoires des païs, aussi-bien que des temps éloignez, nous fournissent peu de sujets, qui soient, si je l'ose dire, plus dignes de vôte attention. Il suffit pour cela que ce soit le portrait d'un Monarque, qui ayant le bonheur de vous ressembler

This striking comparison is not simply a clever device with which to open the dedication. The second paragraph continues in the same vein, sharpening the focus onto the personal qualities befitting a monarch, whether at home or abroad:

The Jesuits whom your Majesty sent to him several years ago were astonished to find at the ends of the earth, that which had not been seen up to this time outside of France, that is to say a prince, like you Sir, in which is joined to a mind as sublime as it is solid, a heart that is even more worthy of empire; who is master of himself as of his subjects, equally adored by his peoples and respected by his neighbors; who, glorious as he is in his great enterprises, has even more valor and drive than good fortune: a prince in one word who unites in his person the majority of those qualities which make heroes, and would be the most accomplished monarch to reign on this earth in a long time were it not that his reign coincided with that of Your Majesty.²⁹

The hyperbole of the dedication may make us want to wince with its unabashed adulation and flattery, but we should not dismiss it out of hand. Certainly, the laudatory tone is obligatory, but it should not obscure its artful design. Who is this other person whose glory matches that of the Sun King? The curiosity of the imperial person would surely be piqued.

As Bouvet's dedication continues, the topic turns to religion. The French king must find himself reassured, after so close a comparison with the ruler of China, to be reminded that the royal qualities of his oriental counterpart have nothing "true or solid" about them since they are not based on Christian faith or practice. Yet the Jesuit fathers express the hope that the qualities the foreign emperor possesses, combined with his favorable reception of the European missionaries, may bode well for the future of Christianity in China.

At this point, the text deepens the comparison between monarchs. Up until now, explicit as it has been, their similarities have been observed by others and held up for royal consideration. However, in the

par plusieurs endroits, a le même avantage à peu près par dessus les Princes infideles, que Louïs le Grand a pardessus les Princes Chrétiens." Translations from the French are by the author unless otherwise indicated.

²⁹ Ibid. "Les Jesuites, que Vôte Majesté luy envoya, il ya a quelques années, ont été étonnez de trouver aux extremitez de la terre, ce qu'on n'avoit point vû jusques-là hors de la France, c'est à dire un Prince, que comme Vous, sire, joint à un genie aussi sublime que solide, un coeur encore plus digne de l'Empire; qui est maître de luy-même comme de ses sujet, également adoré de ses peuples, & respecté de ses voisins; qui tout glorieux qu'il est dans ses grandes entreprises, a plus encore de valeur & de conduite, que de bonheur: Un Prince un un

next sentence an explicit claim is made that the Kangxi emperor would *himself* like to be more like Louis XIV. The hope expressed is “that [the Kangxi emperor] will one day destroy idolatry in China, *in order to resemble more closely your majesty*, who has attained his principal glory in extending religion throughout the world” (my emphasis).³⁰ This paragraph is, of course, designed to flatter the king, who may be intrigued to see himself from a new angle – in the eyes of this foreign, but ever so accomplished, monarch.

The dedication holds up a window through which the French king could see that there was another monarch somewhere in the world (and potentially other monarchs) who could be considered as a kind of cohort. Louis XIV may have been the Sun King in his own court, but other constellations existed. So while the writer sets the French king above all others, he also provides a point of comparison and creates the sense that the king is being watched, not only from below by his subjects, but from the outside. Furthermore, by extension, the dedication creates not only a window onto another faraway court, but also a mirror in which the king is encouraged to see himself as through the eyes of another.

Bouvet’s dedication also serves as a reminder that the king’s power derives not simply from his person, but from a greater source outside himself. His grandeur, his superiority to this foreign monarch, rests on his adherence to and patronage of Catholicism. In other words, in continuing to support the foreign missions from which his glory derives, he also extends his own reputation: a tempting proposition.

Religion was, however, only one of several sources of the king’s legitimacy. Patronage of the arts and sciences was another.³¹ Religion and natural philosophy were inextricably intertwined for the China mission, as they were for Jesuits. Catholicism entered China hand-in-hand with science (and art). For the Jesuits, these were expressions of one truth. The arts and sciences allowed them better to understand God’s creation, and provided a tangible means of displaying the truths they uncovered. What a “happy” thing it would be, writes Bouvet, if the

mot, qui réunissant dans sa personne la plupart des grandes qualitez, qui forment les heros, seroit le plus accompli Monarque, que depuis long-temps ait regné sur la terre, si son regne ne concouroit point avec celui de Vôte Majesté.”

³⁰ Ibid. “... qu’il sera un jour le destructeur de l’Idolâtrie dans la Chine, *pour ressembler de plus après à Vôte Majesté*, qui a mis sa principale gloire à étendre la Religion par tout le monde,” p. 8.

³¹ See Chandra Mukerji, *Territorial Ambitions and the Gardens of Versailles* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1997) for an exploration of the importance of gardens (and the technology they required) to the display of the power of the state.

“esteem which our Arts and our Sciences, having arrived at the peak of their perfection under the protection of His Majesty, were to inspire the emperor of China for our Religion.” The king is lauded as the protector and propagator of both religion and the arts and sciences. The latter sort of knowledge plays an even more prominent role in the final work we will consider here.

JEAN BAPTISTE DU HALDE’S *DESCRIPTION... DE LA CHINE*

Du Halde’s *Description ... de la Chine* was first published in 1735, thirty-eight years after Bouvet’s *Histoire*.³² Not much is known of Du Halde’s personal life. He was born in 1674, and entered the Society of Jesus in 1692 at the age of eighteen. During his career he taught at various Jesuit institutions including Louis le Grand, where he was on the faculty when Voltaire, then known as François-Marie Arouet, was a student.³³ Like Orléans, he was a scholar and not a missionary, and also like him he did not travel abroad to China. While his primary scholarly focus was on China, he also served as the editor of the *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*, a collection of letters from Jesuit missionaries stationed in various parts of the world. He took personal responsibility for the contents of the *Description*, although the contents were based largely on letters written by those in the field.

The reigns of both Louis XIV and the Kangxi emperor had ended by 1735, but their images dominate the framing of the *Description*. Although the work is dedicated to the young Louis XV, the image of his predecessor looms large. The dedication lauds the young monarch for taking the former king as a model, and even describes him as embodying the qualities of Louis XIV. It goes so far as to say that the “People are gratified” to see the former king as having “new life in the person of His Majesty.”³⁴ The Kangxi emperor also figures prominently in the dedication, where he is characterized by his “infinite ardor for the Sciences,” which allowed the missionaries “easy access to his person.”³⁵ The French king’s interest in sciences is also prominent, but is couched behind his ardor to extend the gospel. Thus the overt comparison between the two monarchs continued after their deaths. According to Du

³² *Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique, et physique de l’empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie chinoise, enrichie des cartes générales et particulières de ces pays ... du Thibet, & de la Corée...* (Paris: P. G. Le Mercier, 1735). I also consulted the 1736 French edition printed in the Hague.

³³ Isabelle Landry-Deron, *La preuve par la Chine La “Description” de J.-B. Du Halde, jésuite, 1735* (Paris: Éditions de L’École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 2002), p. 50.

³⁴ Du Halde, *Description* (1935 edn.), p. iv.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. iii.

Halde, the complimentary interests of the two monarchs allowed for an almost divine convergence that facilitated the propagation of the faith. The “marvelous concurrence of protection between the most powerful monarch of Europe and the grandest prince of the Orient”³⁶ favored the work of Christian missionaries in China. The Jesuits served the interests of each and benefitted from their position as intermediaries.

The four-volume *Description*, containing a large number of engravings, was based on materials sent to Paris by Jesuits in China over the course of several decades. Du Halde’s work at once combines and expands on the approaches seen in earlier works on China. As in Martini’s *Bellum tartaricum*, and Semedo’s *History*, geographical knowledge represented on maps is an important part of the work, though by this date the maps were more numerous, detailed, and accurate. As in Semedo’s *History*, much attention is given to ethnographic description of a wide variety of practices in China and, as in Martini’s *Histoire de la Chine*, important historical accounts of early Chinese history are included. Du Halde’s project updated and surpassed the knowledge of China accumulated in Europe up to that time, and it was widely disseminated in numerous editions in a variety of European languages, including English, German, and Russian. Voltaire himself once wrote that although Du Halde never left Paris, and did not have facility with the Chinese language, his work was the best description of the Chinese empire available anywhere in the world.³⁷

In keeping with the early-modern interest in “science,” Du Halde described his methodology as being grounded in observation. In this respect his claims resemble those made by Martini and Semedo. However, by the eighteenth century the Jesuits in China were in a better position to carry out observations – both astronomical and ethnographic – than were their forbears. Most notably, they traveled extensively throughout all the provinces of China, and beyond, as part of a team to survey the empire for the Kangxi emperor’s atlas, titled *Huangyu quanlan tu* 皇興全覽圖, or, *Imperially Commissioned Map of All Surveyed*, completed in 1718.³⁸ In the course of travels they not only recorded information directly pertinent to the mapping project, but also took note of what they

³⁶ Ibid. The original French reads: “...merveilleux concours de protection entre le plus puissant Monarque de l’Europe, & le plus grand Prince de l’Orient.”

³⁷ “Quoiqu’il ne soit point sorti de Paris, et qu’il n’ait point su le chinois, a donné, sur le mémoires de ses confreres la plus ample et la meilleure description de l’empire de la Chine qu’on ait dans le monde.” Voltaire, as quoted in Landry-Deron, *La preuve par la Chine*, p. 111.

³⁸ *Lan*, which I translate as “surveyed” is not a technical term. An alternate translation is “Imperial Map of Territory Showing a Full View.” Theodore N. Foss “A Western Interpretation of China-Jesuit Cartography,” in Ronan and Oh, eds., *East Meets West*, pp. 209–51.

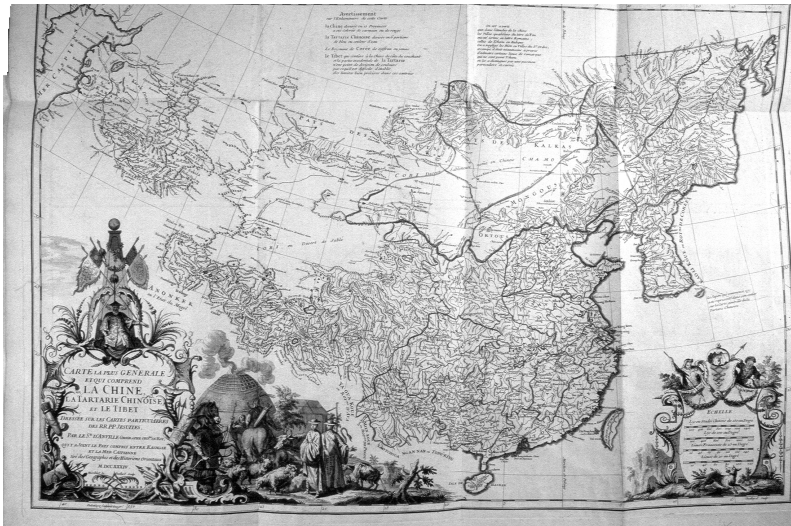


Figure 4. Map of China, Chinese Tartary, and Tibet, from Du Halde's Description...de la Chine

Photograph courtesy The Newberry Library.

saw and learned. These recollections were reproduced in Du Halde's *Description* along with a full set of maps of the Qing empire (figure 4), including a separate page for China proper and one for each of the provinces. Du Halde also included maps of selected cities.³⁹

In the preface, Du Halde speaks directly to the question of how his work supercedes previous accounts of China. While hesitating to critique his forbears too roundly, Du Halde articulates a number of previous shortcomings. Earlier missionaries had only lived in “beautiful provinces” and written about their abundant riches. Readers, in assuming all of China must resemble these descriptions, came to inaccurate conclusions.⁴⁰ The early missionaries also had to rely more heavily than did recent visitors on Chinese texts, which sometimes exaggerated the “rarities and the wonders of their country.”⁴¹ Additionally, the scientific instruments they had used were not as accurate, allowing for errors in the maps they produced. In short, Du Halde's point is that the on-sight observations (of both a general and astronomical nature) of more recent members of the Jesuit mission contributed to a

³⁹ For a discussion of the Kangxi Atlas in various versions see Laura Hostetler “Contending Cartographic Claims? The Qing Empire in Manchu, Chinese, and European Maps,” paper prepared for the Nebenzahl Lectures in the History of Cartography, The Newberry Library, October 7–9, 2004. See also Foss, “Western Interpretation.”

⁴⁰ Du Halde, *Description* (1736 edn.), p. xv.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. xiv.

much more accurate understanding of the Qing empire's territory, and its peoples, their customs, and history.

One major difference we see between Du Halde's comprehensive work and those of Martini and Semedo almost a century earlier is the way in which he writes about China. The language of curiosity, and metaphors of unveiling, or discovery, have disappeared. The quest for knowledge is now presented as having been fulfilled. The commendation to the 1736 edition assures its readers that the *Description* "is so complete that we can be sure that almost no country, even in Europe will be better known than China...".⁴² This knowing encompasses "not only the true extent of such a vast portion of the universe, but also all the detail regarding the most important objects that it contains" – an interesting commentary on the correlation between maps, ethnographic description, and the other kinds of information found in the text.

I have already raised the question, above, of the perceived consequences for actually achieving knowledge of China, for unveiling its mystery. The commendation gives one possible answer. The reader is told that the intercourse between these two nations has allowed us to "take an accurate idea of the Chinese Nation, and of its sovereigns" and to record something of its character, and "the riches which it furnishes to Europe and those which it extracts." This latter is identified as the "happy knowledge of the true Religion." In Du Halde's visualization of this exchange, both regions stand to gain, and both have something to offer. However, the give and take is not framed as being entirely on an equal footing. In this conceptualization, China supplies information, whereas Europe produces and exports knowledge.

In spite of the fact that Du Halde himself never laid eyes on China, the importance of sight as an important component of knowing emerges repeatedly in his volumes. In the preface we read that in their travels around China the missionaries made note of "all that which was before their eyes."⁴³ It comes up again in a discussion of the maps of Chinese Tartary, Korea, and Tibet. Although "until now we hardly knew anything but the names of these vast countries, how easy it is to persuade ourselves, in casting our eyes over these maps made by the most clever geographers that we will have specific knowledge of them."⁴⁴ Seeing

⁴² Ibid., p. 63. "Cette *Description... de la Chine...*, que j'ai lue par l'ordre de Monsieur le Gardes des Sceaux, est si ample, qu'on peut assurer que presque aucun Pays, même de l'Europe, ne sera désormais mieux connu que la Chine, la Tartarie qui lui est soumise ou aliée, & quelques autres Etats considérables qui les touchent immédiatement."

⁴³ Ibid., p. xviii. "...tout ce qui s'offroit à leurs yeux..."

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 35. "On n'a guères connu jusqu'ici que les noms de ces vastes pays, comme il

the land on such an exact map, is nearly as good as being there.⁴⁵ In this twist, the viewer is thus permitted to observe China for himself in perusing the pages of Du Halde's work.

The most obvious example of the importance of visual imagery in the *Description* is the inclusion of scaled maps of the empire, mentioned above. The maps are, however, only one example of the importance of engravings. The entire book is embellished with a wide variety of illustrations. These include scenes of weddings and funerals; the silk industry; the entourage that accompanies a governor-general whenever he goes forth in public; various kinds of Chinese boats; Chinese and foreign coins; and the observatory at Peking. Etchings of paired figures include the emperor of China in ceremonial and ordinary garb; officials in winter and summer attire; Manchu and Chinese military officers; Chinese women (two pairs); a female servant and a Manchu woman; a villager and a priest; and a female villager and a priestess. The preface explicitly states that these images are included with the aim of conveying what they represent in a way that is even more "tangible" than the text alone could do.⁴⁶ They also serve to make the reader feel as though he or she has truly seen China.

Two of the most prominent engravings are those appearing above the dedication, and on the first page of chapter one.⁴⁷ The portrait of the young king, Louis XV, graces the dedication (figure 5). The portrait of the Kangxi emperor appears above the heading to the first chapter. Both are surrounded by imagery that reflects their imperial roles. The bust of Louis XV is flanked by personifications of justice and religion. Justice appears on the right as a clothed woman with scales and sword. Religion stands to the left, taking the form of a clothed woman holding a cross and a book. Her head is covered with a loose cloth in a modest pose evoking images of the Madonna. A crown appears above the cir-

est aisé de s'en convaincre, en jettant les yeux sur les Cartes de nos plus habiles Géographes: on en aura des connoissances particulières..."

⁴⁵ He goes so far as to say: "Et je doute que les Lecteurs pussent mieux s'en instruire, quand ils feroient eux-mêmes ces longs & pénibles voyages." (I doubt that the readers could learn any more if they were themselves to undertake these long and arduous journeys.) Ibid., p. 35.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. xxvi. The French reads: "*sensible*." For more on the ethnographic content of the *Description... de la Chine*, see Laura Hostetler, "From Global to Local: Exploration and Ethnography in Southwest China," paper prepared for the History of Science Workshop Global Science and Comparative History: Jesuits, Science, and Philology in China and Europe, 1550-1850, Princeton University, December 6, 2002 (in preparation for publication in *East Asian Science, Medicine, and Technology*).

⁴⁷ Versions of these engravings appear in both the 1735 Paris edn. and the 1736 Hague edn. The portrait of the French king (unsurprisingly) does not appear in the 1741 London edn. Instead the frontispiece illustration is of an engraving on Confucius.

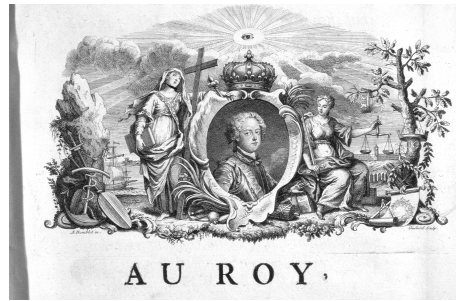


Figure 5. Louis XV, from Du Halde's Description... de la Chine Frontispiece; photograph courtesy The Newberry Library.



Figure 6. The Kangxi Emperor, from Du Halde's Description... de la Chine Frontispiece to chapter 1. Photography courtesy The Newberry Library.

cular window in which the young king is represented, and above it an image of the all-seeing eye. Implements pertaining to navigation such as an anchor, paddles, and a trident are depicted in the foreground on the left-hand side, and a ship in the background. On the right-hand side in the foreground we see an open scroll map depicting a walled fortress, a sextant, and some arrows. In the background, as a counterweight to the ship, a city wall is visible beyond a body of water. To the far right is a tree from which hangs two crowns, both less ornate than that above the head of the young king.

The portrait of the Kangxi emperor (figure 6) is inscribed with his identity. It is not presented as an abstract image of monarchy in China, but claims to be a likeness of a specific person made on a specific date. The portrait in fact bears no resemblance to those made on-site. The border around the medallion in which his bust appears identifies the Kangxi emperor, records the date of his death – December 20, 1722 – and indicates that the portrait was painted when he was thirty-two

years old.⁴⁸ He is flanked by two dragons and by a number of scientific instruments required in surveying lands to produce maps. It is significant not only that both monarchs are portrayed, but that they are shown with instruments representing scientific inquiry. Symbols of navigation are unique to the French king, but both rulers are surrounded by the equipment of cartographic inquiry necessary to know and map the land.

Imagery evoking the patronage of science brings us back to the question of the role that arts and sciences played in the framing of these early-modern Jesuit works on China. The received wisdom regarding the Jesuit mission in China is that its members used their scientific skills as a tool that allowed them access to the emperor and bought a certain amount of freedom to maneuver within China. Their larger goal was the propagation of the Catholic faith. I would like to suggest an alternative interpretation. In the dedication to Du Halde's *Description* one might understand the French king's interest in sciences as being secondary to his ardor to extend the gospel, but another reading of the sentence describing the activities of the French King suggests more of an equation than a prioritizing of activities: "in the design that he conceived to extend the realm of Jesus Christ *and* to extract information useful to the advancement of the sciences, he cast his eyes on a number of Jesuits with whose talents and virtues he was familiar."⁴⁹ In this tableau, "extending" and "extracting" are simultaneous activities, intricately related by the role of the Jesuit fathers who made both possible. The king's role is a dual one, both sending religion and taking away information in the quest for scientific knowledge. Is it possible that early-modern interactions with China, and the images of the Kangxi emperor as the king's foreign counterpart that emerged from them, were designed to encourage Louis XIV's own patronage of the sciences? What were the overriding motivations in honoring the Jesuits who departed for China in 1685 with the title of "Mathématiciens du Roy," accrediting their ministry, assigning them pensions and heaping them with benefits.⁵⁰ Was it the spread of religion or the extraction of

⁴⁸ Du Halde, *Description* (1735 edn.), p. 1: "Kang Hi emp. de la Chine mort le 20 Dec de l'an 1722 la 61e annee de son reg. Peint a l'age de 32 ans."

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. iii; the original French connects the extension of religion and extraction of scientific information in one sentence. The Jesuit assistance instrumental in enabling him to carry out both designs also ties the two parts of the sentence together: "...dans le dessein qu'il avoit formé d'y étendre le Royaume de Jesus-Christ, & d'en tirer des connoissances utiles à l'avancement des Sciences, il jeta les yeux sur un nombre de Jésuites, don't il connaissait la vertu et la capacité."

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. iv: "A leur départ il les honora du titre de ses mathématiciens; il accrédita leur ministère, il leur assigna des pensions, & il les combla des bienfaits."

information? As circumstances would have it, the two did not need to be divorced: one facilitated the other.

As the eighteenth century gave way to the nineteenth, the French religious presence in China became superseded by the British mercantile presence. The relationship between China and Europe as conceived and articulated by Du Halde would be transformed. Europe would still see itself as transmitting knowledge to China, but China's roles both as patron of science, and producer of scientific information would be forgotten as the early-modern era gave way to the modern. The French production of knowledge about China had indeed created China in the eyes of Europe. Europe had defined China and would later redefine China. Once the leaders of Europe and China could no longer be held up as model for comparison, that definition would be ripe for revision.

CONCLUSION

Jesuit writings were widely disseminated in France, as well as other parts of Europe, during the early-modern period. They served as the primary lense through which the French king viewed, and fancied himself observed, by his other. A close reading of the dedicatory and introductory materials of these six works has allowed us to trace how China, and information about the country and its rulers, was presented to a European, and more specifically a French, readership during the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth century. The themes of curiosity and first-hand observation are introduced early on. While curiosity is eventually satisfied, the importance of first-hand observation that it engendered remains paramount throughout the period in question. Ironically, however, the final two works, while still touting direct observation, are by authors who had not been to China, but rather relied on the observations of others in transmitting a "description" and a "portrait" of China and its emperor, respectively, to a European audience. Implicit comparisons between the rulers of China and France appear in 1688, and by 1699 these comparisons are quite explicit. They were used as a window through which the French king could see the image of a far-away counterpart, and a mirror in which he could see reflected his own accomplishments as they might be viewed by that same counterpart.

Prominently invoked in this regard was the French king's patronage of the arts and sciences and his protection of religion. The relationship between these two roles is complex and quite possibly one

that cannot be unraveled. However, I would like to suggest that to the extent that the arts and sciences may have served as a cloak for religion in China, that religion may have served as a cloak for French royal pursuit of arts and sciences as well. Would the Kangxi emperor have welcomed Europeans at his court who were there for the express purpose of gathering scientific information about his country and cartographic information about its coordinates? Probably not. Would the Jesuits have been able to obtain appointments in the French Academie des Sciences without the assurance that their scientific inquiries would remain subservient to their religious mission? Political exigencies of the day made this unlikely.⁵¹ Finally, would the French king have been persuaded to allow his own subjects to serve so extensively in positions so sensitive at a foreign court without the assurance that it was for the glory of God which also undergirded his own reign? This close look at the way the French king and emperor of China were held up in the Jesuit literature as counterparts allows us to pose these questions, whose ramifications will take much longer to explore.

⁵¹ Florence Hsia explores the French academic context in which the Jesuits operated in "French Jesuits and the Mission to China: Science, Religion, History," Ph.D. diss. (University of Chicago, 1999).