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Confucius Sinarum Philosophus (1687)

The First Translations of the Confucian Classics

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INSTITUTUM HISTORICUM SOCIETATIS IESU

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Confucius Sinarum Philosophus (1687)

The First Translation of the Confucian Classics

ed.

Thierry Meynard S.J.

First Section: Introduction

Prospero Intorcetta

Detail - Oil on canvas - 1671
Biblioteca Comunale di Palermo - Sicily

Chapter 1

Historical Background

Even though our present study is based on the final text of the *Sinarum Philosophus*, the book was the product of a complex and lengthy historical development which covers one hundred years and spans from China to Europe. The *Sinarum Philosophus* fits inside the debate among Europeans about how to read the Chinese classics. The very nature of this debate, with deep philosophical and theological implications, made the Jesuits engage Chinese classics at a very rational level, instead of a more metaphorical approach. In this chapter, we shall propose a model of cross-cultural hermeneutics, identifying the different layers of the Western and Chinese traditions involved in the translation of the Confucian classics in the West.

1 Long Genesis

What was to become the *Sinarum Philosophus* went through three different stages. It first started as a manual for missionaries in order to learn the language with the Confucian classics. Then, during the quarrel between missionaries about the correct understanding of Chinese rituals, the translation was conceived as a tool for training the missionaries into "the Jesuit reading" of the Confucian classics that could support the intellectual foundations of the Jesuit missionary approach. Finally, moving from China to Europe, the translation went beyond the small circle of China missionaries and was designed as a tool for propagating to the academic community, the political powers and Church authorities a certain vision of China.

Learning Chinese with the Confucian classics

At the very beginning, the Jesuit involvement with the Confucian texts was quite practical. The missionaries started to translate the *Four Books* for the immediate purpose of teaching Chinese language to newly arrived missionaries.[1] These language manuals incorporated three different layers:

[1] For an account of the learning process undertaken by the Jesuits, see Liam Matthew Brockey, *Journey to the East, The Jesuit Mission to China, 1579-1724* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 243-286.

the original text in Chinese characters, a phonetic transcription in Roman alphabet, and the literal translation in Latin, word by word. Usually the Chinese characters were numbered with their corresponding Latin word, making the learning process easier. Michele Ruggieri (1543-1607) was the first to engage in this type of work, preparing a translation of the *Four Books*, until he was recalled to Rome in 1588. After Ruggieri arrived in Rome in 1590, he did not find support for the diplomatic mission to China that he had hoped for. He came under the suspicion of his superiors and only managed to write a short essay on the missionary method in China, in which half of the preface of the *Daxue* was translated into Latin, published in 1593 in the *Biblioteca selecta* of the Jesuit Antonio Possevino (1559-1611).[2]

After Ruggieri's departure for Europe, Matteo Ricci continued translating the *Four Books* on the basis of Ruggieri's initial work. There were two main reasons for this. First, Ricci taught a newly arrived Jesuit, Francesco de Pietris (1562-1593) the Chinese language. Ricci used the *Four Books* as the basis for learning written Chinese.[3] Second, Ricci had received instruction from Alessandro Valignano (1539-1606) to prepare a new catechism, replacing the previous one made by Ruggieri that was judged insufficient. Interestingly, before inserting quotes of the *Four Books* into this catechism in Chinese language, Ricci probably felt that he had first to translate these books into Latin in order to secure their meaning and to avoid introducing any theological errors. This shows his extreme caution in dealing with the Classical texts of China. Also, as we know, Ricci's catechism had to be approved by superiors who did not read the Chinese and therefore had to prepare a Latin version of it. Ricci's efforts in understanding the *Four Books* can be seen very clearly in the Chinese quotes that he has inserted in his catechism, *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven (Tianzhu shiyi*, 1603*)*.[4] The importance of the *Four Books* is also attested by the first generation of Catholic converts such as Xu Guangqi (1562-1633), Li Zhizao 1565-1630) and Yang Tingyun (1557-1628), who have written a few commentaries on them.[5] Many

[2] Michele Ruggieri, "Quibus rationibus gentes, et Indi innuari possint, Qua occasione id certioris historiae de Regno Sinarum innuitur quod hactenus ignoratum est, quodque Auctor reliquis suis Commentariis in lucem postea edendis copiosus adtexuit: Liber Sinensium", in Antonio Possevino, *Biblioteca selecta qua agitur de ratione studiorum* (Rome, 1593), 581-586. Knud Lundbaek affirms that this contains the translation of the opening of the *Daxue*, but in fact it is only the first half. See "The First Translation from a Confucian Classic in Europe," in *China Mission Studies Bulletin*, I (1979): 9.

[3] See David E. Mungello, "The Seventeenth-Century Translation Project of the Confucian Four Books", in Charles E. Ronan S.J. and Bonnie B.C. Oh, ed., *East meets West* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1988), 253.

[4] There are 3 references to the *Daxue*, 7 to the *Zhongyong*, 13 to the *Lunyu* and 23 to the *Mencius*. See Index of Chinese Classical Texts, Matteo Ricci, *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* (Taipei: Institut Ricci, 1985), 483-485.

[5] Li Tiangang 李天纲, *Kuawenhua de quanshi* 跨文化的诠释 (Beijing: Xinxing chubanshe, 2007),

Jesuit missionaries have subsequently used Ricci's translation, as mentioned by Nicolas Trigault (1577-1628). However, the manuscript has never been found.[6] According to David Mungello, "it was handed down from one student generation of the Jesuits to the next, was probably improved, and was eventually incorporated into the published translations of the *Four Books*."[7]

In 1624, the Jesuit Vice-Province of China, under the direction of Manual Dias the Elder (1559-1639), adopted for the new missionaries coming to China an ambitious plan of studies (*ratio studiorum*) of four years. The training in Chinese language and culture was based essentially on the *Four Books* and the *Classic of Documents (Shujing or Shangshu)*. We suppose that Ricci's translations were judged satisfactory at that time since it seems there was no other attempt. It was only many years later that new translations started again. At that time, Inácio Da Costa (1603-1666) taught the *Four Books* to Jesuit students who transcribed the Latin translation next to the Chinese text. First, in Fuzhou, Andrea Ferrão (1625-1661) transcribed the *Daxue* under the guidance of Da Costa. This initial work was finished on October 1660.[8] Then, Da Costa moved to Jianchang, in Jiangxi province, and another of his students, Prospero Intorcetta (1626-1696), started to learn the *Four Books* with him and continued editing the translation with the *Lunyu*. This led to the publication on 1662, April 13, in the same city of Jianchang, of the *Chinese Wisdom (Sapientia Sinica)*. It includes a biography of Confucius, running to 4 pages (2 folio), the complete translation of the *Daxue*, running to 28 pages (14 folio), and the translation of the first five chapters of the *Lunyu*, running to 76 pages (38 folio). The book was revised by five Jesuits and approved by the vice-provincial Jacques Le Faure (1613-1675).[9] Lionel Jensen rightly stresses the importance of this work as "the first truly bilingual Chinese-Latin translation."[10]

42. Also, Nicolas Standaert, "The Study of the Classics by Late Ming Christian Converts," in Denise Gimpel & Melanie Hanz (eds.), *Cheng - In All Sincerity: Festschrift in Honour of Monika Übelhör* (Hamburger Sinologische Schriften 2), Hamburg: Hamburger Sinologische Gesellschaft, 2001, 19-40.

[6] Matthieu Ricci, Nicolas Trigault, *Histoire de l'Expédition Chrétienne au Royaume de Chine 1582-1610* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1978), 397. In one of his letters, Ricci mentioned that he sent a copy to Europe in 1595. See *Handbook*, 863. Recently, Francesco D'Arelli has claimed to have discovered Ricci's translations of the *Sishu* at the Biblioteca Nazionale V. Emanuele II, in Rome. See Francesco D'Arelli, "Matteo Ricci S.I. e la traduzione latina dei 'Quattro libri' (Si shu): Dalla tradizione storiografica alle nuove ricerche," in Francesco D'Arelli (ed.), *Le Marche e l'Oriente: Una tradizione ininterrotta da Matteo Ricci a Giuseppe Tucci* (Roma: Istituto italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente, 1998): 163-175.

[7] Mungello (1988), 253.

[8] The *Sapientia Sinica* includes just before the translation of the *Daxue* a preface written by Ferrão and dated October 25, 1660.

[9] ARSI, Jap.Sin. III, 3a. See Albert Chan, S.J., *Chinese Books and Documents in the Jesuit Archives in Rome* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2002), 477; Bernard-Maître, *Sagesse Chinoise et Philosophie Chrétienne* (Paris & Leiden: Les Belles Lettres & Brill, 1935), 128; Brockey, 278-279. The five revisers are: Canevari, Gouvea, Brancati, Couplet and De Rougemont**.** See Chan, 11.

[10] Jensen, 114. In 1687, a few months before the publication of the *Sinarum Philosophus* in Paris, an

The second teaching manual still extant is the *Politico-Moral Learning of the Chinese* (*Sinarum Scientia Politico-Moralis*) by Intorcetta, presenting a literal translation of the *Zhongyong*, as well as an expanded *Life of Confucius (Vita Confucii)*. The book was revised by no less than 16 Jesuits. Though printed later, this book still belongs to the period in which the primary involvement of the Jesuits with the Chinese classics was the composition of language manuals. It received the *imprimatur* from the vice-provincial Feliciano Pacheco (1622-1687), on 1667, July 31, feast day of St Ignatius. This book is quite unique since the first half was printed in Guangzhou in 1667 and the second part in Goa in 1669.[11]

These two books have common features: literal translation of the Classical text without Chinese commentaries; juxtaposition of Chinese and Latin texts; transliteration of the Chinese characters; and finally, superscript numbers allowing the identification of a Chinese character with a Latin word. Clearly, the book was intended to teach the new missionaries how to understand, read aloud and memorize these texts.

The Guangzhou Conference and the Rites Controversy

During the forced exile in Guangzhou of four years, from 1666 to 1670, of almost all the China missionaries,[12] the Chinese classics came to play a

English translation of the *Daxue* was published in London, based on the *Sapientia Sinica*. See Matt Jenkinson, "Nathanael Vincent and Confucius's 'great learning' in restoration England", in *Notes and Records of the Royal Society*, 60/1 (2006): 35-47.

[11] The names of the revisers as they appear from left to right and from up to down: da Costa, Gouvea, Augery, Georgius, Le Faure, Canevari, Greslon, Couplet, Maia, Brancati, Motel, Rougemont, Pacheco, Ferrari, Gabiani, Herdtrich. Intorcetta had started carving the wood blocks in preparation for the paper printing, but he had to leave in hurry Guangzhou to catch a boat in Macao on August 1668. He had then only 26 wood blocks, or less than half of the book, carved. He may have had the first 26 pages printed on paper. Half-way to Europe, at Goa, he managed having the wood blocks for the second part carved. In 1669, he put together the Goa print with the Guangzhou print, managing to assemble a few books. Inside the book, the Guangzhou print and the Goa print are easily distinguishable because of the different positions of the numbers of the Chinese characters. Also, the Goa print contains more abbreviations. Intorcetta was not fully satisfied with this printed version and made some manuscript corrections on it, starting from 1670, September 17. This document is preserved at the Jesuit Archives in Rome (ARSI, Jap.Sin. III, 3b). See Chan, 477-478.

[12] The missionaries arrived in Guangzhou on March 25th, 1666. Very soon, two Jesuits died: Inácio da Costa and Michel Trigault. A total of twenty-three missionaries were kept under house of arrest at the Jesuit residence in Guangzhou. Metzler gives a list of 16 Jesuits who formerly attended the Guangzhou Conference: Feliciano Pacheco, Pietro Canevari, Francesco Brancati, Jacques Le Faure, Andrea-Giovanni Lubelli, Jean Valat, Stanislao Torrente, Manuel Jorge, Humbert Augery, Claude Motel, Jacques Motel, François de Rougemont, Adrien Greslon, Giovanni-Domenico Gabiani, Christian Herdtrich, Prospero Intorcetta. See Josef Metzler, *Die Synoden in China, Japan und Korea, 1570-1931* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1980), 23. The other 3 Jesuits were: Antonio de Gouvea, Gianfrancesco Ferrari and Philippe Couplet. See Henri Bosmans, "Lettres inédites de François de Rougemont: missionnaire Belge de la Compagnie de Jésus en Chine, au XVIIe siècle," *Analectes pour servir à l'histoire ecclésiastique de la Belgique* (Louvain), 3s. 9 (1913): 18. Besides the Jesuits, there were the Franciscan Antonio de Santa María and three Dominicans: Domingo Navarrete, Domenico Sarpetri and Filippo Leonardi. About the daily life of the missionaries in Guangzhou, see an account by Navarrete, in James Sylvester Cummins, *The Travels and Controversies of Friar Domingo Navarrete*, (Cambridge: Hakluyt Society, 1962), 229-245. John Wills draws on Dutch sources to describe the life

new role. Missionaries discussed the fundamental orientations of their apostolate in China, especially the suitability of adapting some Christian practices to Chinese culture. The exile forced the missionaries to evaluate afresh their eighty years of missionary activities in China. For a better understanding of the debates then, I have to provide some background information on the Rites Controversy.

Under the direction of Valignano, Ricci had developed a method for adapting Christianity to Confucianism as the best means for evangelizing China. He argued that original Confucianism was in no way incompatible with Christianity and that Confucian rituals were not superstitious. Accordingly, a Chinese converted to Catholicism could still continue to perform traditional rites, namely, to his own ancestors, to the emperor and to Confucius. The Jesuits allowed such rites since they considered them purely civil.

However, Niccolò Longobardo (1565-1655), who succeeded Ricci as superior of the Jesuits in Beijing, held opposite views on the matter. Unlike Ricci, Longobardo stressed the difference between the way Confucianism was understood and practiced by common people, and the way it was understood and practiced by the elite: while the elite considered that the true message of Confucius was atheistic and materialistic, common people understood Confucianism as an affirmation of their popular belief in the immortality of the soul and in the existence of spirits. Yet, according to Longobardo, the elite preferred maintaining an ambiguity about their atheistic stance and refrained from directly attacking popular faith.[13] In 1623 or 1624, Longobardo wrote a text in which he presented Confucianism as a materialist and atheistic doctrine. His aim was precisely to expose the hidden atheism of the Confucian elite. Longobardo had the chance to present his argument at a conference held at Jiading in 1627. Though the Visitor André Palmeiro (1569-1635) decided that Ricci's policy was to be continued, he yielded to Longobardo's request, forbidding the use of *Shangdi* and instructing the exclusive use of *Tianzhu* for God.[14] Also, Palmeiro ordered the destruction of all the copies of Longobardo's report, in order to end the

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of the missionaries at that time and their good relationship with the governor Shang Kexi 尚可喜 (1604-1676) and his son Shang Zhixin 尚之信 (-1680), who, in 1674, would engage into a revolt against the Qing. See John E. Wills, "Some Dutch Sources on the Jesuit China Mission," in *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu* 54 (1985): 271.

[13] See Virgile Pinot, *La Chine et la Formation de l'Esprit Philosophique en France (1640-1740)* (Paris: Geuthner, 1932), 312-313.

[14] For the conference of Jiading, see Brockey, 87-88. The interdiction of using *Shangdi* was not effective since it was agreed that the books by Ricci using the name *Shangdi* should not be corrected, because of their prestige with the Chinese. As we shall see, Intorcetta and Couplet were still advocating the use of *Shangdi* as a better choice than *Tianzhu*.

dispute, but as we are going to see below, the report reappeared during the Guangzhou conference.[15]

The coming of Dominican and Franciscan missionaries to China broke again the unanimity and started the Rites Controversy. In the years 1635-1636, only a couple of years after his arrival in China, the Spanish Franciscan Antonio de Santa María Caballero (1602-1669) forbade Chinese Catholics in his area to perform Confucian rites. The controversy saw an escalation and was transported to Europe. In 1645, Pope Innocent X issued a decree condemning the Chinese rites. However, in 1656, following a mission to Rome of Martino Martini (1614-1661), Alexander VII authorized the Chinese rites, without cancelling the previous decree.

With all this in the background, the missionaries in Guangzhou spent a considerable energy disputing the correct interpretation on the Chinese rites. They held a formal meeting, which lasted forty days, from 1667, December 18, to 1668, January 26, a meeting which became known as the "conference of Guangzhou."[16] Among the opponents of the Chinese Rites, there was Antonio de Santa María Caballero, a veteran of the mission with more than thirty years of experience. There was also the Spanish Dominican Domingo Navarrete (1618-1686) who was to launch a systematic attack against the Jesuit interpretation of Confucian classics. The Dominican Domenico Sarpetri (1623-1683) leaned towards the Jesuits.[17] Even inside the Jesuit camp, division appeared: apparently, Antonio de Gouvea (1592-1677) complained to Navarrete that his

[15] *Reposta breve sobre as Controversias do Xamty, Tienxin, Limhoen e outros nomes e termos sinicos*, Peking. This book escaped destruction and was printed in 1701 in Paris by the Paris Foreign Mission Society with the title *Traité sur quelques points de la Religion des Chinois*.

[16] See *Handbook of Christianity in China (635-1800)*, Brill, 2001, 313. Details on this conference can be found in: James Sylvester Cummins, *A Question of Rites, Friar Domingo Navarrete and the Jesuits in China* (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1993). The agreement of 1668 between missionaries, detailed in 42 points, can be found in: Pacheco, *Praxes quadam discussae in pleno eotus 25 patrum statuae et decreta ad servandum inter nos in Sinica Missione uniformitatem*, Guangzhou, ARSI Jap.Sin. 162, 253-256. For a description of this conference and the subsequent controversy by the opponents to the Confucian rites: "De las disputas que tuvimos en la metropili de la provincia de Kuan-Tung, los de las tres Religiones", in Navarrete, *Tratados Historicos* (Madrid, 1676), Tomo II, 190-253; Louis de Cicé, MEP, *Acta Cantoniensia Authentica in quibus praxis Missionariorum Sinensium Societatis Jesu circa ritus Sinenses approbata est communi consensus Patrum Dominicanorum, & Jesuitarum, qui errant in China* (1700). For a Jesuit reply to the Dominicans and Paris Foreign Missionaries: "Historia et disquisitio critica de Caetu Cantoniensi a trium ordinum missionariis, hoc est, Jesuitis, Dominicanis, ac Franciscanis in urbe Kuam Chiam Fu pro Christiana fide captivis celebrato anno 1687 & 1688", in *Monumenta Sinica cum disquisitionibus criticis pro vera Apologia Jesuitarum contra falsam Apologiam Dominicanorum* (1700), 186-389. Also an important document is: Thomas-Ignatius Dunyn-Szpot, *Collectanea historiae sinensis, ab anno 1641 ad an. 1700, ex variis documentis in Archivio Societatis existentibus excerpta: duobus tomis distincta auctore* (1700-1710), ARSI Jap.Sin. 104-5, I-II.

[17] Even before the "conference of Guangzhou," Sarpetri wrote that he supported Ricci's *Tianzhu shiyi*. The words of his first attestation of 1667, May 9, are quoted in the *Sinarum Philosophus* (preface, cix). In the manuscript can also be found a copy of a second attestation, written in Guangzhou and dated August 4, 1668 (vol. 1, 112). There are many evidences proving that before, during and after the conference, Sarpetri sided with the Jesuits. See, Gabriel Daniel, *Recueil de divers ouvrages philosophiques, théologiques, historiques, apologétiques et de critique* (Paris, 1724), tome III, 21-33.

colleagues were making Confucius a prophet.[18] More importantly, Longobardo's report reappeared in Guangzhou and was circulated among the missionaries, giving more weight to the opponents of the Chinese Rites.[19] At the end of the conference, a document in 42 points was voted at the majority of votes, mostly dealing with Christian rituals. Only point N. 41 dealt with the rituals to Confucius, not mentioning their condemnation by Rome in 1645, but only their approval in 1656. This point states that, since there is no sure evidence against rituals to Confucius, they can be tolerated in good faith, so not to close the door of salvation to so many people.

The opponents of the Chinese rites, reduced to a minority, immediately denounced this "agreement." Santa María wrote two letters to Luís da Gama (1610-1672), the Jesuit visitor of the provinces of China and Japan. The first letter was dated 1668, April 9, and the second, 1668, December 9. Meanwhile, in November of the same year, he had a letter addressed to Jesuit Superior General Giovanni Paolo Oliva (1600-1681). In both the second letter to Da Gama and the letter to the Superior General, Santa María developed another tactic: he used the translations made by Intorcetta in his *Sapientia Sinica* in order to attack the teaching of Confucius as superstitious and idolatrous.[20] As became clear then, Intorcetta's translations were not sufficient for conveying the meaning of a Confucian teaching deprived of superstition, as Intorcetta intended. Translations had to be reworked so as to avoid the kind of misreading done by Santa María. As this one had done, Navarette wrote a report, on 1668, March 8, in order to contest the "agreement."[21]

The report of Longobardo as well as the letters of Santa María circulated among the missionaries in Guangzhou. Much later, in 1701 in Paris, the Paris Foreign Mission Society edited and printed Longobardo's report with the title: *Traité sur quelques points de la Religion des Chinois*; as well as the two letters of Santa María, with the title: *Traité sur quelques points importants de la Mission de la Chine*. However, the authors of the *Sinarum Philosophus* clearly knew the texts of Longobardo and Santa María, from the time of the Guangzhou's exile, since they react to them in many instances.

[18] See Cummins, *A Question of Rites*, 248.

[19] Antonio de Santa María obtained an incomplete copy of the treatise from Jean Valat. See Cummins, *The travels and controversies of Friar Domingo Navarrete*, xlv.

[20] Santa Maria, Letter dated November 14, 1668 (ARSI Jap-Sin.162, 231-233); See also *Traité sur quelques points importants de la Mission de la Chine*, 129-138.

[21] See Cummins, *The Travels and Controversies of Friar Domingo Navarrete*, volume 2, 415.

Establishing the Correct Explanation of the Classics

Facing such a challenge, Intorcetta set up a team to work on a new translation of the Confucian classics. The group consisted of one Austrian Jesuit, Christian Herdtrich (1624-1684), and two Flemish, François de Rougemont (1624-1676) and Philippe Couplet (1623-1693).[22] In order to make the translations more authoritative, the Jesuits added copious translations drawn from Chinese commentaries. This way, it could be proven that the translation was not their own invention, but supported by Chinese interpreters. The Jesuits also expanded the range of the translation, including the whole *Four Books*. Clearly what they intended was no longer a primer in Chinese language for missionaries, but a manual introducing future missionaries to a certain reading of Chinese thought. The Confucian classics were called upon to testify to the legitimacy of the Jesuit missionary policy.

During this period, Intorcetta wrote also a general presentation of Chinese thought. In it, Intorcetta explained that his aim "is not so much to pander to the amusement and curiosity of those who live in Europe, but rather for the use of those who sail away from Europe to bring the light of the Gospel to these far lands" (preface, ix). Intorcetta introduced the future missionary to some basic knowledge on the Chinese classics, as well as on Confucianism and Buddhism. Also, Intorcetta devoted a lot of space in introducing the *Yijing*. The presentation of the schools is greatly favorable to ancient Confucianism as a completely rational philosophy, free from the stain of superstition. Through such an introduction, candidate missionaries could enter into the Jesuit reading of the Confucian classics, a reading vital to the missionary enterprise. In order to show that he was not soft on idolatry, Intorcetta depicted Daoism and Buddhism as idolatrous or atheistic. This essay constitutes the first half of what would be the *Sinarum Philosophus*'s preface.

However, just before the Guangzhou conference, Intorcetta had been elected "procurator of the mission" (i.e. someone to represent the mission in formal discussions), to be sent to Rome. He was to obtain special approval for the ordination of native clergy and for the use of liturgy in the Chinese language.[23] Intorcetta sailed from Macao on 1668, September 3. Before he left for Europe, he instructed the Jesuits to continue working on the translations. Also, he expressed the need to write an essay directly

[22] Born in 1622 at Malines, Couplet joined the Jesuits in 1640, left Europe in 1656 and arrived China in 1659. Before the Guangzhou exile, he stayed in Jiangxi, Fujian, Zhejiang and Jiangsu. De Rougemont left for China together with Couplet. He was stationed in Zhejiang and Jiangsu. Herdtrich arrived in 1660 in Macao and went to Shanxi and Henan.

[23] See Albert Chan, "Toward a Chinese Church: the contribution of Philippe Couplet S.J. (1622-1693)", in Jerome Heyndrickx, ed., *Philippe Couplet, S.J. (1623-1693), The Man who Brought China to Europe* (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1990), 66-67.

defending the missionary policy of Ricci, which was to be inserted as a complement to his own preface. Besides a presentation of Chinese philosophy and of the classical texts, there was a need to argue how ancient China could have been preserved from idolatry. The audience was also to be different, no longer the future candidates to the China mission, but the intellectuals and Church officials in Europe. This apologetic essay constitutes what is today the second part of the preface.[24]

In 1670, Gouvea, who became at that time vice-provincial and from early on had some reservations on the translation project, instructed the three Jesuits to stop their translation of the *Mencius*, the longest among the *Four Books*, because it may affect their health.[25] At that time, Gouvea may have anticipated that the Jesuits could quickly recover their freedom and should therefore be sent to work for the Christian communities, which had been deprived of ministers for already five years. In 1670, Francesco Brancati (1607-1671), Adrien Greslon (1618-1696), and Le Faure made a thorough revision, checking the translation against the Chinese classical text and its commentaries. The three other censors, Pietro Canevari (1596-1675), Gianfrancesco Ferrari (1609-1671), and Pacheco, only checked "if there was nothing against faith and morals."[26] Gouvea gave the final approval. Then, De Rougemont and Herdtrich worked in transcribing all the content.

In mid-1670, a first set of documents was dispatched to Rome. This included the first part of the preface written by Intorcetta, the translations with commentaries of the *Daxue*, *Zhongyong* and the first *juan* of the Lunyu. These documents constitute what is today the first volume of the manuscript at the National Library of France.[27] In November of 1670, the second part of the translation, that is, *juan* 2 to 9 of the *Lunyu*, with Couplet's *Chronological Table* (*Tabula chronologica monarchiae*), was sent to Intorcetta in Rome.[28] The complement to the preface was also

[24] Intorcetta's intent was confirmed by the unfolding of the events, since by the end of 1668, the Jesuit visitor Luis da Gama was partially convinced by Santa Maria and Navarette and he was asking to modify some points of the agreement. See Letter of Rougemont to the Jesuit General, dated 18.12.1668, from Guangzhou, ARSI Jap.Sin. 162, 249-250.

[25] "Lettres inédites de François de Rougemont", 24 (Rougemont to Intorcetta, 1670, November 5). According to Bernard-Maître, the translation of the *Mencius* was dropped because of lack of time (131).

[26] See Letter of Rougemont to Intorcetta (1670, November 5), Bosmans, "Lettres inédites de François de Rougemont," 24. Jacques Le Faure, as vice-provincial of China between 1661 and 1666, had previously authorized the publication of *Sapientia Sinica* in 1662.

[27] Bibliothèque Nationale de France (B.N. Latin 6277, vol. 1).

[28] Rougemont wrote to Intorcetta, on 1670, November 5, that their team had completed and was forwarding the whole *Lunyu* translation, the *Chronological Table* and the *Declaratio proemialis*. See "Lettres inédites de François de Rougemont," 24. The original: ARSI Jap.Sin. 162, 304-305. I thank Paul Rule for indicating to me this letter. The *Chronological Table* was initially called: *Prolegomena ad Annales Sinicos, necnon Synopsim Chronologicam Monarchiae Sinicae*. They received the approval from the Provincial, Pacheco, on 1668, August 20. See ARSI, Jap.Sin. IV, 6 C, f. 81.

sent.[29] As a safety precaution, a copy of these documents was sent to Godefridus Henschens (1601-1681), a Bollandist Jesuit in Antwerp. This proved quite smart since, as we shall see below, the documents dispatched to Rome never arrived. In the accompanying letter to Intorcetta, De Rougemont suggested the work be published, including the Chinese characters, with the famous publisher, Joannes Blaeu in Amsterdam.[30] He also mentioned Herdtrich's suggestion to dedicate the work to a powerful European ruler, like the doge of Venice, the queen Christina of Sweden or the king of Poland, Casimir.

In the last stage in Guangzhou, De Rougemont and Jean-Baptiste Maldonado (1634-1699) worked on copying the Chinese characters of the three classics, since it was intended to have them printed in Europe. In December of 1671, the copying process was finished and the last set of documents left China.[31] Meanwhile, in January of 1671, the Jesuits in Guangzhou were finally allowed to come back to their churches.[32] Our sinological team was disbanded and returned to pastoral work. Couplet and Rougemont left Guangzhou in September of 1671,[33] and Herdtrich in 1672.

Confucian Classics presenting the case of Jesuit policy to Europe

Intorcetta had arrived in Rome in the spring of 1671, and remained there until 1672, in the *Collegium Romanum* to fulfill his mission. However, he did not succeed in obtaining the privileges he was hoping for the China

[29] There is some doubt about the authorship of this complement. In his letter of November 1670, De Rougemont mentioned "his" preface. Yet, there is a note addressed to Intorcetta on the manuscript which is signed by Couplet, suggesting that he was the author or at least the one finally responsible with the content (manuscript, 257r.): "R.P. Prosper Intorcetta. In alteram proemialis declarationis partem quam desiderabat continet disputationem, quâ contra ea quà missa sunt Romam a R.P.f. Ant. de S.M. et R.P. Domin. Navarette, defenditur R.P. Matthaeus Riccius et eiusdem liber Romae olim approbatus. Si R.V. judicaverit profigendam esse operi Confuciano vel totam, vel summam ipsius in modum compendii, tum eam ante omnia exhibeat ad R.P.N. Generali, ne videmur alio quin immutare quidquam velle (quod nequaquam praetendimus) circa vel praeter ordinationem P. Visitatoris, quatenus de Xamti hic quoque agimus et agere necesse fuit. Philippus Couplet." Also, in the *Sinarum Philosophus*, Couplet signed the whole preface with his name (Preface, cxii). Also, there are many internal evidences suggesting that Couplet is the author of this complement, such as the frequent mention of the Chinese chronology on which Couplet was working. When De Rougemont talked about "his" preface, this means most probably that he copied it in one or two copies.

[30] Bosmans, "Lettres inédites de François de Rougemont," 25. One year earlier, in a letter addressed to Balthasar Bort, dated 1669, November 6, Couplet expressed his wish to have the book published with Blaeu in Amsterdam. See John E. Wills, "Some Dutch sources on the Jesuit China Mission," *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu*, iul-dec. (1985): 271.

[31] Bosmans, "Lettres inédites de François de Rougemont," 46; Bosmans, "Correspondance de Jean-Baptiste Maldonado de Mons," in *Analectes pour servir à l'histoire ecclésiastique de la Belgique* (Louvain), 3s.6. (1910): 79.

[32] Edict of the emperor Kangxi, dated 28 January 1671. Though the missionaries were allowed to return to their churches, yet new converts were forbidden to join.

[33] Letter of Couplet and Rougemont, from Guangzhou, to the Provincial of Flanders-Belgium, dated 1671, September 7, reproduced in : CF Waldack, "Le Père Philippe Couplet, Malinois, S.J., Missionnaire en Chine (1623-1694)," in *Analectes pour servir à l'histoire ecclésiastique de la Belgique* 9 (1872) : 26.

Mission. In the context of this setback, he did not find much support for having his *Politico-Moral Learning of the Chinese* printed in Europe. The Guangzhou-Goa edition remained very confidential. Yet, unexpectedly, the work was published in 1672 in Paris, without the Chinese characters, in the fourth volume of *Relations de divers voyages curieux*, edited by Melchisédech Thévenot (1620-1692). Thévenot probably took the initiative of publishing the text by himself, without informing Intorcetta.[34] Not counting the few lines of the *Daxue* translated by Ruggieri and published in 1593, this work can truly be considered the first translation in Europe of a Confucian Classic.

However, the publication of the Confucian texts as a whole did not progress as planned. Intorcetta found in Rome the translations of the *Daxue*, the *Zhongyong* and the first *juan* of the *Lunyu*. Yet, the remaining nine *juan* of the *Lunyu* did not reach Rome. According to a letter to Henschens, written in Rome in June of 1672, just before his return to China, Intorcetta learnt that this one was in possession of the remaining parts of the *Lunyu* and asked him to collect the different manuscripts and publish the whole work in Holland.[35] At that point, the famous Jesuit scholar Athanasius Kircher (1602-1680) became involved. Under his advice, Intorcetta confirmed the choice of Holland for the publication, but, instead of Blaeu, he preferred Jansen (Jansonius) as the publishing house, since this one was already publishing Kircher's works.

However, after Intorcetta's departure from Rome, Kircher decided to shift all the texts from Holland to Rome. He asked Henschens to transfer to Rome the missing nine *juan* of the *Lunyu*.[36] Kircher's reason for this shift is unclear. Was it because of the war situation in Holland at that time? Or was it that Kircher himself wanted to supervise the publication? Yet Kircher was at that time becoming too old and the translations stayed in their boxes in Rome for a decade, at the *Collegium Romanum*. With the death of Athanasius Kircher in 1680, the translation project seemed

[34] Prospero Intorcetta, *Sinarum Scientia Politico-Moralis*, in Melchisédech Thévenot, ed., *Relations de divers voyages curieux*, edited by, Paris, 1672, tome IV: page title, 1; "ad lectorem," 3-4; "Scientiae Sinicae Liber inter Confucii libros secundus," 5-13; "Confucii Vita," 14-18; "Avis", 18; "La Vie de Confucius," 19-23; "Version de quelques endroits du second livre Confucius," 24-25). Thévenot got a copy of the Florentine virtuoso Lorenzo Magalotti. See Nicholas Dew, *Orientalism in Louis XIV's France* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 219.

[35] See Noël Golvers, letter of Intorcetta of June 2, 1672, to Henschens, reproduced in: Noël Golvers, "An unobserved letter of Prospero Intorcetta, S.J., to Godefridus Henschens, S.J., and the printing of the Jesuit translations of the Confucian Classics (Rome - Antwerp, 2 June 1672)", in: D. Sacré & J. Papy, eds., *Syntagmatia. Essays on Neo-Latin Literature in Honour of Monique Mund-Dopchie and Gilbert Tournoy* (Leuven: University Press Leuven, 2009), 679-698. Intorcetta's letter can be found in Biblioteca Nazionale Vittorio Emanuele II, Rome, Autografo. 25.68. The second volume of the Manuscript, now at the National Library of France, arrived to Antwerp and was entrusted "ad manus Patris Godefridi Heschenii societatis Iesu Antverpiae." See Manuscript, 1rst volume, 369.v.

[36] Letter of A. Kircher to Henschens, Roma, July 2, 1675; Brussels, Museum Bollandianum, ms. 64, f° 141; edited by Dom Pitra, *Etudes sur la collection des Actes des Saints par les RR. PP. Jésuites Bollandistes* (Paris: Lecoffre, 1850), 202 - 203.

completely forgotten in Europe.[37] In China, missionaries were all too busy. Intorcetta came back to China in 1674 and was made visitor, then vice-provincial. The other Jesuits had pastoral duties, like Couplet working in the Songjiang area.[38] At that time, the translation project was at its lowest ebb, both in China and in Europe.

Fortunately, in 1680, Couplet was chosen to be sent to Europe as procurator of the mission. A Chinese named Shen Fuzong (1657-1692) came along with him. They left Macao on 1681, December 5, and finally arrived in Holland on 1683, October 8.[39] Couplet was busy in Holland with his mission of procurator: explaining the recent developments in the China mission, recruiting new personal for the mission, buying books, etc. In 1683, while in Holland, he completed the *Chronological Table* that he had carried with him.[40] Also, he also started revising his complement to the preface.[41]

Then, new developments called him in Paris. In the early eighties, France was now taking an important role in the political, economical and cultural exchanges with the Far East. Louis XIV was preparing an embassy to Siam. As early as 1680, Colbert started discussing with the Jesuits the project of a mission to China.[42] On 1684, September 25, thanks to the king's confessor François de La Chaise (1624-1709), Couplet met Louis XIV and soon after, it was decided to send a Jesuit mission to China.[43] Louis XIV could not send missionaries as such, since Rome would have considered this to trespass its prerogative. Therefore, the six French Jesuits were sent as members of a scientific mission and became known as "mathematicians of the King." Still, all the Jesuits who left for China were adamant that the true intention of the monarch was the conversion of China to Christianity. Without denying his pious intention,

[37] See Noël Golvers, "The Development of the *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* Reconsidered in the Light of New Material", in *Western learning and Christianity in China: the contribution and impact of Johann Adam Schall von Bell*, Monumenta Serica, Monograph Series XXXV, (Sankt Augustin : Steyler Verlag, 1998) vol. 2, 1150.

[38] Yet, Couplet did not discard all intellectual activity: according to Cordier, he published : *Tianzhu shengjiao yongcheng lidan* 天主生救永保禮單 (*Calendrier perpétuel pour les fêtes de tous les saints et de tous les martyrs*), *Baiwenda* 百問答 (*Réponse à cent demandes sur la religion chrétienne*), *Simozhenlun* 四末真論 (*La vraie doctrine des quatre fins de l'homme*); Cordier, 411.

[39] See Wills, 274; Waldack, 29. Shen Fuzong became a celebrity, visiting seven European countries, and he was received by one Pope and two monarchs.

[40] The list of the emperors stops at the year 1683 as the title of the table shows: "Tabula Chronologica Monarchiae Sinicae Juxta Cyclos Annorum LX, Ab anno post Christum primo usque ad annum praesentis saeculi 1683."

[41] We have a textual evidence of this within the text since Couplet mentions that he writes in "the year 1683, which is the 43rd of the Tartar dynasty" (preface, lxxv)..

[42] Virgile Pinot, *La Chine et la Formation de l'Esprit Philosophique en France (1640-1740)*, (Paris: Geuthner, 1932), 41.

[43] Pinot, 44.

Louis XIV was pursing his project of an absolute monarchy in which the Gallican church was an important element of influence and prestige.[44]

Meanwhile, on December 1684, Couplet came to Rome to fulfill his main mission. As Intorcetta a decade earlier, he failed to obtain from the *Propaganda Fidei* some privileges for the Chinese Church. During his stay in Rome, Couplet found the draft of the translations on which he had worked in Guangzhou fifteen years before, still sleeping inside dusty boxes in the *Kircher Museum (Musaeum Kircherianum)*. Couplet recommenced the publication project. During his stay in Rome in 1685, he came into contact with the librarian of the *Bibliotheca Vaticana*, Emmanuel Schelstrate (1649-1692) and had discussions with him about the publication of the manuscript.

The final edition of the text in Paris in 1686-1687

An event occurred, changing the publication from Rome to Paris. In December 1684, Melchisédech Thévenot obtained the charge of Librarian of the Bibliothèque Royale. Having published the translation of the *Zhongyong* by Intorcetta a few years earlier, Thévenot wanted to publish the remaining translations. He talked to Louis XIV about having the Confucian texts published in Paris. This one agreed and the diplomatic mission was entrusted to the embassador to the Holy See, the Cardinal d'Estrées (1628-1714).[45] At that time, Louis XIV was getting ready to proclaim the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, asserting his role of promoter and defender of Catholicism in Europe (the official revocation was promulgated on October 1, 1685). In this context, it was difficult for Rome to resist an official request from the French court. Since there was no guarantee of a swift publication there and since Louis XIV was now ready to finance and support the publication, Couplet may have seen this as a good opportunity.

In August of 1685, Couplet started transferring the manuscripts, and arrived in Paris himself in March 1686.[46] From then until May 1687, he worked at the Bibliothèque Royale. He received five thousand *livres* in "gratifications" for his work.[47] First, he revised Intorcetta's preface and restructured it into ten sections, instead of the original 98 paragraphs.[48]

[44] The French Jesuits left on March 3, 1685 and arrived, through Siam, to China on July 23, 1687. The names are Jean-François Gerbillon (1654-1707), Joachim Bouvet (1656-1730), Jean Fontaney (1643-1710), Claude Visdelou (1656-1737), Louis Le Comte (1655-1728), Guy Tachard (1648-1712). This last one did not go to China but stayed in Siam.

[45] See Letter of Emanuel Schelstrate to Christian Mentzel, dated 20.10.1685, in Lucien Ceijssens, *La correspondence d'Emanuel Schelstrate, préfet de la Bibliothèque Vaticane (1683-1692)* (Bruxelles-Rome : Institut historique belge de Rome, 1949), 182-183.

[46] See Chan, "Toward a Chinese Church: the contribution of Philippe Couplet S.J. (1622-1693)," 83.

[47] Dew, 225.

[48] Jean Aymon, Virgile Pinot and Noël Golvers have consulted the manuscript of the *Sinarum*

He especially moved a digression presenting Daoism from the *Zhongyong* part into the preface. This way, Couplet achieved a more systematic presentation of Chinese thought, including ancient Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism and Neo-Confucianism.[49] Second, he edited the complement to the preface, originally written by him in Guangzhou in 1671, and slightly revised by him in Holland in 1683. He structured this part in twelve chapters and a conclusion, instead of the 112 original paragraphs. He deleted and reworded many sentences.[50] Third, he revised very slightly the translation of the *Daxue* and its commentaries, deleting only the transliterations of the Chinese text. Fourth, he heavily revised the translation of the *Zhongyong*, deleting some 150 pages of "digressions." Couplet moved a small part of these digressions to the preface, especially the presentation of Daoism. In the annex of this present volume, a chart can be found indicating the parts deleted by Couplet. Fifth, he deleted many translated comments from the *Lunyu*, while keeping the translation of the classical text unchanged.[51] Sixth, he slightly edited Confucius's biography, written by Intorcetta, and already published in 1672. Seventh, he added the *Chronological Table* written by him in 1668 in Guangzhou and completed in 1683 in Holland.[52] Finally, he prefaced the book for Louis XIV as an expression of gratitude for the royal support toward the Jesuit mission in China. Indeed, in his letter addressed to the "most-Christian king," Couplet lavishly complimented him for this "victory" of true faith over heresy, and expressed the hope that he could help in the conversion of China.

Philosophus. Pinot mentioned in his study of 1932 that the corrections on the manuscript were not by Couplet. In 1934, Alexandre Brou, in order to review Pinot's study, examined the manuscript and he deducted that the corrections could only have been brought by someone very familiar with the content of the texts. Brou, correcting Pinot, affirmed that Couplet was the final editor (Alexandre Brou, " Les jésuites sinologues de Pékin et leurs éditeurs de Paris ", *Revue d'histoire des missions*, Paris, t. 11 (1934) : 555-566). Noël Golvers has compared the handwriting of the final editor with some letters by Couplet, concluding that "the addenda and corrigenda and the typographical instructions are all by Couplet." See Golvers, "The Development of the *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* Reconsidered in the Light of New Material", in *Western learning and Christianity in China: the contribution and impact of Johann Adam Schall von Bell*, Monumenta Serica, Monograph Series XXXV (Sankt Augustin : Steyler Verlag, 1998) vol. 2, 1159).

[49] This first part of the preface still bears a different pagination from the rest of the manuscript, running from I recto to XXXV verso.

[50] Some historical facts mentioned in the published work are posterior to the initial draft of 1671, for example the granting of the imperial inscription *Jingtian* in 1672 (preface, cxii; addition on the manuscript, 257r.). While in Paris, Couplet added on the manuscript some precise quotations from books which were not available in China, for example a quote from Cajetan (preface, lxxiv; manuscript, 15). He mentioned also a book on Japan kept at the Bibliothèque Royale (preface, lxxi; manuscript, 14).

[51] Only on some occasions, Couplet retranslated an original passage, such as 6.7, or 6.16. Sometimes, he would change a word, for example in 2.5, "to sacrifice" is changed for "to make oblation" (*Sinarum Philosophus*, 11; manuscript, vol.1, 353).

[52] The full title is: *Tabula Chronologica Monarchiae Sinicae Juxta cyclos annorum LX*. Since the *Tabula* has different pagination inside the *Sinarum Philosophus* and a different date of publication (1686), it seems that Couplet originally intended to have the *Tabula* printed independently from the *Sinarum Philosophus*.

Before the publication, Couplet got the usual approval from the Jesuit superiors. On 1687, April 29, he also obtained permission from the royal censor Louis Cousin (1627-1707).[53] The royal support is obvious in the published book: in the title page, the book is said to belong to the Royal Library (*Bibliotheca Regia*) and to be printed "under the auspices of Louis the Great" (*jussu Ludovici Magni*), "with the privilege of the king" (*cum privilegio Regis*). The insignia of the monarch, in the front page as well as in different parts of the book, give to the *Sinarum Philosophus* a strong political authority.

The publisher was Daniel Horthemels, rue St Jacques.[54] It seems that there were a massive number of copies printed, since the *Sinarum Philosophus* can be found today in many libraries all over the world. The 1687 edition was apparently enough to cover the needs, since there was no reprint after. The printing was achieved on May 28, 1687, by Andrea Cramoisy in Paris. The work was quite bulky, with 412 pages plus illustrations.

Thus, in 1687, after a lengthy preparation of about one hundred years, the landmark publication came out: *Confucius, the Philosopher of China, or the Chinese Learning* (*Confucius Sinarum Philosophus, sive Scientia Sinensis*). The change of the title by Couplet is significant. While Intorcetta had always mentioned the work as the *Chinese Learning (Scientia Sinica)*, Couplet decided to put the emphasis on Confucius the man. Couplet was very much aware of the collective dimension of the work and, on the cover, the following names are listed: *Prospero Intorcetta, Christian Herdtrich, François de Rougemont and Philippe Couplet*. Also, while Intorcetta's preface in the manuscript uses a singular first person pronoun all the way through, Couplet changed it for a collective first person.[55]

After the publication, Couplet spent some time touring Europe in search of financial and political assistance for the China Mission.[56]

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[53] The last page of the first volume of the Manuscript mentions this, with the approval of Cousin and the date.

[54] In the last pages of the *Sinarum Philosophus*, there is a juridical notification by which the publisher Gérard Garnier, who had a royal privilege on books about the Orient gave permission to Daniel Horthemels for publishing the *Sinarum Philosophus*. The address of Daniel Horthemels in Paris is given, via Citharea. Thèvenot arranged the choice of the publisher since he had a long-term contract with Horthemels. See Dew, 230.

[55] Henri Cordier had quite an unfair judgment on Couplet's contribution, stating that he "does not deserve at all to be placed at the first rank of sinologists; after all, his was only an intermediary, I should even say, a peddler of books." In fact, Couplet made an important contribution, first in Guangzhou, by translating the commentaries, and second in Europe, by editing the whole. Without his determination and scholarship, the book would have most probably stayed in boxes. Through his careful editing, the work gained a lot of consistency. Henri Cordier, "Notes pour servir à l'histoire des études chinoises en Europe jusqu'à l'époque de Fourmont l'aîné," in *Nouveaux mélanges orientaux, Publications de l'école des langues orientales vivantes*, Paris, XIX (1886): 411.

[56] Couplet also published in 1688 the biography of Candida Xu: *Histoire d'une Dame Chrétienne de la Chine* (Paris: Michallet, 1688).

Finally he could embark in March of 1692, but, on 1693, May 15, near Goa, during a bad weather, he died on board, crushed by a crate.[57] The man who had brought Confucius to the West never realized his dream "to see again [his] most desired China" (preface, vii).

2 Christian Allegory Versus Rational Reading

Before the Conference of Guangzhou, the controversy between the Jesuits and the friars was mostly concerned with question of practices and their interpretation. However, at this level, missionaries had difficulty finding a common ground. First, as local practices in China differed greatly from one province to another, missionaries could not easily grasp a common standard. Also, who had the correct interpretation about the Chinese rites? The common people or the elite? The Chinese newly converted to Catholicism or the non-Catholic Chinese? After the first interdiction of the rites by Rome in 1645, the Jesuits claimed that Pope Innocent X was misinformed. In 1656, the Italian Jesuit Martino Martini obtained from Pope Alexander VII a positive judgment, but he stopped short of cancelling the first decree. In order to find a common ground for deciding on the Chinese rites, it was necessary to look at their intellectual foundations and their canonical use by the Chinese. In short, there was the need to recourse to philosophy and to the Confucian classics. The shift of focus from practices to the classics occurred during the stay of the missionaries in Guangzhou.

Navarrete had read Intorcetta's *Chinese Wisdom* (1662) and felt unsatisfied with it. During his time in Guangzhou, he could directly express his critics to Intorcetta. Also, according to Navarrete, some "Jesuits in North China" did not approve Intorcetta's translation, and Gouvea, one of the five revisers of *Chinese Wisdom*, was forced by his superiors to approve it against his will.[58] Still according to Navarrete, Jacques Le Faure would have told him that he had given the final authorization of *Chinese Wisdom*, as vice-provincial, but without any knowledge of its content. If he had known, he would not have authorized the publication. Navarrete goes even further, suggesting that Intorcetta's interpretations diverted from "the ancient missionaries, as well as modern, of the same company."[59]

[57] For the date of death, see Chan, "Toward a Chinese Church: the contribution of Philippe Couplet S.J. (1622-1693)," 85. For the details of death, see Cordier, 414.

[58] Santa Maria reports also that Gouvea held that "from the Chinese books, it can be seen that the Chinese never knew nothing but a first material principle called *taiji* or *li*" (*Traité sur quelques points importants de la Mission de la Chine*, 76).

[59] Domingo Navarrete, *Tratados historicos, politicos, ethicos y religiosos de la monarchia de China* (Madrid, 1676), 132-133.

Though the allegations of Navarrete have to be taken very carefully, we can find a letter of Jacques Le Faure in which he complained about the process of revision of the translations by Intorcetta.[60] Therefore, we cannot doubt that some divergence existed among the Jesuits on the interpretation and translation of the Confucian classics. Gouvea and Le Faure raised similar concerns as the ones Longobardo had expressed in his opposition to the use of *Shangdi* at the Jiading Conference. Da Gama, the visitor, made things more confused since he did not fully support the agreement of January 1668, but instead required a modification on two points concerning the access to Eucharistic communion. This modification was signed by fifteen missionaries, including Navarrete.[61] This affair stirred up some tension between the visitor and the Jesuit leadership in Guangzhou.[62] Probably, it strengthened the resolution of Navarette to fight against the agreement.

Navarrete started investigating the classics. He complained that Intorcetta had refused to show him the translation of his *Zhongyong* that he was editing at that time.[63] Navarrete therefore read the Confucian texts by himself and started to develop his own line of interpretation. He held that the "superstition" was not only present in the popular practice, but already rooted in the classics. Therefore, he opposed any attempt made by Intorcetta and others in canonizing the Confucian classics. He was suspicious of any idealization of China that would conceal the superstitious elements of the culture and thereby give an erroneous picture of China. Since his main target was Confucius itself, Navarrete did not bother attacking Neo-Confucianism. By targeting Confucius himself, Navarrete would prove Intorcetta's interpretation wrong and he would destroy any attempt in differentiating the purity of an original Confucianism from the decay of Neo-Confucianism.[64]

In his *Tratados historicos, politicos, ethicos y religiosos de la monarchia de China* (1676), Navarrete attempted to present an overall view of Chinese culture and society. In order to fight against the wrong conceptions by the Chinese, he advocated the study of their books.[65] More specifically, he considered pagan ethics, either Greek or Chinese, to be inferior to Christian ethics: "The ethics of the ancient philosophers as

[60] See Letter of Le Faure to Father General Paulo Oliva, dated 26.10.1668, ARSI Jap.Sin.162, 224.
[61] See Document dated 10.12.1668, ARSI Jap.Sin. 162, 262.
[62] See Letter of Canevari to the Jesuit General, dated 22.11.1668, from Guangzhou, ARSI Jap.Sin. 162, 235-236; Letter of Pacheco to the Jesuit General, from Guangzhou, ARSI Jap.Sin. 162, 237-238; Letter of Luis da Gama to the Jesuit General, dated 10.12.1668, from Macao, 239-240.
[63] *Tratados*, 133. For a brief introduction to this work, See Robert Richmond Ellis, "The Middle Kingdom through Spanish Eyes: Depictions of China in the Writings of Juan González de Mendoza and Domingo Fernández Navarrete", in *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 83 (2006), 469-483.
[64] However, would Navarrete had a better knowledge of the Confucian hermeneutical tradition, he could have easily dismissed Intorcetta's translation as imbued with Neo-Confucianism.
[65] *Tratados*, 173.

well as of the Chinese is very imperfect and insufficient; their writers were not competent in this science."[66] In order to prove this point, Navarrete translated sentences and paragraphs of the original text of the *Four Books*. He accompanied his translation by comments made up of quotes from Western writers. Sometimes the quotes are drawn from Ancient Greece or Rome (Virgil, Livy), but most of the time they come from the Bible and Christian authors, such as the Fathers of the Church (Origen, Chrysostom, Augustine), and Scholastic theologians (Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, Cajetan). Through this comparative method of interpretation between Chinese and Western classics, Navarrete suggested many commonalities.[67] But his ultimate aim was not so much to praise Confucian classics as compatible with Christianity, but to show that what they said was already said in the West, that the Chinese classics did not bring anything new, and that their doctrine was incomplete compared to Christian theology.[68]

As an illustration, here is a sample of Navarrete's translation of the first verse of the *Daxue*, immediately followed by a comment, quite close to the original meaning:

> In the first book, entitled the *Great Learning*, Confucius says: "O wisdom; the wisdom of the great people consists in enlightening the inner powers, in renovating people through good example and admonitions, and in following in everything the rule of reason." This means that speculation is not enough for human perfection, but should be joined to practice, and that virtue should manifest itself in the works. He wants also to say, as we can gather from his intention and from the context: the one who has responsibility for others should first examine and deal with his own business and then about other's.[69]

After his translation and comment, Navarrete engaged himself in comparing the Chinese text with Western texts:

> On this matter, comes *Matthew* 5: "You are the salt; you are the light." Cajetan said: "Salt because of the life and the light because of the teaching." This is the primary Sacred and Good, for oneself and then for the others. Saint Paul says in Timothy chapter 4: "Pay attention to yourself, and to your teaching." [*I Tim. 4.16*]. About *John* 5.5, Saint Bernard had commented: "He was the burning and shining lamp. John was also burning in himself and he has illuminated us." Saint Ephrem

[66] *Tratados*, 129.
[67] The Dominican Juan Cobo (1546-1592) had already used the same method in Philippines.
[68] *Tratados*, 132.
[69] *Tratados*, 133-134.

> the Syrian has written a treatise about "*Pay attention to yourself*" *(Attende tibi ipsi [Deuteronomy 15.9])* which is very good on this matter. Confucius's message draws towards this, if the objective of his doctrine was what it was to be.

Therefore, for one sentence drawn from a Chinese Classic, Navarrete is able to compare with similar quotes from Western classics. The mere accumulation of Western quotes does not serve to enhance the bearing of the Chinese text, but on the contrary to show that it is purely superfluous, since people have at their disposal the authority of the Western Scriptures, saints and theologians. Also, Navarrete suggests here that the inner reason advocated by Confucius is deficient, since it is cut from its divine origin and finality. Unlike the enigmatic teaching of Confucius, for which so many different interpretations can be found, the teaching of the Gospel is crystal clear.

In another passage, Navarrete depreciates the power of reason and philosophy, quoting Origen of Alexandria saying: "It is very rare for a great philosopher to be a good philosopher."[70] Indeed, by holding a strong opposition between philosophy and theology, Navarrete's position is more Augustinian than Dominican: only a supernatural reason coming from God is powerful enough to convince people. Navarrete sees Confucius as a philosopher who has nothing to say about God, or as he says: Confucius "is a pure atheist."[71]

For Navarrete, the practical consequences are indeed very clear. Instead of studying Confucian classics, missionaries would do better proposing the complete message of Christianity to the Chinese people. Also, for the Chinese Catholics, Chinese rites are good for nothing, since everything is already given through the sacramental practice of the Catholic Church. In fact, while Navarrete deals with the Confucian classics, he remains attached to the traditional Christian hermeneutics, the allegorical reading. He is unable to read the text for itself, but always as a sign of another reality, which is for him the Christian revelation.

On the contrary, the Jesuits developed a very rationalistic reading, paying a great deal of attention to the text itself. Probably the attack from Navarrete forced Intorcetta to refine his way of reading and translating the Confucian texts. Because any translation of a Confucian Classic needs to rely on the interpretation by later commentators, it was necessary not only to translate the original text, but also to translate the comments by authoritative commentators. In order to impose upon the European audience an authoritative translation, it was also necessary to provide the translation with an important academic apparatus of philological and

[70] *Tratados*, 129
[71] *Tratados*, 132

historical notes and with a detailed chronology. Only then, the Jesuits could avoid being accused of presenting their own brand of Confucianism, but instead could be seen as presenting the pure doctrine coming out of the mouth of Confucius. Clearly, the Jesuits had to engage themselves into a work of a complete different magnitude than the previous language manuals. We can see the *Sinarum Philosophus* as the most serious attempt done by the Jesuits in legitimizing Confucianism: here, they do not discuss local practices which could be interpreted in so many different ways, but they offer the canonical texts of Confucianism and present its orthodox teaching. For the first time, European readers could go beyond the contradictory explanations of the missionaries and judge by themselves how Confucianism understands itself.

We can refer here to the condemnation of the Chinese Rites by Charles Maigrot (1652-1730). Though this condemnation was issued in China on March 1693, and therefore after the publication of the *Sinarum Philosophus*, its seven points give a clear idea of the disputed issues: (1) exclusive use of the term "the Lord of Heaven" *Tianzhu* to mean God, excluding "heaven" (*Tian*) or "Celestial Emperor" (*Shangdi*); (2) interdiction to hang on the churches the inscription given by Kangxi "to serve Heaven" (*Jingtian*); (3) cancellation of the papal authorizations of 1656 and 1669; (4) rites given to Confucius deemed as superstitious; (5) suppression on the dead scrolls of the words "ancestral tablet" (*shenwei*), or "spirit tablet" (*lingwei*)*;* (6) condemnation of the following affirmations: (a) the philosophy of the Chinese has nothing contrary to Christianity; (b) *taiji* has been used in ancient times to talk about God, first cause of all things; (b) the cult given to Confucius is more political than religious; (d) the *Yijing* is an excellent book on physics and morality; (7) warning to the missionaries not to teach atheism and superstitions contained in the Chinese classics.[72]

The last point mentions clearly that Chinese classics are stained with superstitions and atheism. The *Sinarum Philosophus* was precisely intended as a tool to prove the contrary, presenting a rational version of the Confucian classics. In France, the Rites Controversy turned more and more into a political fight between allies and adversaries of the Jesuits: on one side there was Mme de Maintenon, Bossuet, the archbishop of Paris Louis-Antoine de Noailles (1651-1729), the archbishop of Reims Charles-Maurice Le Tellier (1642-1710), the Jansenists and the Paris Foreign Missions; in the opposite camp was La Chaise, cardinal de Bouillon (1643-1715), and the powerful Jesuit network. On 1700, October 18, the Jesuit side lost the battle, with the Sorbonne condemning

[72] Isabelle Landry-Deron, *La Preuve par la Chine, La description de J.-B. Du Halde, jésuite, 1735* (Paris : Edition des Hautes Etudes en Science Sociales, 2002), 85-86.

five propositions found in three books by the Jesuits on China.[73] The third proposition of the "censure" clearly rejected any superiority or excellence in Chinese culture, using strong words such as "impious" and "heretical":

> The doctrine contained in these propositions, i.e., that China has preserved for more than two thousand years a purity of morals, holiness of mores, faith, internal and external devotion to God, a clergy, sacrifices, saints and people inspired by God, miracles, a religious spirit, the purest charity which is the perfection and feature of Religion, and if I dare to say (as adds the author), the Spirit of God. This doctrine is false, temerarious, scandalous, impious, contrary to God's word and heretical. It overturns Christian faith and Religion, makes useless the effect of the Passion and Cross of Jesus-Christ.[74]

Clearly, those condemnations were not only aimed at practices, but also at the cultural models and values contained in the Chinese classics. In their fight against their opponents, Jesuits tried to get the support from Louis XIV. We have mentioned above two reasons for the transfer of the publication of the *Sinarum Philosophus* from Rome to Paris: first, the diplomatic ambition of Louis XIV in the Far East, and second, the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, which made Louis XIV the political champion of Catholicism in Europe. This second reason was tactical in the context of the Rites Controversy. This appears clearly in Couplet's letter to the king. Besides the eulogia of the person of the king, as the wisest and the most virtuous ruler who had ever existed, Couplet stressed above all the strict orthodoxy of Louis XIV. Couplet strives to show in his letter that Louis XIV and the Jesuits were all engaged in the same fight against heresy, both in Europe and in China. By doing this, Couplet and the Jesuits attempted to undercut the accusations of being too soft with unorthodox teachings in China.

The *Sinarum Philosophus* was therefore designed to be an important tool for convincing Church leaders, political leaders and intellectuals that Confucianism contained nothing contrary to true faith. Jesuits finally failed in obtaining approval for the Chinese rites. In 1704, the rites were condemned by Clement XI (1649-1721), but he fell short of calling them superstitious. A papal legate, Charles Maillard de Tournon (1668-1710),

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[73] The three books being censored are two books by Louis Le Comte (1655-1728) : *Les Nouveaux Mémoires sur l'Estat present de la Chine* (1696), *Lettre à Mgr le Duc de Maine sur les Cérémonies de la Chine* (1700); and one book by Charles Le Gobien (1653-1708) : *Histoire de l'Edit de l'Empereur de la Chine en faveur de la Religion Chrétienne avec un éclaircissement sur les honneurs que les Chinois rendent à Confucius et aux morts* (1698). See Isabelle Landry-Deron, "Confucius au coeur des polémiques sur la scène européenne au tournant des XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles", in Flora Blanchon & Rang-Ri Park-Barjot, ed., *Le Nouvel Age de Confucius* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de Paris-Sorbonne, 2007), 155.

[74] See Isabelle Landry-Deron, *La Preuve par la Chine*, 100-101.

was sent to China to supervise the implementation of this decree. However, this mission ended in a diplomatic failure with Tournon being expelled from China by the emperor Kangxi and dying in Macau. Clement XI promulgated the apostolic constitution *Ex illa die* (1715), establishing an oath of obedience for missionaries working in China. Finally Benedict XIV (1675-1758) by the apostolic constitution *Ex quo singulari* (1742) restated the interdiction of the Chinese rites. Despite this failure of the Jesuits, the controversy had indirectly made possible, and this for the first time, a comprehensive translation and interpretation of Confucian classics available for a wide readership in Europe.

The controversy about how to interpret the Confucian classics was a decisive moment in the West. It was the first attempt to propose a sophisticated hermeneutics of non-Western texts. Navarrete still used the traditional method of the Christian allegory, searching behind each word of Confucius for the higher truth of Christ, which finally made Confucius unnecessary. At the opposite of the Christian allegory, the Jesuits entered into the hermeneutical tradition of China, not based on revelation but on reason. They read the different layers of the Confucian tradition through their intellectual apparatus, itself made of different traditions. Below I propose a model for clarifying the different levels of interpretation in which they engaged.

3 Cross-cultural Hermeneutics

We have presented above the historical background of the translation process with its political, cultural and theological ramifications. I would like to propose here some general considerations about cross-cultural interpretation. When two intellectual traditions meet, they engage into a dialogue which functions at two different levels, metaphysical and metaphorical. At the metaphysical level, the dialogue occurs essentially between philosophical works and abstract concepts. At the metaphorical level, the dialogue engages itself through literary and religious works, mediated by what the French philosopher Paul Ricœur (1913-2005) called "live metaphors," or symbolic representations of a higher reality, and conveying deep existential meaning for the individual.[75]

In their direct mission of evangelization in China, Jesuits favored the dialogue at the metaphorical level, since it was very congenial to the Chinese and easily received. Ricci had already outlined the direction that the mission should take:

[75] Paul Ricœur, *La Métaphore Vive* (Paris : Editions du Seuil), 1975.

> At the very time when, if I calculate correctly, Plato and Aristotle flourished amongst us, there also flourished amongst [the Chinese] certain literati of good life who produced books dealing with moral matters, not in a scientific way, but in the form of maxims. The chief of these wrote four books which are most highly esteemed, and read day and night. In volume they do not exceed the size of letters of Marcus Tullius, but the commentaries and glosses, and the commentaries on the commentaries, and further treatises and discourses upon them by this time are infinite.[76]

Ricci recognized here that the Confucian texts are closer to the moral essays of Cicero than to the long philosophical treatises of Aristotle. Indeed it is no wonder that Ricci started authoring humanistic writings drawn from Greek and Latin antiquity, like *Discourse on Friendship* (*Jiaoyoulun*, 1595), *Twenty-five Sayings* (*Ershiwu yan*, 1605), based on a Latin version of Epictetus' *Encheiridion*,[77] and *Ten Discourses of a Paradoxical Man* (*Jiren shipian*, 1608). The Italian Jesuit Alfonso Vagnone (1566-1640), in his *Recorded Sayings of the Path of the Fullest Attainment* (*Dadaojiyan*, 1636) pursued Ricci's efforts along the same line, translating moral sayings that he hoped could be adopted as classics by the Chinese.

What seems particularly meaningful to me is that, while Jesuits operated at this symbolic level in their transmission of Western culture to the Chinese, they were operating at a quite different level in their own interpretation of Chinese culture. Attempting to understand for themselves Chinese culture and making it understood to European readership, Jesuits were more at ease thinking at the metaphysical level, and this for two reasons. First, rational discourses such as philosophy and theology have been generally valued above all other genres in the West, and so missionaries favored the rational level of cross-cultural hermeneutic, using the metaphysical tools developed by their own tradition. Very importantly, it was believed that theological difficulties could be solved at this level only. Second, a cross-cultural interpretation at the symbolic level would have likely happened between the Confucian classics and the Bible, as Navarette did. But, if some metaphors could be exchanged and interpreted between the two *corpora* of texts, there could not be any agreement on the higher truth these metaphors were supposed to represent. Necessarily, the Jesuits opted for interpreting the Confucian classics at the metaphysical level, basing themselves on the hypothesis of the commonality of human reason between China and the West.

[76] Tacchi Venturi, *Opere Storiche del P. Matteo Ricci* (Macerata, 1911-1913), Vol. II, 237; Rule, 29.
[77] See Christopher Spalatin, *Matteo Ricci and a Confucian Christianity, A study based upon Ricci's book of 25 paragraphs* (Rome: Gregorian University, 1974).

And so, we see the Jesuits entering into a dialogue with the most "philosophical" treatises of the Chinese canon, such as the *Daxue* and the *Zhongyong*. Reading the *Four Books* through the rational interpretation of Zhu Xi, Jesuits attempted to make sense of Neo-Confucian concepts by comparing them with Western Scholastic conceptual tools.

Yet, at the level of rational and intellectual dialogue, concepts between two systems can oppose each other in a rigid way, leading to misinterpretations. As I shall show below, the comparative attempt sometimes imposed the Scholastic frame upon Neo-Confucianism, leading Jesuits to misread certain key concepts. In fact, the comparative method in interpreting the Chinese classics was very rationalistic, partly because of the context created by the Rites Controversy. Jesuits felt they had to argue their case through the power of reason. Intorcetta needed intellectual weapons to support an interpretation of Chinese classics that was adequate with the standards of Western philosophy.

So far, I have attempted to distinguish two levels in the intercultural dialogue, metaphorical and rational. In reality, because of the nature of language itself, these two levels never exist in their pure forms and are always mixed together. Now, I would like to suggest that the interaction does not occur only in a synchronic way (the encounter of two literary traditions, situated at one point in time), but also in diachronic fashion, in which different layers inside each tradition are simultaneously reinterpreted. Concerning the encounter under study, I would like to suggest three layers.

The first layer consists of Aristotle and Confucius. These two philosophers constitute two moments, historically contemporaneous but independent, during which Western and Chinese thoughts take a definitive orientation. Both Aristotelianism and Confucianism have deeply shaped how Westerners and Chinese view themselves and the world, and we find them prominently in the *Sinarum Philosophus*.

The second layer consists of Aquinas and Zhu Xi. Interestingly, both Aristotelianism and Confucianism declined in the first millennium. They were then revived almost at the same time, at the beginning of the second millennium, by Aquinas and Zhu Xi respectively. These two philosophers established philosophical systems, that became official teaching in the West and in China for centuries.

The third layer consists of the Jesuits and the Chinese scholars. Here the two threads met for the first time. Jesuits and Chinese scholars at the end of Ming and early Qing engaged in deep philosophical discussion: not only on how a Westerner could understand Chinese philosophy, or how a Chinese scholar could understand Western thought, but also, on how the interaction between the two could shape a new understanding.

The two traditions were so commensurate that a true dialogue occurred and a new meaning was created.[78]

I therefore propose to look at this dialogue, historically situated in the seventeenth century, as an encounter between two interpretive traditions. The Jesuit reading has to be understood along the line of the Western tradition of texts and practices, with its own normative references like the Bible, Plato, Aristotle, Seneca, and Aquinas. When the Jesuits went to China, they encountered another interpretive tradition with its own normative references, including Confucius, Mencius and Zhu Xi. Therefore, the missionaries did not read Confucian texts in isolation, but against the background of these two interpretive traditions. They therefore participated both in the ongoing debates of thought in Ming-Qing China and also into the intellectual debates in the West. In other words, there was no real way for the Jesuits – even though they made the opposite claim, to go back to an "original" Confucius, as he would have understood himself. The *Sinarum Philosophus* manifests an encounter between two living interpretive traditions at one point in history. While Jesuits claimed to present the original meaning of the Confucian classics, an analysis of their translations, in fact, reveals a deep engagement with the interpretations then current in China. They had to come to terms with Neo-Confucianism. Therefore, the *Sinarum Philosophus* should not be understood only as a translation and commentary of the "original" classics, but also as a discussion between Neo-Confucian and Western philosophy.

The following chapters will show that the *Sinarum Philosophus* developed a hermeneutics of Confucian texts using three complementary approaches, philosophical, political and historical. These three approaches are rooted in Chinese hermeneutics: the philosophical hermeneutics of the Song, the practical hermeneutics of the Ming, and the evidential hermeneutics of the early Qing. At the same time, we shall see that they also incorporate many elements from Western hermeneutics.

[78] We could add a fourth layer to this dialogue, between myself as a Western thinker situated in my own particular tradition, and the Chinese scholars with whom I am interacting. Some historians, like Jacques Gernet, have pointed to a radical misunderstanding between Jesuits and Chinese, partly because of structural differences in the language. See Jacques Gernet, *Chine et Christianisme* (Paris : Editions Gallimard, 1982), 322-333. See especially book review by Paul Cohen, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 47 (1987):674-683. Some American specialists in Chinese philosophy, like Roger Ames and David Hall, similarly view a fundamental incompatibility between Confucianism and Aristotelianism. See Roger Ames and David Hall, *Thinking Through Confucius* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987).

Philippe Couplet of Mechelen (Malines), in 1647, at the age of 25

Fraternity of Mgr. Scheppers, local congregation of Mechelen (Malines)
Courtesy of Provincialaat Broeders van O.-L.-V. Van Barmhartigheid