CHAPTER 2

The Dutch Commodification of Confucius

In the second half of the seventeenth century the Dutch Republic became the indisputable centre of European book production.¹ The remarkable political structure of the Dutch Republic, as well as the absence of an absolute state religion were fundamental for this economic potential. Religious and economic immigrants combined with native skill to provide the necessary manpower, professional skills, and (equally important) creativity to give the industry its defining boost.² The relatively stable economic situation presented printers and publishers with the opportunity to sell their books ‘wherever there was a demand for them’.³

Dutch cultural and economic growth was an important impetus for innovation on the book market, and a number of business-savvy publishers saw the commercial potential of books on China. In addition to the mercantile and missionary perspective in reproducing and reassembling information, these Dutch publishers displayed a new strategy towards Chinese religion and philosophy: that of ‘cultural entrepreneur’. This term has recently been identified especially in economics and the social sciences, yet it has also been employed in the study of culture in the Dutch Golden Age. A widely used definition is given by Thomas Aageson:

Cultural entrepreneurs are cultural change agents and resourceful visionaries who organise cultural, financial, social, and human capital, to generate revenue from a cultural activity. Their innovative solutions result in economically sustainable cultural enterprises that enhance livelihoods

¹ Paul Hoftijzer, *The Dutch Republic, centre of the European book trade in the 17th century*, [European History Online] http://ieg-ego.eu/en/threads/backgrounds/the-book-market/paul-g-hoftijzer-the-dutch-republic-centre-of-the-european-book-trade-in-the-17th-century, accessed 3 February 2021.
² Graham Gibbs, ‘The role of the Dutch Republic as the intellectual entrepôt of Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries’, *Bijdragen en mededelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, 86 (1971), pp. 155–168; Pettegree and Der Weduwen, *The bookshop of the world*, pp. 266–293.
³ Hoftijzer, *The Dutch Republic*. 

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and create cultural value and wealth for both creative producers and consumers of cultural services and products.4

Economic historian Joel Mokyr demonstrated that cultural entrepreneurs also played a crucial role in the development of innovative economies, such as the production of print, in the early modern period.5 In this regard, Mokyr examined why Europe became increasingly open to new ideas, theories, and concepts between 1500 and 1800 and why such a ‘culture of growth’ did not develop elsewhere. How economies of culture functioned in the Dutch Republic is discussed by Claartje Rasterhoff in her work, Painting and publishing as cultural industries of 2017, which explains how technology and institutions such as publishing houses played a crucial role in the growth and formation of cultural industries.6 Frans Blom does the same for Dutch theatre and its publishers in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic.7

Notions of cultural industries and entrepreneurship are useful, not only for demonstrating how economically motivated individuals developed new arguments and theories, but also for explaining how these innovations were successfully advanced in the early modern market of ideas. Entrepreneurs like Jan Jansz Deutel, Jacob van Meurs, and Simon de Vries acted as focal points around which new ideas coalesced, and their activities as printers and publishers allowed for a rapid dissemination of these new ideas in print.8 In the market of ideas, publishers tried to persuade their intended audience of the ‘correctness of their beliefs and the merit of their values and to provide information to others who do not have it’.9 It should be noted that the impetus to influence the market of ideas did not solely depend on economic motives. Both supply and demand for cultural goods such as books are linked to complex interactions of economic growth and cultural capital.10

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4 Thomas H. Aageson, ‘Cultural entrepreneurs. Producing cultural value and wealth’, in Helmut K. Ankheier and Yudhishthir Raj Isar, Cultures and globalization series. The cultural economy (London: Sage Publications, 2008), pp. 92–107.
5 Joel Mokyr, A culture of growth. The origins of the modern economy (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2017).
6 Claartje Rasterhoff, Painting and publishing as cultural industries. The fabric of creativity in the Dutch Republic, 1580–1800 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 2017.
7 Frans Blom and Olga van Marion, ‘Lope de Vega and the conquest of Spanish theatre in the Netherlands’, Anuario Lope de Vega, 23 (2017), pp. 155–177.
8 Mokyr, A culture of growth, pp. 59–69.
9 Mokyr, A culture of growth, p. 62.
10 David Throsby, ‘The production and consumption of the arts. A view of cultural economics’, Journal of Economic Literature, 32.1 (1994), pp. 1–29.
analysis of the production and consumption of culture is multidimensional and dependent on a variety of factors.11

In the formation of Dutch perceptions of Chinese religion and philosophy in print, many factors were of influence. Economic motives were part of larger considerations about religion, politics, and society. To explore these factors, three producers and their books on China are discussed: Jan Jansz Deutel’s publication of Willem IJsbrantsz Bontekoe’s *Iournael* was one of the few true best-sellers of the seventeenth century. This account of shipwreck in Asia shows a ‘functionally indifferent’ approach towards the Chinese. Another strategy was taken by Jacob van Meurs, who applied considerable effort in making his monumental books on China a commercial success. Van Meurs relied on Jesuit accounts but cleverly adapted them to fit the wants of a newly emerging Dutch elite. This strategy made his books on China innovative as he hit upon a formula that gave an easily digestible and broadly appealing image of Chinese religion and philosophy. Finally, Simon de Vries compiled information available from older sources into something decidedly new, changing representations of Chinese religion and philosophy by placing them next to other descriptions of the foreign world.

1 Popular Works on China

In 1618, when the skipper Willem IJsbrantsz Bontekoe started his voyage from the Dutch island of Texel to Bantam on Java and, from there, on to the coast of China, he could hardly have guessed that his exploits in ‘the East’ would turn into a best-seller: *Iournael ofte gedenckwaerdige beschrijvinghe vande Oost-Indische reyse* (in full: ‘Journal or memorable description of the East Indian voyage of Willem Bontekoe from Hoorn, including many remarkable and dangerous things that happened to him there’).12 The work was published in 1646, no less than 21 years after Bontekoe had returned from Asia in 1625. Regardless, its success was enormous: in large part due to the combined efforts of the skipper and his publisher Jan Deutel. As a member of Hoorn’s Chamber of Rhetorics, Deutel knew how to use language to its fullest rhetorical potential. He heavily edited the text of the journal and moulded it into a

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11 William G. Bowen, *Performing arts. The economic dilemma* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1966).

12 Willem IJsbrantsz Bontekoe, *Iournael ofte gedenckwaerdige beschrijvinge vande Oost-Indische reyse van Willem Ysbrantsz Bontekoe* (Hoorn: Jan Deutel, 1646) (USTC 1013883).
story of adventure, disaster and religion to produce a book that had a tremendous popular appeal, with over seventy editions published before 1800.¹³

Het journael is not a book primarily about China. However, Bontekoe’s descriptions can certainly provide further insight into representations of the Middle Kingdom in popular printed works. These books were relatively cheap and, consequently, within reach of a larger public. Those readers, the majority of which had little knowledge of China, were presented with a rather ambiguous representation of the Chinese. On the one hand, Bontekoe proved appreciative of individual encounters with local Chinese. On the other, he was quite disdainful of the Chinese people in general. Furthermore, even though he and his men encounter many Chinese, he pays little to no attention to their religion and philosophy. This perspective of functionally indifference indicates that the beliefs of China were of such little significance to Bontekoe that he simply had no ideological attitude towards them. He was primarily there to fulfil his duties as merchant employed by the VOC.

Bontekoe set sail for Asia in the service of the Dutch East India Company in 1618. On the Indian Ocean, his ship De Nieuwe Hoorn ran into trouble after a gunpowder magazine exploded. The ship sank, leaving only 72 out of a crew of 119 to service in two little boats. After a miserable journey of 13 days, assuaged by great hunger and thirst (to such a degree they even contemplated eating one of the shipping boys), they finally reached Sumatra and then Bantam: saved by a fleet under the command of fellow Dutchman Frederik Houtman. In Batavia, Jan Pietersz Coen, the Governor General of the Indies, commanded Bontekoe to harass the Chinese coast: ‘Then they decided, that I should go with the same ship [that brought him from Bantam to Batavia] to China, together with seven other ships, under the command of Cornelis Reyertsz van der Gou, to occupy Macao if possible, or to go to the Pescadores and use every tool at our disposal to advance the trade with China.’¹⁴

This voyage is described in the second part of the journal. This narrative is considerably less exiting than the first part, yet it offers valuable insights into the Dutch perspective on China and its inhabitants. More interesting, however, is the editorial process of this second part of the journal, which is revealed when the printed edition is compared to a handwritten report of Bontekoe’s journey

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¹³ Karel Bostoen etc., (ed.), Bontekoe. De schipper, het journaal, de scheepsjongens (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 1996).

¹⁴ ‘Toen besloot men, dat ik met hetzelfde schip naar China zou gaan, samen met nog zeven schepen, onder bevel van commandeur Cornelis Reyertsz van der Gou, om zo mogelijk Macao te bezetten, of naar de Pescadores te gaan en met alle ten dienste staande middelen de handel met China te bevorderen’, in Bontekoe, Journael, p. 65.
FIGURE 17  Willem IJsbrantsz Bontekoe, Journael ofte gedenkwaerdige beschrijvinghe (Hoorn: Jan Jansz Deutel, 1646) Allard Pierson Amsterdam (1804 D 20)
that is kept at the National Archives of the Netherlands in The Hague.\footnote{It is the only contemporary transcript of the journey, although it was not made by Bontekoe himself; Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Verenigde Oost -Indische Compagnie (voc), nr. 1.04.02, inventory 5049; Vibeke Roeper and Diederick Wildeman, ‘Schipper Bontekoe’, in Bostoen etc., (ed.), \textit{Bontekoe}, p. 35.} It is the only contemporary transcript of the journey, although it was not made by Bontekoe himself.

The manuscript contains a great deal of nautical information, such as wind directions and the location of anchor grounds. Deutel also made many additions; primarily anecdotes and descriptions (perhaps disclosed to him by Bontekoe) to make the story more dramatic. For instance, on 24 June 1622, Bontekoe and his men tried to take Macao from the Portuguese. The manuscripts accounts for the loss of 130 men; yet, it is the printed book and not the transcript that explains how this came about: when the gunpowder of the Dutch accidentally ignited, some Japanese traitors notified the Portuguese enemy, who immediately attacked. These, and other rhetorical interventions indicate that Deutel had a heavy hand in shaping Bontekoe’s \textit{journael} into the best-seller it would become. He removed much of the official and perhaps tedious nautical and geographical information and emphasised the spectacular nature of the journey through anecdotes. In that way, he appealed to readers interested rather in adventurous stories than in documentation of trade missions.

Deutel’s edition of Bontekoe brings us to the field of popular literature. Since the 1960s, scholars have studied reading among the ‘classes populaires’.\footnote{Robert Mandrou, \textit{De culture populaire aux 17e et 18e siècles. La Bibliothèque bleue de Troyes} (Paris: Stock, 1964); Victor E. Neuburg, \textit{Popular literature. A history and guide from the beginning of printing to the year 1897} (London: The Woburn Press, 1977); Joad Raymond (ed.), \textit{The Oxford history of popular print culture. Cheap prints in Britain and Ireland to 1660} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); E.P. Thompson, ‘History from below’, \textit{Times Literary Supplement} (7 April 1966); Roelof Harms, Joad Raymond, and Jeroen Salman (eds.), \textit{Not dead things. The dissemination of popular print in England and Wales, Italy, and the Low Countries, 1500–1820} (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013); Jeroen Salman, \textit{Pedlars and the popular press. Itinerant distribution networks in England and the Netherlands 1600–1850} (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014).} They have analysed the cultural habits of the ‘lower classes’ with an emphasis on the French \textit{littérature populaire}, the English \textit{popular literature}, and the German \textit{Volkslektüre}. Popular and often cheap works of print are indicative of wide and continued acceptance, measured by sales, imitation, adaptation to other cultural forms, and general commercial success.\footnote{The term ‘popular print’ specifically refers to printed images of generally low artistic quality that were sold cheaply from the 15th to the 18th centuries, often accompanied by small
become clear that ‘popular’ should be considered a synonym of ‘successful’, not as an antonym for ‘value’.

Various issues arise when examining ‘popular literature’. How to define these concepts that seem to focus on something that has often been described as ‘folk culture’? To begin, the concept presumes that there is such a thing as print solely aimed at the lower classes, who were often only marginally literate, and would not have been able to spend much money on books. In practice, this situation was complicated by a much more fluid reality of consumption, in which different types of audiences read and bought a variety of books. Indeed, regarding the Dutch situation, it has been established that there never existed such a thing as a separate corpus of volkslectuur or popular literature with any specific or demarcated characteristics. Moreover, there has been little consensus over which social classes should be counted among the readership of popular literature. The most workable definition should not exclude any type of reader beforehand and popular literature must be viewed within its broad ‘literary and social context’.

Despite all these precautions, studying early modern printed works through concepts such as ‘popular’ versus ‘elite’ remains an important heuristic tool in determining how readers could perceive the content and form of books like Bontekoe’s Journael, and how these perceptions differed from books aimed at more elitist buyers. Compared to other books on China, Bontekoe was relatively cheap. In the inventory of bookseller David Ruaris, a bound copy of ‘Bontekoes rijshe’ (‘Bontekoe’s journey’) is listed for 0.80 fl., which indeed put it within reach of the lower middle classes. The fact that it was reprinted amounts of text. See A. Hyatt Mayor, Prints & people: Social history of printed pictures (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980).

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18 Roelof Harms, Joad Raymond, and Jeroen Salman, ‘Introduction’, in Harms, Raymond, and Salman (eds.), Not dead things, pp. 1–32.
19 Bert van Selm, “Almanacken, lietjes, en somwijl wat wonder, wat nieuws”. Volkscultuur in de Noordelijke Nederlanden (1480–1800), Leidschrift, 5 (1989), pp. 33–68.
20 Roger Chartier, Cultural history. Between practices and representations (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982).
21 Salman, Populair drukwerk in de Gouden Eeuw, pp. 22–23.
22 James Raven, Helen Small, and Naomi Tadmor (eds.), The practice and representation of reading in England (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Kevin Sharpe, Reading revolutions. The politics of reading in early modern England (News Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); Kevin Sharpe, Reading, society, and politics in early modern England (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
23 Van Selm, “… te bekomen voor een civielen prijs”, pp. 98–116.
at least 70 times before 1800 also indicates that the work found a new public
time and again.24

As noted earlier, Bontekoe is often ambiguous in his descriptions of the
Chinese: he demonstrates appreciation for individual encounters, while at the
same time proving disdainful of the Chinese people as a whole. He described
their food, ships, buildings, and appearance; yet, he rarely mentioned their
religion. With this lack of interest and attention, Bontekoe demonstrates an
absence of awareness and care for the inner life of the Chinese people he
meets. Their religion and philosophy were of little to no significance to him,
and as such he simply took no attitude towards them. Likewise, Bontekoe's
more general attitude towards the Chinese is also obscure. In one encounter,
dated July 1622, the Dutch skipper described the Chinese fishers as cowardly,
since 'they fled from us', implying that the sight of a Dutch vessel alone was
enough to instil considerable fear. This theme returns often in reports of 'vil-
lages from which the inhabitants had fled', or Chinese 'hiding' because they did
not want to get caught by the Dutch.25 Bontekoe often hinted at reasons why
the Chinese might have been so afraid of the Dutch with descriptions like: 'After
we shot some of them dead, they retreated and ran away', and '[we] encoun-
tered two villages and set fire to them'.26 Even Bontekoe himself acknowledged
the rather cruel methods of his men when, on 29 November 1622, a Chinese
fisher defected to the Dutch; the fisher 'seemed to be half mad', implying that
no sane man would have defected. Although the Chinese were often described
as cowardly, Bontekoe also praises some of them for their bravery: 'They bravely
attacked us, and we did not give way'.27

A remarkable turnaround of attitude eventuates when Bontekoe refers to
the intellect of the Chinese encountered. The Dutch often emerged as victors
from their skirmishes with the Chinese, emphasising their 'cowardly' nature:
'In total confusion [the Chinese] carried their weapons away from their

24 Margaret Spufford, *Small books and pleasant histories, Popular fiction and its readership in seventeenth century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Garrelt Verhoeven, ‘Willem Bontekoe (1587–1657). Dutch sailor and explorer’, in Jennifer Speake (ed.), *Literature of travel and exploration* (New York: Fitzroy Daerborn, 2003), pp. 114–115.

25 Hallvard Lillehammer, ‘The nature and ethics of indifference’, *The Journal of Ethics*, 21.1 (2016), pp. 17–35; Thomas M. Lennon, ‘Descartes and the seven senses of indifference in early modern philosophy’, *Studies in Modern Philosophy, Études de philosophie moderne*, 50.3 (2011), pp. 577–622; Tad Schmaltz, *Early modern Cartesianisms. Dutch and French constructions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 15–63.

26 ‘Kwamen twee dorpen tegen waarvan de bewoners gevlucht waren’, in Bontekoe, *Iournal*, p. 79.

27 ‘Ze vielen ons dapper aan en wij wilden niet wijken’, in Bontekoe, *Iournal*, p. 75.
village'. However, when the locals act in accordance to Bontekoe’s wishes, he is not unwilling to praise them for their insightfulness and good intentions. In November 1623, Bontekoe met a Chinese named Cipzuan or Quitsuan. On behalf of the Chinese merchants, Quitsuan negotiated trade with the Dutch. According to Bontekoe, Quitsuan told of a ‘recluse or hermit’ living in the mountains, who was ‘of high birth and had been enormously rich and, if his sources were right, also a mandarin of that province’. After the death of his wife, the hermit had dedicated himself to aiding the poor. He ‘was highly regarded by all, and was even taken for a prophet and his words for prophecies’. The reason why Bontekoe speaks in such a praising manner of the unknown hermit becomes clear soon enough when the latter came aboard to successfully negotiate the trading deal between the Dutch and the Chinese. The hermit and the negotiator Quitsuan ‘promised after some talking back and forth to do their best to bring about a successful conclusion’. Apparently, when the Chinese cooperated with the Dutch, they were praised for their intelligence and insightfulness; yet, when they acted contrary to Bontekoe’s wishes, they were deemed stupid and obstinate.

A similar episode occurred in May 1623, when Bontekoe and his men had found themselves in an awkward situation, having captured ‘several hundred Chinese’ while their own ship was manned by only 50 healthy Dutchmen. When two of the captured Chinese promised to return with provisions if they were set free, Bontekoe decided to take his chances. The following day, the former prisoners indeed returned with ‘chickens, eggs, a pig, lemons, apples, sugar-cane, and tobacco’. Bontekoe was so surprised that he felt inclined to write: ‘It testifies to an attitude which will shame many Christians, who often do not remember their promises after being out of trouble’.

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28 ‘Ze droegen in totale verwarring hun geschut een eind weg van hun dorp’, in Bontekoe, Journael, p. 75.
29 ‘Verder zei deze Cipzuan dat er in zijn woonplaats een kluizenaar of heremiet in de bergen woonde, die van hoge afkomst was en geweldig rijk was geweest en naar hij meende ook mandarijn van die provincie’, in Bontekoe, Journael, p. 88.
30 ‘Nu deed hij niet anders dan van arme mensen, die onbemiddeld waren, de zaken bepleiten bij de groten. Stond daarom bij hoog en laag in aanzien; ja werd voor een profeet gehouden en zijn woorden voor profetieën’, in Bontekoe, Journael, p. 88.
31 ‘Hij beloofde ons na enig heen en weer praten zijn uiterste best te zullen doen om de zaak tot een goed einde te brengen’, in Bontekoe, Journael, p. 88.
32 ‘We hadden toen een paar honderd Chinezen aan boord; waren bang dat ze ons zouden overmeesteren, want zoals gezegd waren we maar met vijftig gezonde mannen sterk’, in Bontekoe, Journael, p. 83.
33 ‘Hadden kippen meegebracht, eieren, een varken, citroenen, appels, suikerriet, en tabak…. Het getuigt van een houding die vele Christenen beschaamd doet staan, die immers vaak
Other contacts with the Chinese were described in the same ambiguous vein: both with appreciation for individual encounters while at the same time disdainful of the Chinese people as a whole. Interactions between the Dutch and the Chinese seemed difficult, yet Bontekoe also reported numerous occasions where contact was positive; for instance, the many times Chinese fishermen sold him dried fish. He even related an incident where he and his men were stranded with damaged weapons but were still generously helped by the locals: ‘Along the way they [Bontekoe’s men] encountered a small house in which a man and a woman were sitting and went inside. They re-lit their fuses and put their weapons ... in order. They also gave them food.’  

34 A similar encounter is related on the next page when Bontekoe’s men were invited into a Chinese village, where they were fed, given some tobacco and a place to stay for the night in ‘their temple’.

The temple mentioned in this episode is the only reference to Chinese religion or philosophy in the journal. This emphasises Bontekoe’s attitude of ‘functional indifference’ as, during the 1640s, a variegated view towards China and its systems of belief had already begun to emerge. It is therefore interesting to note that, in preparing the *Journael*, Bontekoe and Deutel would have had recourse to many of these views in print, but did not use them. They could have followed Jan Huygen van Linschoten, as various references within the *Journael* testify that they used this work as a source on Asia. But in the end, the Chinese figure only as a background character to the description of Bontekoe’s own exploits.

The enormous success of the journal was, in large part, due to its sensational qualities, and it is not surprising that Bontekoe and Deutel banked on the fact that their potential readers would be more interested in dramatic descriptions of the adventures of the Dutch in Asia than in a religious and moral exposition of the Middle Kingdom and its peoples. Their objective was to present readers with an attractive account of travel and disaster, not a documentary or persuasive report. It is exactly this preference for sensational descriptions that reveal

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34 ‘Onderweg kwamen ze een huisje tegen waarin een man en een vrouw zaten en gingen daar binnen; ze staken hun lonten weer aan en brachten hun wapens, die geheel onklaar waren geraakt doordat ze nat waren geworden tijdens het landen met de boot, weer in orde. Hier kregen ze ook te eten, want deze man gaf hun wat rijst’, in Bontekoe, *Journael*, p. 73.

35 ‘Brachten onze mannen naar hun tempel, gaven hen daar te eten en te drinken en wat tabak’, in Bontekoe, *Journael*, p. 74.
their attitude towards the Chinese; their inconsistent characterisations may be indicative of how less affluent and not particularly intellectual Dutch readers might have perceived China. Fiction, reality, and opinion about the Middle Kingdom were thereby amalgamated into a hazy, yet attractive, image.\textsuperscript{36}

2 Jacob van Meurs

Publisher Jacob van Meurs was responsible for some of the most enduring images of China during the second half of the seventeenth century. He was not a missionary or merchant, author or artist, but a publisher \textit{pur sang}: he adapted information from earlier travelogues and Jesuit reports in such a way that his relatively neutral representation of Chinese religion and philosophy would appeal to a broad selection of wealthy buyers. According to early modern historian Benjamin Schmidt, Van Meurs’s books ‘mark the debut, in an important sense, of a new form of European engagement with the non-European world’.\textsuperscript{37} Between 1650 and 1680, Van Meurs produced dozens of works of geography, forging a new genre that was largely dependent on a grand folio size combined with an exceptionally high quality of paratext.\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Het gezantschap} contains 149 eye-catching copper engravings and \textit{Gedenkwaerdig bedryf} holds 102. These engravings were exceptional in the genre of early modern travelogues. The publisher presented the images as being made ‘after life’, giving the impression that they were eyewitness observations. In reality, they were actually manipulated and amended by the publisher. In presenting Asia in such a luxurious manner, Van Meurs hit upon a formula for presenting the foreign world in print ‘that would prove phenomenally successful and vastly influential for years to come’.\textsuperscript{39}

Van Meurs published two monumental books on China: Johan Nieuhof’s \textit{Het gezantschap der Neêrlandtsche Oost-Indische Compagnie, aan den grooten Tartarischen Cham} (‘An embassy from the East India Company of the United

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{36} Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (eds.), \textit{The key concepts of post-colonial studies} (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 150–163; Xavier Guillaume, ‘Travelogues of difference. International relations theory and travel literature’, \textit{Alternatives. Global, Local, and Political}, 36.2 (2011), pp. 136–154; Alan Moss, ‘Comparing ruins. National trauma in Dutch travel accounts of the seventeenth century’, Lotte Jensen (ed.), \textit{The roots of nationalism. National identity formation in early modern Europe, 1600–1815} (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016), pp. 217–232.
\bibitem{37} Schmidt, \textit{Inventing exoticism}, p. 25.
\bibitem{38} Schmidt, \textit{Inventing exoticism}.
\bibitem{39} Sun, ‘The illusion of verisimilitude’, p. 80.
\end{thebibliography}
Provinces to the Grand Tartar Cham, emperor of China’) of 1665, and Olfert Dapper’s *Gedenkwaerdig bedryf der Nederlandsche Oost-Indische Maetschappye, op de kuste en in het keizerrijk van Taising of Sina* of 1670. An analysis of the publication history of both books, as well as an examination of their content will show that Van Meurs indeed ushered in a novel perspective on the Middle Kingdom. He cleverly adapted earlier writings to fit the wants and needs of a newly emerging elite that could afford expensive books on foreign countries. Van Meurs’s grand books on China were not necessarily always economically successful, yet his publishing strategy made his books indeed innovative by focusing on an easily digestible and broadly appealing image of the Middle Kingdom.

To ensure the success of *Het gezantschap* and *Gedenkwaerdig bedryf*, Van Meurs focused on two points: the illustrations had to appeal to potential buyers and the text had to be engaging enough to justify the hefty price tag of both books. By gathering, manipulating, and appropriating a variety of materials, Van Meurs amalgamated an image of China that could appeal to a broad range of people. He then conferred authorship upon a single name, Johan Nieuhof and Olfert Dapper, ensuring a trustworthy ‘authority’ for the content. Nieuhof was indeed one of the few Europeans who had actually been to China. Dapper, meanwhile, had never left Amsterdam but wrote various authoritative accounts of geography. However, much of the final content was decidedly influenced by Van Meurs himself. Nieuhof had entrusted his journals to his brother, who (together with Van Meurs) edited and amended the texts for publication. Likewise, Dapper, as a professional writer, would have probably deferred to Van Meurs’s insights into the book market.

Van Meurs inadvertently relied on Jesuit sources in his representation of Chinese religion and philosophy for a more general audience. And since the mercantile interest of his readers (as we will discover) often coincided with the missionary perspective of the Jesuits, Van Meurs needed to change very little in his descriptions of Chinese religion and philosophy. In this process, he essentially adopted the Jesuit’s justification of their accommodation strategy, which focused on the benignity and compatibility of the teachings of Confucius with Christianity, while Buddhism and Taoism were rejected as idolatrous.

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40 Pettegree and Der Weduwen, *The bookshop of the world*, pp. 115–120.
41 Dobranski, ‘Authorship in the seventeenth century’; Charles Jones, *Shapely bodies, the image of porcelain in eighteenth-century France* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2013), pp. 38–48; Lothar Ledderose, ‘Chinese influence on European art, sixteenth to eighteenth centuries’, in Thomas H. Lee (ed.), *China and Europe. Images and influences in sixteenth to eighteenth centuries* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1991), pp. 221–250.
FIGURE 18  Johan Nieuhof, Gezantschap der Neêrlandtsche Oost-Indische compagne
(Amsterdam: Jacob van Meurs, 1665) Allard Pierson Amsterdam (OG 74-34 (1))
FIGURE 19 Offert Dapper, Gedenkwaerdig bedryf der Nederlandsche Oost-Indische maetschappye, op de kust en in het keizerrijk van Taising of Sina (Amsterdam: Jacob van Meurs, 1670) Allard Pierson Amsterdam (OM 63-124)
Johan Nieuhof’s *Het gezantschap der Neêrlandtsche Oost-Indische Compagnie, aan den grooten Tartarischen Cham* resulted from the first Dutch embassy to the emperor of China.42 After repeatedly failing to break the Portuguese monopoly on trade to Macau, the VOC sent six embassies to Beijing between 1655 and 1685.43 Johan Nieuhof was appointed steward to the first Dutch delegation.44 The most important of his many tasks was to illustrate and describe all noteworthy sights, such as cities, palaces, temples, rivers, and mountains. Nieuhof remained in China until 1657: a year after his homecoming, he entrusted his notes and annotations to his brother Hendrik who, together with Van Meurs, published the manuscript in 1665.45

Van Meurs went to great lengths to ensure the book’s commercial success, with rapid results. A reprint was issued within the year and it was quickly translated into French, German, and Latin.46 The first part is primarily based on Johan Nieuhof’s meticulous notes from his stay in China.47 In contrast, the second part of the work was much more the invention of Van Meurs and Hendrik Nieuhof, who drew heavily on Jesuit sources. For example, in the observation of the monks and priest of Nanjing, the book related that they have a ‘belief of superstition’; yet, if they would adhere to the true faith of the Christian missionaries, they could surpass them in dedication:

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42 Johan Nieuhof, *Het gezantschap der Neêrlandtsche Oost-Indische Compagnie, aan den grooten Tartarischen Cham* (Amsterdam: Jacob van Meurs, 1665).
43 Leonard Blussé and Reindert Falkenburg, *Johan Nieuhof’s beelden van een Chinareis, 1655–1657* (Middelburg: Stichting VOC publicaties, 1987); Leonard Blussé and Zhuang Guotu (eds.), *A study of the first Dutch embassy visit to China* (Xiamen: Xiamen University Publishing House, 1989); Henriette Rahusen-de Bruyn Kops, ‘Not such an “unpromising beginning”: The first Dutch trade embassy to China, 1655–1657’, *Modern Asian Studies*, 36.3 (2002), pp. 535–578; Dawn Odell, ‘The soul of transaction. Illustration and Johan Nieuhof’s travel in China’, in Karel Bostoen and Elmer Kolfijn (eds.), *“Tweelinge eener drag”. Woord en beeld in de Nederlanden (1500–1750)* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2001), pp. 225–242; Ying Sun, *Wandlungen des europäischen Chinabildes in illustrierten Reiseberichten des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1996).
44 Leonard Blussé, ‘No boats to China. The Dutch East India Company and the changing pattern of the China Sea trade, 1635–1690’, *Modern Asian Studies*, 30.1 (1996), pp. 51–76; Leonard Blussé and Reindert Falkenburg, *Tribuut aan China, 1631–1989* (Amsterdam: Cramwinckel, 1989).
45 Blussé, ‘No boats to China’, pp. 51–79.
46 Francesco Ammannanti and Angela Nuova, ‘Investigating book prices in early modern Europe: Questions and sources’, *JLIS.it*, 8.3 (2017), pp. 1–25.
47 A contemporary manuscript of Nieuhof’s account is held at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris. A digitised copy may be consulted via gallica.fr: [Johan Nieuhof], *Journaal van sommige voorvallen, inde voyagie vande E. Heeren Pieter de Goyer en Jacob Keyser, ambassadeurs, aande grootmachtige keizer van Chyna en Tartaryen, inde jaaren 1655, 56, & 1657*, MssSGE1.
In the region surrounding this chief city lay several stately and beautiful temples; the biggest and most important are built upon the mountains Quangliu and Iuenxiu. The nearby inhabitants worship these mountains out of great superstition, upon which dwell a great company of hermits and friars. Each priest and hermit has chosen a little hutch, where he flagellates and afflicts himself by scourging and disciplining his body, such that one wonders about this practice. They claim that they will enter another life after this one, and there will get a sacred status, because they believe that their souls will move to another body. If these blind and lost people did as much for the true religion and if they were this fanatic for the true God, they would not only equal the European hermits, who voluntarily endured many tortures, but also surpass them.48

This statement echoes the rhetoric of the Jesuits, who argued that the Chinese did possess knowledge of the true God, but that they had lost this wisdom through contact with Buddhism and Taoism. The same statement also hints at the editorial influence of Van Meurs and Hendrik Nieuhof. When compared to the manuscript of Nieuhof’s account, we find that he had only made some brief remarks on his stay in Nanjing during April of 1656:

On the 26th of the same month we sailed past the city Nankin, on the right side of Kiam in a hilly field, 180 li [Chinese miles] from the Liansi. She used to be very distinguished, but has been weakened by war. Its walls are high, on the bottom carved out, on the top made from brick, and reasonably well made, with strongholds, going over several hills, about five hours around by foot. To the west stand two arcs, below which one goes into the city over a stone bridge. The first street on the right stands

48 ‘Men vind evenwel in de landstreek van deze hooftstad, vele kunstigh geboude en prachtige kerken; waar van de grootste en voornaamste op de bergen Quangliu en Iuenxiu gelegen zijn. De rondom-leggende inwoonders aanbidden, uit een grooten waangeloof, deze bergen, daar op onttalijche Kluizenaars en Priesters zich onthouden. Ieder Priester en Kluizenaar heeft hier een hutje verkooren, daar in hy zich met zoodanige quellingen des lighaams plaaght en afmat, dat men zich ten hoogste daar over te verwonderen heeft. Zy drijven, datze na dit aardsche leven in een ander leven zullen komen, en een zaligen staat verkrijgen: want zy geloven dat de zielen van deze in een ander lighamen verhuizen zullen. Deden deze verdoolede en blinde menschen zoo veel voor den waren Godtsdienst, en warenne zoo yverig in het aanbidden van den waren God, zy zouden niet alleen den ouden Europische Kluizenaars, die vrywillig uiterlijk veel hebben uitgestaan, gelijk zijn, maar hen ook verre overtreffen,’ in Nieuhof, Het gezantschap, p. 92.
full of wonderful triumphal arches, but the houses are very decrepit, and mostly empty and uninhabited.49

In contrast to the manuscript’s 109 words, the printed book dedicates 296 words to this specific passage, nearly tripling Nieuhof’s original account by inserting notes on religion, the cultivation of hemp, and even a description of a mystical spring called Kien. These were significant additions, especially where Het gezantschap stated that the Chinese could ‘surpass the European hermits’, because we, in fact, hear the voices of the publishers, Jacob van Meurs and Hendrik Nieuhof, and not necessarily that of Johan Nieuhof.50

49 'Den 26 ditto voeren wij voorbij de stad Nankin, aende rechte kant van Kiam in een heuvelachtig veld, 180 lij vande Liansi. Zij is eentijds zeer naamhaftig geweest, maar is door 't oorlog verminderd. Hare muren zijn hoog, onder van gehouwen, en boven van baksteen opgetoogen, en redelik, met bolwerken verzien, lopen over verscheide heuvels, omtrent 5 uur gaans om. Na de westkant staan 2 bogen, daarmen over een steenebrug, inde stadt gaat. D'eerste straat anderrechte hand, staat voll schone Triomfbogens, maar de Huizen zijn zeer vervallen, en staan meest ledig, en onbewoond', in Nieuhof, Het gezantschap, p. 67. A lee or 里 is the Chinese mile, a traditional Chinese unit of distance. While its length has varied considerably over time, it was usually half a kilometre and has now indeed been standardised at 500 meters or 1.690 feet.

50 Since the manuscript of the BnF is probably a transcript made by Johan Nieuhof during his brief stay in Amsterdam, it is also possible that the original manuscript was handed over to Van Meurs and Hendrik Nieuhof, which could have included the information missing from the BnF manuscript. However, neither the English nor French edition of Nieuhof mentions this information. Relevant to this discussion, these translations gave very divergent accounts of the same text, emphasising the fundamental role of the publisher and editor. Compare: ‘Yet in prospect of this city lye several stately temples, whereof the biggest and most important are built upon the mountains Quangliu, Junxiu: the inhabitants round about worship these mountains, upon which dwell a great company of priests and friars; each priest and friar has a little hutch, where he daily flagellates and afflicts himself by scourging and disciplining his body; enduring which castigation makes him a miracle to those people of implicit faith, who fancy these their sufferings merit after death the highest felicities in another world; for they believe that their souls are translated after their deaths into their bodies’ with: ‘L’on trouve pourtant encore sous la jurisdiction de cette place, plusieurs temples, échappés de la furie des Tartares, qui semblent avoir eu ou de la veneration pour leur architecture, ou du respect pour la sainteté des sacrificateurs qui y demeurent. Les principaux, et les plus magnifiques de ces temples se voient sur les montagnes d’Junxin, et de Quangliu, lesquelles sont adorées avec beaucoup de superstition des habitants. C’est en ces lieux quo l’on void le grand monastère d’Junxin et le convent des plus austères Anachorètes de toute la China, voire même de tout l’Universce, puis qu’ils traitent incessamment leurs propres corps avec plus de rigeur, et de supplices, que les cruels d’entre les tyrans en ont sceau forger pour assouvir leur vengeance. Si nous voulons nous arrester aux particularités de ces solitaires, pour en trouverons auncuns qui se sont aveuglés, comme Democrite, pour fermer deux porter à l’amour, et en ouvrir mille à la Sagesse.’ [There are, however, still under the jurisdiction
The second part of the work is even more the invention of the publisher and editor. Entitled the ‘general description of the empire of China’, it relies heavily on secondary sources. Pertinent to our discussion are chapters 8 and 9, which are devoted to ‘various sects in China, concerning the philosophy and the false religion’, and ‘the pagodas or churches of the idols’ respectively. The chapters start out with the now-familiar Jesuit maxim that ‘of all the heathen sects, which came to the knowledge of Europeans, never has one been known, which has been in error so little as the Chinese sects in the first centuries after the beginning of the world’.

The chapter continues with a description of the three sects of China, and of Confucius and his teachings. In this extensive description, Van Meurs invoked the writings of Álvaro Semedo, Nicolas Trigault, and Martino Martini. In particular, Van Meurs referred to Martini’s characterisation of Confucian devotees as not being idolatrous: ‘They make in his honour no statues, but only write his name with golden letters on the façade of the schools’. Thereafter, Van Meurs continued to follow the Jesuit narrative of praising Confucius and his teachings.

The other Chinese sects are also described extensively; yet here, the concept of idolatry or the worship of images is deployed, again in Jesuit fashion, to explain that ‘the shadow and flickering light of the evangelical truth has been suffocated and extinguished by the foulest of lies’. These descriptions of Taoism and Buddhism are supported by engravings, showing, for instance, ‘the

of this place, several temples, escaped from the fury of the Tartars, who seem to have had a veneration for their architecture, or respect for the sanctity of the priests who remain there. The principal and most magnificent of these temples can be seen on the mountains of Juexin, and Quangliu, which are adorned with much superstition of the inhabitants. It is in these places that one sees the great monastery of Juexin and the convent of the most austere Anachorettes of all China, or even of the whole Universe, then they treat incessantly their own bodies with more rigour and tortures, which the cruelties of the tyrants have forged their siege to satisfy their vengeance. If we wish to stop at the peculiarities of these solitaries, we will find some who have blinded themselves, like Democritus, to close two to love, and to open a thousand to Wisdom.] Johan Nieuhof, L’ambassade de la Compagnie orientale des Provinces Unies (Leiden: Jacob van Meurs, 1665), pp. 117–118; Johan Nieuhof, An embassy from the East-India Company of the United Provinces (London: John Macock, 1669), p. 87. The German edition by Van Meurs does contain the comparison with ‘European hermits’, Johan Nieuhof, Die gesantschaft der Ost-Indische Gesellschaft (Amsterdam: Jacob van Meurs, 1666), p. 97.

51 ‘Van alle heidensche Zekten, die tot kennis der Europers zijn gekomen, heeft men tot noch toe geene gelezen, die tot weiniger dwalingen is vervallen, als de Sineesche Zekten, in d'eerste eeuwen of in den beginne des wereldts; in Nieuhof, Het gezantschap, p. 67.
52 Nieuhof, Het gezantschap, p. 68.
53 ‘Maar deze schaduw en ’t flikkerlicht der Evangelische Waarheit hebben met de vuilste dampen van leugenen verstikt en uitgebluscht’, in Nieuhof, Het gezantschap, p. 89.
idol of immorality’, ‘the idol of lechery’ and ‘the female idol of Lincin’, whose statue was apparently witnessed by Johan Nieuhof himself. By including illustrations of the condemned sects, Van Meurs emphasised in image what was already described in text: any religion or philosophy that worships idols in the form of statues or images lost access to the true faith.

However, those adhering to the teachings of Confucius might be much more receptive to Christendom for two reasons: firstly, because they had already denounced the worship of idols; and secondly, because Christianity would not have to replace a religion, as the teachings of Confucius were considered to consist mainly of cultural and societal customs and traditions, which could very well exist alongside a pious observance of Christianity. This view is also highlighted in Van Meurs’s description, where he referred to Confucianism as ‘philosophy’, while Buddhism and Taoism were described as ‘false religion’. These terms make an important point concerning the interpretation of Chinese religion and philosophy. Van Meurs followed the Jesuit line of reasoning, yet for a different purpose. While the perspective of the Jesuits is mostly ‘missionary’ (and therefore accommodating), Van Meurs’s attitude towards the religion and philosophy of China was first and foremost determined by economic considerations of cultural consumption, which allowed him to sell books.54

And who better to appeal to than those who invested in the Dutch East India Company, such as the Gentleman XVII or wealthy shareholders. Van Meurs dedicated his book to ‘the noble, greatly honourable, strict, providential, and wise gentlemen, the gentlemen Hendrik Dirksz Spiegel ... and Cornelis Witsen’, both doctors in law and (respectively) mayor and former mayor of the city of Amsterdam. Spiegel was also the governor of the VOC and Witsen held the same position in the West India Company. These were the people concerned with China from (at least) an economic perspective as their monetary interests were tied with the success of the VOC in Asia. Consequently, just like the travellers of the late sixteenth century, these men held mercantile stakes in China, which influenced their perspective on the country; again, this made for an

54 There is also the possibility that Van Meurs sold the illustrations separately to further boost sales. Van Meurs was in the business of publishing engravings, which is done on a different press than the one used to produce books made from leaden type, since the first is intaglio printing, while the second requires the relief printing technique. Van Meurs himself did not operate a press for relief printing, which meant that he had to outsource much of the work necessary to produce a book. However, in his successive shops on the Singel, Nieuwstraat, Keizersgracht, and Nieuwe Keizersgracht, he did advertise that he sold both books and engravings, the latter probably produced by himself. See Jasper Hillegers and Elmer Kolfin etc., (eds.), Gedrukt tot Amsterdam. Amsterdamse prentmakers en uitgevers in de Gouden Eeuw (Zwolle: Waanders, 2011); Jan Bos, Adresboek. Nederlandse drukkers en boekverkopers tot 1700 (The Hague: Royal Library, 1999).
ambiguous approach. Van Meurs presumed correctly that the elite buyers of *Het gezantschap* would be much more interested in a relatively forward-looking approach towards the Chinese system, especially when it concerned the literati who would be able to facilitate Chinese trade the Dutch Republic.

Early modern book auction catalogues indeed show that various members of the *voc* board of directors possessed Nieuhof’s *Het gezantschap*. The book was offered for sale as part of the estates of Diederik Dix of Haarlem in 1724; Balthasar Boreel of the Amsterdam chamber in 1745; Albert Nicolaas Beyeren van Schagen, governor of the *voc* chamber of Hoorn in 1752; and Jan Albert Sichterman from Groningen in 1764.55 These people evidently had both the means and the inclination to buy such a grand work on China as Johan Nieuhof’s *Het gezantschap*, now that it had been given a nudge in the right direction by Jacob van Meurs’s extensive editorial interference.

The decisive role played by Jacob van Meurs in the creation of Dutch representations of China is further underlined when comparing the publishing strategy of the Amsterdam edition of 1665 with that of the Antwerp edition of 1666.56 In his article on the publishing strategy of Van Meurs, Guido van Meersbergen has demonstrated that, while the title page of the Antwerp edition stated that it was printed in Antwerp by Michiel Knobbaert, in reality, the work was published by Van Meurs in Amsterdam.57 He adapted the work to the presumed wishes of his intended audience by rephrasing the text to appeal to Catholic readers in the Southern Netherlands. Subsequently, the Jesuit origin of information is accentuated and the work was supposedly printed at ‘the declaration house of the Society of Jesus’.58 The title page further mentioned that the book contained ‘the accurate story, all that the Jesuits in China in propagation of the religion of Rome, since their first arrival in China, achieved,

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55 Catalogus Bibliothecae, Beate Defuncti Nobilissimi, Et Generosissimi Domini Alberti Nicolai Baronis Bavariae A Schagen, auction held on 10 and 11 April 1752 (The Hague: Johannes Swart and Matheus Gaillard, 1752); Catalogus Exquisitissimorum Librorum, Juridicorum, Historicorum, & Miscellaneorum, auction held on 12 April 1745 (Amsterdam: Salomon Schouten, 1745); Catalogus Praestantissimae Bibliothecae In vario genere & Lingua praeципuè vero Latina, Gallica & Hollandica, auction held on 18 September 1742 (The Hague: Johannes Swart, 1724); Catalogus Van een schoone Party keurlyke Nederduitsche, Fransche en Latynsche Boeken, auction held on 1 May 1764 (Groningen: Hajo Spandaw, 1764).

56 Johan Nieuhof, *Het gezantschap der Neêrlandsche Oost-Indische compagnie, aan den grooten Tartarischen Cham, den tegenwoordigen keizer van China* (Antwerp: Michiel Knobbaert [Amsterdam: Jacob van Meurs], 1666).

57 Guido van Meersbergen, ‘De uitgeversstrategie van Jacob van Meurs belicht. De Amsterdamse en “Antwerpse” edities van Johan Nieuhofs Gezantschap (1665–1666)’, *De Zeventiende Eeuw*, 26.1 (2010), pp. 73–90.

58 Het profssie huys der Societeyt Jesu, in Nieuhof, *Het gezantschap*, title page.
and all the bitter and cruel persecutions they have endured there because of their faith’.\textsuperscript{59}

Van Meurs did not simply alter the paratext to appeal to this new Catholic audience; in many places, the main text was completely rewrittten.\textsuperscript{60} In the Southern Netherlands, fewer people invested in Dutch trade with China, and Van Meurs adapted the text accordingly by removing these details from his ‘Antwerp’ edition.\textsuperscript{61} Yet, even when the references to Dutch trade were toned down considerably, the chapter ‘About the Chinese religion or sects’ remains (albeit abbreviated) more or less intact. However, the title of this chapter no longer specifically mentions ‘philosophies’ and focuses solely on ‘religion’ and ‘sects’. Even though the term ‘sects’ may have been relatively neutral in early

\textsuperscript{59} ‘Een nauwkeurigh verhaal, van al ‘t geen de Jesuiten in China, verrecht, en wat al ijzelijke en wrede vervolgingen zo aldaar om ‘t geloof uit gestaan en geleden hebben’, in Nieuhof, \textit{Het gezantschap}, title page.

\textsuperscript{60} Van Meersbergen, ‘De uitgeversstrategie van Jacob van Meurs belicht’, p. 85.

\textsuperscript{61} For more examples on the extent to which the ‘Antwerp’ edition differs from the ‘Amsterdam’ edition see Van Meersbergen, ‘De uitgeversstrategie van Jacob van Meurs belicht’.
modern Europe, ‘religion’ was decidedly not. The content of the chapter nevertheless follows the same approach towards Chinese religion and philosophy as the Amsterdam edition of 1665: the Jesuit argumentation is adopted almost verbatim. Clearly, these different perspectives adopted by Van Meurs in the publication of the Amsterdam and Antwerp editions of *Het gezantschap* demonstrates the power of the publisher in influencing the possible interpretation of the texts.

In 1670, five years after *Het gezantschap*, Jacob van Meurs tried his hand at another lavishly illustrated folio: Olfert Dapper’s *Gedenkwaerdig bedryf der Nederlandsche Oost-Indische Maetschappye, op de kust en in het keizerrijk van Taising of Sina*. As Dapper never travelled beyond the borders of the Dutch Republic, his book relied on descriptions of others; for instance, Baltasar Bort’s expedition to China in the early 1660s and Pieter van Hoorn’s official second Dutch embassy to the Forbidden City of 1666. As a result, *Gedenkwaerdig bedryf* offers one of the most comprehensive descriptions of the Middle Kingdom of its time.

The work consists of two parts. Volume one relates how the Dutch lost Formosa in 1661 and their attempts to regain the island by negotiating with Chinese officials in Fujian. It also includes an account of Pieter van Hoorn’s embassy to the Chinese emperor and an extensive general description of China, mainly taken from Trigault, Semedo, Martini, and Kircher. The second volume *Beschryving des keizerryks van Taising of Sina* (‘Description of the empire of China or Taising’), contains material from almost every major seventeenth century source on China. Again, the Jesuit accounts were the most important source, yet Dapper also included Mendoza’s work, as well as that of various Dutch writers: most notably, Johan Nieuhof’s *Het gezantschap*. Dapper’s

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62 Olfert Dapper, *Gedenkwaerdig bedryf der Nederlandsche Oost-Indische Maetschappye, op de kust en in het keizerrijk van Taising of Sina* (Amsterdam: Jacob van Meurs, 1670). Jacob van Meurs did not remain idle after *Het gezantschap*: within five years he published the French, German, and Latin translations of Nieuhof as well as the second edition in Dutch. Between 1665 and 1670, Van Meurs issued an additional 11 books, all travelogues or descriptions of foreign countries: *Fransche Merkurius, of Bondige beschrijving van geheel Vrankrijk* (1666), Athanasius’s Kircher’s *China illustrata* (1667), Olfert Dapper’s *Naukeurige beschrijvinge der Afrikaensche eylanden* (1668) and *Naukeurige beschrijvinge der Afrikaensche gewesten* (1668) and their translations in German, Arnoldus Montanus’s *Gedenkwaerdige gesantschappen der Oost-Indische Maatschappy aan de kaisaren van Japan* (1669) in two editions and a German translation, Christian Wilhelm Hagdorn’s *Äyquan, oder der grosse Mongol* (1670), and, of course, Olfert Dapper’s *Gedenkwaerdig bedryf der Nederlandsche Oost-Indische Maetschappye, op de kust en in het keizerrijk van Taising of Sina* (1670).

63 Dapper, *Gedenkwaerdig bedryf*, title page.
book was also lavishly illustrated with copper plates, among them four large engravings of Buddhist iconography, obviously based on Chinese examples.\textsuperscript{64} The descriptions of religion and philosophy closely follow Nieuhof, which is not surprising as they both used similar sources.

Dapper’s chapter on religion starts out with the now-familiar remark that three sects existed in China: that of the learned men, of the idolaters, and of the immortals.\textsuperscript{65} Likewise, when discussing the philosophy of Confucius, the assertion is made that this sect did not worship idols. The followers of Confucius are praised for their main commandments, which centred around peace, prosperity, and education. Then follows a long exposition on the life of Confucius and the struggles and tribulations he had to endure during his early years. Before introducing the Four Books of Confucius and their contents, Dapper asserted that ‘Confucius does not take the place of a god, but is honoured by observances, which attest to an appreciative heart for the doctrine expounded by him’.\textsuperscript{66} He also stressed the similarities between China and Europe by comparing Confucius with Plato, Pythagoras, and other classical thinkers and, again, he made the statement that ‘it is very likely that Confucius has known the true God’.\textsuperscript{67}

The general description of China and specifically that of Chinese religion and philosophy is much more elaborate in Dapper’s \textit{Gedenkwaerdig bedryf} than in Nieuhof’s \textit{Het gezantschap}. However, the general gist in terms of content and interpretation is the same. Both books targeted an audience of Dutch readers with interests in trade and the situation of the \textit{voc} in Asia. Indeed, the same book sales catalogues (as discussed above) reveal that many of the people who owned Nieuhof’s work also had a copy of \textit{Gedenkwaerdig bedryf}.\textsuperscript{68}

However, Van Meurs may have overplayed his hand. The potential market for such books was relatively small, owing both to the high cost of the product and the specific interests of the readers. According to the notarial archive of Amsterdam, Van Meurs did not sell all his copies of Dapper and Nieuhof. In 1678, Van Meurs was summoned to the Amsterdam court by the notary of fellow bookseller, Otto Koper.\textsuperscript{69} In 1674, Van Meurs’s daughter Sara had

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{64} Dapper, \textit{Gedenkwaerdig bedryf}, title page.
\item \textsuperscript{65} Dapper, \textit{Gedenkwaerdig bedryf}, p. 81.
\item \textsuperscript{66} Dapper, \textit{Gedenkwaerdig bedryf}, p. 93 (my emphasis).
\item \textsuperscript{67} Dapper, \textit{Gedenkwaerdig bedryf}, p. 97.
\item \textsuperscript{68} For an overview of the auction sale catalogue consulted, see note 55.
\item \textsuperscript{69} Gemeente Amsterdam Stadsarchief: 5075 Archief van de notarissen ter standplaats Amsterdam. Notarieel archief Jacob van Loosdrecht, 1998–2018, minuutacten van compromissen en inventarissen. See also Kleerkooper and Van Stockum, \textit{De boekhandel te Amsterdam}: p. 423.
\end{itemize}
married Koper, yet the bride price of 12,000 ‘Carolus guilders’ was still due four years later. As compensation, Koper would receive several books published by Van Meurs. Among the 3,000 rebate books, with a combined value of 9,000 guilders, were ‘five hundred copies of the description of Asia’, and ‘three hundred copies of the description of America’. Two books were mentioned specifically: ‘a hundred and fifty copies of the first part of the description of China, Nieuhof’s embassy’, and ‘four hundred and fifty copies of the second and third part of the embassy or description of China’. Besides works in Dutch, Coper was also allotted various works in German, including ‘three hundred and fifty copies of the ... first part of Nieuhof’s embassy’, and ‘one hundred and fifty copies of the second and third part of China’. Koper received those books without the engravings, which still had to be printed. In total, Koper received almost a million pages of printed paper from the bargain, yet he lacked the 150,000 engravings that would make the books sellable.70

By the time the case of Otto Koper versus Jacob van Meurs was presented before the Amsterdam court in 1678, *Het gezantschap* (1665) and *Gedenkwaerdig bedryf* (1670) were at least eight years old. The German edition of Nieuhof was older still, having been published twelve years prior in 1666. This court case tells us that Van Meurs had not been able to clear his stock of these books within a decade after publication. How many books remained unsold? We know that, in the second half of the seventeenth century, an edition generally averaged 750 to 1,250 copies. This number is confirmed by another appearance Van Meurs made before the court in Amsterdam when he secured a contract with printer Jean Gerard to produce 1,000 copies of the Latin translation of Nieuhof.71 If we follow this number, it appears that 15 to 45 percent of Van Meurs’s editions of Nieuhof and Dapper were not sold within eight years. Van Meurs seemingly overestimated the number of people willing and able to buy such a monumental work, with the consequence that the market for large and expensively illustrated folios was soon saturated. In fact, 15 years later, we find on the stock-list for publisher Andriaen Moetjes from The Hague that he still

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70 Pettegree and Der Weduwen, *The bookshop of the world*, pp. 116–117.
71 For information on the general output of printers see Van Selm, “... te bekomen voor een civielen prijs”, pp. 98–116; Gemeente Amsterdam Stadsarchief: 5075 Archief van de notarissen ter standplaats Amsterdam. Notarieel archief Johanne Hellerus, 2049–2082, minuutacten in ‘Protocol’; Kleerkooper and van Stockum, *De boekhandel te Amsterdam*, pp. 419–420.
had some copies of Nieuhof for sale, probably referring to the Latin edition of 1668.\textsuperscript{72} While the publication of Johan Nieuhof’s \textit{Het gezantschap} and Olfert Dapper’s \textit{Gedenkwaerdig bedryf} was less of an economic success than expected, Van Meurs nevertheless influenced representations of China by way of his innovative publishing strategy.\textsuperscript{73} Besides creating a greater impact through his copper engravings of the Middle Kingdom, Van Meurs's biggest contribution was that he made Jesuit sources widely available in books on foreign countries that were not necessarily aimed at a Catholic readership. By combining sources that were once only available in Latin (or in a severely abbreviated form), Van Meurs had adapted knowledge on China with a distinctively Jesuit viewpoint for a broader public of readers.

In the last quarter of the seventeenth century, an increasing number of books on China were published in the Dutch Republic. Thanks to Jacob van Meurs’s publications, authors and writers now had easier access to knowledge about the Middle Kingdom. These authors and writers broadened the transtextual reach of knowledge and used China in a variety of ways: from supplementing descriptions of the non-European world or a general exposition on religion, to illustrating seemingly barely relevant writings with ‘fun facts’ \textit{avant la lettre}.

3 Compilations of All Things China

The object of the study of literary discourse is ‘not the text but its textual transcendence, its textual link with other texts’.\textsuperscript{74} In the case of the works discussed in this chapter, these transtextual links became more distinct in the last decades of the century. China was no longer the sole subject of large monographs and the Middle Kingdom was invoked whenever required, often alongside descriptions of other foreign regions and peoples. Regarding China,
it was not simply intertextuality at its most basic level that influenced the manner in which the country could be interpreted by readers. As will become clear, almost the entire corpus of Dutch texts about the divergent foreign world became involved in shaping images of the religion and philosophy of the Middle Kingdom. The Dutch professional writer Simon de Vries is a good example of this phenomenon. He collected much that could be known about China from printed sources and assembled them in his *Curieuse aenmerckingen der bysonderste Oost en West-Indische verwonderens-waerdige dingen* of 1682. However, the information was arranged in such a manner that his descriptions of Chinese religion and philosophy could only be understood and explained in relation to the texts he had sourced his information from.

In the second half of the seventeenth century, publishing strategies concerning the Middle Kingdom became increasingly focused on introducing Chinese curiosities into texts. A genre of ‘catalogues of wonder’, resembling the *livres des merveilles* of the late Middle Ages, emerged during the second half of the seventeenth century. These books focused on curiosities of the natural world, and the recently discovered territories of Asia, Africa, and America provided ample inspiration. Not surprisingly, this genre appealed to the ambitions of the ‘cultural entrepreneur’. Many Dutch producers, among them Lambertus van den Bosch, Petrus de Lange, and Simon de Vries, employed (and perhaps exploited) China and its religious and philosophical customs according to the decidedly economic laws of cultural consumption. The supposed tastes and wishes of the intended audience were the decisive factor in the representation of the Middle Kingdom. This is, of course, not to say that individual sentiments, be they religious, cultural, or political, played no part, but a common perspective can be discerned.

These prevalent and somewhat collective characteristics of China are composed of various elements. One element is the role of the Jesuits: clearly visible, as they had provided the bulk of information. In this regard, the Jesuits are invoked either directly or indirectly through references to intermediaries such as Nieuhof and Dapper. However, as the following paragraphs demonstrate, the relationship between Jesuit information and Dutch authorship proved somewhat strenuous. Another element contained in these descriptions is the fact that they are coloured by Dutch mercantile interests in the Asian world; more so because the second tier of information from merchants consisted of travelogues, writings on trade and (to a lesser extent) conquest. Yet, the decisive element in how descriptions of China could and would be interpreted by

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75 Eric Jorink, *Het ‘boeck der natuere’. Nederlandse geleerden en de wonderen van Gods schaping, 1573–1715* (Leiden: Primavera Pers, 2006), pp. 361–395.
the more general public was not so much determined by what was written, but more by how this information was arranged on the pages of the respective books. Since China was rarely the sole topic or theme but usually part of expositions on the foreign world, the arrangement of information heavily influenced its representation to the early modern Dutch public.\textsuperscript{76}

Arguably, this new genre led to the increasing ‘fragmentation’ of books on China. One example of this phenomenon is Lambertus van den Bosch’s ‘\textit{t Oude nieuws der ontdekte weereld}’ of 1667.\textsuperscript{77} This rambling collection of famous cities, palaces, temples, towers, churches, mountains, bridges, ships, trees, and plants devoted much space to China; in fact, the country occupies more lines than any other area outside Europe.\textsuperscript{78} Petrus de Lange’s \textit{Wonderen des werelds} of 1671 is a similar collection of curiosities.\textsuperscript{79} In only two pages, this little-known writer from Amsterdam discusses diverse subjects ranging from ‘how women are punished by their spouses’, ‘the horrible practice of eating humans’, ‘sheep grazing on the roof of houses’, to ‘a Jew was murdered in secret, and why’.\textsuperscript{80} None of these events referred to the same country, time, or place; nevertheless, they were grouped together to illustrate ‘excellent rarities and things of wonderment’.\textsuperscript{81} De Lange, of course, mentioned China, that country on the other side of the world with its strange customs of ‘nobody may rule in his city of birth’, ‘the wonderful wall of China’, and the more curious ‘sea that changes iron into copper’.\textsuperscript{82} There seems little rhyme or reason in the subjects chosen by De Lange, even though his references mention Athanasius Kircher and Van Linschoten. This seemingly random attitude towards collation of information is perhaps best expressed in De Lange’s preface: the book was simply meant as ‘a sweetmeat’ or ‘appetiser’ for curious readers. In the last decades of the seventeenth century, China provided enough fodder for anyone ready to engage in theological, political, and economic discourse. Yet the country also began to provide more than enough material for entertainment and wonder.

\textsuperscript{76} Georg Lehner, \textit{China in European encyclopaedias, 1700–1850} (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011), pp. 1–7.
\textsuperscript{77} Lambert van den Bosch, ‘\textit{t Oude nieuws der ontdekte weereld}’ (Amsterdam: Cornelis Jansz Zwol, 1667).
\textsuperscript{78} Van Kley, ‘\textit{Qing dynasty China in seventeenth-century Dutch literature}’, pp. 217–234.
\textsuperscript{79} Petrus de Lange, \textit{Wonderen des werelds} (Amsterdam: Marcus Willemsz Doornick, 1671); E.O.G. Oste Gaspard and Anton van der Lem, \textit{Repertorium van geschiedschrijvers in Nederland, 1500–1800} (The Hague: Nederlands Historisch Genootschap, 2000), lemma 287.
\textsuperscript{80} De Lange, \textit{Wonderen des werelds}, pp. 150–151.
\textsuperscript{81} ‘De uytstekenste vreemdigheden en verwonderenswaerdige saken’, De Lange, \textit{Wonderen des werelds}, title page.
\textsuperscript{82} ‘In China mach niemandt in sijn geboorte stadt regeeren’, ‘Wonderlijkce muur in China’, ‘Zee die ‘t Yser in Koper verandert’, in De Lange, \textit{Wonderen des werelds}, p. 6, p. 73, p. 82.
Simon de Vries’s *Curieuse aenmerckingen der bysonderste Oost en West-Indische verwonderens-waerdige dingen* (‘Curious remarks of the most special East and West Indian things’) of 1682 collected as much as could be known about China from published sources.\(^83\) According to the title page, De Vries aimed to present his readers with ‘everything important, that has ever meticulously been recorded by a great number of credible eyewitnesses from all over Europe, about rarities of these countries: the shape of the earth, mountains, crops, seas and rivers, morals and religions of the people, &c.’.\(^84\) The title further pointed out that this wealth of information was based on eyewitness reports, and had been ‘put in order and enhanced with investigative as well as comparing discussions’ by De Vries himself.\(^85\) This resulted in ‘a superb example of what could be known about China in 1682 from published sources.’\(^86\)

*Curieuse aenmerckingen der bysonderste Oost en West-Indische dingen* was published by Johannes Ribbius of Utrecht in 1682. The work appeared in two volumes in four parts, illustrated with 65 engravings made by Romeyn de Hooghe. A dedication by Ribbius to the ‘Gentlemen … great authorities of the

\(^83\) Simon de Vries, *Curieuse aenmerckingen der bysonderste Oost en West-Indische verwonderens-waerdige dingen* (Utrecht: Johannes Ribbius, 1682).

\(^84\) ‘t Voornaemste van alles, wat oyt nauwkeurighs en seldsaems van deese landen, ten opsight van der selver gelegenheyd is ondervonden en opgeteeckend van een seer groote meenigthe der geloofwaerdighste ooghgetuygen onder meest al de natien in Europa: gestalte der aerd, bergh-wercken, gewassen, zeeën, rivieren, seeden en godsdiensten der menschen, &c.;’ in De Vries, *Curieuse aenmerckingen*, title page.

\(^85\) ‘Is ondervonden en opgeteeckend van een seer groote meenigteder geloofwaerdighste ooghgetuygen onder meest al de natien in Europa. En uyt deselve in een bequaeme orde gebragt; oock soo met ondersoecckende als vergelijkckende redenvoering verhandeldt,’ in De Vries, *Curieuse aenmerckingen*, title page.

\(^86\) Van Kley, ‘Qing dynasty China in seventeenth-century Dutch literature’, p. 229; Arianne Baggerman, *Een drukkend gewicht. Leven en werk van de zeventiende eeuwse veelschrijver Simon de Vries* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993), pp. 269–302; Trude Dijkstra, “Tot eeuwige memorie de druckerye-konste”. Simon de Vries’s discourse on the Chinese art of print (1682), *Quaerendo*, 48.4 (2018), pp. 206–232. Indeed, De Vries could easily access a substantial number of books on China; according to the book sales catalogue made after his death in 1708, he held the following in his collection: Nieuhof’s *Het gezantschap* in three copies (1665) and *Zee en lantreize door Oostindien* (1682), Dapper’s *Gedenckwaerdig bedryf* in three copies (1670), *Naukeurige beschryving van Asia* (1672) and (1680), and *Naukeurige beschryving van Asie waarin Arabie, Mesopotamie, Babylon* (1678), Kircher’s *Tooneel van China* (1667), Van Linschoten’s *Voyasie, ofte schip-vaert* [1624], and *Itinerarium* [1596], Louis Le Comte’s *Beschryvinge van het machtige keyserryk China* (1698), Charles le Gobien’s *Histoire de l’édit de l’empereur de la Chine* (1698), Martini’s *Historie van den Tartarschen oorloch* [1654], and Cornelis de Bruyn’s *Reizen* (1698). See *Catalogues van veele schoone Neder-en eenige Hoog-Duitsche boeken, nagelaten by Simon de Vries* (Utrecht: Willem van de Water, 1708).
FIGURE 21 Frontispiece by Romeyn de Hooghe in Simon de Vries, Curieuse aenmerckingen der bysonderste Oost en West-Indische dingen (Utrecht: Johannes Ribbius, 1682) Allard Pierson Amsterdam (OG 63-1453-1456)
Dutch East India Company’ is found in the first part.\(^8^7\) Each of the work’s four parts holds numerous references to China. Since the first volume is devoted to the natural and cultural world broadly defined, the Middle Kingdom is used to illustrate such varied subjects as ‘tree wool [cotton] is very much prevalent’, to ‘Chisung, a marvellous wind-predicting herb’.\(^8^8\) The second volume dealt with the geography of various Asian and American countries, in which China’s curious ‘yellow earth’, ‘special caves’, and ‘mountains, famous for some remarkable examples’ provide enough interesting reading material.\(^8^9\) Here, De Vries also referenced the religion and philosophy of China: he noted that the Chinese ‘Pussa and the Japanese Amida’, were the same gods as the Greek Cybele and Isis. He guessed that perhaps this Ancient European idolatry was shipped to Asia, where the Chinese apparently were also familiar with the ‘two-and four headed Janus the old, and the hundred-handed Briareus’.\(^9^0\)

The third part is specifically devoted to religion, philosophy, idolatry, devil-worship and everything in between. The chapters bear titles such as ‘the heathen processions’, ‘the chastisement of the flesh’, ‘the beautiful houses of idolatry’, and ‘the false religion and horrible devil-service’.\(^9^1\) Interestingly, the reader is not told which countries, regions, or even continents these chapter titles refer to. However, the table of contents to this volume proves to be more enlightening when it comes to denoting the peoples related to these various subjects. However, this table also immediately points to a fundamental characteristic of Curieuse aenmerckingen: since De Vries aimed to inform his readers about ‘wondrous East and West Indian things’, the resulting amalgamation of the whole world (with the exception of Europe) into one narrative could

\(^8^7\) ‘Heeren … Groot-Gesaghheberen der Oost-Indische Maatschappye’, in De Vries, Curieuse aenmerckingen, dedication.

\(^8^8\) ‘Boom-wol is in China seer meenigvuldigh’, and ‘Chisung, een wonderlijck wind-voorsegend kruid in China’, in De Vries, Curieuse aenmerckingen, register 1.

\(^8^9\) ‘Geele aerde in China’, ‘In China, van een bysondere grotte’, ‘Bergen in China, beroemd door eenige aenmercklijcke gevallen’, in De Vries, Curieuse aenmerckingen, register 11.

\(^9^0\) ‘De Chineesche Pussa en de iapansche Amida’, ‘Den twee en vier-hoofdigen Janus der Oude, en van den honderdhandigen Briareus’, in De Vries, p. 596. The Chinese Pussa may well refer to Guanyin 觀世音, and the Japanese Amida to Amitabha 阿弥陀仏, and 阿弥陀如来. This correlation comes from Athanasius Kircher, who equates the Chinese ‘Pussai, a Buddhist Bodhisattva, with ‘Cybele or Isis of the Chinese’, an idol that was probably worshipped by the Brahmins. See also: Thijs Weststeijn, ‘The Chinese Isis, or the Sino-Egyptian hypnotises’, in Miguel John Versluys (ed.), Temple – monument – lieu de mémoire. The Iseum Campense from the Roman empire to the modern age (Rome: Edizioni Quasar: 2019), pp. 301–313.

\(^9^1\) ‘De heydensche processien’, ‘De kastijdingh des vleesch’, ‘De praghtige afgods-huysen’, ‘De valsche Gods-dienst, en grouwlijcke Duyvels-dienst’, in De Vries, Curieuse aenmerckingen, register 111.
perhaps be described, at best, as ‘informed confusion’. This approach may constitute a form of transtextuality which is concerned not so much with *other* texts that are juxtaposed against the focus text, but those that sets the text in relationship with itself. In other words, how is De Vries’s description of China related to other descriptions of foreign countries and their systems of belief?

This phenomenon may be referred to as ‘interparatextuality’, whereby intertextuality’s interconnection between similar or related works can be understood within the context of the paratext’s clarifying designation of the relation between one text and its surroundings.\(^{92}\) Take for instance, the general subject of ‘idols’. The index lists all subjects to be discussed under this header:

Idols of the Indian heathens, horned devil statues, ten thousand statues in a building, foolish piety and ridiculous compassion of a Chinese emperor for an idol, horrible idols in the Indian temples of the Benjans [merchants from Eastern Mughal empire], whether the Chinese literati worship idols or not, large crowd of Chinese idols. Materials of which these idols are made, the statue of Miniso, the god of lechery in China. About the god of immortality, and how he is pictured. The idol of Ticam, which is the Chinese Pluto, other Plutonians [kings of the Underworld] which stand with him. The bellies of Chinese idols are full of gold, silver and precious stones; the appearance of the statue of the Chinese idol Kingangh; the statue of a false goddess – thirty feet high – thickly gilded and silver plated. A stone idol which moved itself to its position; twelve-hundred large statues of men for the temple of the idol Tanhinarels, all made of copper; a sinisterly large copper snake, which holds with his tail a horrible man-sized statue a hundred feet high. A female statue with a horrible countenance, which represents the goddess of fire; the god of the stormy winds and how it is designed. Japanese idols; idols of the creator of all things; many headed idols of the Indian heathens; other idols and the wonders which the heathens attribute to them. The length of the idols after Adam’s size are fifty feet tall. Idols and idolatry in Pegu [Myanmar], in the temple of the idol Tinagogo; expensive idols in Peru; statues of bears, that are house gods in Jucatan.\(^{93}\)

\(^{92}\) Not to be confused with ‘paraintertextuality’, where paratexts exploit their paratextual forebears.

\(^{93}\) *Afgods-beelden der Indiaensche heydenen, gehoornde duyvels-beelden, thien-duysend beelden in een gebouw, dwaese godvruchtigheyd en belagchlijck meedelijden eener keyseren van China tegens een afgods-beeld, afgrijslijcke afgods-beelden in d’Indiaensche tempelen der Benjansen, andere afgrijslijck afgods-beeld, of de geleerde in China d’afgodsbekliden eeren of niet, groote meenighte der Chinesesche afgods beelden.*
In this recital, China certainly takes pride of place, just as it does on the title page and in the preface, yet the country and its customs nevertheless get lost in the seemingly endless summaries of topics discussed by De Vries. As a result, the readers are introduced to the intricacies of Chinese religion and philosophy and are challenged to interpret and digest this information alongside knowledge about many other (completely different) foreign belief systems. Can a subject as complex as ‘whether the Chinese literati worship idols or not’ truly be introduced as unbiased, as this statement tries to indicate, when it is preceded by titles such as ‘horrible idols in the temple of the Benjans’ and followed by ‘statue of Miniso, god of lechery’ (hardly a commendable quality for a deity)?

The index also points to two chapters in the main body of the text in which Chinese religion and philosophy are discussed in more detail. Chapter vi on ‘the idols’ begins with an exposition on Indian religion and idolatry, or ‘the fables of the Indian Braminen’. After several pages that recited the names of all these Indian idols, the ‘sect of the literati in China’ is introduced. While De Vries, according to the reference, obtained his information from Trigault, it seems that he does not entirely adhere to the Jesuit perspective. Like many writers before him, De Vries condemned the sects of Buddhism and Taoism outright. Yet, counter to the Jesuit perspective (adopted in large part by Nieuhof and Dapper), he also showed some reserve towards the teachings of Confucius:

Trigault expressly states, that this sect of the literati in China honour no idols, but believe in one god, who rules everything under the heavens. However, they also do honour some spirits, yet with small honours....

94 De Vries, Curieuse aenmerckingen, p. 149.
Nevertheless, the best among the literati do not recognise this highest and true God for the creator of the world. [They] also do not believe in the beginning of this world, but an eternity of the same.95

De Vries did indeed provide information about the Confucian absence of idol veneration, which was essential to the argumentation of the Jesuits; however, he immediately retracts from this position by the qualifying terms of 'however' and 'nevertheless'.

The next chapter on 'the false religion, and horrible devil-service' follows a similar pattern. Again, the text begins with India, where (according to De Vries) three distinct 'main-religions' (notice the use of the term religion) are customary: that of the Christians, Mohammedans, and the heathens.96 De Vries had more than enough ammunition to attack both the Mohammedans and the heathens; Christianity is, of course, praised. However, like some Dutch authors before him, he revealed his dislike for the Society of Jesus by remarking that the progress of Christianity in India was not helped by the Jesuit presence there: 'In passing, we have to mention that the progress of the Christian religion in the empire of the Mughals by the Jesuits is not very large'.97 Yet, he may have exaggerated somewhat when recounting how, 'through the diligence of the reformed teachers [Calvinist missionaries] 62,558 Christians men and women are found in the small region of Jasnapatan in Ceylon'.98

After an earlier-announced exposition on the numerous religions and philosophies of Asia, from Hindustan and Calcutta and the coast of Coromandel to Siam, the chapter arrives at China on page 235. This section essentially consists of a summary of De Christiana expeditione apud Sinas. The familiar three sects are discussed and, again, the sect of Confucius takes pride of place,
because ‘those belonging to this sect do not worship statues but a single god’.99 However, unlike Ricci and Trigault, De Vries paid scant attention to Confucius, providing neither a biography nor a description of his teachings. The sect of the literati is examined in detail, but the connection with Confucius is not explicitly made. De Vries did mention the conflict between Confucianism and neo-Confucianism, in which the Jesuits had been involved since their first foray into China.100 In the context of De Vries’s general description, this short mention of the conflict makes little sense, yet in the following decades authors would return again and again to the question of Chinese orthodoxy represented by the discord between the ancient and modern Chinese interpretations of the teachings of Confucius. This debate becomes most visible in the learned journals which were published during the second half of the seventeenth century. How China and Confucius are discussed in these journals will be the subject of chapter 4.

In his accounts on ‘the false religion’ of China, De Vries relied heavily on Ricci and Trigault. With a few minor exceptions, he seems to follow the Jesuits when it concerns the interpretation of Chinese religion and philosophy, even though the emphasis on Confucius is reduced. While the content may very well be comparable, the presumed interpretation by both author and reader is not. De Vries deliberately chose to keep his description of China to a limited length ‘to make our treatise not too big’, which would allow him to ‘recount in short something about the false gods and devil-worships of some other people’.101 This is probably also the reason why his exposition on Confucius is rather brief; aside from the issue of length, it would only distract from the general summary of religious and philosophical ideas. Regardless of minor changes in the content, the image of the various Chinese systems of belief are first and foremost shaped by the surrounding text through interparatextuality. Both the paratextual elements, the titles of the chapters, the use of comments in the margins, and the construction of the index, together with the content of preceding and successive sections primed readers to view China in a certain light, which was aimed at defining notions of foreign religion and philosophy as idolatrous. That De Vries may have demonstrated his skills in effectively summarising a wealth of sources by exhibiting a relatively nuanced understanding of Ricci and Trigault is therefore of secondary importance, as

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99 ‘Degeene, die ‘t met deese secte houden, zyn aen geenen beelden-dienst verknoght, maer eeren een enige God’, in De Vries, Curieuse aenmerckingen, p. 236.
100 Rule, K’ung-tzu or Confucius, pp. 76–173.
101 ‘We moeten de Chineesen verlaeten, om onse voorverhandelingh niet al te groot te doen worden; en sullen kortlijck noch vets verhaelen van de valsche Gods jae oock Duyvels-diensten eeniger anderer Volckeren’, in De Vries, Curieuse aenmerckingen, p. 248.
The Dutch Commodification of Confucius

the consumers of the book must have been highly skilled in the act of reading to separate the Chinese wheat from the more general foreign chaff.

By the last quarter of the seventeenth century, Dutch demand for information about the non-European world had outstripped the supply of travelogues of writers who had actually been overseas. To cater to the growing public wanting to buy printed materials on the subject of Asia, Dutch printers and publishers started to churn out a variety of compilations penned down by professional writers. Besides satisfying the need for additional publications, these works also met the needs of readers who (for whatever reason) were not in the position to buy or read the wealth of books already available. In his preface, De Vries identified five groups of potential readers. The first were those for whom the purchase of books would soon prove too costly (‘sou ‘t te kostlijck vallen’). The second group comprised of readers who had the money but not the time to read ‘so many writers’. The third category lacked the necessary knowledge of foreign languages; the fourth group might have had the money, time and skill of language, but not the desire to read such a great number of books. And rightly so, according to De Vries. Many travelogues were needlessly long-winded, and much content overlapped between books anyway. The last group consisted of those who lacked the necessary knowledge to independently read and analyse travelogues: they were not really in a position to judge ‘who has best recorded the subject [and] captured it the neatest’.

While De Vries also worked as a bookseller and publisher in Utrecht, he at least partially depended on income gained from his writings, with the consequence that these publications needed to appeal to as large an audience as possible. Here, the difference between liefhebber, the amateur with a love for the art, and ‘professional’ is of importance. The benevolent and appreciative amateur writes for his or her own pleasure (and perhaps that of like-minded...
readers). In contrast, it is no coincidence that both the Dutch word for a professional writer, *broodschrijver* (literally ‘bread-writer’) and the English equivalent of ‘potboiler’, announce how the main purpose of the literary creator was to pay for daily expenses.¹⁰⁶ Both expressions (along with the related ‘hack-writer’) also include in their definition that notion that the writings, which resulted from such labours, cater to popular taste. This is also indicative in Simon de Vries’s books, which attempted to appeal to a more general readership of people interested in Asia. While he did not exactly write for the ‘masses’, his preface alludes to how a more general Dutch readership could perceive the Middle Kingdom during the later Golden Age.

De Vries never travelled beyond the borders of the Dutch Republic, yet his *Curieuse aenmerckingen* offered an excellent summary of European knowledge about the East and West Indies during the final decades of the seventeenth century. Such compilations were highly valued in their time as they offered the essence of writings in an easily digestible form. While much of De Vries’s writings are unapologetically derivative and contain little new information, it would be a mistake to regard his books as ‘mere compilations’.¹⁰⁷ In his analysis of Dapper, Adam Jones has rightly asked the question whether ‘we can really afford to relegate [compilations] to the status of a secondary source and concentrate our attention on more important works?’⁴⁸ Primary sources might always remain ‘those pieces of information which stand in the most intimate relationship to an event or process in the present state of our knowledge’; however, an examination of De Vries offers perspectives on Chinese religion and philosophy and its culture of print that go beyond the mercantile and missionary view of the primary sources and focuses on that of the cultural entrepreneur.¹⁰⁹

The large majority of books on China published in the Dutch Republic during the second half of the seventeenth century were the result of carefully construed cultural entrepreneurial strategies. Motivated by economic and cultural considerations, producers developed new and different ways to present China to as large an audience as possible. Cultural entrepreneurs like Jacob van Meurs, Jan Jansz Deutel, and Simon de Vries were focal points around which new ideas coalesced, and their publications rapidly disseminated new ideas.

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¹⁰⁶ *Merriam Webster Online*, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/potboiler, last accessed 23 August 2021.
¹⁰⁷ Adam Jones, ‘Decompiling Dapper. A preliminary search for evidence’, *History in Africa*, 17 (1990), p. 171–209.
¹⁰⁸ Jones, ‘Decompiling Dapper’, p. 180.
¹⁰⁹ David Henige, ‘The race is not always to the swift. Thoughts on the use of written sources for the study of early African history’, *Paideuma*, 33 (1987), pp. 53–79, p. 54.
about Chinese religion and philosophy in print. Their publications engaged in varying degrees with the Middle Kingdom, moving from distant by way of functionally indifferent to digestible.

One of the most popular Dutch books of the seventeenth century was Willem IJsbrantsz Bontekoe’s *Journael* of 1646. As this chapter revealed, China played an important supporting role in this book, particularly, as the foreign ‘foil’ to Bontekoe’s swashbuckling exploits. As this was clearly the publishing strategy of Jan Jansz Deutel, the religion and philosophy of China are hardly mentioned. Nonetheless, this type of representation is helpful as this ‘functionally indifferent’ attitude may indicate a more generally held attitude towards China. These inconsistent and rather indifferent characterisations of Chinese religion and philosophy may reflect the perceptions of a less affluent and not particularly intellectual Dutch readership.

In the second half of the seventeenth century, publisher Jacob van Meurs adapted earlier travelogues and Jesuit accounts in such a manner that the resulting representation of Chinese religion and philosophy became broadly appealing and easily ‘digestible’. Johan Nieuhof and Olfert Dapper’s heavily illustrated books on China were not always economically successful; yet, Van Meurs’s publishing strategy was certainly innovative. He relied largely on Jesuit sources in his representation of Chinese religion and philosophy and, since the mercantile interest of his readers often coincided with the missionary perspective of the Jesuits, Van Meurs modified his descriptions only slightly. His detailed and lavish copper engravings would have an impact on visual imagery of China; however, his greatest contribution was to make Jesuit sources widely accessible in books on foreign countries to a larger, non-Catholic demographic. By combining sources that were previously only available in Latin or in severely abbreviated form, Van Meurs adapted knowledge on China with a definite Jesuit viewpoint for a broader public of readers.

By the last quarter of the seventeenth century, an increasing number of books on China were published in the Dutch Republic. Authors, writers, and publishers had easier access to knowledge about the Middle Kingdom. They broadened the transtextual reach of China, utilising the country in a variety of ways. The Middle Kingdom was no longer primarily the subject of large monographs. Instead, information about the country was fragmented, invoked alongside descriptions of other foreign regions and peoples. Therefore, it was not just intertextuality that influenced the manner in which China was represented. The entirety of Dutch works on Asia, Africa, and the Americas came to be involved in the formation of images of Chinese religion and philosophy, as we saw with Simon de Vries’s *Curieuse aenmerckingen*. This process may be considered interparatextuality, where representations of Chinese
religion and philosophy were understood in relation to its surrounding texts on other countries.

The growth and diversity of representations of Chinese religion and philosophy would provide fertile ground for the future. In the 1700s, readers became increasingly occupied with the Middle Kingdom and knowledge about Chinese religion and philosophy reached its early modern apogee in 1687 with the publication of *Confucius Sinarum philosophus* by Daniel Horthemels in Paris. This, like many other texts we have encountered, was a Jesuit project. It was the first annotated Latin translation of three of the Four Books that traditionally made up the Confucian canon, and the knowledge it contained would go on to greatly influence the European debate on Chinese religion and philosophy. Even though it was a Jesuit undertaking, many non-Jesuit actors were involved in the production process of translating, editing, publishing, explaining, and criticising the translation of Confucius. The involvement of Dutch interlocutors makes clear that the dissemination of Confucius in Europe was a variegated process, in which the transmission of text and image through print played a fundamental role.