

Chinoiserie and printed sources. Seventeenth century Dutch illustrated volumes on the Far East and their reception in European art

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Abstract

This article focuses on the importance of some volumes on the Far East (China and Japan in particular) published in The Netherlands during the 17th century as source of inspiration for Chinoiserie, the artistic and aesthetical European phenomenon which spread with major intensity during the 18th century. Starting with the Van Linschoten's *Itinerario* (1596), these books were published mainly as a result of the flourishing commercial activity of the Dutch East India Company in Asia. The illustrations which appear in these volumes, far from being faithful depictions of those far countries and of their inhabitants, form a visual compendium of the idea Europeans had about those still mysterious cultures.

要旨

本稿は、シノワズリへのインスピレーションの源となった17世紀にオランダで出版された極東（具体的には中国と日本）に関する数点の書籍の重要性に焦点をあてる。シノワズリは、18世紀に最高潮に達したヨーロッパ全土に流行した美術・審美上の風潮。シノワズリの兆候はVan Linschotenの著書「*Itinerario*」(1596)に始まり、これらの出版は、アジアにおけるオランダ東インド会社の盛況な商業活動に起因している。複数巻に及ぶ書籍に描かれる挿絵は、遠く離れたアジアの国々とその国の人々を忠実に描写してはならず、神秘的な文化について依然として持ち合わせていた西洋的考えの視覚的抄録を形成しているに過ぎない。

Keywords キーワード

Chinoiserie - Nieuhof - Montanus - Dapper - Kircher

Introduction

Ten thousands kilometers. This is the distance between Lisbon and Beijing. Today an intercontinental flight covers it in ten hours, more or less. Until one hundred and fifty years ago it needs months of sailing and maybe years across the land route to be covered. Today a simple click on any computer can immediately connect people living in the most remote places on Earth. Until two centuries ago an information need many months to arrive from China to Europe. During the long trip across the continents it frequently lost clearness, the contours of its truthfulness became faded, it passed from being a cultural datum to enter in the realm of mythology. Usually at its arrival to Europe the information underwent further alterations which depended not only on the kind of person who used it but also on the purpose of its use.

Only objects were exempt from the changes which occur during this geographical and historical transfer. The knowledge they represent doesn't risk to be corrupted by the inescapable activity of Space and Time.

This article focuses on the importance of some volumes on the Far East (China and Japan in particular) published in The Netherlands during the 1660s as source of inspiration for Chinoiserie, that artistical and aesthetical European phenomenon which spread with major intensity during the 18th century.¹ The illustrations which appear in these volumes, far from being faithful depictions of those far countries and of their inhabitants, form a visual compendium of the idea Europeans had about those still mysterious cultures.

'Proto-Chinoiserie', or the beginning of a taste

One of the tangible consequences of the arrival in Europe of information and objects from the Far East was the spread of a new taste which shows clear oriental influences. This phenomenon began in the late 13th century, during the period of the maximum expansion of the Mongol empire then ruling great part of the huge Asian continent. This new fashion spread with major intensity in Italy.²

¹ The reference book about Chinoiserie remains H. Honour, *Chinoiserie. The Vision of Cathay*, London 1961, later followed by useful texts such as O. Impey, *Chinoiserie. The Impact of Oriental Styles on Western Art and Decoration*, London 1977; M. Jarry, *Chinoiserie. Chinese Influences on European Decorative Art, 17th and 18th centuries*, New York 1981; D. Jacobson, *Chinoiserie*, London 1999.

² F. Morena, *Early Chinoiserie. China as Source of Inspiration in Italian Art from the 13th to the 16th century*, in Lu Peng (ed.), *The Dimension of Civilization*, Shanghai 2014, pp. 57-60.

This fact can be explained essentially with two motivations. Firstly, the pope embodied the most important political and religious power in Europe, and all the Asian sovereigns tried to have diplomatic relationships with him, sending to Rome emissaries and gifts. Secondly, Venice and Genoa were among the most powerful maritime and commercial European cities and in fact most of the Westerners that travelled to China between the late 13th and early 14th century were Genoese and Venetian.

A precise term to identify this early phenomenon doesn't exist, even if the word Exoticism is widely used to explain it. However, 'proto-Chinoiserie' could be in my opinion more suitable. China was then the most influential foreigner source for Italian manufacturers, although the artistical and iconographical datum from East Asia was often filtered by Persia and the other Middle Eastern countries before its arrival to Europe. Italian artisans and artists used as models Far Eastern objects, especially silk. They also tried to visually re-elaborated the scarce and usually confused information they received directly from travellers coming back from the Orient. The major source of knowledge from those distant lands was *Il Milione (The Book of the Marvels of the World)* by Marco Polo (1254-1324). Even if the famous account by the Venetian originally didn't contain illustrations, it nourished the fantasy of both craftsmen in search of new inspirations and consumers who adopted those new trends.

In the following centuries, between the 14th and the early 17th century, the spread of the fashion for exoticism continued to be stimulated in Europe mainly by the always increasing arrival of Chinese, Indian, Japanese, South-East Asian, African and American objects. Together with silk, many European manufacturing centers tried to imitate the characteristics of Chinese porcelain and Japanese lacquer using as models the original objects coming from Asia. Even if they didn't know their chemical composition and the techniques to realize them, they succeeded in creating efficacious ceramic and varnished surrogates, as for example the experiments made in Florence at the court of Francesco I de' Medici (1541-1587), or the lacquered furnitures made in Venice during the same period.³ European artists and artisans imitated also the oriental decorative motifs, yet drawing inspiration from the original artefacts. Far Eastern objects imported to Europe will remain in the following centuries a constant source of inspiration for Chinoiserie.

Different approaches: early Jesuit publications on China and Van Linschoten's Itinerario

By the early 16th century, together with the volume of merchandise, also the amount of first hand information grew tremendously. The main sources of knowledge about the Far East became the many missionaries who lived in Asia with the aim to proselytize. The greater effort was conducted by Jesuits, who reached China for the first time toward

³ F. Morena, *Chinoiserie. The Evolution of the Oriental Style in Italy from the 14th to the 19th century*, Florence 2009, pp. 35-38, 40-42.

the mid 16th century. The religious figure who obtained the major success was Matteo Ricci (1552-1610). He was able to gradually be considered by the Chinese people not as a foreigner but as a member of the Chinese cultural élite. Thanks to his policy of 'accomodation', Ricci ended his life in Beijing working in the Imperial Palace as a scientific advisor for the Emperor Wanli (1563-1620), the first Westerner to be admitted to a such important role in the Chinese administration. The Ricci's journals, written during his twenty-seven years stay in China, were published for the first time in 1615 in Augsburg, translated into Latin by the Flemish Jesuit Nicolas Trigault (1577-1628) with the title *De Christiana expeditione apud Sinas*. In the following years the volume was translated in many languages, and published in many different editions.

As for the other accounts by missionaries written between the late 16th and early 17th century, also the *De Christiana expeditione apud Sinas* didn't contain illustrations, apart from the frontispice which shows the long complete title of the volume flanked by the two standing portraits of Francis Xavier (1506-1552), the co-founder of the Jesuit order, and Matteo Ricci [FIG. 1]. It was engraved by Wolfgang Kilian (1581-1662) from Augusburg, an artist particularly admired for his portraits.⁴ Kilian had certainly the opportunity to examine the famous portrait of Matteo Ricci dated 1610 and realized in Beijing by the Chinese painter Emmanuele Yu Wen-Hui, called Pereira (1575-1633), now housed in the Chiesa del Gesù in Rome [FIG. 2].⁵ Pereira was born in Macau where he converted to Catholicism. In the Chinese town he could learn the rudiments of the techniques of European painting from the Jesuit Father Giovanni Cola from Nola (1560-1626) who had the merit to establish a number of schools of devotional painting in Japan and China. Pereira's portrait of Matteo Ricci was brought back from China to Italy by Father Trigault between november and december 1615. It soon became the prototype of the iconography of Matteo Ricci, later used with very few alterations in a number of paintings and engravings.

The impact of the Trigault's book and of the other early Jesuit publications about China on the development of Exoticism and Chinoiserie in Europe was therefore minimal because of their lack of illustrations.

On the opposite, pictures began to appear in laical publications about the Far East from the late 16th century. Apart from the exotic subject, what they all have in common is the city of Amsterdam as place of their publication. This is not surprising. Holland was in the 17th century in its Golden Age. Its richness, its political, intellectual and cultural developments were above all the result of its predominance in the international trade. The Dutch East India Company (Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie, usually abbreviated in VOC) was the leading European commercial enterprise. Its activities stimulated a flood of

4 L. Giustozzi and S. Segatori, in A. Paolucci and G. Morello (eds.), *Ai crinali della storia. Padre Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) fra Roma e Pechino*, exhibition catalogue (Rome), Turin 2009, p. 206, n. 32a.

5 M.P. D'Orazio, in *Fiamminghi e altri Maestri. Gli Artisti Stranieri nel Patrimonio del Fondo Edifici di Culto del Ministero dell'Interno*, exhibition catalogue, Rome 2008, pp. 70-71.



Fig. 1 - Wolfgang Kilian (1581-1662), frontispice of Nicolas Trigault, *De Christiana expeditione apud Sinas*, Augsburg 1615.



Fig. 2 - Emmanuele Yu Wen-Hui called Pereira (1575-1633), *Portrait of Matteo Ricci*, 1610. Oil on canvas, cm. 120 × 95. Rome, Chiesa del Gesù.

publications about geography (books, single prints, maps, atlas, etc...), especially in the second half of the century when its turnover began to decline favouring its European competitors. Following a self-conscious trade strategy, these lavishly illustrated books promoted a vision of the world as a place of business opportunities, both for who wanted to travel throughout the oceans and for who remained in Holland, dramatically contributing to create an idea of the 'exotic' which was soon adopted by all the other European countries.⁶

A series of thirty-six etchings, especially illustrating the Indian subcontinent and Goa, then a Portuguese colony, were included in the volume *Itinerario: Voyage ofte schipvaert van Jan Huyghen van Linschoten naar Oost ofte Portugaels Indien, 1579-1592*, first published in Amsterdam in 1596 by Cornelis Claesz (1551-1609) and soon after followed by other editions in different languages, translated in English for Richard Hakluyt (1598) and in Latin as a volume in De Bry's series of books entitled *India orientalis* (Frankfurt 1599).⁷ The author, the Dutch Jan Huyghen van Linschoten (1563-1611), lived in Asia for some years in the service of the Archbishop Vicente da Fonseca. The book is the summary of his experience there and it gave a big amount of fresh information to Europeans about not only Goa but also on China and, above all, about the main maritime trade routes in the Indian Ocean then ruled by Portugal.⁸

The images in the *Itinerario* – engraved by Joannes Baptista van Doetecum, with the help of his sons, who based his work on drawings by the author in a style that clearly recalls late Renaissance Mannerism – show a still mysterious place and unknown people to the Europeans. Some of their features, such as the nudity of the bodies, will become recurring elements of the European vision of some of those foreign people [FIG. 3].⁹ However, paradoxically they were probably more useful to Asian artists and artisans to illustrate their vision of European countries. Japanese painters from the Kanō school, for example, presumably used as models the Van Linschoten's engravings with Portuguese characters living in Goa for their compositions in exotic taste, mainly painted on those screens belonging to the *Nanban* ("The Southern Barbarians", as Japanese people scornfully called Westerners) typology.¹⁰

6 B. Schmidt, *Inventing Exoticism. The Project of Dutch Geography and the Marketing of the World, circa 1700*, in P.H. Smith and P. Findlen (eds.), *Merchants & Marvels. Commerce, Science, and Art in Early Modern Europe*, New York-London 2002, pp. 347-369: 348-350.

7 E. van den Boogaart, *Heathendom and Civility in the Historia India orientalis: The Adaptation by Johann Theodor and Johan Israel de Bry of the Edifying Series of Plates from Linschoten's Itinerario*, in "Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek", 53, 2002, pp. 71-105.

8 E. van den Boogaart, *Civil and Corrupt Asia: Image and Text in the 'Itinerario' and the 'Icones' of Jan Huygen van Linschoten*, Chicago 2003.

9 L. Silver, *India Ink: Imagery of the Subcontinent in Early Modern Europe*, in L.E. Saurma-Jeltsch and A. Eisenbeiß (eds.), *The Power of Things and the Flow of Cultural Transformations*, München 2010, pp. 217-247.

10 A. Curvelo, in *Encomendas Namban. Os Portugueses no Japão da Idade Moderna*, exhibition catalogue, Lisbon 2010, pp. 182-186, nn. 47-48.

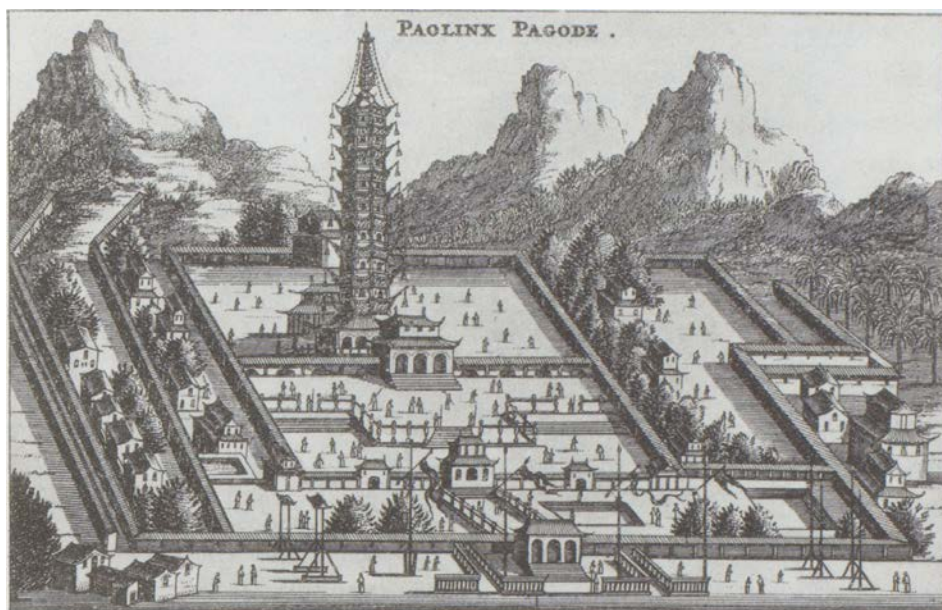


Fig. 4 - Paolinx Pagoda, engraving in Jan Nieuhof, *Het gezantschap der Neerlandsche Oost-Indische Compagnie aan den grooten tartarischen cham*, Amsterdam 1665.

van Meurs (1619-1680) who started with Nieuhof's volume an ambitious editorial project relating to non-European countries. Nieuhof's book contains about one hundred and fifty illustrations depicting Chinese landscapes and elements from the natural world, architectures and means of transport, animals and human figures. Even if the original drawings by the author were retouched to be more suitable for the European taste, the engravings in Nieuhof's volume are the earlier images on China and on the customs of Chinese people taken first-hand from a traveller. Soon after its publication, it became a reference book for any artist or artisan who wanted to test himself with the Chinoiserie theme.

The plate depicting the famous Nanjing Pagoda [FIG. 4] - wrongly named "Paolinx" by Nieuhof, it is also known with the title of Porcelain Pagoda; covered with ceramic glazed tiles, the tower was built between 1412 and 1431 and destroyed in 1856 during the Taiping Rebellion - became an inexhaustible source of inspiration not only for decorators, as for example the anonymous one who created the decoration on the cabinet now preserved in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam [FIG. 5],¹¹ but also for architects. Even if he lived in Canton in 1743-4 and 1748-9 as an agent of the Swedish East Indian Company

¹¹ S. Van Raay, *Imitation and Inspiration. Japanese Influence on Dutch Art*, Amsterdam 1989, pp. 48-49, pl. 6.



Fig. 5 - Cabinet-on-stand. Holland, late 17th century. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

where he had the occasion to study real ancient Chinese architecture, William Chambers (1726-1796) certainly had in mind the Chinese building in Nieuhof's volume when he designed the famous pagoda in Kew, later published in his *The Garden and Buildings at Kew* (London 1763).

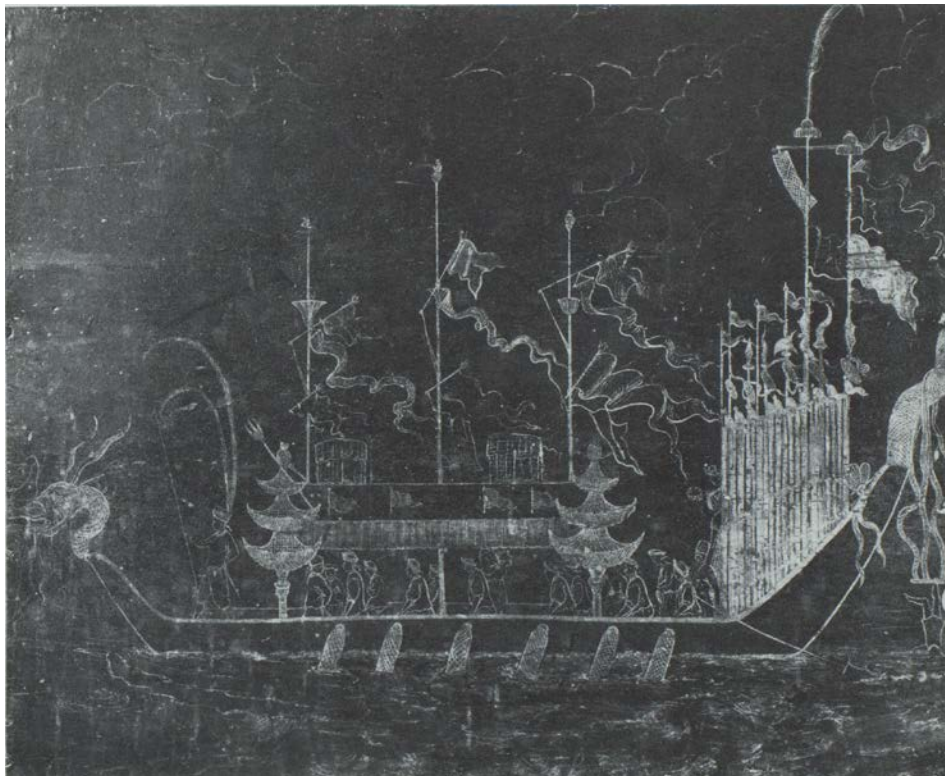


Fig. 6 - Francis de Bray, *Detail of the decoration of the Lacquer Room, 1667-1670.*
Copenhagen, Rosenberg Castle.

The first documented example of the use of Nieuhof's engravings as models for a Chinoiserie creation is the decoration on some of the lacquered panels on the walls of the 'Christian IV's Bedroom' in Rosenberg Castle, Copenhagen, the earliest Lacquer Room in Europe [FIGG. 6-7].¹² The author of this work is Francis de Bray, a Dutch artist and cabinet-maker who was in the service of the Danish king Frederik III (1648-1670) from 1663 to 1671. The lacquered decoration was later restored by Christian van Bracht, another Dutchman who arrived in Denmark in 1669 working for the royal house until 1720. The walls and the doors of the room are covered with seventy-three panels painted with a greenish blue varnish imitating oriental lacquer with a gilt decoration, each encircled by a framework painted to counterfeit tortoiseshell. The panels are arranged in three parallel rows: the panels on the lower row depict ships (one explicitly derived from Nieuhof's book), those in the middle landscapes with human figures, the panels on the top large figures in gardens. Most likely Francis de Bray realised this decoration between 1667 and 1670, because together with those derived from the drawings in Nieuhof's volume, some

12 G. Boesen, 'Chinese' Rooms at Rosenberg Castle, in "The Connoisseur", 200, 1979, 803, pp. 34-39.



Fig. 7 – Slang-Schuiten (“The Dragon Boat”), engraving in Jan Nieuhof, *Het gezantschap der Neerlandtsche Oost-Indische Compagnie aan den grooten tartarischen cham*, Amsterdam 1665.

of the compositions are inspired by engravings in another of the most influential book on China published at that time, Kircher’s *China Illustrata*.

Kircher’s *China Illustrata* (1667)

China monumentis qua sacris qua profanis, nec non variis naturae et artis spectaculis, aliarumque rerum memorabilium argumentis illustrata, more simply known as *China Illustrata* (1667), is one of the many books published by Athanasius Kircher (1602-1680), “The Last Man who knew Everything”, as he was denominated in a book edited by Paula Findlen (New York-London 2004).

Differently from Nieuhof, Kircher has never been in Asia. The text in his account on China was in fact based on the information provided directly by other Jesuit fathers on return to home from their stay in Asia, or on other books about the argument previously published. Kircher lists the principle sources for his work in the preface to *China Illustrata*: the *De Bello Tartarico Historia* (Antwerp 1654), the *Novus Atlas Sinensis* (Amsterdam 1665) and the *Sinica Historiae Decas Prima* (Munich 1658), all edited by Martino Martini (1614-1661), a Jesuit from Trento (Italy) who has been in China for many years.

Far from being a truthful visual description of China, the engravings in *China Illustrata* are in fact a perfect example of Chinoiserie, a pure European graphic transposition of the textual and then still incomplete knowledge about China. If we take as an example the plate in Kircher's volume depicting *Matteo Ricci and Paul Xu Guangqi* [FIG. 8] we can easily recognise an overall European Baroque style, from the pose of the two figures (another example of the influence of Pereira's portrait on a later depiction of Matteo Ricci) to the typology of the fabric which forms the curtains on the background and the robe of Paul Xu Guangqi, the Chinese mandarin who converted to Catholicism in 1603, whose facial features are evidently anything but Chinese. The only real Chinese feature are the two characters beyond the two figures, written however in a wrong manner.

Apart from the already cited Lacquer Room in Copenhagen, the illustrations in Kircher's volume were used as source of inspiration for a great number of Chinoiserie style decorations. Just to mention one example, the portrait of the Jesuit father Johann Adam Schall von Bell (1592-1666) published by Kircher appear with very few modifications in the tapestry entitled *Les Astronomes*, belonging to the series named *History of the Emperor of China*, realised by the Beauvais factory from the late 17th century [FIGG. 9-10]. Both in the etching in Kircher's book and in the French tapestry, the German Jesuit appears wearing Chinese literati hat and robes, with the typical embroidered insignia on the chest. He is standing, surrounded by astronomical instruments, a celestial globe on the floor, a world map on the wall and shelves with books beyond him. He is therefore portrayed in his eminent role of Director of the Imperial Observatory and the Tribunal of Mathematics, perfectly integrated as an important member of Chinese society.¹³ The main features of this portrait became a standard for later depictions of Jesuits in China (see for example the many figures in the well known volume by Jean-Baptiste Du Halde, *Description Géographique, Historique, Chronologique, Politique et Physique de l'Empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie Chinoise ... ornée d'un grand nombre de Figures et des Vignettes*, Paris-The Hague 1735-1736), stimulating the birth of an iconography widely use in the field of European visual imagery about the Far East.

The *China Illustrata* was published in Amsterdam (the first edition was in Latin, soon followed by a German version, 1668, and a French translation, 1670), by Janssonius van Waesberge and Elizer Weyerstraten. They were among the main commercial rivals of Jacob van Meurs, Nieuuhof's volume publisher, who in the same year published an unauthorized copy of the same book by the German Jesuit.¹⁴

¹³ D. Odell, *Clothing, customs, and merchantilism. Dutch and Chinese ethnographies in the seventeenth century*, in *Picturing the Exotic 1550-1950. Peasants and outlandish peoples in Netherlandish art*, Zwolle 2003, pp. 139-159: 142-144.

¹⁴ I.H. van Eeghen, *Arnoldus Montanus's Book on Japan*, in "Quaerendo", 2, 1972, pp. 250-272; D.E. Mungello, *Curious Land: Jesuit Accomodation and the Origins of Sinology*, Honolulu 1989, p. 13, footnote 2.



Fig. 8 - Matteo Ricci and Paul Xu Guangqi, engraving in Athanasius Kircher, *China Illustrata*, Amsterdam 1667.



Fig. 9 - Johann Adam Schall von Bell, engraving in Athanasius Kircher, *China Illustrata*, Amsterdam 1667.



Fig. 10 - *Les Astronomes*, a tapestry from the suite *History of the Emperor of China*. Beuvais, late 17th - early 18th century. Los Angeles, The J. Paul Getty Museum. Digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program.

Montanus' *Atlas Japannensis* (1669)

Belonging to the same Van Meurs's series of books about the geography of the world, the *Gedenkwaardige Gesantschappen der Oost-Indische Maatschappij in't Vereenigde Nederland aan de Kaiseren van Japan* by Arnoldus Montanus (1625-1683) was published in 1669.¹⁵ It was immediately translated by John Ogilby (1600-1676), the Royal Geographer, into English and published in London in 1670 with the title *Atlas Japannensis being remarkable addresses by way of Embassy from the East India Company of the United Provinces to the Emperor of Japan*, usually abbreviated in *Atlas Japannensis*.¹⁶ It was not the first book of this kind by Montanus who in 1651 had already published *De wonderen van 't Oosten ofte De beschrijving en oorlogs-daden van oud en nieuw Oost-Indien* ("The Miracles of the East"), a compendium of information on the Far East available at the time. In the following years he wrote a number of volumes on travels, mainly published by Jacob van Meurs, becoming a leading figure in that literary field. His book on Japan – the first published in Europe entirely devoted to that Asian country – collected information provided by members of the Dutch East India Company following their travels there. The first part of the volume relates the events that took place during a diplomatic mission to the *shōgun* Tokugawa Iemitsu (1604-1651) in 1649-50. Andries Frisius also participated in the mission as the envoy's secretary, and also wrote an account of the journey though there are many discrepancies between the two. The second part assembles other accounts somehow garnered from the usually secret archives of the Dutch East India Company or taken from previous sources on that country.

Despite mistakes and misunderstandings of the text, rendered in a very discursive way which attracted to Montanus many critics only few decades after the publication of the volume,¹⁷ what is interesting for us is that Montanus' work was already widely read shortly after its first publication and some of the engravings were used from the late 17th and throughout the 18th century by artists who specialized in Chinoiserie.

Some figures which appear in the Montanus' book (the Japanese priest), for example, were used for the decoration of the English tapestry (now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, inv. 402-1906) by the Soho factory then directed by John Vanderbank (active 1683-1717) who also supplied Kensington Palace with nine tapestries "designed after the Indian manner, probably very similar to this one [FIG. 11].¹⁸ The compositions on the tapestries of this series by the Soho factory are arranged in a layout forming separate

¹⁵ R.H. Hesselink, *Memorable Embassies: The Secret History of Arnoldus Montanus' Atlas Japannensis*, in "Quaerendo", 32, 2002, 1, pp. 99-123.

¹⁶ Curiously, Ogilby claimed to be the author and not only the editor of the versions of the Dutch volumes he published, as if to affirm the depersonalization of every information about the Far East: K.S. Van Eerde, *John Ogilby and the Taste of His Times*, Folkestone 1976, pp. 95-122.

¹⁷ For example in the introduction by Johann Gaspar Scheahzer of the Engelbert Kaempfer's *The History of Japan*, London 1727.

¹⁸ E.A. Standen, *European Post-Medieval Tapestries and Related Hangings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, 2 voll., New York 1985: II, p. 717.



Fig. 11 - Soho Factory, Chinoiserie tapestry, late 17th century.
London, Victoria & Albert Museum.

groups, in a way that recalls lacquer decoration as suggested by the engravings in the *Treatise on Japanning and Varnishing* by John Stalker and George Parker, published in Oxford in 1688. Far from being homogeneous from the spatial point of view, the motifs too have heterogeneous geographical provenance, mixing together inspirations from the Middle East and Africa, from India to China, in a way that is very typical of early Baroque Chinoiserie.¹⁹

However, the most striking example of the use of the plates in Montanus' book as source of inspiration for Chinoiserie are the paintings by François Boucher (1703-1770) created in the early 1740s as preparatory designs for the tapestries of the *Second Chinese Series* made by the Beauvais factory. The detail of the lady seated on the rickshaw in the painting entitled *The Chinese Fair*, for example, is clearly derived by the print with the same subject in the Montanus' volume [FIGG. 12-13].²⁰ An inspiration to the Montanus' engraving entitled *The wedding* could also be found in the Boucher's painting belonging to the same series and entitled *The Audience of the Emperor of China* [FIGG. 14-15]. Here the analogies refer to the structure of the entire composition and not to some of its details.

¹⁹ H. Williams, *Turquerie. An Eighteenth-Century European Fantasy*, London 2014, p. 141.

²⁰ P. Stein, *Boucher's chinoiserie: some new sources*, in "The Burlington Magazine", CXXXVIII, 1996, 1122, pp. 598-604.



Fig. 12 – François Boucher, *The Chinese Fair*, 1742. Besançon, Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie.



Fig. 13 – *The rickshaw*, engraving in Arnoldus Montanus, *Gedenkwaerdige Gesantschappen der Oost-Indische Maatschappy in't Veereenigde Nederland aan de Kaiseren van Japan*, Amsterdam 1669.



Fig. 14 – François Boucher, *The Audience of the Emperor of China*, 1742. Besançon, Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie.



Fig. 15 – *The wedding*, engraving in Arnoldus Montanus, *Gedenkwaardige Gesantschappen der Oost-Indische Maatschappij in't Veereenigde Nederland aan de Kaiseren van Japan*, Amsterdam 1669.

Evidently, the French artist didn't matter if the subject of his paintings was Chinese while the prints by Montanus referred to Japan. Boucher was a fervent admirer of the Far East and a collector of Chinese and Japanese objects. One of the leading figure in the spread of 18th-century Chinoiserie, he was able to create an atmosphere in which the exotic elements harmoniously coexist with the most updated mid 18th-century Parisian fashion features, perfectly embodying the aesthetic of the Rococo period.

Dapper's *Atlas Chinensis* (1670)

Olfert Dapper (1635-1689) – a clergyman and doctor based in Amsterdam who never left Europe, as Kircher and Montanus – also participated in the series of books about the geography of the world planned by Jacob von Meurs. He had already contributed in 1668 with two important volumes on Africa. In 1670 he published the *Gedenkwaerding Bedryf de Nederlandsche Oost-Indische Meetschappye op de Kunste en in het Keizerrijk von Taising if Sina*, later translated into English with the title *Atlas Chinensis being a second part a relation of remarkable passages in two embassies from the East India Company of the United Provinces to the vice-roy Singlamong and General Taising Lipovi and to Konchi, Emperor of China and East-Tartary*.²¹ The book recounts the second and third Dutch diplomatic missions to China (1662-1663 to Fujian and 1666-1667 to Beijing), giving also further general information about that country taken mainly from other European sources previously published.

The volume includes ninety-four illustrations. Some of them are clearly faithful copies from original Chinese works of art, as for example the one depicting a *bodhisattva* surrounded by disciples clearly derived from a Chinese woodblock print [FIG. 16].²² Another group is based on original drawings by the Dutch merchant Pieter van Doornik. However, great part of the engravings in Dapper's volume shows stylistical and thematic features which can be easily related to the previous works about Far Eastern countries, as some of the illustrations in the costume book entitled *Habiti antichi et moderni di tutto il mondo di nuovo accresciuti di molte figure* (Venice 1598) by Cesare Vecellio (1521-1601), or the volumes about China and Japan already edited by Jacob von Meurs, as for example the engravings in Nieuhof's and Montanus' books. The recycling, with some modifications, of already published etchings was very common in 17th-century volumes on extra-European cultures. It simply follows a widespread practice in the field of written texts, already used by the 14th century when Marco Polo's account started to be literally sacked by an undefined number of authors.

²¹ F. Ulrichs, *Johan Nieuhof's and Olfert Dapper's Travel Accounts as Sources for European Chinoiserie*, in A. Jolly (ed.), *A taste for the Exotic: Foreign Influences on Early Eighteenth-Century Silk Designs*, Riggisberg 2007, pp. 45-56.

²² D. Odell, *Creaturely Invented Letters and Dead Chinese Idols*, in M.W. Cole and R. Zorach (eds.), *The Idol in the Age of Art. Objects, Devotions and the Early Modern World*, Farnham 2009, pp. 267-288: 86-87.



Fig. 16 – Chinese Buddhist deities, engravings in Olfert Dapper, *Gedenkwaerding Bedryf de Nederlandsche Oost-Indische Meetschappye op de Kunste en in het Keizerrijk von Taising if Sina, Amsterdam 1670.*

Dapper tried to make a different book respect to Nieuhof's volume, giving more attention to other aspects of the Chinese culture, such as the life of the aristocracy or the administration of the empire, mainly focusing on more sensational themes to attire the readers. This choice doesn't concern only the text but also the engravings that seems to be more detailed respect to the images in the previous volumes on China. They seems also to be stilistically very suitable to the European taste, thanks to the widespread use of the most important features of Western art, such as the mathematical perspective and chiaroscuro. Furthermore, respect to the etchings in Nieuhof's volume, the engravings in Dapper's book usually show the human figure better integrated within the natural and architectural elements of the composition.

The illustrations in Dapper's *Atlas Chinensis* entered soon after its publication in the repertories of the artists and artisans who faced with the Chinoiserie theme. They inspired, for example, together with some of the illustrations in Nieuhof's and Montanus' books, some of the scenes which decorate the eleven silk wall hangings of the Chinese Cabinet in the Munich Residenz [FIG. 17].²³ Elegantly worked with gold, silver and coloured embroidery on a black taffeta ground with a final effect that recalls the surface of Far Eastern lacquer, the panels were probably made in Munich around 1700. The anonymous Bavarian artists took from Dapper's book for example the scenes with *The*

²³ F. Ulrichs 2007, cit. footnote n. 21, pp. 51-56.



Fig. 17 - Anonymous artists from Munich, *Two of eleven silk wall hangings*, late 17th - early 18th century. Munich, Residenz, Chinese Room.

Goddess Matzou and *The arrival of a Chinese Bride*. The comparison between the engravings and the embroidered silk hangings points out the great care used by the German artisans in the reproduction of every detail of the print. This is certainly one of the masterpiece of international Baroque Chinoiserie [FIGG. 18-19].

As a demonstration of the uninterrupted influence of the Dapper's engravings on international Chinoiserie, we can compare the engraving for the frontispice of the *Atlas Chinensis* with a detail of the painted decoration on the wall of the Banqueting Room in



Fig. 18 - Anonymous artists from Munich, *Detail of a silk wall hanging with The Goddess Matzou*, late 17th - early 18th century. Munich, Residenz.

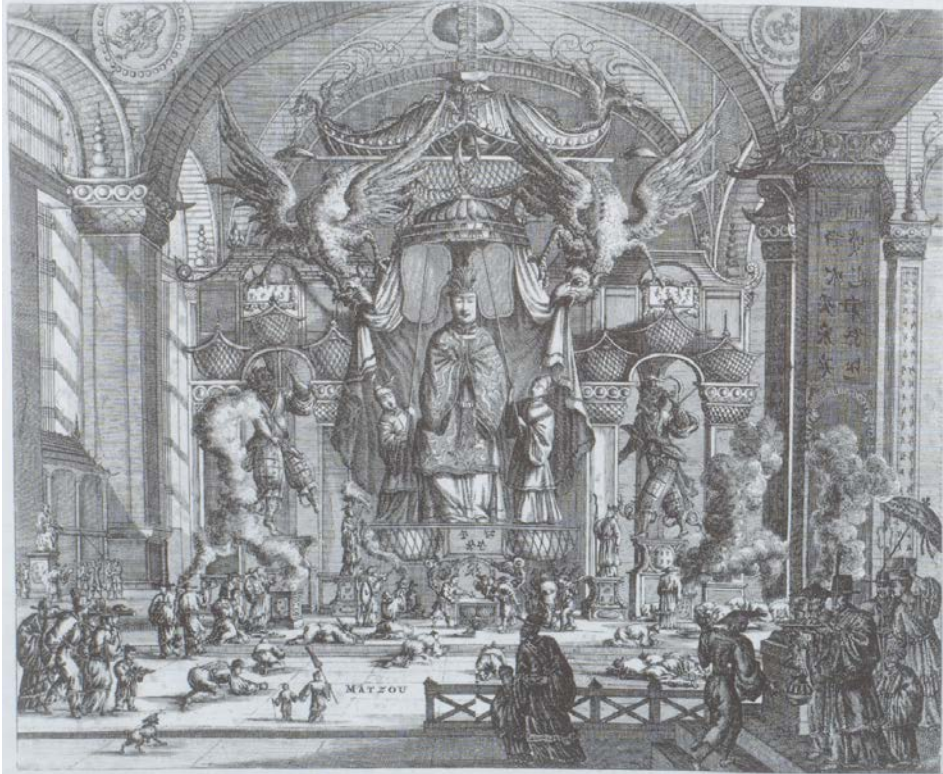


Fig. 19 - The Goddess Matzou, engravings in Olfert Dapper, *Gedenkwaerding Bedryf de Nederlandsche Oost-Indische Meetschappye op de Kunste en in het Keizerrijk von Taising if Sina, Amsterdam 1670.*

the Brighton Pavilion, realized by Robert Jones in 1817 circa,²⁴ both depicting the seated figure of a Chinese Emperor under a parasol, surrounded by dignitaries and revered by other figures [FIG. 20].

From his highness, the Chinese sovereign seems to be unperturbed from their cruel destiny. This is a recurring scene in the European imagery about China during the early Modern Era, reflecting the idea Europeans had about the Chinese public administration, embodied by the absolute monarch who rules the country with justice and impartiality, without any interference by the religious power. An opinion which was often used as example in the debate about the rightest among the possible forms of government by some philosophers during the Age of Enlightenment, such as Voltaire. European intellectuals formed their judgment about that political and philosophical argument mainly through

²⁴ A. Loske, *Inspiration, Appropriation, Creation: Sources of Chinoiserie Imagery, Colour Schemes and Designs in the Royal Pavilion, Brighton (1802-1823)*, in Lu Peng (ed.), *The Dimension of Civilization*, Shanghai 2014, pp. 323-352: 340-350.



Fig. 20 - Frontespice, engravings in Olfert Dapper, *Gedenkwaerdig Bedryf de Nederlandsche Oost-Indische Meetschappye op de Kunste en in het Keizerrijk von Taising if Sina*, Amsterdam 1670.

the information they found in the many books about China published by missionaries and laical authors from the late 16th century. The frontispice in Dapper's volume – actually very similar to the opening page in Nieuhof's book – is therefore a graphic synthesis of that concept, which could be considered as a kind of starting point of the laical European knowledge about China.

Conclusions

The engravings in the volumes on China and Japan published in Amsterdam in the second half of the 17th century became soon after their entry in the editorial market a precious and endless source of inspiration for European artists and decorators dealing with the theme of Chinoiserie, thanks also to the many translations and different editions which followed. This influence didn't exhaust in the 17th century because they were frequently copied and re-elaborated by artistical figures such as Peter Schenk (1660-1711), Jean Bérain (1637-1711), Antoine Watteau (1684-1721), Johann Christoph Weigel (1654-1725), Martin Engelbrecht (1684-1756) e Paul Decker the Elder (1677-1713). Their prints with scenes adapted from Nieuhof's, Montanus', Kircher's and Dapper's volumes widely circulated in Europe contributing in the spread of the Chinoiserie taste throughout the 18th century.