

Transforming the East.
*A New Research Project in Australia**

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Introduction to the Project

The rising influence of China and Chinese culture over the last three decades has provided a stimulus to scholars to look to the beginnings of Sino-Western exchange in the early modern period. The primary protagonists of Europe's first intellectual encounters with Ming and early Qing China were Jesuit missionaries, who above all sought to convert China to Catholicism by accommodating the cultural and intellectual traditions of Confucianism to Christianity. Their accommodation rested upon a secularised interpretation of Confucianism as a political and ethical philosophy that was devoid of superstition.

Yet in their attempt to transform China, Europe itself was transformed: the Jesuits' idealisation of the Chinese state as the perfect realisation of Confucian virtue influenced the development of Enlightenment political theory and made a significant contribution to the emergence of Enlightenment values such as secularism and religious tolerance.

Europe first came into contact with Confucian classical texts through Jesuit translations. The Jesuits initially translated these texts to provide language primers for their missionary activities in China, but their translations served as the main vehicle for Enlightenment thinkers to form their own image of China.

In their translations, the Jesuits promoted a secularised interpretation of Confucianism as a political and ethical philosophy for the purpose of legitimising their toleration of Confucian rituals among Chinese converts. In this interpretation such rituals would be seen as purely civil rites. Enlightenment philosophers seized upon the secularity of Confucianism as evidence of the superfluity of religion in statecraft. Thus, the Jesuit translations of Confucian classics played a key role in the emergence of Enlightenment secularism.¹

* Although this paper presents the work of the entire research team, Francesco Borghesi authored pp. 148–156, while Yixu Lü, Daniel Canaris and Thierry Meynard contributed to the sections at pp. 156–160.

¹ See PAUL A. RULE, 'The Religious Other as Perceived by the Chinese and by Early Western Missionaries,' in *Through Your Eyes: Religious Alterity and the Early Modern Western Imagination*, eds Giovanni Tarantino and Paola Wyss-Giacosa (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2021), 145–68, whose argument takes into account the Chinese perspective.

A project titled ‘Transforming the East: Jesuit Translations of the Confucian Classics’ is currently tackling these issues with funding from the Australian Research Council Discovery Project scheme.² This project aims at evaluating Europe’s first encounter with Chinese thought through the Jesuit translations of the Confucian canon from the sixteenth- to the eighteenth-century. An interdisciplinary team of experts from the University of Sydney, Sun Yat-sen University and Nanjing University will work together to provide a comprehensive history of the dissemination of these translations in Europe. In carrying out this collective task, it also seeks to make primary and secondary sources in languages other than English accessible to anglophone scholars through critical editions based on each team member’s individual skills and through a collaborative digital platform. In doing so, the project contributes mainly to two fields of study: the history of Sino-European intellectual encounters and the philological analysis of Jesuit translations.

Why this Project?

Understanding China has always been a challenge. It has become more so at a time when China’s rise is ever present in the balance sheets of economic experts and political strategists. The rising influence and importance of China and Chinese culture over the last three decades has provided a stimulus to scholars to look to the beginnings of European encounters with Chinese thought. It is commonly accepted that the Jesuits’ idealising of the Chinese state as the perfect realisation of Confucian virtue influenced the development of Enlightenment political theory and that it made a significant contribution to the emergence of Enlightenment values such as secularism and religious tolerance, values that are now considered under threat in Western democracies.³ However, despite the rapidly expanding scholarship on this entangled history, the study of the role played by China in the Enlightenment remains by and large separated from the philological study of Jesuit translations.

Research on the Jesuit China mission is still dominated by mission history and the Chinese Rites Controversy,⁴ while cultural and intellectual historians continue to concentrate on European images of China and the apparent shift from ‘Sinophilia’ to

² ARC DP210100458: <https://dataportal.arc.gov.au/NCGP/Web/Grant/Grant/DP210100458>.

³ DAVID E. MUNGELLO, *Curious Land: Jesuit Accommodation and the Origins of Sinology* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1989); JOHN GASCOIGNE, *The Enlightenment and the Origins of European Australia* (Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); JONATHAN ISRAEL, ‘Admiration of China and Classical Chinese Thought in the Radical Enlightenment (1685-1740),’ *Taiwan Journal of East Asian Studies* 4, no. 1 (2007): 1–25; WENCHAO LI, ‘Confucius and the Early Enlightenment in Germany from Leibniz to Bilfinger,’ in *The Globalization of Confucius and Confucianism*, eds Klaus Mühlhahn and Nathalie van Looy (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2012), 9–21; BETTINA BRANDT and DANIEL LEONHARD PURDY, eds, *China in the German Enlightenment* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016); SIMON KOW, *China in Early Enlightenment Political Thought* (London: Routledge, 2017).

⁴ DAVID E. MUNGELLO, ed., *The Chinese Rites Controversy: Its History and Meaning* (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1994); LIAM MATTHEW BROCKEY, *Journey to the East: The Jesuit Mission to China, 1579-1724* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); INES G. ŽUPANOV and PIERRE ANTOINE FABRE, eds, *The Rites Controversies in the Early Modern World* (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

‘Sinophobia’.⁵ The ‘slump of the Chinese stock’ in European intellectual history, first succinctly summarised by Dawson,⁶ continues to be a major focus of scholarship in this area.⁷ However, thinking in such binary opposites obscures the complex interactions between Chinese civilization and European thinkers. The latter often assimilated positive views on the Chinese state held by the Jesuits into their political philosophies, while maintaining an unflattering assessment of other aspects of Chinese culture.

In order to better understand the intellectual encounters between Enlightenment and Chinese thought, the study of the philosophical climate in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe must be combined with the philological study of Jesuit translations of the Chinese classics. Europe’s transition to modernity can be accurately understood and assessed only by laying bare the ways in which the Jesuits changed and transformed Chinese thought in their translations to make them fit into European discourse, and by examining how such translations were disseminated.

The main challenge to such an endeavour lies in the need for a collaboration that unites specialised linguistic and cultural knowledge across a number of disciplines. Scholarship on the Jesuit translations, and on China in early modern Europe more generally, has tended to cluster around particular national contexts,⁸ despite the fact that the Jesuit translations of the Chinese classics usually involved missionaries from highly diverse national backgrounds. Moreover, anglophone authors often ignore significant contributions in other languages, such as Chinese, French, German and Italian, because few scholars have the philological competence to engage directly with both the Jesuit translations and the secondary material in these other languages. Most conspicuously, very few Jesuit translations have appeared in English language editions that can be relied upon by anglophone scholars. Hence it is unsurprising that scholarship on the influence of the Jesuits’ sinological activities tends to focus on the

⁵ COLIN MACKERRAS, *Sinophiles and Sinophobes: Western Views of China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); ISRAEL, ‘Admiration of China and Classical Chinese Thought in the Radical Enlightenment (1685-1740)’; CHUNJIE ZHANG, ‘From Sinophilia to Sinophobia: China, History, and Recognition,’ *Colloquia Germanica* 41, no. 2 (2008): 97–110.

⁶ RAYMOND DAWSON, *The Chinese Chameleon: An Analysis of European Conceptions of Chinese Civilisation*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967).

⁷ DAVID ALLEN HARVEY, *The French Enlightenment and Its Others: The Mandarin, the Savage, and the Invention of the Human Sciences* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); JOANNE MIYANG CHO and DAVID M. CROWE, eds, *Germany and China: Transnational Encounters since the Eighteenth Century* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); BRANDT and PURDY, eds, *China in the German Enlightenment*; SIMON KOW, ‘Enlightenment Universalism? Bayle and Montesquieu on China,’ *European Legacy: Toward New Paradigms* 19, no. 3 (2014): 347–58; KOW, *China in Early Enlightenment Political Thought*; DANIEL LEONHARD PURDY, *Chinese Sympathies: Media, Missionaries, and World Literature from Marco Polo to Goethe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2021).

⁸ See, for instance: BRANDT and PURDY, eds, *China in the German Enlightenment*; HUIYI WU, *Traduire la Chine au XVIIIe siècle: les jésuites traducteurs de textes et le renouvellement des connaissances européennes sur la Chine* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2017); PURDY, *Chinese Sympathies*.

contribution of the Jesuits' portrait of China to the emergence of *chinoiserie* and orientalism, while skirting the philological background of the philosophical exchange.⁹

This project aims to re-orient scholarship on Enlightenment discourse about Chinese thought with a renewed focus on its foundations, namely the Jesuits' translations of the Confucian corpus and their dissemination in the Enlightenment. Until now, while the studies by Sergio Zoli on China's presence in Italian culture between the sixteenth- and the eighteenth-century¹⁰ have provided a synthetic approach to the Italian case, the most comprehensive overview of the Jesuit translations is David Mungello's *Curious Land*.¹¹ Mungello's work was ground-breaking in the sense that it was the first to stress the decisive role of the Jesuits in the development of Sinology in Europe. Yet Mungello focused on the Jesuits' initial translations, ignoring the vulgarised editions through which the Jesuit translations had their greatest impact on Enlightenment intellectual culture.¹² Moreover, since the book's publication, many additional sources have been uncovered¹³ and more studies of Jesuit translations have been published in other languages.¹⁴ Nevertheless, anglophone scholars still have to refer to Mungello's history as their main reference. The lack of a comprehensive and up-to-date history of Jesuit translations has greatly limited our understanding of the role played by China in the European Enlightenment.

Philological research on the Jesuit translations is currently at a cross-roads. Thierry Meynard's pioneering work¹⁵ has laid the groundwork for a significant re-evaluation of the *Confucius Sinarum philosophus* (1687), which featured the first full

⁹ NICHOLAS DEW, *Orientalism in Louis XIV's France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); URS APP, *The Birth of Orientalism* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010); URS APP, *The Cult of Emptiness: The Western Discovery of Buddhist Thought and the Invention of Oriental Philosophy* (Rorschach and Kyoto: UniversityMedia, 2012); CHRISTOPHER M. S. JOHNS, *China and the Church: Chinoiserie in Global Context* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2016).

¹⁰ SERGIO ZOLI, *La Cina e la cultura italiana dal '500 al '700* (Bologna: Pàtron, 1973); SERGIO ZOLI, *La Cina e l'età dell'Illuminismo in Italia* (Bologna: Pàtron, 1974).

¹¹ MUNGELLO, *Curious Land*.

¹² DANIEL LEONHARD PURDY, 'China Circulating in Early Modern German Print Media,' *Monatshefte* 108, no. 3 (2016): 361–370.

¹³ MICHELE RUGGIERI, *Confucio: La Morale della Cina*, ed. Eugenio Lo Sardo, trans. Isabel Turull (Rome: De Luca Editori d'Arte, 2016); LUISA M. PATERNICÒ, 'Translating the Master: The Contribution of Prospero Intorcetta to the *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*,' *Monumenta Serica* 65, no. 1 (2017): 87–121; MICHELE RUGGIERI, *La filosofía moral de Confucio, por Michele Ruggieri, SJ: La primera traducción de las obras de Confucio al español en 1590*, eds Thierry Meynard and Roberto Villasante (Madrid: Mensajero-Sal Terrae-Comillas, 2018); MICHELE RUGGIERI, *Il primo Confucio latino: Il grande studio; La dottrina del giusto mezzo; I dialoghi*, ed. Michele Ferrero (Rome: Libreria Ateneo Salesiano, 2019).

¹⁴ WENCHAO LI, *Die Christliche China-Mission im 17. Jahrhundert: Verständnis, Unverständnis, Mißverständnis. Eine Geistesgeschichtliche Studie zum Christentum, Buddhismus und Konfuzianismus* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2000); 张西平 (XIPING ZHANG), *儒學西傳歐洲研究導論* (Ruxue xichuan Ouzhou yanjiu daolun) (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2016); 李新德 (XINDE LI), *明清時期西方傳教士中國儒道釋典籍之翻譯與詮釋*

(Ming-Qing shiqi Xifang chuanjiaoshi Zhongguo Ru Dao Shi dianji zhi fanyi yu quanshi) (Beijing: Commercial Press, 2015); WU, *Traduire la Chine au XVIIIe siècle*.

¹⁵ THIERRY MEYNARD, *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus (1687): The First Translation of the Confucian Classics* (Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 2011); THIERRY MEYNARD, *The Jesuit Reading of Confucius: The First Complete Translation of the Lunyu (1687) published in the West* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2015).

translation of three of the *Four Books* (四書) and a sophisticated neo-Scholastic reading of Confucian thought. However, the first complete and printed translation of all *Four Books* by the Flemish missionary François Noël, the *Sinensis imperii libri classici sex* (*Six Classic Books of the Chinese Empire*), was not published until 1711. Noël's work served not only as a principal source for Jean-Baptiste Du Halde's portrait of Chinese philosophy in his *Description de l'empire de la Chine* (1735), an enormously influential work for European intellectual history,¹⁶ but also as one of the principal channels through which Chinese philosophy entered eighteenth-century German thought.¹⁷ In the same year, Noël also published his *Philosophia sinica*,¹⁸ which featured the first systematic analysis of Chinese metaphysics, ritual and ethics using a rich array of Chinese-language sources. Although this latter work was suppressed and had little influence, Noël's attempt to establish a dialogue between Aristotelian scholasticism and neo-Confucianism was innovative and represented a significant departure from his predecessors, who saw neo-Confucianism as a corruption of pre-Qin Confucianism. In recent years, a few scholars have turned their attention to Noël's translations and commentaries,¹⁹ but a comprehensive philological study of Noël's translation of the Confucian canon and an accompanying philosophical commentary are still lacking. The English translation of and a commentary on Noël's *Philosophia sinica* to be undertaken in this project will therefore fill a significant gap in our understanding of how Confucian ideas dialogued with early modern and Enlightenment thought.

Objectives of the Project

Drawing on the philological skills and research expertise of four scholars based in Australia and China, this project will provide a comprehensive history and fresh re-evaluation of attempts by Jesuit missionaries to translate the Confucian canon (*Four Books and Five Classics* 四書五經) and make both primary sources and existing scholarship, spread across multiple European languages and Chinese, accessible to anglophone scholars. Its three main objectives are as follows:

¹⁶ VIRGILE PINOT, *La Chine et la formation de l'esprit philosophique en France (1640-1740)* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1932); ISABELLE LANDRY-DERON, *La preuve par la Chine: La «Description» de J.-B. Du Halde, jésuite, 1735* (Paris: Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 2002).

¹⁷ LI, *Die Christliche China-Mission im 17. Jahrhundert*.

¹⁸ FRANÇOIS NOËL, *Philosophia sinica tribus tractatibus, primo cognitionem primi entis, secundo ceremonias erga defunctos, tertio ethicam, juxta Sinarum mentem complectens* (Prague: Typis Universitatis Carolo-Ferdinandae, 1711).

¹⁹ PAUL A. RULE, 'François Noël, S.J., and the Chinese Rites Controversy,' in *The History of the Relations between the Low Countries and China in the Qing Era (1644-1911)*, eds W. F. Vande Walle and Noël Golvers (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003), 137–65; VLADIMÍR LIŠČÁK, 'François Noël (1651-1729) and His Latin Translations of Confucian Classical Books Published in Prague in 1711,' *Anthropologia Integra* 6, no. 2 (2015): 45–52; CLAUDIA VON COLLANI, 'François Noël and His Treatise on God in China,' in *History of the Catholic Church in China: From Its Beginning to the Scheut Fathers and 20th Century* (Leuven: Ferdinand Verbiest Institute, 2015), 23–63; THIERRY MEYNARD, 'François Noël's Contribution to the Western Understanding of Chinese Thought: *Taiji Sive Natura* in the *Philosophia Sinica* (1711),' *Dao* 17 (2018): 219–30.

- 1) *To systematically examine the history of Jesuit translations of the Confucian corpus from 1590 to 1773*

The project will provide the first comprehensive overview of the Jesuit translations of the *Four Books* and *Five Classics* and map their dissemination. It will commence with the first known Jesuit translation of the *Four Books* by Michele Ruggieri (1543-1607) and conclude with the suppression of the Society of Jesus in 1773, when the Jesuit translation enterprise effectively ended. These translations will be compared against the original Chinese text to ascertain how the Jesuits' scholastic and Renaissance formation influenced their interpretation of Chinese philosophy. A new history of the Jesuit translations and their dissemination as well as a critical edition and English translation of Noël's sinological writings will give the next generation of scholars access to texts that were hitherto accessible only to specialists and a better informed understanding of the sources through which the Enlightenment thinkers encountered Chinese thought.

- 2) *To analyse how these Jesuit translations were read by coeval European thinkers and how they influenced the course of European intellectual history*

Combining digital search tools and archival research, this project will map the extent to which these texts were transmitted and read, and examine how European thinkers were shaped by their encounter with Chinese thought. Greater weight will be attached to European thinkers writing from the second half of the seventeenth century onwards, when Jesuits started to publish their translations more widely. While canonical thinkers like Leibniz and Voltaire will necessarily be included in our study, our mapping of the scholarly networks will pay attention to lesser-known thinkers, such as the Italian Paolo Mattia Doria (1667-1746) and the German Georg Bernhard Bilfinger (1693-1750), and formulate a more comprehensive understanding of how these translations were received in the broader scholarly community.

- 3) *To establish an international collaborative digital platform for research on Sino-European exchange in intellectual history*

As new archival materials are uncovered and digitised, traditional research outputs like monographs and edited volumes can quickly become outdated. In order to keep abreast of the rapid developments in the field, the project is supplementing the jointly authored monograph and critical editions with the first web-based point of reference dedicated to all Jesuit translations of the Confucian canon made between 1590 and 1773. The core of this information hub is a scalable and dynamic online database which records and cross-links the source documents and translations at section level. While it is now at the initial stage of development, as research advances it aims to provide multilingual search capabilities, the ability to drill-down into the texts, timeline display and network visualisation. Since the cross-disciplinary study of the Jesuit translations will draw great benefit from diverse expertise, opportunities will be provided for other scholars to contribute additional resources, marginal annotations and discussion around the documents. This database will grow over time and, once the Jesuit

translations of the Confucian canon have been comprehensively covered, will eventually broaden its scope to encompass coeval translations of other Chinese texts.

Originality and Innovation of the Project

The chief innovation of the project lies in its interdisciplinary and multi-lingual approach that draws upon diverse fields: digital methods, philology, intellectual history and cultural history. Through the analysis of archival and bibliographic materials that have largely been neglected because of language barriers, the project is reinvigorating the study of Sino-European encounters. The innovations can be summarised as follows:

1) Renewed focus on philology in intellectual history

New knowledge in the study of Eastern and Western encounters must be grounded on rigorous textual analysis. This project is conducting detailed archival research in Europe and China and producing a critically informed assessment of the translations of the Confucian classics. By systematically combing through citations of the Jesuit translations in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and carrying out a detailed textual analysis of the translations, it will not only advance knowledge of Sino-European encounters in general, but also shed new light on the specific question of how the Jesuit translations influenced the intellectual debates of the Enlightenment. As a result, it will promote a better understanding of the intellectual origins of key values in Western democracy, such as secularism and religious tolerance, which were informed and consolidated through the intellectual exchange with Chinese philosophy that the Jesuits effected.

2) Overcoming disciplinary divides through scholarly collaboration and digital humanities

New knowledge on the Jesuit translations can be achieved only by overcoming traditional disciplinary barriers. Notably, previous attempts to map Jesuit translations were predominantly the work of individual scholars who were trained in localised subject-specific fields such as ‘Western Philosophy,’ ‘Chinese Philosophy,’ ‘European Literature,’ ‘Intellectual History’ and ‘Philology.’ While individual specialists can acquire the rudiments of all these fields, it is difficult to master all the linguistic skills and intellectual background knowledge required to do full justice to the complexities of this cultural exchange. This project is conceived as intrinsically cross-disciplinary and collaborative from the outset, engaging the specialist expertise of each of its participants, who have been chosen to ensure all the disciplinary needs for the successful completion of the project are met. Feedback from other internationally renowned scholars of the Jesuit China mission is being sought through networking, workshops and conferences, ensuring that the scholarship will be at the cutting-edge of Jesuit studies.

3) *Bringing philology up to speed with digital humanities*

Digital humanities are at the core of the project to promote cross-disciplinary collaboration. The proposed digital platform, identifiable by the title of the project (<https://textus-sinici.org/>), draws inspiration from other successful China-focused websites designed overseas, such as the ‘Bibliotheca Sinica 2.0’ of the University of Vienna, the ‘Beyond Ricci’ project at Boston College, the ‘Chine Ancienne’ website, and the digitalisation of the Japonica-Sinica collection of the Roman Archives of the Society of Jesus (Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu). Although these websites have made a fundamental contribution to making rare resources more accessible to researchers, they are of limited usefulness for the specialised study of Jesuit translations because their aim was to digitalise entire collections. Our digital platform has a defined focus on Jesuit translations of the Confucian canon and their dissemination in Europe, representing not only the content but also the connections and research around this content, thereby facilitating the comparison of corpora. Furthermore, the dynamic nature of the database-driven platform and its maintenance as part of a wider digital research support network, will ensure that the platform can continue to expand in scope beyond the completion of the three-year project and to incorporate Jesuit translations of other Chinese texts. Thus far, we have compiled a list of known sources including eighteen titles, such as Prospero Intorcetta’s *Sinorum scientia politico-moralis* and Jean de La Brune’s *La morale de Confucius* and we expect this list to grow further during the life of the project.

Methodology

At the heart of the project is the methodological postulate that intellectual history must be grounded upon a close reading of primary sources. In this regard, our methodology is indebted to the approach identified with the ‘Cambridge School,’ which has been generally understood as seeking historical understanding through the reconstruction of social, cultural and political contexts and an attentive consideration of the discursive language employed in texts.²⁰ However, this project will go beyond the Cambridge School by drawing upon the tools of philology, a discipline which has seen a resurgence in the humanities in recent years. In particular, the project draws inspiration from the insights of Pollock,²¹ who argues that philology brings not only an awareness of the constructedness and changeability of disciplines such as sinology, but is also attuned to the multiple meanings that texts acquire through the exegetical process. Since China

²⁰ J. G. A. POCOCK, ‘On the Unglobality of Contexts: Cambridge Methods and the History of Political Thought,’ *Global Intellectual History* 4, no. 1 (2019): 1-14; KENNETH SHEPPARD, ‘J. G. A. Pocock as an Intellectual Historian,’ in *A Companion to Intellectual History*, eds Richard Whatmore and Brian Young (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2016), 113–25. By Pocock one should also see the collection of methodological essays: J. G. A. POCOCK, *Political Thought and History: Essays on Theory and Method* (Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009). More specifically, on Jesuits and globalization in a Renaissance studies perspective, PETER BURKE, ‘The Jesuits and the Globalization of the Renaissance,’ *Cultural History* 9, no. 2 (2020): 156–70.

²¹ BENJAMIN A. ELMAN, ‘Early Modern or Late Imperial? The Crisis of Classical Philology in Eighteenth-Century China,’ in *World Philology*, eds Sheldon Pollock, Benjamin A. Elman and Ku-ming Kevin Chang (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2015), 225–24.

in the late Ming and throughout the Qing dynasty witnessed the emergence of textual practices (*kaozheng* 考證) that have been understood as analogous to European philology,²² the philological focus of our methodology allows us to move beyond an Anglocentric model of intellectual history and to link more effectively the Chinese and European contexts. Our proposed history of the Jesuit translations and philological study of Noël's sinological works will not view these as static texts, but as dynamic works that respond to the interpretative triangulation of source, translator and reader.

While we appreciate postcolonial criticism's insights into the problematics of cultural appropriation, we are mindful that a dogmatic adherence to its conceptual framework can produce metanarratives that are divorced from the intellectual concerns of the texts themselves in their historical context. Hence our analysis of the Jesuit translations requires a close reading of manuscripts and letters on the one hand, and, on the other, a critical examination of materials published at the time. In this way, we aim to elicit authorial intention and clarify the meaning of key terms. For instance, to understand the significance of the translation choices made in the *Confucius sinarum philosophus*, it is necessary to have expert knowledge not only of Chinese philosophy, but also of neo-Scholasticism, which was part and parcel of every Jesuit's training in the seventeenth century. Our analysis of the Jesuit translation enterprise utilises the multidisciplinary strengths of each participant in this project. It aims to achieve a detailed reconstruction of the discursive interplay within the Jesuit translations and reveal their inner workings.

Digital presence

To minimize common risks in developing a digital component, the team has adopted the open-source *Heurist* system (heuristnetwork.org). *Heurist* is developed at the University of Sydney, where the project is based, and the core of several long-running public-access projects developed with Australian Research Council funding such as the 'Digital Harlem' (digitalharlem.org), 'The Virtual Museum of Balinese Painting' (balipainting.org), and 'Beyond 1914/Expert Nation' (expertonation.org). As the system has a well-proven record of flexibility, functionality and sustainability, *Heurist* is also in use in several projects in the UK and in the European Union. Use of the system does not require skills in programming and allows the project team to describe and link entities, and to modify and extend the data model on the live database without downtime. As a shared service dependent on a common open-source codebase, the database and web platforms built on it will remain fully functional as long as the service is maintained, thus offering the prospect of longevity far beyond the project itself.

Heurist was established in 2005 to address the issue of unsuitability of interrelated and complex data for most databasing systems at the time by introducing an innovative design philosophy, which would separate programming skills from the ability of the humanities researchers involved to create, test and modify data structures to suit the

²² SHELDON POLLOCK, 'Introduction,' in *World Philology*, 1-24.

needs of their projects without having to be (or become) database engineers. The original *Heurist* database was designed by Ian Johnson, its designer-in-chief, with the aid of the engineering skills of Artem Osmakov, *Heurist's* chief developer. An archeologist at the University of Sydney, Ian Johnson had previously founded the Faculty of Arts' Archeological Computing Laboratory, which in a later reincarnation would become a founding member of the Australasian Association of Digital Humanities. Since then, *Heurist* has continued to provide scholars in the humanities with tailored solutions and has grown to host over 1,500 databases in Australia, Europe and the Americas.

In the case of 'Transforming the East,' the website supported by *Heurist*, apart from presenting basic information on the project and listing team member's publications and research activities, is equipped with a 'Map' section to allow users to visualize the translations the team is working on and find specific translation via a search tool. It displays such translations in list mode so that basic bibliographic data is provided for those currently in the database as well as in map mode enabling viewers to check in which library or archive a translation is currently held and visualize a timeline for each translation. Since this section is programmed to update automatically as soon as a new translation is added to the database, the map will grow as the research progresses.

A connected section, 'Network,' is being planned to display the intricate connections between different translations that circulated in Europe. A diagram is currently presenting a simplified version of this analysis by showing the links between early translations of the Confucian classics and the classical source works they translated. The arrows go from the source work to the translation. As this early analysis shows, there were certain influential translations, such as Noël's *Sinensis imperii libri classici sex* (1711) and the *Confucius sinarum philosophus* (1687), which formed the basis of numerous other translations.

As the project proceeds, and the network analysis becomes more sophisticated, this section will provide a complex picture of how Europeans understood Chinese literature and philosophy at a crucial stage of Sino-European relations.

The research team

The project's team of researchers consists of specialists in philology and intellectual history based at the University of Sydney (Francesco Borghesi and Yixu Lü, the project's chief investigators), Sun Yat-sen University (Thierry Meynard) and Nanjing University (Daniel Canaris).

Borghesi and Lü bring expertise in European intellectual and cultural history, skills in textual analysis and translation, extensive experience of working in some of continental Europe's most important archives and libraries, which also hold the major collections and manuscripts for the project in question.

Francesco Borghesi has studied the paradigms used by European thinkers for cross-cultural dialogue. His ongoing research on the concept of concord (*concordia*) in the Renaissance (ARC DP150104077) will serve as the theoretical basis for mapping the scholastic and Renaissance background of the hermeneutic strategies employed by Jesuits in their translation of Chinese texts. His experience in preparing critical editions, translations and analyses of early modern texts in Latin and Italian will bring philological rigour to the study of Jesuit texts. With experience as lead researcher of the Sydney Digital Humanities Research Group at the University of Sydney and a key participant in digital humanities projects such as the Pico Project at Brown University, Borghesi is orchestrating the digital component of the proposed digital platform for the study of Jesuit translations.

Yixu Lü works on Sino-German encounters, and has held previous grants in this field (ARC DP0555935; ARC DP0877918). Trained as an historian as well as a philologist in China and Germany, she is uniquely equipped to bring interdisciplinary depth to the research field of Sino-European encounters. Conversant with the most recent scholarship in the studies of Sino-European encounters, she will oversee the methodological approach of the project and its intellectual direction. Her broad research networks in Germany, China, Japan and English-speaking countries are engaged to connect scholars working in this field to the planned international platform of the project.

Thierry Meynard is an experienced scholar of Jesuit studies and has published works of translation, critical editions, philological analysis, and commentaries on Jesuit texts. His particular expertise in printed texts and archival documents written in Chinese and European languages is essential to completing the philological work of the project. As a member of the Society of Jesus, he has the capacity to facilitate access to Jesuit archives throughout the world.

Daniel Canaris' research focuses on early modern and Enlightenment intellectual history, with particular emphasis on the philosophical milieu of Naples and the cultural exchange between China and Europe. His contribution adds to this project expertise on the reception of China in the Italian and European Enlightenment and on the Jesuit China mission.

Together, the team possesses the ability to work in all languages essential to the aims of the project. These include classical and modern Chinese, Latin, French, German, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese. With this pool of linguistic expertise and experience in critical editions and intellectual history, the team is uniquely placed to establish a new international hub for research into Sino-European cultural exchange. Leveraging pre-existing research groups at the University of Sydney, such as the Sydney Intellectual History Network and the Translatability of Cultures Reading Group, the team is developing an international network to connect experts on Sino-European cultural exchange based in Australia, China, and Europe.

Developments

This project is aimed at deepening our understanding of the role played by Chinese culture in the emergence of Enlightenment thought and advance research on Sino-European intellectual encounters. Moreover, on a broader level, it aims to produce valuable insights into the linguistic, cultural and intellectual challenges that need to be considered when navigating cross-cultural relations and exchanges today.

The concrete benefits can be summarized as follows:

The project aims to

- 1) unearth hitherto unaccessed Jesuit translations of and commentaries on the Chinese classical canon and map their dissemination throughout Europe, thus producing new historical knowledge about the intellectual encounters between China and Europe.
- 2) produce the most comprehensive history of Jesuit translations of the Chinese canon in the English language. The open-access digital platform will democratise the field for future scholars, making available online manuscripts which could previously be accessed only by travelling to the related archives. The critical commentaries and translations will open up these texts to anglophone scholars and other interested readers. In addition, the project will improve national research infrastructure in digital humanities through the creation of a cutting-edge digital presence.
- 3) restore a philological focus to this important area of intellectual history, enhancing our understanding of the philosophical debates at the forefront of the Enlightenment and advancing an innovative approach in the study of intellectual history. The interdisciplinary and collaborative approach adopted by the project will strive to serve as a model for future research on Sino-European encounters.
- 4) strengthen existing connections between Australian and Chinese academics and further intellectual linkages with colleagues from Europe and the United States (within and beyond the already established and highly specialised scholarly community of “China Christianity Studies”) and provide training opportunities for future generations of researchers.

Case studies

Apart from a co-authored book on the history of Jesuit translations of Confucian texts and their circulation in Europe until the suppression of the Society of Jesus (1773) with which the project will culminate, the research team will progress the project by focussing on a number of case studies.

Among these, a critical edition with English translation of François Noël’s *Chinese Philosophy (Philosophia sinica)* is being edited by Canaris and Meynard. Meynard and Canaris have just completed work on the *First Treatise on God* in Noël’s *Chinese*

Philosophy, which is due to be published in 2023 by Brepols in the series ‘Global Perspectives on Medieval and Early Modern Historiography.’

Meynard and Canaris have also prepared the first edition and scholarly annotated translation of a pioneering report on the predicament of cross-cultural understanding at the dawn of globalization, titled *A Brief Response on the Controversies over Shangdi, Tianshen and Linghun* (*Resposta breve sobre as Controversias do Xámty, Tien Xin, Lim hoên*), which was written in China by the Sicilian Jesuit missionary Niccolò Longobardo (1565–1654) in the 1620s, profoundly influenced Enlightenment understandings of East Asian thought, and was printed in 2021 by Palgrave MacMillan in the series ‘Palgrave Studies in Comparative Global History.’²³

Canaris has published a critical edition of the Chinese and Latin texts, which are both translated into English for the first time, of the *The True Record of the Lord of Heaven* (*Tianzhu shilu*, 1584) by Michele Ruggieri, the first Chinese-language work ever published by a European. The volume, which contains an introduction, a biography of Ruggieri, and rich annotations, was published in 2022 by Brill in the series ‘Studies in the History of Christianity in East Asia.’²⁴

Furthermore, Borghesi has set up to work on an edition of Michele Ruggieri’s 1601 *Relatione del successo della missione della Cina*, which presents an account of Ruggieri’s travel and mission to China in the period spanning from 1577 to 1591 and is currently preserved in the Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu in Rome (*Jap. Sin.*, 101, I). Ruggieri’s account has been neglected by scholarship, which has relied primarily on Ricci’s memoirs that were published in Latin in 1615 and many Europeans vernacular languages in the first half of the seventeenth century, and provides an alternative account on the beginnings of the Jesuit China mission.

In addition to the focus on text-based work, while Lü will further her research on intercultural paradigms in translation to support the methodological framework for the project, Borghesi and Lü will edit a collection of essays on translating and interpreting Chinese and Tibetan cultures in seventeenth- to nineteenth-century Europe intended to fine-tune the overarching theoretical approach of the project and to be submitted to the journal ‘Intellectual History Review’ by the end of 2022. Such collection will include seven papers from scholars based in universities in Australia, China, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States of America on topics ranging from Sino-Western translation theories and practices to the introduction of Renaissance pedagogy in Late-Ming China and from approaches to translation in Malebranche and Leibniz to the development of Tibetan Studies between the second half of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century.

²³ THIERRY MEYNARD and DANIEL CANARIS, eds, *A Brief Response on the Controversies over Shangdi, Tianshen and Linghun* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).

²⁴ DANIEL CANARIS, ed., *Michele Ruggieri’s Tianzhu shilu* (The True Record of the Lord of Heaven, 1584) (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2022).