CHAPTER TWO

FORMATIONS OF KNOWLEDGE

2.1 Knowledge from China: Chinese Sources for European Encyclopaedias

For a long time, scholars in Europe did not have sufficient command of the Chinese language to take their information on China from Chinese sources. Until the end of the eighteenth century, Roman Catholic missionaries, most of them Jesuits, played a key role to supply the European ‘republic of letters’ with information directly taken from Chinese sources. The important role of translations of Chinese texts into European languages becomes obvious from the impact of the publication of *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* (1687).\(^1\) This translation of Confucian writings served as a mine of information for revised editions of Moréri’s *Dictionnaire* published from the early 1690s onwards. European missionaries perceived Chinese ways of describing and ordering the world in Europe with the first translations of Chinese works. Indigenous responses of the Chinese and their views on Europe and the Europeans only became obvious for European observers by restrictive regulations imposed by the Ming and Qing courts on foreign trade.

With his *Description… de la Chine* (1735), Du Halde prepared the most outstanding example for an ‘indirect’ approach to Chinese sources. Without any knowledge of Chinese he drafted his work relying on translations by his fellow Jesuits working in China. He freely revised style and content of these translations.\(^2\) Two years after the publication of Du Halde’s *Description*, a remarkable manuscript came to Paris. It had been prepared by the French Jesuit Joseph Anne Marie Moyriac de Mailla (1669–1748). De Mailla had made extensive use of Zhu Xi’s 朱熹 (1130–1200) *Tongjian gangmu* 通縫綱目 (an abridgment of Sima Guang’s *Zizhi tongjian*). Only after the suppression of

---

\(^1\) For a thorough discussion of *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* see Mungello, *Curious Land*, 247–299.

\(^2\) On the translations of Chinese works Du Halde used for his work see Landry-Deron, *La preuve par la Chine*, 193–247.
the Society of Jesus, Grosier published the manuscript under the title *Histoire générale de la Chine.*

The first European scholar possessing the necessary language skills to make extensive use of Chinese-language materials held in a European library was the above-mentioned Joseph de Guignes. As far as we know, de Guignes did not write for any of the major general encyclopaedias published in eighteenth-century France. Nevertheless, his scholarly contributions were widely acknowledged and used by authors, compilers and editors of encyclopaedic dictionaries. This was the case not only with his *Histoire générale des Huns, des Turcs, des Mogols, et des autres Tartares occidentaux* (1756–1758), but also with his publication of a translation of the *Shujing* (1770), prepared by Antoine Gaubil SJ (1689–1759). As early as in 1776, the French translation of the *Shujing* formed the basis for the article ‘Chou-King’ (*Shujing*) inserted in the supplement of the Yverdon edition of the *Encyclopédie.*

Under the headword ‘Chinese’, the first edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* had mentioned several Chinese works dealing with the antiquity of the empire. The article mostly refers to the (presumed) authors of these writings including works like the *Shujing* (in an edition by Kong Anguo 孔安國 (c. 156–74 BC), the *Kongzi jiayu* 孔子家語 (School Sayings of Confucius) by Wang Su 王肅 (AD 195–256) and to authors like Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (AD 574–648), and the *Lu shi* 路史 (Great history) of Luo Bi 羅泌 (d. AD 1176). It also mentions the *Shiji* 史記 (Records of the Scribe, compiled c. 104–87 BC) of Sima Qian 司馬遷 (c. 145–86 BC), and works by Huangfu Mi 皇甫謐 (AD 215–282; presumably the *Diwang shiji* 帝王世紀 (Genealogical Records of Emperors and Kings)) and Zuo Qiuming 左丘明 (Zuo zhuan 左傳 (Zuo’s tradition), fifth/fourth century BC). Not only due to the tran-

---

5 *Encyclopédie d’Yverdon*, Supplément 2 (1775) 598–607 (s. v. ‘Chou-king’).