ФІЛОСОФІЯ

ISSN 1682-5268 (on-line); ISSN 1608-0599 (print)
Shìdnij svìt, 2025, No. 3, pp. 165–200
doi: https://doi.org/10.15407/orientw2025.03.165

UDC 911.2Кант:(510)

IMMANUEL KANT LESSON ON CHINA: ENLIGHTENMENT GEOGRAPHY, ORIENTALISM, CULTURAL DISTANCE, AND A PORCELAIN TOWER

Ivo Carneiro de Sousa
PhD (Portuguese Culture), Professor
East-West Institute for Advanced Studies (EWIAS)
Estrada Nordeste da Taipa (Edf. Pearl on the Lough), Macau SAR (China)
ivocarneiro@gmail.com

This paper thoroughly investigates all references to China and the Chinese in Immanuel Kant's extensive body of work, as well as in the numerous manuscript notes from his university lectures over 41 years at the University of Königsberg, known as the *Albertinum.* This span of academic service lasted from the winter semester of 1755–1756 until his final lecture on July 23, 1796. The analysis reveals that, aside from a few minor titles, Kant exhibited little interest in studying Chinese civilization, let alone traditional Chinese philosophy in his major critical works. Most references to China appear in the various manuscript versions of his lectures, typically as brief examples rather than meaningful conceptualizations of China's cultural and philosophical legacies. In some instances, these examples occur within Orientalist reflections, where Chinese cases are mingled with Indian examples, reflecting the geographical and cultural perceptions of the Orient that were still prevalent in the 18th century. In other cases, references to Chinese examples emphasize extreme exoticism, cultural backwardness, racialization and ethnocentrism, or social, intellectual, and scientific stagnation. This perspective contributed to a prevailing view among 19th-century European intellectuals that while China had once been a brilliant civilization, it had subsequently stagnated and was incapable of progress.

Notably, Kant taught a course on Physical Geography for more than forty years, beginning in the summer semester of 1756 during his second term as a lecturer at the university. Apart from his Logic classes, which he taught 56 times, and his Metaphysics lectures, delivered 53 times consecutively, the Physical Geography course was the third subject he significantly engaged with, yielding 49-semester lectures until his retirement in mid-July 1796. Currently, 32 known manuscripts of students' notes reflect the academic curiosity surrounding this field, which in the 18th century was far more cosmopolitan and expansive than today's academic Geography. Due to declining health, Kant sought to promote an authorized edition of his Physical Geography teachings with the help of his friend, Friedrich Theodor Rink (1770–1811). Kant provided Rink with a manuscript intended as a "dictation text" from his early teachings, created before 1760 but not fully updated. Consequently, Rink's edition incorporated his updates, notes, and significant alterations. It also drew from other manuscript lecture notes from Kant's classes in the 1770s, including portions of the original dictation text provided to the young aristocrat Friedrich von Holstein-Beck, who had paid for private lessons in 1772/73. The final product was published in 1802 in Königsberg under the title *Immanuel Kant's Physical Geography*, edited at the author's request from his manuscript and partly revised by Dr. Friedrich Theodor Rink ("Immanuel Kant's Physische Geographie auf verlangen des Verfassers aus seiner Handschrift herausgegeben und zum Teil bearbeitet von Dr. Friedrich Theodor Rink"). The section presenting Kant's lecture on

China (pp. 129–140) is the third and final part of the second volume of the 1802 edition, titled "Summary Consideration of the Most Important Peculiarities of Nature in All Countries in Geographical Order". This text closely aligns, often verbatim, with various available handwritten manuscript notes, indicating a consistent presentation of Kant's recurring class on China. These teachings mark the beginning of the final section of this book, commencing with Asia as the "first continent", followed by explorations of Africa, Europe, and America. In concrete terms, the lesson on China comprises just over 2,000 words in the original German printed edition. Therefore, if read aloud or dictated at a moderate pace, it would likely take approximately 20 to 30 minutes, suggesting that it served as the opening segment of Kant's typical two-hour Physical Geography class, generally held every Wednesday and Saturday from 8:00 to 10:00 AM.

This paper offers a comprehensive analysis of Kant's lecture on China, articulating a distinct cultural distance concept. It reveals Kant's lack of engagement with Chinese civilization and philosophy, including Confucian thought, which Jesuit writings had popularized throughout 17th-century intellectual Europe. These writings had garnered favorable impressions from leading German philosophers such as Leibniz and Christian Wolff. In stark contrast, Kant exhibited no correspondence with or inclination toward the Jesuit accommodationist missionary framework that praised the Chinese imperial authority and the philosophies attributed to Confucius. In his lecture on China, Kant did not cite any Jesuit texts, prompting this study to investigate the primary sources that influenced Kant's teachings rigorously. In particular, the examination draws on the notable work of German theologian Paul Ludolfo Berckenmeyer (1667–1732), titled *Curiöse Beschreibung, Der außerleßnesten Merkwürdigkeiten, So in denen dreven Welt-Theilen Asia, Africa und America zu finden* ("Curious Description of the Most Extraordinary Oddities to Be Found in the Three Parts of the World: Asia, Africa, and America"), published in Augsburg in 1721. Kant's examples and lessons regarding China ultimately illustrate that between 1750 and 1770, when the Society of Jesus was disbanded by the Holy See and expelled from various European nations, a significant intellectual shift concerning Chinese civilization and society was already underway in Europe. Fueled by new geographical texts and travel narratives, there developed a tendency to perceive China with a fresh skepticism, highlighting its considerable cultural distance from European intellectual traditions and philosophy. Kant emerges as a pivotal figure symbolizing this turn.

Keywords: I. Kant; China; Physical Geography; Enlightenment; cultural distance

Introduction

In one of his most renowned works, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future* ("Jenseits von Gut und Böse: Vorspiel einer Philosophie der Zukunft"), published in Leipzig in 1886, Nietzsche harshly criticizes the metaphysics, categorical imperatives, and judgment system of Immanuel Kant. He refers to Kant, among other ironic epithets, as the "Chinaman of Königsberg", a nod to the place where the great German philosopher was born in 1724. Within the context of this text, this "Chinese" characterization appears at the conclusion of a dense reflection on the "philosopher of the future". Ultimately, Nietzsche simplistically concludes that, due to Kant's reliance on problematic metaphysical explanations based on unknowable categorical ideas, he was not a true philosopher but merely a "great critic"[1]. Nietzsche employs the Chinese allusion once more, though in a less personal manner, in a famous essay completed in 1888. The work would only be printed in 1895, soon producing widespread controversy and no less scandal mainly due to its provocative title of *The Antichrist* ("Der Antichrist"). In an argument dedicated to unraveling the true meanings of Kant's ethics – presented as mere "fantasies" – Nietzsche concludes his critical examination by highlighting the "manifestations of decline" of what he calls "Königsberg Chinesianity"[2] [Lee 2007, *292*]. These remarks may have aimed for a satirical effect by invoking 19th-century European stereotypes about Chinese civilization, characterized by stagnation, decadence, rigid morality, and an unforgiving, totalitarian authority. In the 19th century, perceptions of Chinese culture underwent significant transformation, often portraying it as incapable of generating a truly modern philosophy focused on social life, education, science, and progress – advancements thought to necessitate foreign intervention from the cultivated nations of Europe.

Nonetheless, even if Nietzsche's references were intended as a metaphorical critique of Kantian philosophy, it is worthwhile to examine Kant's works in detail. Such an exploration could uncover whether his allusions to Chinese civilization and thought lend credence to Nietzsche's playful moniker of "Chinaman".

Kant Fragments on China: Confusing Philosophy, Aesthetics, Passions, and Gambling

It is not worthwhile to meticulously investigate any references to China in Kant's three most significant critical works – *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), and *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790) – as none of these titles suggests any remote interest in China and its civilization, completely ignoring its philosophical traditions. The only mention of "Chinese" in these Kant's major writings appears fragmentarily in the context of aesthetics within the last of the three critical titles in a textual general passage stating that "a Negro must necessarily have a different normal idea of the beauty of a figure than a white person, and a Chinese person must have a different idea than a European" [Kant 2000, *119*]. Strictly speaking, Kant introduced only very timidly, much less taught systematically, any domain of Philosophy by summoning his three *Critiques*. Yesterday as today, the three major works, and mostly the *Critique of Pure Reason*, continue to present huge learning challenges, if not nightmares, for young undergraduate students starting serious university studies of philosophical subjects. Furthermore, in contrast to his most striking original works, Kant taught for four decades the major themes of epistemology, logic, and other areas of philosophy stably following Georg Friedrich Meier's *Excerpt of the Doctrine of Reason* ("Auszug aus der Vernunftlehre"), first published in 1752 to become an official textbook widely adopted by many 18th-century German instructors. We still know the personal copy of Meier's textbook that Kant used for decades in his classes in which he had written extensive notes and some critical remarks [Meier 2016, *VIII–IX*].

These contrasts between privileged consideration for original scientific research versus routine textbook teaching as an ongoing academic paradoxical comfortable dualistic practice even of leading scholars of the past, force us to remember historically how Kant was in his time much more a diligent and esteemed teacher – his main source of income – rather than the globally recognized philosopher he is today, since his consecration outside Prussia and German territories took place only in the last years of his life and belatedly after his death in non-European geographies. In mainland China, for example, awareness of Kant's work began to emerge sparingly in the early 20th century, contrasting with Macau, where some of Kant's works in German circulated among a select intellectual group in the early 19th century. This group was connected to the wealthy Prussian consul, Thomas Beale, a powerful opium merchant whose library, containing Kantian works, eventually passed to the Royal Seminary of St. Joseph[3]. Later, among mainland Chinese intellectuals, the reformist Kang Youwei (1858–1927) wrote the first Chinese paper on "The Doctrine of Kant, the First Great Philosopher of the Modern World" in 1903. Following him, philosopher and influential politician Cai Yuanpei (1868–1940) conducted research on Kantian epistemology and aesthetics [Wang 2020, *496–514*]. Next, in the turbulent Republican period, key works by Kant were translated into Chinese, including the *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1935 and the *Critique of Practical Reason* in 1936. These translations helped establish a gradual teaching and research foundation for his philosophy in China. This development can be traced from the pioneering efforts of Fan Shoukang (1896–1983), who published works between 1926 and 1927[4], to the significant studies by Mou Zongsan (1909–1995), who critically disseminated Kant's thought during the last two decades of the 20th century. Mou's work had a considerable impact on Chinese philosophical production, including attempts to update various neo-Confucian traditions [Chan 2011, *131–140*].

The 41 years of Kant's dedicated service at the University of Königsberg, known as the *Albertinum*, spanned from the winter semester of 1755–56 until his final lecture on July 23, 1796. Initially, from 1755 to 1769–1770, he served as a lecturer (Privatdozent), providing private courses funded directly by his students. In 1771, he became a full professor of Logic and Metaphysics, which also included delivering a public free course of lectures each semester that attracted numerous students and some curious external visitors. The topics of his courses varied widely, encompassing Logic and Metaphysics, Geography and Anthropology, as well as areas such as Moral Philosophy, Pedagogy, Philosophical Encyclopedia, Natural Law, Physics, Mathematics, and Theology. Many manuscript notebooks of his lessons have been preserved, reflecting a rich diversity of subjects[5]. These significant manuscript collections pose a variety of challenges, as they were created generously by students for personal use, group dissemination, or even sale, often involving professional copyists. This led to numerous variants of the same subjects and lessons. As a result, it is difficult to consider these manuscript notebooks – and, to a lesser extent, Kant's handwritten annotations in the textbooks he employed – as immediate, absolute direct, or rigorously accurate documents of his thought or teachings. It is crucial to critically establish the fixation, transmission, periodization, and functions of these handwritten notebooks, cross-referencing them with the textbooks that structured Kant's lessons, while also carefully considering the cultural and social context in which the German philosopher operated and published. This approach will help avoid anachronisms that might arise from interpreting a work outside its historical context.

Aside from an 1802 book on *physical geography* that will be studied later, Kant's references to China appear in less prominent printed works and, more importantly, in the variety of notebooks made by his students, disciples, and intrigued attendees of his lectures. These texts and notebooks show that Kant limited himself to produce only brief and scattered remarks about China, typically using it as an example rather than delving into a deeper analysis of major themes in Chinese civilization, culture, or philosophy. Following a chronological approach, we find Kant's first remark on China in a modest book published in Königsberg in 1764, titled "Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime". In this work, he discusses the foundational concepts of Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714–1762), who proposed aesthetics as a new science concerning the judgment of taste and the appreciation of beauty. Kant critiques and transcends Baumgarten's causal assertions by emphasizing that the judgment of beauty is inherently subjective; it is rooted in the internal feelings of pleasure or displeasure rather than in any external qualities of the object itself. This judgment invariably involves mental representations that connect a specific sensory experience to universal principles. These ideas are, among others, exemplified by Kant's views on the "unnatural" otherness of traditional Chinese art, as he noted:

> What ridiculous grotesqueries do the verbose and studied compliments of the Chinese not contain: even their paintings are grotesque and represent marvelous and unnatural shapes, the likes of which are nowhere to be found in the world. They also have venerable grotesqueries, for the reason that they are of ancient usage*, and no people in the world has more of them than this one [Kant 2007, *59*; Nelson 2011, *510*].

The editions of this text commonly feature a note regarding the phrase "ancient usage", typically denoted with an asterisk. This note provides an illustrative example that highlights, in Kant's interpretation, the "miserable custom" and "times of ignorance" associated with an ancient Chinese cultural festival – often recounted by European travelers in the 18th century, serving as a vivid illustration of the perceived cultural backwardness of the Chinese empire. While many of these travelers focused on Macau and only briefly visited the foreign factories in Canton, some of their writings reveal the following notable tradition: "In Peking, during an eclipse of the sun or moon, they continue the ceremony

of making a great noise to drive away the dragon believed to devour these celestial bodies. This practice, which has endured since the earliest times of ignorance, persists despite our contemporary understanding" [Kant 2007, *59*].

In 1770, manuscript notes from Logic classes based on Meier's textbook provide the only known direct references to prominent Chinese philosophers by Kant. He noted,

> Among the Chinese, we identify three great philosophers: Confucius, Keilau, and Janzu, whom they worshipped as a three-headed idol. They shared Pythagoras's view on the transmigration of souls, worshipped the sun, moon, and stars, and occasionally even made offerings to the devil to prevent him from harming them. Consequently, they placed his image at the front of their ships and wore frightening masks on their clothing. In Chinese thought, philosophy is essentially limited to morals, along with some astronomy and mathematics, as well as a form of political science and governance. Confucius was to the Chinese what Solon was to the Greeks [Kant 1992, *21*].

While acknowledging Confucius's recognition among 18th-century European intellectuals, this lecture – at least as recorded in the students' notes – presents names and imaginative features that are difficult to interpret. The two other "great" philosophers mentioned are difficult to identify, particularly if the names noted by Kant's students were accurately transcribed. "Keilau" might loosely refer to the semi-legendary Laozi (Lao Tzu), while "Janzu" could represent an attempt to identify Zhuang Zhou (Chuang-tze or Zhuangzi), the 4th-century B.C. thinker credited with authoring key Taoist texts [Kant (Lehmann ed.) 1966, XXIV, *991*]. In any case, these figures certainly do not form a three-headed deity; this must be a confusing reference to Nezha (哪吒), who is highly revered in the Canton region and particularly in Macau, where he is known by the Cantonese name Na Tcha. This ancient protective divinity remains one of the most popular local deities, with several 18th-century travelers providing detailed descriptions of the festivals and numerous images of Na Tcha in Chinese temples in Macau, where he continues to be celebrated as the "Third Lotus Prince", emblematic of the city [Sousa 2022, *201–397*]. In summary, these brief teachings on Chinese odd philosophers and philosophy invited students to understand that philosophical thought in China encompassed little more than morality, a smattering of mathematics and astronomy, and a type of political science. This understanding led Kant, reflecting a normative Eurocentric model, to explain that the three supposed great philosophers shared Pythagoras' common belief in the transmigration of souls while conveniently referring to Confucius as the "Solon of China".

Amidst this confusion and oversimplification, it appears that these short notes represent Kant's only references to Chinese philosophers throughout his four decades of teaching. In fact, in the Logic textbook published in 1800 by Gottlob Benjamin Jäsche (1762–1842), which was based on Kant's handwritten teaching notes, the three philosophers were omitted, and only a general assertion remained, claiming starkly that Chinese thought lacked the capacity for abstract conceptualization:

> Among all peoples, the Greeks were the first to philosophize. They were the first to cultivate knowledge of reason not through images, but in abstract terms. Other peoples tend to make concepts understandable only through concrete images. Even today, some cultures, like the Chinese and some Indians, engage with concepts derived from reason, such as God and the immortality of the soul. However, they do not attempt to investigate the nature of these concepts using the rules of abstract reasoning. For them, there is no distinction between the use of understanding in concrete terms and in the abstract [Kant 1992, *540*].

Consequently, in his lectures on Anthropology delivered during the winter semester of 1775–1776, Kant also addresses the "immaturity" of scientific knowledge in China, particularly in relation to its approach to mathematics. This theme resurfaced in Enlightenment discourse towards the end of the 18th century, consolidating the perception of scientific stagnation in China. According to this perspective, any progress in China could

only be realized through European intervention or the "guidance of another". Detailed notes taken by David Joachim Friedländer (1750–1834) – a silk dealer from Königsberg who eventually settled in Berlin and was neither a student of Kant nor enrolled in any university – indicated that "the understanding can either be used under the guidance of another, or without the guidance of another. The former is deemed immature; the latter, mature. Thus, in mathematics, the Chinese are considered immature, despite their belief that their own judgment and cognition are mature" [Kant 2012, *103*].

In this much more "mature" context, Kant convokes other brief Chinese cases during his other Anthropology lectures on "passions" in the winter semester of 1777–78, as noted in several available manuscript records. He differentiates "passions" from "affections", stating:

> It is said of certain individuals that they are full of affect, but not that they are full of passion; for instance, regarding the French. Conversely, there are those who may exhibit no affects yet are brimming with passions, exemplified by the Chinese and Indians, who, in various situations, display little affect, thereby appearing to embody the role of philosophers, despite harboring insatiable desires [Kant 2012, *273*].

These distinctions continued to be cited in Kant's Anthropology classes in 1786, where they inspired more detailed student notes characterizing the Chinese as "deceivers", a people regarded as untrustworthy in both commerce and diplomacy, reflecting their peculiar misleading traditional cultural practices. Thus, summarizing the complex cultural dynamics surrounding passion, Kant taught that

> where a great deal of affect is present, there is generally little passion; as with the French, who as a result of their vivacity are fickle in comparison with the Italians and Spaniards (as well as Indians and Chinese), who brood over revenge in their rage or are persistent in their love to the point of dementia. Affects are honest and open, passions on the other hand are deceitful and hidden. The Chinese reproach the English with being impetuous and hotheaded, "like the Tartars"; but the English reproach the Chinese with being out-and-out (though calm) deceivers, who do not allow this reproach to dissuade them at all in their passion. Affect is like drunkenness that one sleeps off; passion is to be regarded as a dementia that broods over a representation which nestles itself deeper and deeper [Kant 2007, *355*].

A collection of fragmentary topical examples ultimately guiding students to the inevitable "discovery" of the profound Chinese "passion" with gambling, which, according to Kant, could only be understood as rooted in superstition:

> It is not easy to explain why games of chance exert such a strong fascination among civilized and uncivilized peoples (Chinese and American savages). However, it is even more difficult to explain it as a way to maintain social intercourse, or indeed to explain how it is valued as promoting humanity. People with unclear concepts: hunters, fisherman, perhaps also sailors, are first and foremost common lottery players and are on the whole superstitious [Kant 2007, *375*].

Other Chinese Fragments: Race, Orientalism, and Cultural Distance

It is essential to clarify that many of the brief Kant references to China and the Chinese are not typically made with autonomy or singularity, even when used as mere examples. Rather, they are often embedded within broader considerations that visit a space both "civilizational" and geographical, which many European intellectuals of the 18th century continued to identify as "the Orient". Although ample evidence emerged in the latter half of this period – ranging from geographical studies to travel accounts – that began to dissolve the notion of a homogeneous "Orient" in favor of a more nuanced understanding of Asia and its diverse territories, Kant seemed to rely on established notions of "the Orient" in his lectures. This adherence reflects a pronounced form of "orientalism" with

clear ethnocentric roots[6]. In this context, Kant conveniently pairs India and China as witnessed in other Anthropology lectures' manuscript notes. During again the winter semester classes of 1777/78, he presented this troubling idea: "China and Hindustan is a land in which there is much art and also an analogue to science; indeed, we are much indebted to this land. If we consider this people, then we ask: has it come to the bounds of its destiny? We have conjectured that it will not proceed further, since it lacks spirit" [Kant 2012, *275*]. Despite the vague generalization of "land" (the term "länder" in the original could also be translated as "countries"), these observations contributed to a broader framework of racialization, suggesting that

> the Negroes, however, are also no longer susceptible to any further civilizing; but they have instinct and discipline, which is lacking in the Americans. The Indians and Chinese appear now to be at a standstill in their perfection; for their history books show that they now know no more than they have known for a long time [Kant 2012, *276*].

These remarks highlight the well-known notion of the "stagnation" of notable "oriental" civilizations – once vibrant but now perceived to be in decline – thus establishing a persistent form of "Orientalism" in subsequent Anthropology lectures. This concept was also revisited during the winter semester classes of Anthropology in 1781/82, as recorded in handwritten notes that later came into the possession of Johann Adam Bergk (1769–1834), a professor of Philosophy and Jurisprudence at Leipzig University. In these detailed notes, Kant concluded his general lecture on "human nature" by emphasizing a causal system of "predispositions" that, he argued, led to the "Oriental" peoples' inability to improve "over centuries":

> The variety of natural gifts among the many diverse nations cannot be explained entirely by incidental causes but must lie in the nature of the human being himself, because this variety also often occurs under identical circumstances. The incidental causes are 1) physical; to these belong the climates (climatic zones) and domestic products, and 2) moral. If a people in no way improves itself over centuries, then one may assume that there already exists in it a certain natural predisposition which it is not capable of exceeding. The Hindus, the Persians, the Chinese, the Turks, and in general all Oriental peoples belong to this group [Kant 2012, *315*].

In the manuscript notes from other anthropology lessons of the first semester of 1784/85, there are additional brief remarks regarding the "Chinese", focusing directly on the concept of the "human race". In a straightforward description of the "colors" of different human populations, it appears that the German philosopher taught a comment similar to the following:

> Thus the differential mark' of the blond color is dominant in Denmark, whereas in Spain (but even more in Asia in the peoples that are counted among the whites) the brunette skin color (with its consequence, the eye and hair color) is dominant. The latter color can even acquire hereditary status without exception in an isolated people (as with the Chinese, to whom blue eyes appear ridiculous) because there is no fair-skinned person to be encountered among them who could engender this color [Kant 2007, *148*].

Kant discusses further this topic in various sections of his Anthropology lectures, where several manuscript notes reveal a clear racialization of the Chinese through a simplistic analysis of physiognomy. Although presented cautiously in the realm of conjecture, his teachings provoke questions such as:

> Does a hump on the nose indicate a satirist? Does the distinctive shape of the Chinese face, characterized by a lower jaw that slightly protrudes beyond the upper jaw, signify their stubbornness? Or does the abundance of hair on both sides of Americans' foreheads suggest inherent feeble-mindedness? These are conjectures that lead to uncertain interpretations [Kant 2007, *396*].

Despite the critical idea of "uncertain interpretations", Kant's class notes from the same period on "physiognomy", namely summarized in the manuscript notes known as *Anthropology Mongrovius*, simply state that "the Chinese have their upper jaws and upper teeth protruding; we have the opposite" [Kant 2012, *475*]. These contrasting mirror-like observations, where Westerners perceived their own traits as reversed in "Orientals", perpetuated a well-established orientalism rooted in an ethnocentric perspective – one that Kant never critically examined, instead using it as if it were factual evidence.

The close connections between racialization and generalized Orientalist perspectives, which aim to exaggerate the differences between Europeans and "Orientals", led Kant to briefly address critically several political and moral considerations regarding the imperial order and the prevailing system of values in China. It is noteworthy that Chinese historical culture has never identified itself as "Oriental" or even Asian, as reflected in its own categorization as the "Middle Empire" or similar terms. Nonetheless, furthermore, in manuscript notes from the winter semester of 1784/85, taken during his Ethics classes, Kant remarked: "In different parts of the world, we also find that men differ in regard to morality; thus, in Africa, theft is allowed; in China, parents are permitted to abandon their children on the street; the Eskimos strangle them; and in Brazil, they are buried alive" [Kant 1997, *49*]. Albeit the evident historical and cultural inaccuracies in these statements, Kant also presented a consequential fatal perspective in his repeated lessons on the "Conjectural Beginning of Human History". Teaching in 1786 the classic interrelation between war and state-formation to introduce the theme of "respect for humanity" that he thought could not fully exist without freedom, Kant cautioned his students by stating, "One needs only to look at China, which, due to its geographical situation, has to fear possibly only an unforeseen attack, rather than a strong enemy. In this context, all traces of freedom have been eradicated" [Kant 2007, *173*]. Kant further elaborated on the theme of individual freedom during his Theology classes, as captured in manuscript notes from his lectures in the winter semesters of 1783/84 and 1785/86. In exploring various theological principles, he conducted a profound examination of the civilizational diversity surrounding the concept of God. Kant noted that traditional religious beliefs in regions such as China, Tibet, and India often lead to what he described as a "mystical self-annihilation", where "individuals are misled into the belief that they are ultimately subsumed into the Godhead" [Kant 1996, *390*; Nelson 2011, *511*].

The profound implications surrounding the concept of self-annihilation are articulated further in Kant's final essay on religion, titled *The End of All Things* ("Das Ende alter Dinge"), which was published in June 1794 in the Berlinische Monatschrift. He soon encountered significant criticism for introducing another philosophical discourse on religion faith, including topics related to Christianity, which resulted in censorship by the king on October 1. Consequently, Kant felt it necessary to reassure Frederick II on October 12 that he would refrain from discussing religious matters in the future [Kuehn 2001, *378–380*]. This incident was one among many that marked what was referred to as the end of *Aufklärung* in Prussia [Lesttion 1993, *57–112*]. Notwithstanding, the forthright tone of his essay also critiques what he describes as "Lao-Kiun's monstrous system", referring to the foundational legendary figure of Daoism, Laozi (Lao Tzu). Kant's critical perspective blends Daoist philosophy (daojia) and religion (daojiao), emphasizing the theme of nothingness – a concept he reaffirms in his lecture on China, extending it to Buddhism and potentially encompassing all forms of Chinese religious traditions:

> From this comes the monstrous system of Lao-kiun concerning the highest good, that it consists in nothing, i.e. in the consciousness of feeling oneself swallowed up in the abyss of the Godhead by flowing together with it, and hence by the annihilation of one's personality; in order to have a presentiment of this state Chinese philosophers, sitting in dark rooms with their eyes closed, exert themselves to think and sense their own nothingness [Kant 1996, *228*; Nelson 2011, *512*].

The references we have cataloged have gradually formed a mosaic of examples that have evolved in seriousness over time, ultimately sparking curiosity and reflections among students and attendees at Kant's lectures. This occurred within an intellectual process of building a system of "cultural distance", blending a restrained exoticism with a progressive intellectual framework aimed at critically representing China. This domestication of the exotic regarding China, framed by the Eurocentric superiority and gravitas of Enlightenment philosophy, progressively gave rise to the normative clichés of the era. Amidst stagnation, oppression, and superstition, these perceptions significantly shaped European political, cultural, and scientific views of China for the following two centuries. As a result, even a notable curiosity is tempered by a concluding remark that incorporates the term "dramatic" in Mongrovius' Anthropology class notes from the winter semester of 1784/85. Kant alludes to the well-known Chinese tradition of symbolizing the number 9 (九, jiǔ), which is imbued with meanings related to "eternity" and its intrinsic link to the emperor's patriarchal authority, characterized by "lasting love". The lesson remarks that "the Chinese, too, consider the number nine to be something special, and the emperor possesses no more and no less than 9.999 ships; this sounds so dramatic when one articulates it" [Kant 2012, *410*]. This numerical fascination resurfaces in more elaborate reflections from Kant's lectures in 1798, where he adopts an increasingly critical viewpoint. In his continued discussions on "Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View", Kant further explores the intriguing symbolism of "nine", which he uses to illustrate a Chinese paradigm of ignorance and mysticism:

> The emperor of China is supposed to have a fleet of 9,999 ships, and on hearing this number we secretly ask ourselves, why not one more? Although the answer could be: "Because this number of ships is sufficient for his needs"; in reality the intent of the question is not focused on the needs, but rather merely on a kind of number mysticism. – Worse, although not uncommon, is when someone who through miserliness and fraud has brought his fortune to 90,000 thalers in cash now cannot rest until he has a full 100,000, without needing it. And in achieving this goal he perhaps at least deserves the gallows, even if he does not get it. To what childishness the human being sinks in his ripe old age, when he allows himself to be led by the leash of sensibility! Let us now see how much better or worse he fares when he pursues his course under the illumination of understanding [Kant 2007, *303*].

Kant Lesson on China: Physical Geography and Much More

In addition and contrast to the limited collection of fragmentary and generally brief references to China and the Chinese in published works and predominantly in students' manuscript learning notes, Kant offered a unique lesson about the great middle empire during several continuous years of teaching Physical Geography. He began offering this subject in the summer semester of 1756, during his second term as a lecturer at the university in Königsberg. Apart from his Logic classes, which he conducted 56 times, and his Metaphysics lectures, which he taught 53 consecutive times, Physical Geography was the third area that significantly engaged his teaching efforts, yielding 49 semester lectures until his retirement in mid-July 1796. Currently, there are 32 known manuscripts of students' notes that meticulously reflect the academic curiosity surrounding a field of knowledge that, in the 18th century, was far more cosmopolitan and expansive than today academic Geography. In fact, Kant presented Geography as a science that cultivates "that unity of knowledge without which all learning remains only piecework", laying the essential groundwork for pragmatic understanding of the world, or *Weltkenntnis* [Kant 2012, *453*].

This broad cosmopolitan approach, however, would not endure. Starting in the 1770s, students' notebooks reveal a gradual shift in Kant's disciplinary divisions and methodologies, as he moved away from comprehensive Geography towards more specialized academic fields, a transformation that ultimately foreshadowed the Enlightenment's emergence of contemporary social and human sciences. Indeed, after the winter semester of

1772–73, Kant excluded certain themes from his Physical Geography course – most notably what he termed *moral geography* – in order to establish a dedicated course in Anthropology. He began offering this Anthropology course during winter semesters, alternating it with classes in Metaphysics, while reserving the summer semester for Logic and Physical Geography. This new course, covering a wide range of topics from physical anthropology to various aspects of psychology, quickly became the most popular among Kant's lectures. It attracted an average of over forty enrolled students, including several of his professorial colleagues. As a result, this course generated the largest collection of handwritten student notes, consisting of 36 distinct preserved manuscript versions [Kant 2012, *2*].

Later, in 1801, a volume titled "Physische Geographie", abusively attributed to Immanuel Kant, was published in Mainz and Hamburg without his permission. This work was actually created by Johann Jakob Wilhelm, along with editor Gottfried Vollmer. It was based on lecture notes provided by Vollmer's brother, who worked as a teacher and preacher in Thorn [Wilhelm & Vollmer 1801]. The publication ultimately expanded to four volumes by 1805. Due to his declining health, the German philosopher sought to promote an authorized edition with the assistance of his friend, Friedrich Theodor Rink (1770–1811), a professor of Oriental languages and theology at Königsberg. Kant provided Rink with a manuscript presented as a "dictation text" from his early teachings on physical geography, a document created before 1760 but not fully updated. Consequently, Rink's edition project decided to incorporate his own updates, notes, and significant alterations. It also drew from other manuscript lecture notes from Kant's classes in the 1770s, including portions of the original dictation text provided to the young aristocrat Friedrich von Holstein-Beck, who had paid for private lessons in 1772/73 [Adickes 1911, *10*]. By this point, Kant lacked the physical and intellectual capacity to oversee the final editorial process. Although Rink managed to revise the first volume effectively, he only partially accomplished this for the second. As a result, the published work does not represent a text solely written and edited by Kant; it is a compilation derived from various sources, including Kant's notes, sporadically updated teaching materials, and student transcripts from different periods, along with Rink's extensive personal revisions. The final product was published in 1802 in Königsberg under the title *Immanuel Kant's Physical Geography published at the author's request from his manuscript and partly edited by Dr. Friedrich Theodor Rink* ("Immanuel Kant's Physische Geographie auf verlangen des verfassers aus seiner handschrift herausgegeben und zum theil bearbeitet von Dr. Friederich Theodor Rink").

It is not particularly significant to dwell on the fact that our philosopher and devoted professor rarely ventured outside the borders of Königsberg, except for a few brief excursions into East Prussia. The longest recorded journeys were approximately 60 miles to the town of Arnsdorf and 75 miles to Goldapp [Kuehn 2001, *450*]. In consequence, his vivid understanding of Europe – and the wider world he discussed in his physical geography classes – was quite limited. Kant's geographical teachings were primarily based on second-hand information, mainly gathered from geography dictionaries and travel accounts, most of which were German editions and translations that will be examined later.

The section presenting Kant's lecture on China (pp. 129–140) is the third and final part of the second volume of the 1802 edition of the *Physische Geographie*, titled "Summary Consideration of the Most Important Peculiarities of Nature in All Countries in Geographical Order". This text closely aligns, often verbatim, with various available handwritten manuscript notes, indicating a consistent presentation of Kant's recurring class on China. These teachings mark the beginning of this book final section, which starts with Asia, designated as the "first continent", and is subsequently followed by explorations of Africa, Europe, and America. The volume does not mention any other recognized continent, aside from a concluding chapter dedicated to "the Lands of the Arctic

Ocean" ("Von der Ländern am Fismeere", pp. 246–248). In concrete terms, the lesson on China comprises just over 2,000 words in the original German printed edition. Thus, if read aloud or dictated at a moderate pace, it would take approximately 20 to 30 minutes. This suggests that it likely served as the opening segment of Kant's typical two-hour *Physical Geography* class, which he generally conducted every Wednesday and Saturday from 8:00 to 10:00 AM [Kuehn 2001, *205–206*].

Following the extensive lecture on China, the chapter progresses to lessons on Tonkin ("Tunkin", pp. 140–141), Cochinchina ("Cochin-China", pp. 141–142), Siam "and Other Countries, some of whom pay tribute to this Kingdom" (pp. 142–147). Subsequent sections cover Pegu (pp. 147–148), Arakan ("Arrakan", pp. 148–149), Assam ("Asem", pp. 149–150), Hindustan ("Indostan", pp. 150–154), the Moluccan Islands ("Molucische Inseln", pp. 154–155), the Island of Celebes or Macassar ("Die Insel Celebes ober Macassar", pp. 155–156), Borneo (pp. 156–158), Java (pp. 158–160), Sumatra (pp. 160–161), the Islands of Nicobar and Andaman ("Die Inseln Nicobar und Andaman", p. 161), Land of the Papuans ("Das land der Papuas", pp. 161–162), and Other Islands in this Sea [Bali, Solor and Timor] ("Andere Inseln in diesen Meere", pp. 162–163). The lesson continues its journey through Ceylon ("Ceilon", pp. 163–165), the Maldive Islands ("Maldivische Enlande", pp. 165–167), Persia ("Persien", pp. 168–171), Arabia ("Arabien", pp. 171–175), Asiatic Tatary ("Asiatische Tataren", p. 176), Russian Territory – Siberia ("Russisches Gebiet. Siberien", pp. 176–181), Peninsula of Kamchatka ("Kamtschatka eine Halbinsel", pp. 181–182), Mohammedan free Tatary ("Mahomedanische freye Tataren", pp. 182–183), Mongolian Tatars ("Mongolische Tataran", pp. 183–184), Kalmuks ("Kalmücken", pp. 184–186), Manchu Tatary ("Nische oder Mandschu Tatarey", p. 186), and Asiatic Turkey ("Asiatische Türkey", pp. 187–188)[7]. This Asiatic written exploration is approximately 8,500 words long, following the length of the printed second volume of the referenced Rink edition. Even when read slowly and carefully, it would take about an hour and a half to complete. Therefore, during a two-hour class focused on Asia, Kant had plenty of time to pause and provide additional insights. This is supported by various notes taken by students during different periods of the Physical Geography course, noting that Kant's lectures included several comments and humorous remarks that contributed to the lively atmosphere of the class [Kuehn 2001, *357*].

In examining this teaching textbook section attributed to the intellectual prestige of Kant, several notable omissions become apparent. Most significantly, there is no mention of Japan or the Philippines, despite these regions frequently being referenced and mapped in various geographical dictionaries during the 18th century, including popular small-format editions[8]. Furthermore, the treatment of Spain is notably brief and superficial, limited to a mere 13 lines (p. 225), which inadequately addresses the prevailing ignorance surrounding its colonial dominance in the Philippines. Consequently, the 1802 edition of the *Physische Geographie* not only neglects the Spanish Empire in the Far East but also fails to consider the various Asian territories and enclaves controlled by the Portuguese, Dutch, British, and French. This omission is particularly striking considering French colonial ambitions were expanding not only into Tonkin but also into the overlooked regions of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, which would later come to constitute French Indochina. Moreover, there are no references to the Korean peninsula, despite the existence of a comprehensive map of the "Kingdom of Korea" created by Jean-Baptiste Bourgignon d'Anville as early as 1735. This map was included in the works of Jesuit Jean-Baptiste Du Halde on China and was subsequently published in atlases, geography dictionaries, and travel collections, depicting Korea as a distinct nation [Du Halde 1735, I (10); Atlas 1737, (32)]. The four volumes of Du Halde's description were available in German translation from 1747 to 1749 [Du Halde 1749, IV (553)]. Finally, the diverse array of peoples and the political and cultural territories in what is now recognized as Central Asia and the Middle East reveal several confusions, omissions, and ambiguities. Particularly, the brief

commentary on "Asian Turkey" does not adequately address the lack of a geographical lesson on the Ottoman Empire.

In contrast, and contributing to explain the omissions, Kant's examination of Asia's physical geography is largely influenced by the dominant presence of a single, powerful empire: China. This influence is evident in various observations stressing China's cultural impact in different Eastern regions. In the following chapter on Tonkin, it is noted that "they have much in common with the religion and laws of the Chinese" (p. 141). Further on, the section about Siam mentions that "[l]ike the Chinese, in painting, they only draw monsters and impossible things" (p. 144). When discussing Bombay, the text highlights the city's "fame for the production of painted glasses, silk cloths, a good mortar for building, various medicines, and Chinese work" (p. 153). A brief mention of the island of Bali states that "both the Chinese and the Javanese take the men as slaves" (p. 162). Additionally, in the note about the Mongolian Tatars, the text takes a Sinocentric perspective, claiming that "[t]he Mongols are called stinking Tatars by the Chinese because of their bad smell" (p. 183). Moreover, in a unique discussion regarding the Kalmuks' religion – characterized as a form of "Catholic Christianity that has degenerated into the blindest paganism" – it is noted that their priests are believed to possess the symbolic power of a formidable trinitarian deity, referred to by the Chinese as a "living Fo" (p. 185).

It is hardly surprising that the lecture on China stands out as the most extensive among all countries featured in the printed *Physical Geography*, offering a textual segment characterized by its grandiloquent, exotic, and critical style. Kant begins by referring to China as a "great empire" ("Großen Reich", no original), asserting that it is "undoubtedly the most populous and cultured in the entire world", housing "as many inhabitants (…) as a significant portion of the rest of the world combined". The text admirably emphasizes China's impressive network of canals that connect its major rivers, noting that the "great canal from Canton to Peking is unmatched in length anywhere in the world". The text also pays particular attention to the Great Wall, a common theme in 18th-century European literature and science, which "crosses astonishing mountains and rivers with flying buttresses" and has "withstood the test of time for one thousand eight hundred years". The commendation extends to the cities and urban planning, highlighting that "the Chinese cities are all, as far as the site permits, laid out accurately in squares, divided into four quarters by two main roads, ensuring that the four gates align perfectly with the four cardinal points". After extolling the grandeur of Beijing's wall, which towers "nearly one hundred feet high", this introduction reaches its apex with an exaltation of the 15th-century Buddhist Pagoda Tower of Nanjing. Notably, this nine-story structure, crafted from porcelain and standing for four centuries, "is the most beautiful building in the Orient" [Kant 2012, *629*].

The following section titled "Customs and Character of the Nation" offers a nuanced view of China, celebrating some of its cultural traits while also addressing certain perceived eccentricities and criticizing some moral behaviors. Kant describes the Chinese as having "an uncommonly serene disposition. He keeps to himself and tries to explore the minds of others. They regard nothing as more despicable than losing one's temper". However, some other customs are presented with a sense of exaggeration and irony. For instance, it is noted that "the scholars never cut the nails of their left hand, as a sign of their profession", while "Chinese women have feet that are no larger than those of a three-year-old child as a result of being bound since childhood". Nonetheless, the text acknowledges that women in "general are white and beautiful enough". Building also on earlier themes inventoried in the previous fragments, Kant takes a more critical approach by asserting that the Chinese "are uncommonly artful at deception. They can sew a torn piece of silk cloth together again so well that not even the most observant merchant will notice it; and they mend broken porcelain with copper wire drawn through it in such a way that at first no one is aware of the break". Kant further depicts the Chinese as "vengeful but

patient for a convenient opportunity", characterizing them as "cowardly, very industrious, excessively obsequious, and devoted to compliments". The text concludes that they are "obstinate devotee of old customs and as indifferent as could be in respect of the afterlife" [Kant 2012, *629–630*].

The regime of profound cultural distance with which Kant called up examples and taught about China, often exaggerating and simplifying various social behaviors into caricatures or folkloric types, reaches an exotic textual excitement in the theme under the simple title of "Eating and Drinking". The lesson immediately explains in obvious suggestion of repugnance that "in China, everything is eaten, including dogs, cats, snakes, etc." At the same time, in the field of peculiar inventive food trade "anything edible is sold by weight, which is why they fill the crop of a chicken with sand". Practices of a general mentality of deception that even led to the principle that "[a] dead pig is worth more than a live one if it weighs more", leading to an unthinkable repulsive treachery: "hence the deception of poisoning live pigs and fishing them out again when they have been thrown overboard". In contrast, Kant also highlights more positive aspects of Chinese meal traditions that reflect the sociability of the court and high aristocracy, explaining that "unlike other Oriental peoples, they sit on stools, not on the ground" and, even more, "at a banquet, each person has his own little table (…) one person beats time, then all raise their cups simultaneously and drink or act as though they were drinking. The host gives the sign when they should begin to eat and when they should stop". Kant's portrayal also includes references to chopsticks, which became an emblematic representation of "the Chinese" in European literature and art: "instead of forks, they have two small sticks of ebony". Notably, at the time when the spoon began to gain popularity in 18th-century Europe – even among the lower classes – Kant points out that "nor do the Chinese have spoons", thus emphasizing a huge cultural distance in meals' etiquette [Kant 2012, *630*].

A recurring theme prevalent in 18th-century literature and European arts, which significantly influenced the fashion of "chinoiserie", is the fascination with the meticulous system of courtesy practiced by the elites of imperial China. This invites a reflection on Kant's lesson, leading to the organization of a small section under the distinctive title of "Compliments". The textbook emphatically states that "No one in China swears or curses". It further explains that the elite regime of courtesy of the "Chinese" was meticulously codified in ancient, official, and highly detailed texts: "everything he says, when he announces himself, when he pays a visit, the gestures he is to make and the speeches he is to make, what the host then says or does, all this is laid down in officially published compliment books and not one word of it may be omitted". In contrast to the irreversible decline of Renaissance and Baroque courtesy books in eighteenth-century Europe – replaced by texts focused on urbanity, citizenship, and civilization amid rising nationalisms and the social advancement of the bourgeoisie – the traditional aristocratic courtesy in Qing China remained a foundational element of the cultured pedagogy of dominant sociability until the end of the empire. As a result, Kant's students were undoubtedly astonished to learn that among the Chinese, "everyone knows how to decline something politely and when it is time to leave. No one is obliged to uncover his head in a greeting, as that is considered impolite" [Kant 2012, *630–631*].

Without further courtesy, the lesson shifts to a more substantive topic entitled "Agriculture, Fruits, and Manufactures". While Kant acknowledges the significance of "mercantile geography" as an essential branch of the science, he displays little enthusiasm for its notable development during the 18th century, which encompassed dictionaries, journals, and associations dedicated to commerce and global trade. As a result, this section offers limited insights into agriculture, provides only cursory references to industries, and confines the discussion of trade to a brief list of selected exports, but relegating this information to the lesson's final remarks. As we know, economics is largely absent from

Kant's work; it is subsumed within moral philosophy, where he emphasizes active values such as initiative, independence, and freedom for entrepreneurial individuals and agents. While categories like household or market are studied in Anthropology, they primarily serve the purpose of understanding different levels of human behavior. In continuation, after commending that "[e]very piece of land is used, even the smallest", the textbook proceeds with a quick inventory of flora. It includes brief mentions of the "tallow tree", "wax tree", "tea shrub", and the ubiquitous bamboo reed, "from which they make nearly all their implements, even small boats". A few words are also devoted to the varnish tree, from which is derived "the lacquer of which the Chinese paint over everything they have in their houses". There is an unavoidable reference to Ginseng, presented with imperial grandeur: "[t]he Emperor sends ten thousand Tartars out into Chinese Tartary each year to collect these roots for him". Mulberry trees housing silkworms receive the only slight allusion to industries, indicating that "[t]heir [the Chinese] silk cloth is mostly decorated with the figures of dragons woven in". Despite this limited overview, the section concludes with a tone of admiration, noting that "[t]he Emperor works in the fields in public once a year" [Kant 2012, *631*].

Next, we come to the most extensive section of these geographical teaching notes about China, titled "Concerning the Sciences, the Language, and the Laws". The text begins with astronomy, highlighting its long history and noting that "an observatory in Peking existed for many centuries before the arrival of missionaries". However, it critiques the Chinese lunisolar calendar as "extremely inaccurate", stating that "[t]he prediction of eclipses was hardly accurate to the day, let alone to the minute as it is with us". Returning to an example previously made in his booklet "Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime", Kant expresses astonishment at how Chinese scholars "can possibly believe that during an eclipse, the moon or the sun is being devoured by a dragon, whom they try to deprive of his booty by [beating] drums". Kant prudently acknowledges that this belief may stem from an ancient superstition that has persisted due to the Chinese people's respect for old customs, even if they recognize its absurdity: "it could also be that this is an old superstition from the time of ignorance, which the Chinese, as obstinate respecters of ancient customs, retain, even though they are aware of its foolishness". Regarding mathematics, Kant ironically remarks that "the knowledge of mathematics and other sciences served the preaching of the Gospel in China instead of miracles". The lesson transitions to discuss written language, explaining that "the characters of their writing do not represent sounds but the things themselves, sometimes encompassing several ideas at once". The text briefly addresses medicine, notably ignoring traditional Chinese practices and stating only that "they cure many illnesses by cauterization or by burning with hot copper plates". After a short discussion of the ancient art of Chinese printing, Kant summarizes historiography, claiming that "their ancient history consists almost entirely of traditions only" [Kant 2012, *631–632*].

The following section discusses laws, outlining three main principles: "Their first law is the obedience of children to their parents. If a son raises his hand against his father, the whole country gets into a commotion about it"; "The second law is obedience and deference towards the authorities"; "The third law concerns politeness and compliments". In stark contrast to the high orderliness of these triple laws, Kant expresses evident astonishment, stating exaggeratively that "everyone in China has the liberty to throw away, hang, or drown any children who have become a burden to him". The lesson concludes with a note that "In Peking, there is a newspaper printed daily reporting the praiseworthy or reprehensible behaviour of the mandarins, together with their rewards or punishments" [Kant 2012, *632*]. This is a reference not to a conventional newspaper but to the government bulletin known as Jing Bao (京报), which was published regularly since the 1730s, mainly distributed among officials working at the imperial court, high administration, and central bureaucracies [Mokros 2021, *11–15*].

The class transitions to a new topic: religion in China. Kant begins by explaining that "religion is treated in a somewhat unenthusiastic way", yet "many do not believe in any god; others who adopt a religion do not concern themselves much about it". In this lesson, the dominant religion in imperial China is Buddhism (Fojiao, 佛教), with Kant noting that "by this Fo, they understand an incarnate deity that presently dwells in the great Lama in Barantola[9], Tibet, and is worshipped in him; after his death it enters into another Lama". Recovering a theme that, as seen, was also used for the religion of the Kalmuks, Kant expresses the same surprise at how "the Catholic missionaries describe the articles of faith concerning Fo in such a way that it becomes evident that it is nothing other than Christianity degenerated into paganism". This confusion with Christianity arises from two specific interpretations: "they are said to have three persons in the deity, the second of whom is said to have given the law and shed his blood for the human race", and simultaneously, "the great Lama is also said to administer a kind of sacrament with bread and wine". The class also includes a brief reference to Confucius, who is mentioned only to highlight his role as a more convenient version of Socrates than the "Chinese Solon"; Kant states simply that "Confucius or Con-fu-tse, the Chinese Socrates, is also honored". In his concluding remarks, Kant ironically extends his key category of *nothingness* to Buddhism. He simply modifies the Buddhist complex principle of emptiness (sunyata) to encompass it within an idea of plain nothingness. This prompts the class to recognize that "there is an opinion among them that nothingness is the beginning and end of all things, which is why the absence of feeling and the act of relinquishing all work for a time are regarded favorably" [Kant 2012, *632–633*].

The textbook lesson continues with a brief section on "Marriages". During the second half of the 18th century, as European and subsequently American merchant companies established themselves in Macau, their personnel and families often had to reside there for extended periods due to the seasonal nature of the Canton market and restrictions that prevented foreigners from visiting the great meridional city. This led to a surge in travel narratives that provided detailed accounts of marriages between variously affluent Chinese individuals, many of which were observed or participated in by foreigners in the Portuguese-Chinese city [Sousa 2022, II, *162–164*]. Kant's teachings do not dwell on specifics or superficialities, such as rituals, attire, or the distinctiveness of wedding gifts. Instead, he succinctly highlights that "marriages are concluded by the parents without the two parties meeting". Consequently, "the girls do not receive a dowry; they are sold instead". As a result, "anyone with substantial wealth can purchase as many wives as he desires". Furthermore, Kant rightly emphasizes the patriarchal structure of Chinese society, noting that "the husband can send the wife back before consummation if he is willing to forfeit the purchase price, but the woman cannot" [Kant 2012, *633*].

The lesson on China in this *Physical Geography* textbook ends with the promised section on "Exported Products". This is only a summary list of commodities that China exported to world markets: "tea, quicksilver, China root, rhubarb, reeds and processed silk, copper in small bars, camphor, fans, paintings, lacquered wares, porcelain, sago, borax, lapis lazuli, tutenag, [and] Indian birds' nests". The text is only interested in the latest exotic merchandise, explaining that "nests of birds [are] similar to sea swallows, made from the foam of the sea mixed with a liquid produced by their beaks to form the nests. They are white and transparent, are used in soups and have an aromatic taste" [Kant 2012, *633*]. In rigor, it was much more an import than an export, but Kant lesson presents the case as a singular Chinese curiosity within a broader regime of exoticism and otherness since birds' nests would also offer an evident topic with which colonial science and the novel fashion of travel literature sought to organize some of the main essentialist ideas about "the Chinese": they eat the most strange things between repugnance and weirdness [Sousa 2022, I, *244–246*].

Additional Observations about China from Other Physical Geography Lessons

This lesson on China, which Kant revisited – certainly with some updates – over four decades, allows us to reassess the collection of Chinese examples we have been cataloging. Some examples appear connected to the lesson, while others do not resonate within its teachings. Notable exceptions include the cases of the "three great philosophers" of China, observations on the symbolism of the number nine, and various references to the Chinese within discussions of aesthetics and anthropology. However, there still are further additions, as Kant referenced China in various other subjects during his Physical Geography course. This is evident in the structure of his 1802 textbook, where he presents the discipline as a "general outline of nature", the "foundation of history", and the basis for "all other possible geographies" [Kant 2012, *451*]. For Kant, these geographies, in the plural, comprised five categories: Mathematical Geography, Moral Geography, Mercantile Geography, and Theological Geography. For instance, when defining moral geography – "in which the customs and characters of people are discussed according to the different regions" – Kant makes one of his few references to Japan, conveniently linking it to China:

> For example, in China, and especially in Japan, parricide is punished as the most terrible crime, not only by torturing the miscreant to death in the cruelest manner, but also by executing his entire family and imprisoning all his neighbors who live on the same street. It is believed that such an act cannot possibly occur suddenly but rather develops gradually, and that the neighbors should have been able to anticipate it and notify the authorities [Kant 2012, *452*].

Universal geography dictionaries, along with various geographical texts and numerous accounts of voyages to China, consistently highlight several common themes regarding maritime travel. During the 18th century, these voyages typically culminated in Macau, with travelers aiming to reach the bustling market in Canton between July and September, coinciding with the perilous typhoon season. Consequently, a recurring motif in world geographies and travel narratives is the distressing experience of encountering a typhoon in the South China Sea [Sousa 2022, I, *270–271*]. Although Kant's lesson on China did not address this topic, it could be examined in previous *Physical Geography* classes that focus on the "Division of the Winds According to their Properties, Humidity, Dryness, Warmth, Coldness, and Salubriousness". These sections purport to offer a scientific explanation of typhoon formation and dynamics, stating:

> Typhoons prevail in the China Sea and the Sea of Japan, typically arising from vapors emanating from the ocean. In this region, the sea churns and surges, the air is thick with sulfurous vapors, and the sky takes on a copper hue. Notably, the China Sea remains warmer in winter than its neighboring seas, which seems to support the causative explanation already provided. Typhoons tend to remain stationary rather than moving away [Kant 2012, *552–553*].

Another motif that, while presented as distinctly different and exotic, permeated European descriptions of China and found its way into painting and engraving is the unique traditional practice of fishing with cormorants, often referred to as "crop goose". A striking example that was absent from Kant lesson on China is included in the Physical Geography classes on various fishing methods, which begins with the following description:

> In China, fish are caught with a specially trained Cormorant which has a ring placed around its neck to stop it swallowing the fish. It catches as many fish as it can in its beak. If one bird catches a large fish, it gives the others a sign, and they then come and help it carry the fish away. Such a goose is worth a lot. If it does not want to eat, it is forced to do so by beatings [Kant 2012, *600*].

An emphasis on unusual practices is reiterated a few pages later in a section titled "Some Peculiarities of the Avian Family", where Kant informs his students that "In China, on the coast of Guinea[10] and near Porto Bello[11], wild geese and ducks are caught by people swimming with their heads in a hollowed-out pumpkin" [Kant 2012, *608*]. This is not the sole link made between China and African Guinea; in the portion of the textbook dedicated to "Differences Between Human Beings in Respect of Taste", Kant cites, among other examples, the extreme "judgments of taste" associated with these cultural regions: "In China, as well as throughout Guinea, a dog is regarded as one of the most delectable dishes, and everything except for rats and snakes is consumed as food" [Kant 2012, *579*].

The references and examples related to China could almost serve as a standalone supplemental text, often offering more detailed descriptions than the academic lesson on the topic. Notably, the *Physical Geography* textbook provides a much more comprehensive overview of "Chinese trees" than the brief mentions found in the Kant class. The third section of the book, titled "The Plant Kingdom", opens with a chapter on "Remarkable Trees", which features three Chinese species among a total of 17. The first, "The Tallow Tree of China", presents typical observations of natural history: "It bears a pulpy fruit containing three nut-like kernels the size of peas, enveloped in a layer of tallow and rich in oil. The small nuts are pounded and boiled, allowing the tallow to be extracted; linseed oil and wax are then added to create fine candles" [Kant 2012, *610*]. The second is "The Wax Tree of China", noted for the numerous "small worms, not larger than fleas, attach themselves to the leaves of this tree. They build cells, though much smaller than bee-cells. The wax is harder, shinier, and more expensive than beeswax. The eggs of these worms are collected and placed onto other trees" [Kant 2012, *611*]. The third species studied is the "Varnish Tree", described as follows: "This tree is found in China and the Moluccas. It produces varnish in a manner similar to how birches yield sap. A small spiral shell is placed in a carved hole on its bark, allowing the sap to accumulate inside" [Kant 2012, *611*].

The detailed references to Chinese floral species carry on into the next chapter of the textbook titled "Concerning Other Plants", which opens with a discussion about tea. It states:

> The leaves of the Tea-Shrub in China, broken off at the beginning of spring, give Imperial Tea; the second and third type are progressively inferior. The first type is dried in the sun and rolled with the hands. The second is heated on plates over boiling water until the leaves shrink. The third kind over coal fires. The best tea comes from the northern provinces, which is why the Russians favour it [Kant 2012, *615*].

This chapter also delves into roots, highlighting their remarkable properties ascribed to traditional Chinese medicine – an aspect not covered in Kant's lesson. It notes:

> Rhubarb comes from China and the Chinese part of Tartary. China root is an astringent and blood-cleansing medicine. It is also brought to Europe in preserved form. The Ginseng root is the most highly prized medicine, very many hundreds of Tartars in Chinese Tartary go to a great deal of trouble to extract it. It is said to turn grey hair black. Small pieces are cut off and boiling water poured over them. It fills the person with new life, and, taken in too large doses, it causes feverish illnesses or even madness. A certain kind of goat is said to be very fond of its foliage, and their blood is thus regarded as being very healthy [Kant 2012, *616–617*].

The fourth section of the *Physical Geography* textbook, while less comprehensive, presents other observations regarding China, particularly in its exploration of "The Mineral Kingdom". In his discourse on silver, which "is found in many places around the world", Kant explains, "There is hardly any silver in Asia, which is why substantial profits can be made in China by exchanging silver for gold; for if the exchange ratio here is

gold: silver = 14 : 1, there it is 11 : 1" [Kant 2012, *615*]. Indeed, during the 18th century, China's economy absorbed a significant portion of the world's silver production, especially from South America, while also serving as an exporter of various metals [Glahn 2019, *566–569*]. Kant's insights extend to Chinese exports of tin: "Tombac from China and the neighboring regions is a type of white tin or white copper, mixed with calamine to enhance its ductility", also known as "pinchbeck" [Kant 2012, *615*]. This term originates from the Chinese word "ping-beike" (平贝克), which Portuguese traders in Macau began to circulate from late 17th-century as "pechisbeque", referring to a copper and zinc alloy used to craft inexpensive jewelry that imitated gold [Sousa 2011, *123–125*]. This term subsequently appeared in 19th-century dictionaries published in Portugal and Brazil to denote any cheap imitation of genuine articles [Figueiredo 1899, *278*]. It is finally noteworthy that Kant's *Physical Geography* textbook includes a unique reference to Macau, frequently mentioned in 18th-century geographical, travel, and scientific texts that sought to clarify the mysteries of longitude: "In Macau, the Portuguese have Sunday at the time when it is Saturday for the Spaniards in Manila, for the Spaniards sailed from east to west and the Portuguese from west to east" [Kant 2012, *568*].

Kant Sources on China

Kant's lesson on China in his *Physische Geographie*, as published in 1802, is an original work. It is not a copy or adaptation of a single source; rather, it is a compilation of various readings and personal perspectives, supplemented by some notes and updates from Rink. When Kant announced his Physical Geography course on April 13, 1757, for the upcoming summer semester, he explained in a written notice that

> the relevant information is scattered across numerous lengthy works, and a textbook that makes this body of knowledge suitable for academic use has yet to be written. For this reason, I decided from the outset of my academic teaching to treat this science in a special course of lectures based on a summary outline [Kant 2012, *368*].

Testimonies from several students who attended these classes over the years clarify that Kant conducted the course without using or recommending any textbook. He read from handwritten notes, which he frequently interrupted to offer personal, often humorous, comments [Malter 1990, *48*]. The course was considered easy, even light, and secondary to Kant's main courses on Logic and Metaphysics, which often attracted 80 or more students. In contrast, Physical Geography classes typically had only 10 to 15 attendees.

The overall framework of the course predominantly adhered to Bernhard Varenius's *Geographia Generalis*, which was originally published in Latin in Amsterdam in 1650 and later revised by Newton in 1672 and 1681. This seminal work was further expanded in a 1712 edition, also in Latin, and championed by James Jurin [Varenius 1650; 1672; 1681; 1712]. In the later stages of his teaching, Kant frequently referenced Ludwig Mitterpacher's *Physikalische Erdbeschreibung*, published in Vienna in 1789, which served to update Varenius's lessons [Mitterpcher 1789]. In his announcement of the course, Kant mentioned that, in addition to Varenius, he also drew upon the works of Buffon and Lulofs, which offer essential insights into physical geography [Kant 2012, *368*]. Buffon is renowned for his monumental work, "Natural History", written in French[12], while Lulofs, a professor at Leiden University, published an *Introduction to the Mathematical and Physical Understanding of the Globe* ("Inleiding tot eene natuur- en wiskundige Beschouwinge des Aardkloots") in Dutch in 1750. Kant owned the German translation of Lulofs' work, rendered by Abraham Gotthelf Kästner and published in 1755.

From these texts, Kant derived much of the structure, divisions, and main content of his course. He taught in a sequence that included: a first part on "Concerning Water" (first section), "Concerning the Land" (second section), "The Atmosphere" (third section), and

"History of the Great Changes that the Earth Has Undergone and Is Still Undergoing" (fourth section), followed by an appendix on "Concerning Navigation"; a second part, titled "Particular Observations Concerning What is Found on the Earth", was divided into sections on "Concerning Human Beings" (first section), "The Animal Kingdom" (second section), "The Plant Kingdom" (third section), and "The Mineral Kingdom" (fourth section); finally, the third part titled "Brief Observations on the Principal Natural Curiosities of All Countries in Geographical Order" focused sequentially on Asia, Africa, Europe, and America's countries. None of the works by Varenius, Buffon, or Lulofs contained chapters akin to the third part of Kant's course, as they did not systematically organize geographical information by continents or countries, nor did they offer specific details about China. Consequently, it is crucial to explore alternative sources to gain a deeper understanding of Kant's intellectual and academic pursuits concerning his lesson on China.

The library that Immanuel Kant bequeathed upon his death was entrusted to his younger colleague and close friend, Johann Friedrich Gensichen (1760–1807). Gensichen served as a professor of mathematics and librarian at the Königsberg Castle Library, which operated as both a state and university library. Kant's collection comprised 326 books, including 56 in Latin, 12 in French, and the remainder in German. This distribution illustrates Kant's scholarly tendencies, as he composed his works in German, crafted his academic dissertations in Latin, and had studied French for three years at the University of Königsberg [Kuehn 2001, *49–50*]. Although he possessed the ability to read and converse in French, he did not write in that language. In contrast, his knowledge of English was quite limited; he could only recognize book titles and some familiar topics. While Kant was not a book collector, he was renowned for his passion for reading. He frequently exchanged and received books to gather information and conduct reviews. After finishing a book, he would return it to publishers, colleagues, friends, or authors. Although his modest personal library does not fully capture the vast scope of his extensive readings, it holds historical significance. Notably, a portion of this collection is dedicated to history and geography, comprising 25 titles [Warda 1922, *7–20*].

Among these books, in addition to the German edition of Lulofs' work, Kant's library contained five significant titles useful for his Physical Geography classes, arranged chronologically as follow: (1) "Historia Orbis Terrarum Geographica et Civilis", a work in Latin by Johan Christoph Becmann, professor of Greek, History, and Theology at Brandenburg University of Frankfurt, published in 1698; (2) A four-volume world historical and geographical encyclopedia, *Neu-vermehrtes Historisch und Geographisches Allgemeines Lexicon*, compiled by the Swiss historian and lexicographer Jakob Christoph Iselin, published in Basel in 1726 and 1727, which closely followed Pierre Bayle's famous "Dictionnaire historique et critique"[13]; (3) "Atlas Geographicus", comprising two volumes by the German cartographer and geographer Johan Baptist Homann, reissued in 1759; (4) *An introduction to mathematical and physical geography* ("Einleitung in die Mathematische und Physikalische Geographie nach den neuesten Beobachtungen") edited by Johann Christoph Pfennig in Stettin and Leipzig, published in 1765; Pfennig was a tutor, teacher, and editor of geography textbooks; (5) The first six volumes of a collection of concise travel descriptions, titled "Sammlung kurzer Reisebeschreibungen und anderen zur Erweiterung der Länder- und Menschenkenntnis dienender Nachrichten", compiled and published in German by the Swiss mathematician and geographer Jean Bernoulli since 1781. This work primarily served as a translation of earlier compilations in English and French.

Only two of these five titles provided texts on China: Johan Christoph Becmann's *Historia Orbis Terrarum Geographica et Civilis* and the widely read lexicon compiled by Jakob Christoph Iselin. Becmann's entry on China spans four pages in Latin, totaling a little over 1,200 words. It closely follows, often copying verbatim, the well-known work of Jesuit missionary Martino Martini (1614–1661), *Novus Atlas Sinensis*, featured

in Volume X of Joan Blaeu's "Atlas Maior", published in Amsterdam in 1655. It also references, though to a lesser extent, the insights of German Jesuit Athanasius Kircher (1602–1680) in his influential work *China Illustrata*, published in Amsterdam in 1677 [Becmann 1698, *260–263*]. Significantly, Kant did not use a single subject from this description in his class on China or in the "Chinese examples" scattered throughout his work.

Iselin's entry in his encyclopedia was notably more extensive, spanning three pages with two columns and totaling over 4,570 words. Despite this, Kant did not reference any notes from this work, even though it remained in his personal library until the end of his life. It is noteworthy that over 1,620 words of Iselin's text are devoted to summarizing the well-known dispute surrounding the Chinese rites. This conflict highlighted differences in missionary approaches among Jesuits, Dominicans, and some members of other religious orders, as well as individual secular clergy. This summary distinctly favored the accommodationist stance of the Jesuits. Accordingly, the concluding section of this entry on China featured a succinct bibliography that not only spotlighted the works of Martini and Kircher but also referenced Louis-Daniel Le Comte's renowned "New Memoir on the Present State of China", originally written in French[14]. Additionally, it acknowledged Gabriel de Magalhães' "Twelve Excellences of China", which was initially written in Portuguese and published in French in 1688 as "Nouvelle relation de la Chine"[15]. The bibliography wrapped up with a mention to *Novissima Sinica*[16], one of the few titles released during Leibniz's lifetime that compiled his correspondence and reports from Jesuit missionaries in China [Iselin 1726, I, *896–898*]. In contrast to Leibniz and, shortly thereafter, Christian Wolff[17], Kant did not establish any correspondence with Jesuits, who were suppressed by the Holy See in 1773. Nor did he express any interest in the Confucianism that they had adapted and disseminated in educated Europe during the 17th century. Moreover, Kant did not show any inclination to explore classical Chinese philosophy to inform the development of modern European moral philosophy. Therefore, further research is necessary to uncover the sources Kant used for his lesson on China.

In the 1802 edition of *Physical Geography*, there are some pertinent bibliographical notes included at the end of the chapter titled "Concerning the Land". These notes were likely compiled by Rink, as they reference multiple titles published in English, some of which date back to 1800. This is noteworthy considering that Kant did not read English, let alone during this period marked by a decline in his health. The notes aim to inform readers that "Certainly less than half of China is known, even after the most recent journeys" [Kant 2012, *507*]. The phrase "recent journeys" specifically refers to the well-known account of Lord Macartney's embassy to China, which was published by his secretary, George Staunton, in 1797 and later edited in German in two volumes between 1798 and 1799[18]. It was immediately clarified, without sympathy, that "Macartney's journey to China has added virtually nothing to our knowledge of that country; rather it has merely put even more fables into circulation" [Kant 2012, *507*]. These "fables" were a critical reference to the earlier favorable writings about China produced by Jesuit missionaries. These works had been widely circulated in Europe, particularly through the extensive collections of *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*, which, published between 1702 and 1776, comprised a total of 34 volumes. It is plausible that Kant either read or at least skimmed Macartney's travel accounts, which may have shaped his critical perspective. However, it is more likely that this viewpoint arises from an editorial decision by Rink, who opted to incorporate similar information – albeit with appropriate revisions – at the conclusion of the lesson on China. In a convenient parenthetical remark to readers, he stated: "The most recent reports of the English since Macartney's Embassy have taught us to know China in many ways from a different side to that of the previous missionary reports. But even in these reports there are doubtless great exaggerations, though without fault [on the part] of the Englishmen". Staunton's account of Lord Macartney's embassy was thus excused as it allowed "to know China in many ways from a different side". In

contrast, the earlier "missionary reports" faced reaffirmed criticism for their "doubtless great exaggerations". Notably, Kant's Physical Geography lesson on China intentionally omitted reference to earlier Jesuit titles, reports, memoirs, and correspondence. This exclusion encompassed the previously noted monumental work, *Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique et physique de l'empire de la Chine* by Jean Baptiste Du Halde, which served as an official chronicle of the Jesuit missions in China. First published in 1735, this work significantly influenced numerous entries in 18th-century world geographical dictionaries pertaining to China. Kant had no interest in Jesuit chronicles and literature, and even less in their missionary activities and philosophical explorations related to China.

Given the impossibility of using a *Physical Geography* textbook validated by the Prussian government that didn't exist, Kant relied on a compilation of personal notes for his semester classes, which he used to create the referred dictation text. These notes included readings on China drawn mainly from various geographical works and contemporary travel narratives. The connection between Geography and Travel resulted in a compelling editorial and cultural success, embodying a form of cosmopolitan knowledge and intellectual enjoyment that was characteristic of the 18th century [Broc 1975, *475*] Therefore, in the official presentation document for his course on April 13, 1757, Kant informed potential students that, in addition to the works by Varenius, Buffon, and Lulofs,

> I have gone through the most thorough descriptions of individual countries by capable travelers, the *Allgemeine Historie der Reisen*, the *Göttingische Sammlung neuer und merkwürdiger Reisen*, the Hamburg and the Leipzig *Magazines*, the Proceedings of the Académie des Sciences in Paris and the Stockholm Academy and so forth, and I have constructed a system out of everything relevant to my purpose [Kant 2012, *507*].

Despite this extensive list – comprising travel accounts, multi-volume collections, widely-read cultural magazines, and the proceedings from some of Europe's most prestigious scientific academies – it seems that these sources did not provide the textual materials Kant compiled for his course on China.

Between 1748 and 1763, the *Hamburg Magazine* was published in 26 volumes, featuring brief references to China in volumes 6, 8, 9, 10, 15, 17, and 23[19]. However, these mentions lacked substantial descriptions or thematic exploration of any significant Chinese topics. As a result, Kant did not find any pertinent subjects or useful notes from this magazine for his class. The *General Magazine of Nature, Art, and Sciences*, often referred to as the "Leipzig Magazine", was published in 12 volumes from 1753 to 1767. While it featured both brief notes and two lengthy articles on Chinese gems and lacquer in volumes 2, 3, 9, 11, and 12[20], Kant chose not to incorporate any of this textual information into his teachings regarding China.

The other two titles referenced in the official announcement of the Physical Geography course pertain to essential collections of travel journals published in German, adapted from extensive editions originally released in England and France. These works were widely disseminated through various editions and translations during the 18th century. The most comprehensive collection, issued in 21 volumes, was gradually published in Leipzig from 1747 to 1774 under the title *General History of Voyages by Sea and Land* [Allgemeine historie… 1747–1774, 21 vols]. A slightly smaller collection, consisting of 11 volumes, featured the more intriguing title *Collection of New and Strange Voyages at Sea and on Land,* published in Göttingen between 1750 and 1757. This collection was particularly coveted for its numerous engravings and maps, which were also sold separately in bookstores across Europe[21]. Both collections served as German translations of the era's two principal compilations: the *New General Collection of Voyages and Travels*, published in four volumes from 1745 to 1747 under the editorial guidance of Thomas Astley[22], and the substantial French work *Histoire Générale des Voyages*, which expanded

to 20 volumes between 1746 and 1791, with the first 15 volumes coordinated by the abbot Antoine-François Prévost D'Exiles[23]. These collections contained accounts about China, raising the question of whether they were primary sources of inspiration for Kant's lectures on the subject.

In the eleven volumes of the *Sammlung neuer und merkwürdiger Reisen zu Wasser und zu Lande*, only a few brief and scattered references to China can be found, which did not attract any attention from Kant. In contrast, the *Allgemeine Historie* offers a detailed exploration of the vast Middle Empire in its sixth volume, published in 1750. This volume directly translates its counterpart from the aforementioned French travel collection edited by Prévost D'Exiles. Rather than editing the actual journeys to China, Prévost chose to compile information and create his own imaginative narrative by integrating notable accounts from Jesuit missionaries, particularly those of Du Halde, with a well-known geographical work titled *A Short Way to Know the World or the Rudiments of Geography*, published in London in 1707[24]. This latter work, while lacking a clear author, was recognized for its unique didactic question-and-answer format. Additionally, this *Allgemeine Historie* sixth volume contains a near-final chapter featuring a largely literal transcription of Father Jean-Baptiste Régis's memoir concerning Korea [Allgemeine historie… 1750, VI, *555–603*]. Aside from general information regarding the region and population of China – readily available in various world geography dictionaries – there are no descriptions, themes, or examples utilized by Kant lesson that originate from this work. As a result, the detailed accounts of the empire's fifteen provinces, extensive discussions on governance and administration, lists of local flora and fauna, in-depth observations of rivers and mountains, and depictions of Korea did not pique Kant's interest. Therefore, further exploration in other directions remains necessary.

The materials for his class about China do not ultimately draw from the primary texts announced by Kant for the beginning of the Physical Geography course, which, in the absence of an officially sanctioned manual, necessitated the creation of specific teaching notes derived from a diverse array of consultations. Despite this, the China class significantly depended on another form of narrative that became popular in the 18th century, written by the German theologian and enthusiast of history and geography, Paul Ludolfo Berckenmeyer (1667–1732). His notable publication, originally titled *Curiöse Beschreibung, Der außerleßnesten Merkwürdigkeiten, So in denen dreven Welt-Theilen Asia, Africa und America zu finden* (Curious Description of the Most Extraordinary Oddities to Be Found in the Three Parts of the World: Asia, Africa, and America), was released in 1721 in Augsburg [Berckenmeyer 1721]. This work followed an unsuccessful initial attempt to document curiosities from travels across Europe, which he organized in a book published in Hamburg, his hometown, in 1708 [Berckenmeyer 1708]. The universal appeal of the worldly curiosities ensured significant editorial success for Berckenmeyer's new, expanded edition, particularly aided by an important French translation published in Leiden in 1729, under an enticing title *Le Curieux Antiquaire ou Recueil Geographique et Historique des choses les plus remarquables qu'on trouve dans les quatre parties de l'Univers* [Berckenmeyer 1729]. The work, spread across three volumes, saw numerous editions and translations throughout the 18th century, with German editions appearing in 1725, 1731, 1734, 1740, 1748, 1761, and 1784[25].

Berckenmeyer's book features the sixth chapter entirely devoted to the "curiosities" of China, spanning 46 pages[26]. This chapter also includes an additional extra-text illustration of the renowned "porcelain tower" of Nanking [Berckenmeyer 1721 (200–201)], which Kant described as the "most beautiful building in the Orient". By closely comparing the text from Kant's lecture on China as published in the 1802 volume of *Physical Geography* with the first edition of Berckenmeyer's curiosities from 1721, it becomes clear that Kant held a distinct preference for this work, which enjoyed considerable editorial success in German territories and across Europe. To begin with, the introductory summary

presentation of China in the Kantian lesson draws systematically from Berckenmeyer's volume, which details the country's area, population, and canal systems [Berckenmeyer 1721, *167*]. This also includes the description of the Great Wall measured in German leagues (p. 168), the specific mention of the Wall of Beijing (p. 168), and the general overview of Chinese urban typology (p. 170). Notably, Kant follows closely Berckenmeyer's description of the Nanjing Porcelain Tower, which he could have visually shared with his students through the book referred engraving depicting this famous monument, surrounded by miniature representations of Chinese devotees, traditional houses, and imagined mountains. It was not a singular representation but rather a slightly modified print of the original engraving published in 1665 in Johan Nieuhof's account of the Dutch East India Company's embassy to Beijing between 1655 and 1657 [Nieuhof 1665]. Published in French in the same year, the book was later translated and published in German in 1666. Kant was certainly aware of this work, but he did not take any notes from it for his lecture on China.

The subsequent section of Kant's lesson, which delves into the customs and character of the nation, draws its themes and examples from various curiosities, including highlighting exotic elements such as the scholars' long nails (pp. 184–186). In contrast, the sections on *Eating and Drinking* and *Compliments* are interspersed throughout the curiosity text and only offer brief and simplistic summaries in Kant's lecture. Additionally, the discussion on *Agriculture, Fruits, and Manufactures* includes only selected excerpts from more comprehensive descriptions found in Berckenmeyer's book, which could just as easily be derived from any gazetteer or world geography. The section titled *Concerning the Sciences, the Language, and the Laws* closely adheres to Berckenmeyer's text, almost reproducing it verbatim. This particularly includes the discussion on the art of printing (pp. 187–188), observations related to astronomy and the Peking Observatory (p. 194), as well as the summary of the imperial examinations (p. 195). However, Berckenmeyer's narrative does not consider the tripartite division of laws proposed in Kant's lecture, which appears to be a uniquely original presentation or personal interpretation. The following section on religion closely mirrors Berckenmeyer's content, explicitly noting that the Fo sect subscribed to the belief in the transmigration of souls (pp. 188–194). Differently, Kant's intriguing insights on marriage are a topic that Berckenmeyer completely overlooked in his narrative. Moreover, the section on exported products is not included in its abbreviated form within the more comprehensive text of the *curiosities*, prompting Kant to create a summary that could easily be compared to entries found in a standard epochal world geography dictionary.

It is important to note that some of the cataloged examples by the German philosopher in his various lectures and writings were also sourced from the collection of Chinese curiosities assembled by Berckenmeyer. A particularly noteworthy illustration can be found in that unique note from his Logic classes, dated 1770, which discusses the "three Chinese philosophers". This passage closely resembles the original prose from the collection of *curiosities*, originally stating:

> There is among others a figure of a man with three heads, to which they render great devotion: it is Confucius, Xequias and Tanzu, 3 famous Philosophers that they imply. Their chief Gods are the Sun, the Moon, and the Stars; they also worship the Devil, not for love, but for fear that he should harm them: this is why they put his image on the front of their ships. They are Pythagorians in that they believe in the transmigration of the soul or the transfer of souls from one body to another (188)[27].

Kant also uses for his lesson on China complementary references from one of the most widely consulted and influential geographical dictionaries of the 18th century: the *Grand Dictionnaire Géographique et Critique.* This significant work was authored by French intellectual, diplomat, and translator Antoine-Augustin Bruzen de La Martinière (1662–

1746), who served as geographer to Philip V, King of Spain. Published between 1726 and 1735 in The Hague, Amsterdam, and Rotterdam, a notably expanded German edition was released in 1740–1744. This edition comprised 13 volumes and featured a cover adorned with an extensive, text-heavy title, highlighting a remarkable preface by Christian Wolff[28]. Kant held Wolff's philosophy in high esteem, despite frequent criticisms, and considered Wolff a significant personal influence. Accordingly, his presentation of the work facilitated its dissemination within German-speaking cultural circles, where it functioned both as a comprehensive world lexicon and atlas. It not only served as an intellectual reference but also emerged as an essential pedagogical resource for promoting the teaching of modern geography in 18th-century Germany [Fischer & Withers 2021, *380–406*]. Kant consulted Bruzen de La Martinière's *Dictionary* to gather detailed information on ginseng [Bruzen de La Martinière 1730, II, *588*], varnish [Bruzen de La Martinière 1730, II, *591*], and various distinctive aspects of the Chinese language [Bruzen de La Martinière 1730, II, *593*].

In this context of complementary readings, Kant, or at least the revised version of Kant, sought to enhance the lesson on China with insights derived from the travels of Pierre Sonnerat, a distinguished 18th-century French naturalist. Sonnerat's reflections, initially published in Paris under the title *Voyage aux Indes Orientales et à la Chine*, embody the scientific ideals of the Enlightenment and were meticulously translated into German, appearing in two volumes in Zurich in 1783 [Sonnerat 1783]. The 1802 edition of the *Physical Geography* draws upon this work to explore topics such as the significant festival associated with "eclipses and dragons" and to revisit the remarkable symbolism of the number nine [Sonnerat 1783, II, *25–26*]. Additionally, it is important to recognize that Sonnerat offered a sharp critique of the memoirs penned by Jesuit missionaries in China, contending that these narratives were largely constructed as fables designed to glorify the Chinese imperial theocracy while concealing the harsh realities endured by many citizens, who faced daily hunger and saw countless children abandoned in desperate situations [Sonnerat 1783, II, *3–4*].

Despite their significance, these notable works do not encompass the complete spectrum of curiosities that Kant explored through examples in relation to China. Additionally, other Kant Chinese remarks convoke an author whom he had favorably engaged with in his notes on America: Dutch geographer, philosopher, and diplomat Cornelius de Pauw (1739–1799). In addition to his more widely recognized "American" work [Pauw 1771], the author also published a significant critical text in 1773, again in French and through presses in Berlin, titled *Recherches philosophiques sur les Égyptiens et Chinois* [Pauw 1773]. This book was promptly translated into German the following year [Pauw 1774]. It primarily serves as a critical examination of the well-known theses proposed by the French sinologist Joseph de Guignes (1721–1800), who argued for an Egyptian origin of the Chinese language and civilization [Guignes 1760]. Kant referenced this work in his teachings to illustrate examples of the "grotesque" aesthetics of the Chinese [Pauw 1773, I, *229–230*] and to discuss the limitations of their philosophy and sciences [Pauw 1773, I, *337*; II, *230*]. He also used it to elaborate further on the topic of the "superstition of the number nine" [Pauw 1773, I, *345*; II, *27*, *337*]. It should be emphasized once again, much like Sonnerat's work, that Pauw's reflections are decidedly critical of Jesuit literature on China. He echoes a sentiment that was increasingly gaining traction among the educated circles of the European Enlightenment, namely the belief that "the Jesuits kept the Chinese in their ignorance to maintain their influence at the court of Peking" [Pauw 1773, I, *4*]. Pauw's critique goes even further, extending to what he and his contemporaries deemed the Jesuit fabrication of a "superior" moral philosophy attributed to Confucianism. He concludes, "I regret that I have not been able to uncover, despite extensive research, the slightest trace of this so-called sublime philosophy; I do not believe I have entirely lacked insight on such a crucial matter" [Pauw 1773, I, *6*]. Kant would likely

have expressed the same idea if he had been remotely interested in these Jesuit polemics, which had not any relevance to his philosophical research and academic teaching.

Some of Kant's brief observations regarding China and the Chinese reveal a lack of textual or content autonomy and distinctiveness. Instead, these remarks appear as fleeting references within broader discussions on "race", "passions", or "human nature". These references often stem from other readings or represent somewhat original interpretations. Consequently, much of the discussion surrounding human nature that contributed to the racialization of the Chinese through physiognomic considerations closely aligns with notable excerpts from Count Buffon's "Natural History" [Buffon 1750, II, *555*, *571*; 1750, III, *378–379*, *382–392*; 1752, IV, *117*]. This alignment reflects the prevailing racialist and ethnocentric categorizations of the time rather than showcasing any original critical insight from Kant [Lu-Adler 2023, *304*]. In turn, the critical examples highlighting the insatiable desires of the Chinese, fueled by their deep passions, seem distinctive Kant remarks. The lesson on China likely increased students' engagement and curiosity in Physical Geography during the later phases of the course. The lecture fostered a combination of deep curiosity and exploration of cultural distance, contrasting with the two earlier large parts of the course, which were primarily focused on factual academic information. It is often noted that the most lasting impressions are those that come at the end.

In addition to the sources mentioned, we must also consider a related non-textual aspect. During Kant's life, Königsberg emerged as one of the main commercial ports of the Baltic, alongside Danzig. The port welcomed hundreds of vessels each year from the English and Dutch Oriental Companies, establishing vital connections to the lucrative trade opportunities in Asia, including Canton and Macau. This thriving commerce engaged numerous Prussian sailors and adventurers [Hoyer 2020, *75–102*]. Between 1751 and 1780 alone, there were 42,472 Dutch vessels and 25,706 English ships that arrived in Königsberg, many of which were affiliated with the East Anglia Company (EAC) and the Dutch *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (VOC) [Tamaki 2004, *38*]. While most members of the expeditions to the Canton market never had the opportunity to visit the two trading cities of southern China – something reserved for a select few captains, officials, and pilots – fascinating stories, straddling the line between folklore and the mundane, circulated among the major European ports. These tales, recounted by enthusiastic sailors involved in the China trade, vividly illustrated the remarkable cultural divide of the Middle Empire in both exotic and often satirical tones [Sousa 2024, *65–67*].

During the second half of the 18th century, captains, mates, foremen, pilots, naval officers, doctors and affluent merchants engaged in trade with Canton increasingly circulated negative portrayals of China and its inhabitants throughout commercial, naval, and political European spaces. Although most did not produce travel memoirs, their ship journals, reports, and letters voiced strong criticisms of the Chinese, accusing them of greed and dishonor. They claimed that Chinese trade practices were deceptive and that foreigners were treated with contempt, all while adhering to customs that many found provocative and disgusting, from unusual foods to eccentric fashions [Sousa 2022, I, *288–347*]. Consequently, critiques of the Chinese imperial system intensified greatly. This represented a significant shift in perception among naval and mercantile circles, moving away from the admiration that characterized Jesuit accounts in the 17th century towards a growing disfavor that increasingly influenced the prominent themes of world geography and travel literature. Therefore, in addition to his academic pursuits, Kant likely encountered discussions about China, with its intriguing exoticism and perceived cultural backwardness, during numerous dinner conversations and salon gatherings. It is well-known that Kant rarely dined at home, accepting instead frequent invitations to lavish dinners among the political and commercial elite of Königsberg [Kuehn 2001, *7*, *9*, *115*, *129*]. Within this atmosphere of refined sociability, as well as in the more informal settings of sailors' taverns, one can imagine an abundance of curious stories about China circulating. These

engaging stories would certainly have inspired amusing anecdotes and fantastical examples, suggesting some of the most curious and parodic comments in Kant's Chinese lecture.

Despite his debt to Berckenmeyer's published *curiosities*, Kant's readings, notes, and reflections produced a lesson about China that was both original in composition and pedagogically pleasant. His lecture reveals that from 1757, when Kant began teaching Physical Geography, until 1773, when he restructured his course to separate the Anthropology lessons, a new cosmopolitan understanding of China had already taken root within European geographic and commercial circles, as well as among various intellectuals and academics. This shift notably challenged the traditional teachings of Jesuit accommodationism, which had historically sought to balance commendations of the "Son of Heaven" with the promotion of Confucianism's patriarchal moral and political philosophy. Contrary to certain historiographical interpretations that link the intellectual shift regarding the favorable Jesuit portrayals of China to the memoirs of Macartney's embassy [Platt 2018, *47–48*], this rupture actually occurred several decades earlier. It was shaped by the advancements in modern geography and travel narratives that were increasingly influenced by the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, as well as the mercantile globalization of European trade. This trade involved both chartered companies and numerous private enterprises, whose commercial mentality often clashed with the strict tenets of Christian morality.

In line with various significant world geographies, novel travel accounts, and the influential works of thinkers like Sonnerat and Pauw, Kant's reflections on China go beyond the typical descriptions associated with themes of imperial power, mandarin governance, punitive justice, social patriarchy, and the customary reverence for Confucian philosophy that was compulsory in former writings about the Middle Empire. Kant adopts a cultivated Eurocentric perspective, which is characteristic of the Enlightenment. This perspective depicted China as stagnant, backward, and lifeless, arguing that only through the introduction of European science, technology, and political influence could the great nation escape its fatal "oriental despotism". Like other Enlightenment philosophers, geographers, scientists, navigators, and merchants of the late 18th century, Kant's discourse contributed to diminishing the positive fascination with China, situating it at a greater cultural distance. This categorization fostered the future 19th century narratives that supported European colonial expansion in Asia and framed the imperialist actions of the Opium Wars with cultural and scientific distances' justifications for imposing an active canon over a passive curiosity. While epistemic curiosity encourages deeper inquiry, simpler curiosities tend to fade after an initial encounter or first account, transforming past interests into mere relics, as in the case of the famous Porcelain Tower of Nanjing ruined during the Taiping Rebellion. Kant was likely correct in his observation about the Lisbon earthquake of 1755, where he noted that the monuments and curiosities of the great Portuguese city's past were reduced to "relics left behind" [Kant 2012, *341*]. Therefore, as useless to scientific progress and social modernity as the Catholic preachers who interpreted the calamity not as a natural accident but as a punishment from God.

For all these and certainly many other reasons, it remains worthwhile to further read and examine Kant's lesson on China, which, rather than proposing a singular or definitive conclusion, offers a research opportunity to revisit an important but much forgotten text.

China[29]

In the northern part of this great empire, the cold in the winter is more severe than at the same parallel in Europe. This empire is without a doubt the most populous and most cultivated in the entire world. There are reckoned to be as many inhabitants in China as in a large part of the rest of the world put together. Canals have been built through almost every province; from these other, smaller ones go to the cities and smaller ones still go to the villages. Over all these, there are some bridges with flying buttresses built of stone and mortar, the middle part of which is high enough

to allow a ship with masts to sail through. The great canal from Canton to Peking has no equal for length [anywhere] in the world. Ships are raised by cranes from one canal to another or over waterfalls, not with locks as we do. The Great Wall of China, counting all the curves, is three hundred German miles long, four fathoms thick, five fathoms high, or, as others report, five yards thick and ten yards high. It crosses astonishing mountains and rivers with flying buttresses. It has already been standing for one thousand eight hundred years. The Chinese cities are all, as far as the site permits, laid out accurately in squares, divided into four quarters by two main roads in such a way that the four gates exactly face the four cardinal points. The wall of the city of Peking is nearly one hundred feet high. The Porcelain Tower in Nanking is two hundred feet high and divided into nine storeys. It has been standing for four hundred years, consists of porcelain, and is the most beautiful building in the Orient.

Customs and Character of the Nation

The Chinese regard as beautiful someone who is tall and fat, has small eyes, a broad forehead, short nose, large ears and, if a male, a coarse voice and long beard. They pull the tufts of the beard out with a small pair of tweezers, leaving only a few small bushes. The scholars never cut the nails of their left hand, as a sign of their profession. The Chinese is of an uncommonly serene disposition. He keeps to himself and tries to explore the minds of others. They regard nothing as more despicable than losing one's temper. They are uncommonly artful [630] at deception. They can sew a torn piece of silk cloth together again so well that not even the most observant merchant will notice it; and they mend broken porcelain with copper wire drawn through it in such a way that at first no one is aware of the break. He [the Chinese person] is not ashamed if caught at deception, but only insofar as he has revealed a lack of skill thereby.

He is vengeful but can be patient for a convenient opportunity. No one duels. He loves gambling. He is cowardly, very industrious, very obsequious and devoted to compliments to an excessive degree; an obstinate devotee of old customs and as indifferent as could be in respect of the afterlife. Chinese women have feet that are no larger than those of a three-year-old child as a result of being bound since childhood. They lower their eyelashes, never show their hands, and in general are white and beautiful enough.

Eating and Drinking

In China, everything is eaten, including dogs, cats, snakes, etc. Anything edible is sold by weight, which is why they fill the crop of a chicken with sand. A dead pig is worth more than a live one if it weighs more. Hence the deception of poisoning live pigs and fishing them out again when they have been thrown overboard. Instead of forks, they have two small sticks of ebony. Nor do the Chinese have spoons. Unlike other Oriental peoples, they sit on stools, not on the ground. At a banquet, each person has his own little table. They consume all drinks warm, even wine, and they eat the food cold. At a banquet, one person beats time, then all raise their cups simultaneously and drink or act as though they were drinking. The host gives the sign when they should begin to eat and when they should stop. All this goes on in silence for three hours. Between the main meal and the dessert, they walk in the garden. Then comedians come and play silly tricks. They carry quail in their hands in order to warm themselves as with a muff. Here, the Tartars make brandy from mare's milk and bottle it over mutton, whereby it obtains a strong but repulsive taste.

Compliments

No one in China swears or curses. Everything he says, when he announces himself, when he pays a visit, the gestures he is to make and the speeches he is to make, what the host then says or does, all this is [631] laid down in officially published compliment books and not one word of it may be omitted. Everyone knows how to decline something politely and when it is time to go home. No one is obliged to uncover his head in a greeting; that is regarded as impolite.

Agriculture, Fruits, and Manufactures

The hills are terraced. Manure is brought from the cities by canal and dry areas are put under water. Every piece of land is used, even the smallest. The tallow tree has been mentioned above.

It is reported of the wax tree that an insect like a fly stings not merely through the leaves but through the bark into the core or trunk, whence white wax like snow oozes out in drops. The tea shrub. The bamboo reed, out of which they make nearly all their implements, even small boats. From its bark is made the varnished paper, which is very thin and smooth, but easily eaten by worms. Thus their books always have to be copied. "Kutlang", or a tough Chinese reed, of which anchor ropes are plaited, which do not rot as quickly as those made of jute. The Varnish Tree, with the lacquer of which the Chinese paint over everything they have in their houses. The Ginseng or Man's Root, thus called because it divides into two branches like the loins of a man. The Emperor sends ten thousand Tartars out into Chinese Tartary each year to collect these roots for him. They can sell the rest. It is uncommonly expensive. Silk worms work on the mulberry trees in the southern provinces without any attention. Their [the Chinese] silk cloth is mostly decorated with the figures of dragons woven in. Their ink is prepared from lamp black mixed with musk to make it smell sweet. The Emperor works in the fields in public once a year.

Concerning the Sciences, the Language, and the Laws

Their astronomy is ancient and there had been an observatory in Peking for many centuries before the arrival of missionaries. Their calendar was, however, extremely inaccurate. The prediction of eclipses was hardly accurate to the day, not to the minute as it is with us. They derive these predictions from tables, so that it is not clear how their scholars can possibly believe that during an eclipse, the moon or the sun is being devoured by a dragon, whom they try to deprive of his booty by [beating] drums. But it could also be that this is an old superstition from the time of ignorance, which the Chinese, as obstinate respecters of ancient customs, retain, even though they are aware of its foolishness. The knowledge of mathematics and other sciences served the preaching [632] of the Gospel in China instead of miracles. The Chinese language has only three hundred and thirty monosyllabic words, none of which are inflected, but the different tones, aspirations and combinations add up to three hundred and fifty thousand words. The characters of their writing do not represent sounds but the things themselves, and sometimes they encompass several ideas at once. For instance, "Good morning, Sir" is expressed by a single sign. The inhabitants of Cochinchina and Tonkin understand the writing of the Chinese but not their language. A scholar has to know and be able to write at least twenty thousand characters. They cure many illnesses by cauterization or by burning with hot copper plates. Some emperors and others have long pursued the foolish notion of the elixir of life. The art of printing is done as follows: The pages of a well-copied book are glued to a long wooden board, and the characters cut out. The Chinese have academic degrees. Candidates for the degree of doctor are usually examined by the Emperor himself. They fill the most important offices. Because all their archives were destroyed by an emperor two thousand years ago, their ancient history consists almost entirely of traditions only. Their first law is the obedience of children to their parents. If a son raises his hand against his father, the whole country gets into a commotion about it. All the neighbours are subjected to an inquisition. He himself is condemned to be hacked into ten thousand pieces. His house and even the street in which it stood are torn down and not rebuilt. The second law is obedience and deference towards the authorities.

The third law concerns politeness and compliments.

Theft and adultery are punished by bastinado [being beaten on the soles of the feet]. Everyone in China has the liberty to throw away, hang or drown any children who have become a burden to him. This happens, since the country is so heavily populated, in order to encourage marriages. Regardless of their industriousness, many thousands die of starvation each year in one or other of the provinces. In Peking, there is a newspaper printed daily reporting the praiseworthy or reprehensible behaviour of the mandarins, together with their rewards or punishments.

Religion

Religion is treated in a fairly unenthusiastic way. Many do not believe in any god; others, who adopt a religion, do not bother themselves much about it. The Fo Sect is the most numerous. By this Fo, they understand an incarnate deity that presently dwells in the great Lama in Barantola, Tibet, and is worshipped in him; after his death it enters into another Lama. The Tartar priests of Fo are called Lamas; those in China Bonzes. The Catholic missionaries describe the articles of

faith concerning Fo [633] in such a way that it becomes evident that it is nothing other than Christianity degenerated into paganism. They are said to have three persons in the deity, the second of whom is said to have given the law and to have shed his blood for the human race. The great Lama is also said to administer a kind of sacrament with bread and wine. Confucius or Con-fu-tse, the Chinese Socrates, is also honoured. There are also some Jews in China, who, like those on the Malabar coast, went there before the birth of Christ and now know little about Judaism any more. The Fo Sect believes in the transmigration of souls. There is an opinion among them that nothingness is the beginning and end of all things, which is why lack of feeling and giving up all work for a time are viewed favourably.

Marriages

Marriages are concluded by the parents without the two parties seeing each other. The girls do not receive a dowry, but are sold instead. Anyone who has a lot of money, buys as many wives as he likes. A confirmed bachelor or old unmarried man is a rarity among them. The man can send the wife back before he has touched her, if he is prepared to lose the purchase price, but the woman cannot.

Products Exported

Principally China tea, quicksilver, China root, rhubarb, reeds and processed silk, copper in small bars, camphor, fans, paintings, lacquered wares, porcelain, sago, borax, lapis lazuli, tutenag, Indian birds' nests are nests of birds similar to sea swallows, made from the foam of the sea mixed with a liquid produced by their beaks to form the nests. They are white and transparent, are used in soups and have an aromatic taste. (The most recent reports of the English since Macartney's Embassy have taught us to know China in many ways from a different side to that of the previous missionary reports. But even in these reports there are doubtless great exaggerations, though without fault [on the part] of the Englishmen).

FIGURES

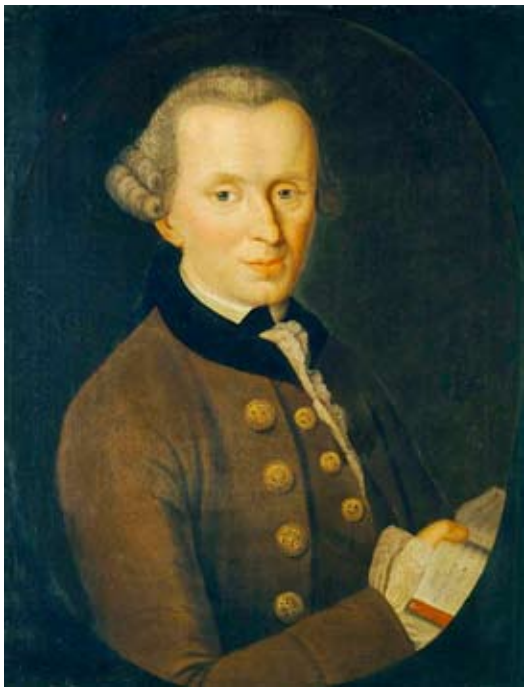

Fig. 1. The oldest portrait of Immanuel Kant, an oil-on-canvas by Johann Gottlieb Becker, dated 1768

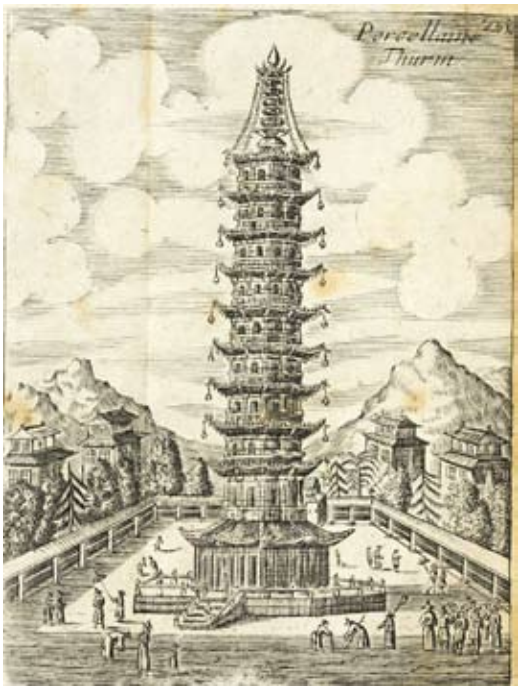

Fig. 2. "Porcelain Thurm" [Berckenmeyer 1721, *200–201*]

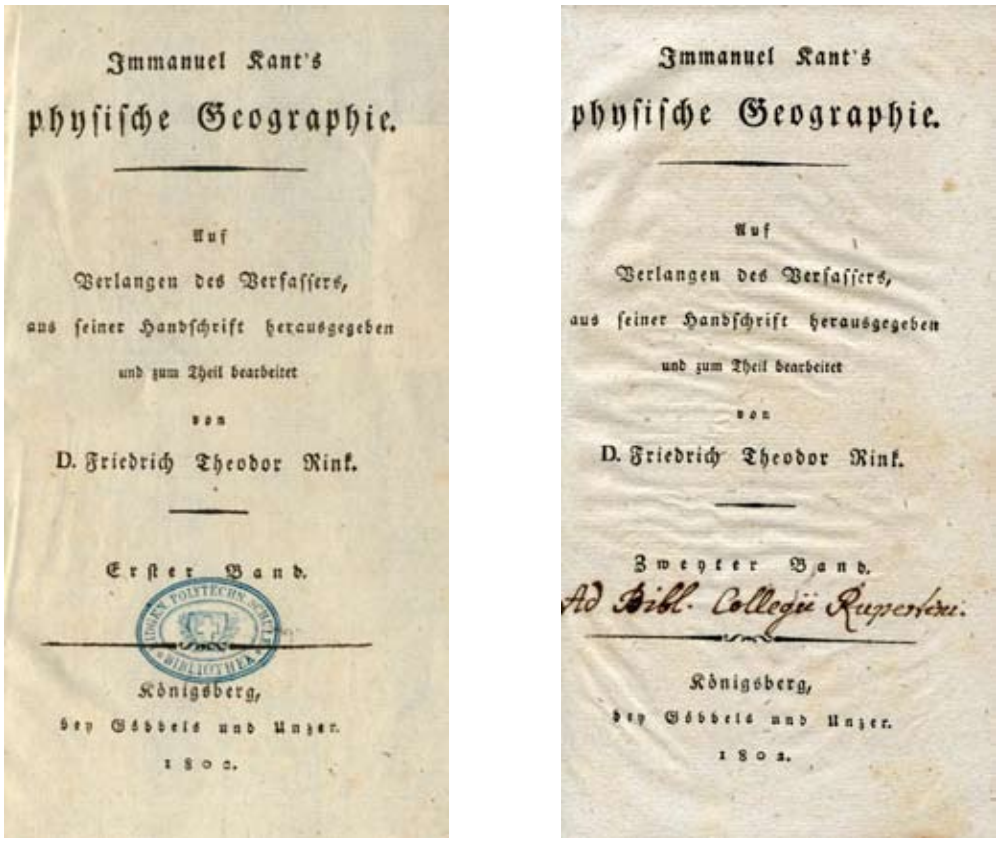

Fig. 3. Reproductions of the title page of "Kant, Immanuel. 1802. *Physische Geographie* (ed. Friedrich Theodor Rink). Königsberg: Göbbels und Unzer, Vol. I and Vol. II"

[1] "These philosophers of the future will demand (and not only of themselves) critical discipline and every habit that leads to cleanliness and rigor in matters of the spirit. They might even wear these like a type of jewel they have on display, – nevertheless, they still do not want to be called critics. They think it is no small disgrace for philosophy these days, when people are so happy to announce: 'Philosophy itself is criticism and critical science –and nothing else whatsoever!' However much all the French and German positivists might approve of this evaluation of philosophy (- and it might even have flattered Kant's heart and taste: just think of the titles of his major works -), our new philosophers will nevertheless say: critics are tools of philosophy and that is precisely why, being tools, they are so far from being philosophers! Even the great Chinaman of Konigsberg was only a great critic" [Nietzsche 2002, *104–105*].

[2] "One more word against Kant as a moralist. A virtue needs to be our own invention, our own most personal need and self-defence: in any other sense, a virtue is just dangerous. Whatever is not a condition for life harms it: a virtue that comes exclusively from a feeling of respect for the concept of 'virtue', as Kant would have it, is harmful. 'Virtue', 'duty', 'goodness in itself', goodness that has been stamped with the character of the impersonal and universally valid – these are fantasies and manifestations of decline, of the final exhaustion of life, of the Königsberg Chinesianity" [Nietzsche 2005, *9–10*].

[3] Arquivo Histórico de Macau (AH) – LMs. 109, *Novo Cathalogo da Bibliotheca do Seminario de Sam Joseph de Macao* (1845), fls. 14–15; AH – AC, Juízo dos Orfãos, "Inventario dos bens do Sr. Tomas Beale, Consul do Rey da Prussia", Nos. 7–8; Coates Austin. *Macao and the British, 1637–1842. Prelude to Hong Kong.* Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009, pp. 73, 127, 130, 140–141.

[4] Fan Shoukang. 康德 (Kant). Shanghai: Shang wu yin shu guan, 1926; Fan Shoukang. 認識論淺說 (Introduction to the Epistemology [of Kant]). Shanghai: Shang wu yin shu guan, 1927.

[5] An excellent, extensive and up-to-date repository of Kant's manuscript collections of notes taken from his various classes, can be found at the website *Kant in the Classroom: Materials to aid the study of Kant's lectures*, available at: https://users.manchester.edu/facstaff/ssnaragon/kant/ (accessed January 20, 2025).

[6] The category of Orientalism inevitably references Edward Said's seminal work, first published in 1978. While it is essential to acknowledge and engage with some of the innovative perspectives presented in Said's book, serious researchers must also confront its numerous historical and anthropological inaccuracies, limitations, and biases, as well as its often hasty interpretations that emphasize ideological concerns over scientific rigor. Regardless of one's viewpoint on Said's influential study, it is clear that his analysis was largely developed outside of China, where one would be hard-pressed to find the type of "Orientalism" described and critiqued in his work, which primarily addresses the cultural landscapes of the Middle East, plus some scattered references to India (Said Edward. *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978; Warraq Ibn. *Defending the West: A Critique of Edward Said's Orientalism*. New York: Prometheus Books, 2007).

[7] The 1923 edition of the Prussian Akademie includes a passage on "The Astrakhan Tatars" (Die astrachanischen Tatarn) that is not present in the original 1802 edition [Kant 1923, IX, *403*].

[8] Among several examples, the small in-16 portable geographical dictionary by the intellectual and orientalist Jean Baptiste Ladvocat, published in Paris in 1747, provided a well-informed entry on the Philippines and on Manila as well [Ladvocat 1747, *325*, *413*].

[9] "The Priests have a Chief, who is called Orto Lama, or the Grand Lama, who resides near the city of Lhasa, Capital of the Kingdom of Lhasa or Barantola" [Du Bois 1736, *536*].

[10] Guinea does not refer to any specific western African country that did not exist in the second half of the 18th century. Instead, it describes large territories identified by Kant as "the coast of Guinea" [Kant 2012, *377*, *554*, *557*, *597*, *605*, *608*, *659–660*] or as "The Gulf of Guinea, on the western coast of Africa, adjacent to Guinea" [Kant 2012, *471*]. Kant's concept of "Guinea" is broad, encompassing the diverse continental territories and cultures surrounding the Gulf of Guinea. During this period, these areas had only a few colonial trade settlements along the coast while being governed inland by intricate mosaics of traditional kingdoms and chiefdoms. Historical and anthropological research has revealed the consumption of dog meat among various ethnic groups in Nigeria, Cameroon, Ghana, and Congo [Seignobos 2022, *1–29*; Simoons 1961, *92–95*, maps: 133–137].

[11] Kant discusses Portobelo, a former Spanish colonial city and important trading port now near the North entrance of the Panama Canal [Kant 2012, *549*].

[12] See: [Buffon 1749–1789].

[13] See: [Bayle 1697].

[14] Le Comte Louis-Daniel. *Nouveaux Mémoires sur l'état présent de la Chine*. Paris: Chez Jean Anisson, 1696.

[15] Magalhães Gabriel de. *Nouvelle Relation de la Chine contenant la description des particularités les plus considérables de ce grand empire, composée en l'année 1668, et traduite du portugais en français par l'abbé Claude Bernou*. Paris: Claude Barbin, 1688.

[16] Leibniz Gottfried Wilhelm. *Novissima Sinica historiam nostri temporis illustratura in quibus de Christianismo publica nunc primum autoritate propagato missa in Europam relatio exhibetur, deque favore scientiarum Europaearum ac moribus gentis & ipsius praesertim monarchae, tum & de bello Sinensium cum Moscis ac pace constituta, multa hactenus ignota explicantur*. Hannover: Nikolaus Förster, 1697.

[17] Wolff Christian. *Oratio de Sinarum philosophia practice in solemni panegyri recitata, cum ipso Academie Hallensis natali XXVII. d. XII Julii A.O.R. 1721*. Frankfurt: J. B. Andreae & Henri Hort, 1726.

[18] Staunton George. *An Authentic Account of an Embassy from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China; Including Cursory Observations made, and Information obtained, in travelling through that Ancient Empire and a small part of Chinese Tartary*. London: W. Bulmer for G. Nicol, 1797, 2 vols. [+ Atlas, Vol. 3].

[19] [Hamburgisches Magazin… 1747, Vol. 6, *419*; 1751, Vol. 8, *137*, *365*; 1752, Vol. 9, *108*, *223*, *370*, *542*, *553–554*; 1752, Vol. 10, *106*; 1755, Vol. 15, *148*, *293*, *520*; 1756, Vol. 17, *490*; 1759, Vol. 23, *56*, *152*, *308*, *321*].

[20] [Allgemeines Magazin... 1753, Vol. 2, *280–283* ["Nachahmung der chinesischen gemalten spiegel, durch den herrn D." (Finding Chinese gems through Mr. D.)]; 1754, Vol. 3, *155–157*, *220–222*, *230*; 1757, Vol. 9, *63*, *183*; 1761, Vol. 11, *237*; 1767, Vol. 12, *109–143* ["Abhandlung

von dem chinesischen lacke durch den Jesuiten d'Incarville" (Treatise on Chinese lacquer by the Jesuit d'Incarville)]].

[21] *Sammlung neuer und merkwürdiger Reisen zu Wasser und zu Lande: aus verschiedenen Sprachen übersetzt, und mit vielen Kupfertafeln und Landkarten versehen* [Collection of New and Strange Voyages at Sea and on Land: translated from various languages and provided with many copper plates and maps]. Göttingen: Abrams Vandenhoeck, 1750–1757, 11 vols.

[22] Astley Thomas (ed.). *A new general collection of voyages and travels. Consisting of the most esteemed relations, which have been hitherto published in any language; comprehending everything remarkable in its kind, in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America.* 1745–1747, 4 vols.

[23] Prévost D'exiles, Antoine François (ed.). *Histoire générale des Voyages, ou Nouvelle Collection de toutes les Relations de Voyages par Mer et par Terre, qui ont été publiées […] Avec les mœurs et les usages des habitans, leur Religion, leur Gouvernement, leurs Arts et leurs Sciences, leur Commerce et leurs Manufactures; pour former un système complet d'histoire et de géographie moderne.* Paris: Chez Didot, 1746–1789, 20 vols.

[24] *A short way to know the world, or the rudiments of geography: being a new familiar method of teaching youth the knowledge of the globe, and the four quarters of the world.* London: Thomas Osborne, 1707. The second edition, published in 1719, presents as author one "T.H."

[25] Reproductions of various editions available at: https://www.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/; Bayerische Staatsbibliothek [www.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/]; Universitäts-Bibliothek Heidelberg – Heidelberger historische Bestände – digital [https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/].

[26] "Das 6. Capitel: Von dem grossem Kayserthum China / Tschina / oder Sina / Lat. Imperium Sinense gennant" [Berckenmeyer 1721, *167–212*].

[27] In the original German edition of 1721: "Unter andern haben sie einen Ubgott mit drenen hauptern welchen sie grosse Ehre erweisen und daruntur ihre dren Philosophos, den Confutium, Xequiam und Tanzu verstehen. Ihre vornehmste Gotter find die Sonne, Mond und Sterne; sie beten auch den Teuffel an nicht aus liebe sondern aus furcht, damit er ihnen fein lend zufuge daher sie auc sein bildnis auf die Bordertheil ihrer schiffe sezen. Sie sind Pythagoristen indem sie die Transmigration Animarum oder die Bersezung der seelen aus einem leib in den andern glauben".

[28] *Historisch-Politisch-Geographischer Atlas der gantzen Welt; Oder Grosses und vollständiges Geographisch- und Critisches Lexicon: Darinnen die Beschreibung des Erd-Kreises, Aller Monarchien, Käyserthümer, Königreiche, Chur- und Fürstenthümer, Republiquen, freyen Staaten, Stände und Herrschafften, Länder, Städte, Festungen, Seehäfen, Schlösser, Flecken, Aemter, Stiffter, Klöster, Gebürge, merckwürdigen Höhlen, Bergwercke, Pässe, Wälder, Meere, Seen, Inseln, Vorgebürge, Klippen, Sand-Bäncke, Meer-Engen, Quellen, Flüsse, Canäle, Gesund-Brunnen; Nebst denen dazu gehörigen Denck- und Merckwürdigkeiten enthalten: Aus des berühmten Königl. Spanischen Geographi Mr. Brvzen La Martiniere Dictionnaire Geographiqve Et Critiqve ins Deutsche übersetzt, Mit vielen tausend Artickeln vermehret und verbessert, sammt einer Vorrede von Christian Wolffen*. Leipzig: Johann Samuel Heinsius, 1740–1744, 13 vols.

[29] See: [Kant 1802, *129–140*; 1923, *377–382*; 2012, *629–633*].

DIGITAL RESOURCES

Kant in the Classroom: Materials to aid the study of Kant's lectures, available at: https://users.manchester.edu/facstaff/ssnaragon/kant/ (accessed January 20, 2025).

Deutsche Digitale Bibliothek – Kultur und Wissen online, available at: https://www.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/ (accessed January 20, 2025).

Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg, available at: https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/ (accessed January 20, 2025).

REFERENCES

Adickes E. (1911), *Untersuchungen zur Kants physische Geographie*, Mohr, Tübingen.

Allgemeine historie der Reisen zu Wasser und zu Lande (1747–1774), 21 vols, Arkstee & Merkus, Leipzig.

Allgemeines Magazin der Natur, Kunst, und Wissenschaften (1753–1767), 12 vols, Gleditsch, Leipzig.

Atlas (Nouvel) de la Chine, de la Tartarie Chinoise, et du Thibet: Contenant Les Cartes generale & particulieres de ces Pays, ainsi que la Carte du Royaume de Corée (1737), Henri Scheurleer, The Hague.

Bayle P. (1697), *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique*, Reinier Leers, Amsterdam.

Becmann J. C. (1698), *Historia Orbis Terrarum, Geographica et Civilis: De Variis Negotiis Nostri potiss. & Superioris Seculi, Aliisve rebus selectioribus*, Henr. Joh. Meyeri Haered. & Godofr. Zimmermann, Frankfurt and Leipzig.

Berckenmeyer P. L. (1721), *Curiöse Beschreibung, Der außerleßnesten Merkwürdigkeiten, So in denen dreven Welt-Theilen Asia. Africa und America zu finden: Als eine Fortsetzung der bereits heraus gegebenen Nachricht von Europa / Aus beruhmter Manner Reils-Beschreibung fleis1g zusammen getragen, zum Druck befördert*, Johann Christoph Wagner, Augspurg.

Berckenmeyer P. L. (1729), *Le Curieux Antiquaire ou Recueil Geographique et Historique des choses les plus remarquables qu'on trouve dans les quatre parties de l'Univers; Tirées des Voiages de divers Hommes celébres.; Avec deux Tables, des Noms Geographiques, & des Matiéres*, Pierre Vander Aa, Leiden.

Bernoulli J. (1781), *Sammlung kurzer Reisebeschreibungen und andererzur Erweiterung der Länder- und Menschenkenntnisz dienender Nachrichten*, Vols I–VI, Bey dem Herausgeber, Berlin and Leipzig.

Broc N. (1975), *La géographie des philosophes: géographes et voyageurs Français au XVIIIe siècle*, Edition Ophrys, Paris.

Bruzen de La Martinière A.-A. (1735), *Le Grand Dictionnaire Geographique et Critique*, P. Gosse, Haia, Herman Uytwerf & François Changion, Amsterdam, Jean Daniel Beman, Rotterdam.

Buffon G.-L. L. (1749–1789), *Histoire naturelle, générale et particuliére, avec la description du Cabinet du Roy*, 36 vols, Imprimerie Royale, Paris.

Chan N. S. (2011), *The Thought of Mou Zongsan*, Brill, Leiden and Boston. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/ej.9789004212114.i-340

Coates A. (2009), *Macao and the British*, *1637–1842. Prelude to Hong Kong*, Hong Kong University Press, Hong Kong.

Du Bois A. (1736), *La Geographie Moderne, Naturelle, Historique & Politique, Sans une Methode Nouvelle & Aisée*, Vol. III ("Asie"), Jacques Vanden Kieboom & Gerard Block, La Haye.

Du Halde J.-B. (1735), *Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique et physique de l'empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie chinoise*, 4 vols, P. G. Lemercier, Paris.

Du Halde J.-B. (1747–1749), *Ausführliche Beschreibung des Chinesischen Reichs und der grossen Tartarey: Aus dem Französischen mit Fleiß übersetzet, nebst vielen Kupfern*, 4 vols, Koppe, Rostock.

Figueiredo C. de (1899), *Nôvo Diccionário da Língua Portuguêsa*, Tavares Cardoso & Irmão, Lisboa.

Fischer L. and Withers C. W. J. (2021), "Geographical Education in the Eighteenth-Century German-Speaking Territories", *Paedagogica Historica*, Vol. 59, Iss. 3, pp. *380–406*. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/00309230.2021.1872658

Glahn R. von (2019), "The Changing Significance of Latin American silver in the Chinese economy, 16th–19th centuries", *Revista de Historia Económica, Journal of Iberian and Latin American Economic History*, Vol. 38, No. 3, pp. 553–585. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/S0212610919000193

Guignes J. de (1760), *Mémoire dans lequel on prouve que les Chinois sont une colonie égyptienne*, Chez Desaint & Saillant, Paris.

Hamburgisches Magazin, oder, Gesammlete Schriften, aus der Naturforschung und den angenehmen Wissenschaften überhaupt (1747–1763), 26 vols, G. C. Grund, Hamburg and Leipzig.

Hartshorne R. (1958), "The Concept of Geography as a Science of Space, from Kant and Humboldt to Hettner", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 48, No. 2, pp. 97–108. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8306.1958.tb01562.x

Homann J. B. (1759), *Atlas geographicus major exhibens tellurem seu Globum terraqueum in mappis generalibus et specialibus*, 2 vols, Curantibus Homannianis heredibus, Nuremberg.

Hoyer F. (2020), *Relations of Absence. Germans in the East Indies and Their Families c. 1750–1820*, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Uppsala.

Iselin J. C. (1726–1727), *Neu-vermehrtes Historisch- und Geographisches Allgemeines Lexicon*, Johann Brandemüller, Basel.

Kant I. (1764), *Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen*, Johann Jacob Kanter, Königsberg.

Kant I. (1802), *Physische Geographie*, F. T. Rink (ed.), Göbbels und Unzer, Königsberg.

Kant I. (1923), *Kant's Gesammelte Schriften herausgegeben von der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Missenchaften*, Vol. IX [Logik. Physische Geographie. Pädagogik], Walter de Grunter, Berlin and Leipzig.

Kant I. (1966), *Gesammelte Schriften, hrsg. von der Königlich Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaft*, Bd. 24, Hf. 2, G. Lehmann (ed. and notes), Walter de Gruyter, Berlin.

Kant I. (1992), *Lectures on logic*, J. Michael Young (ed. and tr.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Kant I. (1997), *Lectures on Ethics*, P. Heath & J. B. Schneewind (eds), P. Heath (tr.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Kant I. (2000), *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Paul Guyer (ed.), P. Guyer and E. Matthews (tr.), Cambridge University, Cambridge.

Kant I. (2007), *Anthropology, History, and Education*, G. Zöller & R. B. Louden (ed.), M. Gregor, P. Guyer, R. B. Louden, H. Wilson, A. W. Wood, G. Zöller & A. Zweig (tr.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Kant I. (2012), *Natural Science*, E. Watkins (ed.), L. W. Beck, J. B. Edwards, O. Reinhardt, M. Schönfeld & E. Watkins (tr.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Kuehn M. (2001), *Kant. A Biography*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Ladvocat J. B. (1747), *Dictionnaire Géographique-Portatif*, Les Libraires Associés, Paris.

Lee Eun-Jeung (2007), "Kant on China and Confucius", *Discourse*, No. 201, pp. 291–314. DOI: 10.17789/discou.2007.10.1.009

Lestition S. (1993), "Kant and the End of Enlightenment in Prussia", *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 65, pp. 57–112.

Lu-Adler H. (2023), *Kant, Race, and Racism. Views from Somewhere*, Oxford University Press, Oxford. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197685211.001.0001

Lulofs J. (1750), *Inleiding tot eene natuur – en wiskundige Beschouwinge des Aardkloots*, Jan en Hermanus Verbeek & Amelis Jan van Hoorn, Leiden.

Lulofs J. (1755), *Einleitung zu der mathematischen undphysikalischen Kenntnisz der Erdkugel. Aus dem Holländischenübersetzet von Abraham Gotthelf Kästner*, Elias Luzac, Göttingen und Leipzig.

Malter R. (1990), *Immanuel Kant in Rede und Gespräch*, Felix Meiner Verlag, Hamburg.

Meier G. F. (2016), *Excerpt from the Doctrine of Reason*, Aaron Bunch in collaboration with Axel Gelfert and Riccardo Pozzo (tr.), Bloomsbury Academic, London and New York.

Mokros E. (2021), *The Peking Gazette in Late Imperial China. State News and Political Authority*, University of Washington Press, Washington.

Nelson E. S. (2011), "Kant and China: Aesthetics, Race, and Nature", *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, Vol. 38, Iss. 4, pp. 509–525. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6253.2011.01672.x

Nietzsche F. (2002), *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, R.-P. Horstmann & J. Norman (eds), J. Norman (tr.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Nietzsche F. (2005), *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols*, A. Ridley & J. Norman (eds), J. Norman (tr.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Nieuhof J. (1665), *Het gezantschap der Neêrlandtsche Oost-Indische Compagnie, aan den grooten Tartarischen Cham, den tegenwoordigen keizer van China: waar in de gedenkwaerdighste geschiedenissen, die onder het reizen door de Sineesche landtschappen, Quantung, Kiangsi, Nanking, Xantung en Peking, en aan het keizerlijke hof te Peking, sedert den jare 1655 tot 1657 zijn voorgevallen, op het bondigste verhandelt worden: befeffens een naukeurige Beschryving der Sineesche steden, dorpen, regeering, wetenschappen, hantwerken, zeden, godsdiensten, gebouwen, drachten, schepen, bergen, gewassen, dieren, &c. en oorlogen tegen de Tarters: verçiert men over de 150 afbeeltsels, na't leven in Sina getekent*, Jacob van Meurs, Amsterdam.

Pauw C. (1771), *Recherches philosophiques sur les Américains, ou Mémoires intéressants pour servir à l'Histoire de l'Espèce Humaine. Avec une Dissertation sur l'Amérique & les Américains*, 3 vols, Georg Jakob Decker, Berlin.

Pauw C. (1773), *Recherches philosophiques sur les Égyptiens et Chinois*, 2 vols, Georg Jakob Decker, Berlin.

Pauw C. (1774), *Philosophische Untersuchungen über die Aegypter und Chineser: Nebst einer Carte von der berühmten großen Mauer in dem alten Aegypten*, 2 vols, J. G. Krünitz (trans.), Georg Jakob Decker, Berlin.

Pfennig J. C. (1765), *Einleitung in die Mathematische und Physikalische Geographie nach den neuesten Beobachtungen*, George Matthias Drevenstedt, Stettin and Leipzig.

Platt S. (2018), *Imperial Twilight: The Opium War and the End of China's Last Golden Age*, Penguin Random House, New York.

Seignobos C. (2022), " 'Chez nous, on ne tue pas le chien sans raison': Le chien dans le nord du Cameroun", *Revue d'ethnoécologie*, No. 22, pp. 1–29. DOI: https://doi.org/10.4000/ethnoecologie.9524

Simoons F. (1961), *Eat Not This Flesh*, The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison.

Sonnerat P. (1783), *Reise nach Ostindien und China: auf Befehl des Königs unternommen vom Jahr 1774*, 2 vols, Orell, Geßner & Füßli, Zürich.

Sousa I. C. de (2011), *A Outra Metade do Céu. Escravatura e Orfandade Femininas, Mercado Matrimonial e Elites Mercantis em Macau (séculos XVI–XVIII)*, St. Joseph University Press, Macau.

Sousa I. C. de (2022), *Memórias, Viagens e Viajantes Franceses por Macau (1609–1900)*, 4 vols, Instituto Cultural, Macau.

Sousa I. C. de (2024), "Rodolfo, Deo Gratias Princeps ad Macao: A Faked Prince of Macao in 18th-Century France", *Revista de Cultura. International Edition*, Vol. 75, pp. 58–71.

Tamaki T. (2004), "Anglo-Dutch Trade with the Baltic and White Sea: 1671–1780", *Kyoto Management Review*, No. 5, pp. 35–48.

Varenius B. (1650), *Geographia generalis, in qua affectiones generales telluris explicantur*, Ludovicum Elzevirium, Amsterdam.

Varenius B. (1672), *Geographia Generalis in qua affectiones generales telluris explicantur, summa cura quam plurimus in locis emendata, & XXXIII schematibus novis, aere incisis, una cum tabb. aliqout quae desiderabantur aucta & illustrata. Ab Isaaco Newton Math. Prof. Lucasiano apud Cantabrigienses*, Ex Officina J. Hayes, Sumptibus H. Dickinson, Cambridge.

Varenius B. (1681), *Geographia Generalis in qua affectiones Generales Telluris explicantur, Summa cura quam plurimus in locis Emendata, & XXXIII Schematibus Novis, Aere incisis, una cum Tabb, aliqout quae desiderabantur Aucta & Illustrata. Ab Isaaco Newton Math. Prof. Lucasiano apud Cantabrigienses. Editio Secunda Auctior & Emendatior*, John Hayes for Henry Dickinson, Cambridge.

Varenius B. (1712), *Geographia Generalis, in qua affectiones generales telluris explicantur: Adjecta est Appendix, praecipua Recentiorum inventa ad geographiam spectantia continens, a Jacobo Jurin, A. M. Collegii S. Trinitatis Socio, & Scholae Publicae Novocastrensis Archididascalo*, Cornelii Crownfield, Cambridge.

Wang B. (2020), "Aesthetics, Morality, and the Modern Community: Kang Guowei, Cai Yuanpei, and Lu Xun", *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 46, No. 3, pp. 496–514. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1086/708078

Warda A. (1922), *Immanuel Kants Bücher*, Martin Breslauer, Berlin.

Wilhelm J. and Vollmer G. (eds) (1801), *Immanuel Kants physische Geographie*, 2 vols, G. Vollmer, Mainz and Hamburg.

І. К. де Соуза

Урок Іммануїла Канта про Китай: географія епохи Просвітництва, орієнталізм, культурна дистанція та Порцелянова вежа

У цій статті ретельно досліджуються всі згадки про Китай та китайців у великому доробку Іммануїла Канта, а також у численних рукописних нотатках із його лекцій, читаних протягом 41 року в Кенігсберзькому університеті, відомому як Альбертіна. Цей період академічної праці тривав від зимового семестру 1755–1756 років до останньої лекції Канта 23 липня 1796 року. Аналіз свідчить, що у своїх головних критичних працях (де можна знайти лише кілька малозначних китайських назв) Кант виявляв мало інтересу до вивчення китайської цивілізації, не кажучи вже про традиційну китайську філософію. Більшість посилань на Китай з'являються в різних рукописних конспектах його лекцій зазвичай як короткі приклади, а не змістовні концептуалізації культурної та філософської спадщини Китаю. У деяких випадках ці приклади зустрічаються в межах орієнталістських роздумів, де китайські реалії змішуються з індійськими, відображаючи ті географічні та культурні уявлення про Схід, що ще були поширені у XVIII столітті. В інших випадках посилання на китайські приклади підкреслюють крайню екзотику, культурну відсталість, расіалізацію та етноцентризм або соціальний, інтелектуальний та науковий застій. Ця перспектива сприяла поширенню серед європейських інтелектуалів XIX століття думки, що, хоча Китай колись був блискучою цивілізацією, згодом його спіткала стагнація і він не здатний до прогресу.

Прикметно, що під час свого другого терміну викладання в університеті, починаючи з літнього семестру 1756 року, Кант понад сорок років викладав курс фізичної географії. Окрім занять із логіки, які він провів 56 разів, та лекцій з метафізики, прочитаних ним 53 рази поспіль, курс фізичної географії був третім предметом, яким він займався суттєво: 49 семестрових лекцій до його виходу на пенсію в середині липня 1796 року. Відомі наразі 32 рукописи студентських конспектів відображають академічну зацікавленість цим предметом, який у XVIII столітті був набагато космополітичнішим та мав ширші виміри, ніж сучасна академічна географія. Через погіршення здоров'я Кант задумав здійснити авторизоване видання своїх учень із фізичної географії з допомогою свого друга Фрідріха Теодора Рінка (1770–1811). Кант надав Рінку рукопис як створений до 1760 року й не цілком оновлений "запис із голосу" його ранніх уроків. Відповідно, видання Рінка містило оновлення, примітки та суттєві зміни. Він також запозичував з інших рукописних конспектів лекцій Канта, прочитаних у 1770-х роках, включно з частиною оригінального тексту, записаного молодим аристократом Фрідріхом фон Гольштейн-Беком, який у 1772–1773 роках брав у Канта приватні уроки. Фінальний текст був опублікований 1802 року в Кенігсберзі під назвою "Фізична географія Іммануїла Канта, відредагована на прохання автора за його рукописом і частково перероблена доктором Фрідріхом Теодором Рінком" (*Immanuel Kant's Physische Geographie auf verlangen des Verfassers aus seiner Handschrift herausgegeben und zum Teil bearbeitet von Dr. Friedrich Theodor Rink*). Розділ на основі лекції Канта про Китай (с. 129–140) є третьою і заключною частиною другого тому, виданого 1802 року під назвою "Короткий розгляд найважливіших особливостей природи всіх країн у географічному порядку". Цей текст тісно узгоджується, часто дослівно, з різними доступними рукописними нотатками, що свідчить про стабільну репрезентацію Кантом повторюваного уроку про Китай. Зазначені матеріали знаменують собою початок заключного розділу тієї книги, який починається з Азії як "першого континенту", а продовжується дослідженнями Африки, Європи та Америки. Урок про Китай в оригінальному німецькому друкованому виданні містить трохи більш ніж 2000 слів. Тому читання їх уголос або диктування в помірному темпі триватиме, імовірно, десь 20–30 хвилин. Це свідчить, що цей текст був початковим сегментом типових двогодинних занять Канта з фізичної географії, які зазвичай проводилися щосереди та щосуботи з 8:00 до 10:00 ранку.

У статті пропонується всебічний аналіз лекції Канта про Китай, у якій викладено чітку концепцію культурної дистанції. Вона свідчить про незацікавленість Канта китайською цивілізацією та філософією, включно з конфуціанською думкою, яку в XVII столітті популяризували в усій інтелектуальній Європі єзуїтські праці. Ці праці справили добре враження на таких провідних німецьких філософів, як Лейбніц і Крістіан Вольф. На противагу їм, Кант не виявив жодної подібності чи прихильності до єзуїтської місіонерської системи, що вихваляла китайську імперську владу та приписувану Конфуцію філософію. У своїй лекції про Китай Кант не процитував жодного єзуїтського тексту, і це спонукало нас ретельно дослідити першоджерела, що вплинули на вчення Канта. Зокрема, дослідження спирається на визначну працю німецького теолога Пауля Людольфо Беркенмаєра (1667–1732) "Цікаві описи найнезвичайніших дивовиж, які можна знайти в трьох частинах світу: Азії, Африці та Америці" (*Curiöse Beschreibung, Der außerleßnesten Merkwürdigkeiten, So in denen dreven Welt-Theilen Asia, Africa und America zu finden*), опубліковану в Аугсбурзі 1721 року. Наведені Кантом приклади та його уроки про Китай, зрештою, ілюструють, що між 1750 і 1770 роками, коли Товариство Ісуса було розпущене Святим Престолом і вигнане з різних європейських країн, у Європі вже відбувалися значні інтелектуальні зміни у сприйнятті китайської цивілізації та суспільства. Підживлювана новими географічними текстами та подорожніми розповідями, міцніла тенденція сприймати Китай із новим скептицизмом, підкреслюючи його значну культурну віддаленість від європейських інтелектуальних традицій та філософії. Кант постає як ключова постать, що символізує цей поворот.

Ключові слова: І. Кант; Китай; "Фізична географія"; Просвітництво; культурна дистанція

Стаття надійшла до видання 26.03.2025
Прийнято до друку після рецензування 6.05.2025
Опубліковано 7.10.2025