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Susan RICHTER

## A WARNING AGAINST THE INFAMY OF IMPEACHMENT

The "Memorable Facts of the Emperors of China" (1788)

On the eve of the French Revolution, in 1788, the copper engraver Isidore Stanislas Henri Helman (1743-1809)<sup>(1)</sup> dedicated to Madame Marie-Joséphine Louise de Savoie (1753- 1810), wife of the Count of Provence Louis Stanislas Xavier (1755-1824), younger brother of King Louis XVI, a mirror of the Chinese princes illustrated with twenty-four hand-lettered engravings bearing the title: "Faits mémorables des empereurs de la Chine, ti- rés des annales chinoises [...] tirés du Cabinet de M. Bertin in Paris"<sup>2</sup>. Helman was commissioned to do this work by the painter Jean-Denis Attiret (1702-1768), a Jesuit in Peking, who had close ties with the minister Henri-Léonard Jean Bap- tiste Bertin (1720-1792) at the court of Louis XV<sup>3</sup>. Helman was to transpose for the em-

- 1 I would like to thank Corinna Gepner for translating this article and my student colleague Maïke Wendland for her research and help writing it. On Helman's work, see Roger PORTALIS, Henri Béraldi, *Les graveurs du dix-huitième siècle*, Paris 1881, vol. 2, pp. 392 ff; D. STERN, s. v. "Helman", in *Allgemeines Lexikon der Bildenden Künstler von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, vol. 16, 1922, esp. pp. 346 ff. For a brief overview of the mirror of princes, Léo KELLER, "'Un pinceau utile pour le bien de la religion'. Jean Denis Attiret (1707-1768) dit Wang Zhicheng, peintre jésuite à la cour de Chine", in *La chair et le verbe: les jésuites de France au xviii<sup>e</sup> siècle et l'image*, Édith Flamarion (ed.), Paris 2008, p. 72.
- 2 Mentioned but not reproduced in Hendrick Budde (ed.), *Europa und die Kaiser von China 1240-1816*, exhibition at the Martin-Gropius-Bau, 12 May-18 August 1985, Berlin/Frankfurt am Main 1985, p. 311, cat. n° 10/35,3. See also Marcia Reed, Paola DEMATTÈ (eds.), *China on Paper. European and Chinese Works from the Late Sixteenth to Early Nineteenth Century*, Los Angeles 2007, p. 178 ff. A recent work of art history on the ancient mirrors of Chinese princes, Julia K. Murray, *Mirror of Morality. Chinese Narrative Illustration and Confucian Ideology*, Honolulu 2007. - Helman's dedication reads as follows: To Madame. Madame, Your enlightened appreciation of the arts has emboldened me to present you with this tribute from the annals of the most ancient People in the Universe. The kindness with which you have deigned to accept it is for me, Madame, the most honourable and flattering of *encouragements*. *Allow me to place my feeble talents and my eternal gratitude at your feet. With the deepest respect, Madame, Your most humble and obedient servant Helman*. Isidore Stanislas Henri HELMAN, *Faits mémorables des empereurs de la Chine, tirés des annales chinoises [...] tirés du Cabinet de M. Bertin*, Paris 1788, s. p. The dedication was identified from the portrait of the princess painted in 1778 by Élisabeth Vigée Lebrun and the coats of arms of the Bourbons and the House of Savoy. When Louis XVI ascended the throne, the princess was given the traditional title of "Madame" as the wife of the king's younger brother.
- 3 Henri BERNARD-MAÎTRE, *Le frère Attiret au service de K'ien-Long (1739-1768)*. His first written biography, Shanghai 1943. Bertin was comptroller-general of finance and of the French East India Trading Company at the court of Louis XV and a member of the Royal Agricultural Society founded in Paris in 1761. On Bertin, see Michel Antoine, *Le Gou-*

Chinese emperor Qianlong an illustrated classic from the Ming period, the *Mirror of the Princes*

"*Dijian tushuo*" (published in 1573), in the Western style of copper engraving. Minister Bertin sent him the Chinese original. This was the second Helman had received a commission from China. In 1775, he had already engraved, from watercolours by Attiret, the voluminous "*Suite de Seize estampes representant les conquêtes de l'Empereur de la Chine*", showing the emperor Qianlong (1711- 1799)<sup>4</sup> at war, hunting at Chengde, and performing rituals. This was followed in 1788 by a magnificent engraved version of the "*Dijian tushuo*" with a dedication to the king's sister-in-law<sup>5</sup>.

This is how a work arrived at the court of the King of France that dealt with imperial governance, good or bad, over the course of China's long history, and above all that highlighted the consequences of the abuses perpetrated by the sovereign against his people. One of these was impeachment. This was the fate of Emperor Jie (last of the Xia dynasty, around 1800 ), whose court had become so luxurious that the population had never been so burdened with taxes and the country was on the verge of ruin. The '*Dijian tushuo*' devoted a page to him and, for his part, Helman vividly portrayed the misdeeds of this prince, who amused himself by making iniquitous use of food while his subjects were starving. It is said that he had a canal dug (some Chinese works speak of a lake) and then filled it with wine. To entertain him, his concubines were forced to navigate the canal and drink from it like cattle. Despite being called order, this mismanagement continued, and the emperor was finally removed from office and deposed. Taken as a whole, Helman's collection could have been seen as a warning at a time of crisis in France and in light of the growing criticism of the luxury of the Versailles court. However, the work suffered the same fate as most of the princes' mirrors: it remained a dead letter.

We will try to highlight the role of the princes' mirrors in the crisis of power in China and early modern Europe. One of the questions that arises is how it was possible to interest European, and more particularly the French, court public, as well as the royal family, in a Chinese princely mirror and a Chinese ethic of power. Niklas Luhmann, who sees the 'mirror' as a metaphor for the self-confrontation of the individual in relation to his or her social position, will serve as a source of inspiration. In the mirrors of European princes, for example, it was customary to present only the face of one of the princes.

vernement et l'Administration sous Louis XV, dictionnaire biographique, Paris 1978, p. 34; idem, *Le secrétariat d'État de Bertin (1763-1780)*, Paris 1948 (Positions des thèses de l'École des chartes), p. 11-19. André J. BOURDE, *Agronomie et agronomes en France au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris 1967, t. 2, p. 1079 et seq. Henri CORDIER (ed.), *Correspondance des RR. PP. Jesuites missionnaires en Chine avec H. L. J. Bertin, 1744-1798*, 12 vols, Bibliothèque de l'Institut de France, ms 1515-1521.

4 In the course of this article, emperors will be referred to by the name of their era. In English-language works, we usually find the sequence "Qianlong emperor" and so on. In the rest of the text, therefore, the imperial title will be followed by the name of the era.

5 On Holland paper, hand-coloured with yellow border, folio, 278 x 274 mm, bound in blue leather.

Ethics can therefore use the metaphor of the mirror - not to redouble its reality, but to confront the individual with what he really is in terms of his social position, but which he could not see without a mirror<sup>6</sup>. The principle of the sovereign confronting another sovereign was also the basis of Chinese mirrors. The reference to Chinese emperors seemed legitimate because the equality of their rank and the extent of their power were both recognised and undisputed in Europe. It was therefore possible to draw a comparison between the strategies used in Europe and China by the political ethic to make itself heard through carefully chosen biographical examples, both positive and negative. With this in mind, we propose to analyse the critical scope of the image, based on two pages (I and III) of "Memorable Facts about the Emperors of China".

In China, a bad monarch could be stripped of his sovereignty, in particular through impeachment, as shown by the example of Jie, punished for his insane profligacy. In Europe, on the other hand, impeachment was out of the question. Helman's work illustrated through images what had been known since the <sup>seventeenth</sup> century thanks to the many accounts of travellers and missionaries: Chinese sovereigns seemed to have a greater responsibility than their European peers towards their subjects and could not expect their abuses to go unpunished. This was the warning that emerged from Helman's engravings.

### Mirrors of Princes in Europe and China - Critical tools

In early modern Europe, where political theory and ethics were closely linked to political reality, the point of reference was the governing body, usually the monarch. It was this link that was the focus of a type of work that was particularly characteristic of the period: the mirror of princes.

For Bruno Singer, using the definition still valid in Meyer's "Dictionary of Conversation", the mirrors of princes are "writings in which a model sovereign is constructed, either by recounting the lives of famous sovereigns, their way of thinking, governing and acting; or by idealising historical figures through poetic licence; or finally by setting out principles, norms and rules concerning the behaviour of the prince, discussing them and illustrating them with the help of historical examples<sup>7</sup>". The *miroir des princes* is the only type writing to make a

6 Niklas LUHMANN, *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft*, Frankfurt am Main 1997, p. 915.

7 Bruno Singer, *Die Fürstenspiegel in Deutschland im Zeitalter des Humanismus und der Reformation. Bibliographische Grundlagen und ausgewählte Interpretationen*: Jacob Wimpfeling, Wolfgang Seidel, Johann Sturm, Urban Rieger, Munich, 1981, p. 16. Article "Fürstenspiegel", *Meyers Konversationslexikon*, 1895, vol. 6, especially p. 1012. The concept of the "mirror of princes" was coined in the Holy Roman Empire in the <sup>sixteenth</sup> century and became a term for a specific genre literary work nineteenth-century German historiography. See Bruno SINGER, s. v. "Fürstenspiegel", in: *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, vol. 11, 1983, in particular p. 707; Theo Stammen, s. v. "Fürstenspiegel", in: *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik*, vol. 3, 1996, in particular pp. 495-507; Michael ROBERTS, "Fürstenspiegel", in: *Der Neue Pauly*, Weimar 1998, vol. 4, esp. pp. 693-695. Wilhelm Berges offers an analysis

history as a *magistra vitae*. History offers the reader examples from all areas of life and knowledge. Otto Eberhardt aptly adds: "A mirror of princes is a closed work, which, in order to convey knowledge or deliver a warning, engages in as full a debate as possible on the exercise of power with regard to the sovereign's particular position; it is generally based on a personal relationship with the sovereign<sup>8</sup>." Ulrike Grassnick's study of the mirrors of the English princes of the late Middle Ages reveals characteristics that also apply to the mirrors of the early modern German-speaking world: these are "pragmatic texts in a wide variety of forms, setting out models for the exercise of power in order to educate and advise princes and kings<sup>9</sup>".

The mirrors of the princes thus formulated ideal precepts likely to foster a broad consensus, both religious and social. Norms were established that became ethical objectives to which the ruling elite and those in positions of political power had to conform. They were therefore associated with a specific social function and position. But while norms are generally accompanied by sanctions, this dimension was completely absent from the mirrors of the princes, and not by chance. Instead, their authors resorted to defensive mediation strategy and demonstrated a particular understanding of the norm. They did not see it as an established or binding directive - that was not the aim of the mirror. Rather, the aim was to encourage the prince to improve himself by drawing inspiration from the habitus of the ideal sovereign, and to offer him the opportunity to assess himself against the yardstick of higher values and, if necessary, to correct himself<sup>10</sup>.

This is the context for Helman's artistic transposition of the "Dijian tushuo". With his twenty-four engravings illustrating the good and bad practices of power, Helman was pointing the viewer in the direction he wanted, namely to teach the princely reader. This explains the brief explanations that accompany the engravings. In the eyes of contemporaries such as the art theorist Jean-Baptiste Du Bos (1670-1742), the inscription associated with the image was a way of enhancing contemplation, introducing a fruitful educational dimension and clarifying the artist's intention<sup>11</sup>.

The mirrors of princes in the Middle Ages, see Wilhelm BERGES, *Die Fürstenspiegel des hohen und späten Mittelalters*, Leipzig 1938.

8 SINGER, *Die Fürstenspiegel* (see no. 7), p. 16; Otto EBERHARDT, *Via Regia. Der Fürstenspiegel Smaragds von St. Mihiel und seine literarische Gattung*, Munich 1977 (*Münstersche Mittelalter- Schriften*, 28). The fundamental idea that it is possible educate in the exercise of power can be found in the works on the "Policy", the good political regime, where the aim is to teach virtue to a prince who will govern as a good father. On the similarities between these works and the mirror of princes, see Gotthardt FRÜHSORGE, *Privatklugheit. Zur Bedeutungsgeschichte des Politischen in der Hofliteratur des 17. Jahrhunderts in Deutschland und in den politischen Romanen Christian Weises*, Stuttgart 1974, p. 61 ff.

9 Ulrike GRASSNICK, *Ratgeber des Königs. Fürstenspiegel und Herrscherideal im spätmittelalterlichen England*, Cologne, Weimar, Vienna 2004 (*Europäische Kulturstudien*, 15), p. 44.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 1 ff.

11 On Jean-Baptiste Du Bos's theories on educating or entertaining the spectator, see Eva KERNBAUER, *Platz des Publikums. Kunst und Öffentlichkeit im 18. Jahrhundert*, doctoral thesis, Trier 2007, p. 106 ff.

The images could therefore instruct the viewer with the help of the texts, acting as a mirror.

Ulrike Grassnick assumes that the mere fact of possessing this type of writing and being able to offer a princeps edition to a sovereign was in itself a symbolic recognition of the existence of values for the use of the powerful and showed that princes accepted the need for advice<sup>12</sup>. In view of the continuous enrichment of court and castle libraries at the end of the <sup>seventeenth</sup> century through purchases and the integration, often in their entirety, of gigantic private collections, this conclusion may seem too hasty. Owning a work does not necessarily mean that you know it or approve of its content. Castle libraries also welcomed critical, even censored, literature. And 's a long way from owning a book to having a collective understanding of what good governance is. It was only by reading the book that the sovereign demonstrated his interest. It was then possible to influence his vision of power by proposing collective values. A detailed analysis tailored to specific situations meant that the ideal models of governance drawn from the mirrors could be grasped, put into practice, adapted, even if only symbolically, or even rejected. But this presupposed a decision on the part of those in power. In this case, the content could be accepted and lead to a greater or lesser degree of identification.

With regard to the "Memorable facts of the emperors of China, taken from the *Annales chinoises*", we know nothing of the reaction of the recipient, her husband or even the king<sup>13</sup>. It is highly likely, however, that it was the minister Bertin, influenced by the ideas of the physiocrats and concerned with economic and political reform, who encouraged Helman to send the mirror to the court, and more particularly to the entourage of the Count of Provence, who was very interested in politics without yet having committed himself to it. It may be that Bertin thought he would find in the king's younger brother a certain understanding and support for possible reforms. However, it is also possible that the work was intended for the family of the Count of Provence, since, apart from his political ambitions, Louis Stanislas Xavier was known by his contemporaries for his taste for splendour, and as he maintained a large court and gave endless parties, he was continually in debt<sup>14</sup>. It might therefore be thought that this was a direct criticism of Monsieur's lavish lifestyle and that it was necessary to pass it on through his wife. On the other hand, the Count of Provence had the reputation of being a great art lover and patron<sup>15</sup>. The engraver Helman was therefore perhaps hoping to attract his protection.

12 GRASSNICK, *Ratgeber des Königs* (see n. 9), p. 283.

13 The reviews of the time are nowhere to be found. However, Helman's work was published in number of less editions. The *Journal Encyclopédique* reported on them in December 1788, indicating the selling prices. Cf. *Journal Encyclopédique*. Par Une Societe De Gens De Lettres [...], 8 (1788), p. 343.

14 Klaus MALETTKE, *Die Bourbonen*, vol. 2, Von Ludwig XV. bis zu Ludwig XVI. 1715-1789/92, Stuttgart 2008, p. 173 ff.

15 Cyrille SCIAMA, *Le comte de Provence et son surintendant des Bâtiments: un partenariat original. 1771-1791*, in: *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 3 (2006), p. 61-76.

Whatever the case, the purpose of the engraving was to send a gentle reminder to the rulers to observe good practice. Since the 1760s, even though the Society of Jesus had been dissolved, Bertin had maintained close contacts with the Jesuits in Peking, with aim of exploiting for the benefit of the French crown the knowledge he had acquired through questionnaires and exchanges of letters, as well as his carefully controlled observations of Chinese politics and economics. He was perfectly aware that Chinese economic policy and structures could not be transposed to France. What was important to him was to propose new directions for France in a world of rapid economic expansion. He shared the view that France drew its strength not from the sea but from the land, and wanted to strengthen collaboration with China. In his eyes, France and China were two powers of equal strength in two different parts of the world. His ambition was to breathe a little *Chinese spirit* into the French economy to make it more efficient<sup>16</sup>. Given the recurrence of famine and the resulting unrest, this meant appropriate management of resources, but also questioning the luxury of the Versailles court, which was increasingly criticised and criticized, or rather the role of the queen, Marie-Antoinette, an ignorant sovereign blind to the misery of her subjects. Helman's work was right at the heart of the debate on the luxury of the court<sup>17</sup>, particularly in the third plate on the waste of food resources by Emperor Jie (see ill. 1). Here is the caption:

*III<sup>e</sup>. Print.*

*Kie and Techeou, the first of the Hia dynasty, the second of the Chang, are the two emperors who have left China with the most odious memory. Kie's bad qualities were compounded by the misfortune of having married a woman even more wicked than himself. Her name was Mei-Hi, and she disgraced his reign, not only by atrocities, but by acts of insanity that could scarcely be imagined. The Chinese Annals tell us that to please her, Kie had a canal dug deep enough to carry boats. He had it filled with wine, and this Prince took pleasure in seeing his vile courtiers drinking on the banks of this canal like cattle. Around this same canal he had hung so many roasted meat quarters that from a distance they looked like a forest. Intoxicated with wine and satiated with these meats, the Companions of Kie then indulged in the most infamous excesses. These insane prodigalities ruined the Empire; the Peoples rose up on all sides, and Kie was*

- 16 Gwynne LEWIS, Henri-Léonard Bertin and the Fate of the Bourbon Monarchy. The Chinese Connection, in: Malcolm CROOK, William DOYLE, Alan FORREST (eds.), Enlightenment and Revolution. Essays in Honour of Norman Hampson, Burlington 2004, p. 71; Susan RICHTER, Pflug und Steuerruder. Zur Verflechtung von Herrschaft und Landwirtschaft in der Aufklärung, Cologne, Weimar, Vienna 2015 (Beihefte zum Archiv für Kulturgeschichte, 75), pp. 180-198.
- 17 According to Lynn Hunt, the caricatures expressed the disappointed hope that the Queen could be a "good mother". See Lynn HUNT, The Family Romance of the French Revolution, Los Angeles 1992, p. 49-52; Le Roman familial de la Révolution française, trans. Jean-François Sené, Albin Michel, 1995]. See also: EAD, The Invention of Pornography. Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity. 1500-1800, New York, 1993.

*finally dethroned around 1766 BC. His fall brought with it that of his family, which had occupied the throne for 600 years. One would be tempted to cast doubt on such delirium, if the reigns of Nero, Caligula and Heliogabalus did not present such absurd scenes. History only reluctantly preserves the memory of these monsters, but by preserving them it proves that a fool, re-vested with unbounded power, is the most formidable scourge of Nations<sup>18</sup>.*

Bertin wished to initiate reforms inspired by physiocracy, but this presupposed a movement critical self-reflection and reform within the French monarchy and court. For him, it was a question of returning to the duties of the king and establishing a power exercised in the service of the subjects in accordance with the laws of nature<sup>19</sup>. However, by diverting wine for his own amusement and encouraging his court to adopt extravagant behaviour - drinking like cattle - Emperor Jie was contradicting nature. The engraving illustrated an act of arbitrary humiliation against men and resources that was totally at odds with the mission of power, and it denounced the sovereign as the cause of these dysfunctions. The aim of this engraving, and of the work as a whole, was to criticise by pointing out dysfunctions, as the first image immediately indicates.

The engraving shows a man standing at the entrance to a palace, beating a drum. The Chinese emperor, ready to receive his subjects in audience, is enthroned in the upper left-hand half (see ill. 2). Helman wrote the following caption:

*The Emperor Yao, who reigned 2,357 years before our Era, set a great example to all the Princes by making the truth reach the Throne. At the outer door of his Palace, he had a Tablet placed on which all his Subjects had the right to write any opinion they thought useful for the good of the Empire. Next to the Tablet was a Drum; the person who just written knocked on it; the Prince, warned by the sound, had what had been written brought to him on the spot, and benefited, either to render justice or to reform the administration, from the light this experiment had given him. This wise institution condemns the policy of those Princes who make the Majesty of the Throne consist in making themselves inaccessible to their Subjects<sup>20</sup>.*

18 III<sup>e</sup> Print, in HELMAN, *Faits mémorables* (see n. 2), s. p.

19 RICHTER, *Pflug und Steuerruder* (see no. 16), pp. 209 ff.

20 I<sup>e</sup>. Print, HELMAN, *Memorable facts* (see n. 2), s. p.

If we refer to the reports of the Jesuits, the institution of the drum had appeared in European history books since the middle of the <sup>eighteenth</sup> century. Helman's plan was therefore well known: *he was courting Emperor Yu by him advice on his conduct, and he did not believe that there was any occupation more worthy a monarch than that of dispensing justice to the people. To this end, he made himself accessible at all hours, so that people could easily speak to him: he had a bell, a drum and three tables attached to the gates of his palace, one of iron, the other of stone and the third of lead; G he had an order posted, by which he enjoined all those who had to speak to him to strike on these instruments or on these tables, depending on the nature of business they wished to communicate to him. The bell was intended for civil matters; the drum was to be struck for those concerning the laws and religion;*

Emperor Yao was one of the three Augustans, and the fourth of the five Chinese emperors<sup>21</sup>. The emperors were civilising heroes of the third, or rather second millennium, whose wisdom had elevated them to the rank model sovereigns across the dynasties. During his reign, Yao instituted audiences in the "hall of the " to out what the people were thinking. Emperor Yu<sup>22</sup> then had a complaints drum installed at the door of his palace, which could be beaten when there was any criticism to be made of the emperor and the government<sup>23</sup>. This fact is recounted by Mencius (370-290 BC), a scholar who, during the Han dynasty, succeeded in elevating the teachings of Confucius to the rank of state philosophy, thereby laying down guidelines for the ethics of power. The idea a critical public opinion had been early on in the various regions of the Chinese Empire through tools such as audiences, drums and bells, and subjects were invited to formulate their demands on those in power in a formalised and legitimate way. Remarkably, musical instruments were used for this purpose. The drum is considered to be one of the oldest ceremonial instruments, and drums and bells the oldest.

*the plomp table was used for the Ministry's own affairs G of the Government: if one had to complain of some injustice committed by the Magistrates, one knocked on the stone table; G finally on the iron table, when one had received some too rigorous treatment. The Emperor always received with kindness, G even with a kind of gratitude, those who came to give him advice or implore his justice. It is reported that one day he left the table twice at the sound of the bell, G that another day he came out of the bath three times to receive the complaints made to him. In the Canonical Book, called Chu King, we find the instructions he gave to Princes to govern their States wisely, G the rules he prescribed for the distribution of offices, G for the levying of taxes. He was accustomed to saying that a Sovereign must conduct himself with as much caution as if he were walking on ice; that nothing is more difficult than to reign; that dangers arise under the footsteps of the Monarch; that he has everything to fear if he gives himself over entirely to his pleasures; that he must avoid idleness, make a good choice of his Ministers and follow their advice; G when he has once made a wise resolution, he must carry it out without delay. It was during his reign that a man called Ytie invented Chinese wine, a beverage made from sweetbreads. The Emperor had no sooner tasted it he was distressed: this liquor, he said, would cause the greatest disturbance in the Empire. He banished the inventor of this beverage from his lands, and forbade, under severe penalties, its future composition. This precaution was in vain; the secret of this li-queur was preserved, and it is still the delight of Chinese tables today.* Samuel von PUFENDORF, Antoine Augustin BRUZEN de LA MARTINIÈRE, L'Histoire generale et politique de l'Univers, Où l'on voit l'Origine, les Révolutions, l'Etat présent, & les Intérêts des Souverains, Amsterdam, 1745, t. 6, p. 95 et seq.

- 21 According to modern chronology, Yao's time is roughly between 2353 and 2234 BC. On Yao, see Sarah ALLAN, Erlitou and the Formation of Chinese Civilization. Toward a New Paradigm, in: The Journal of Asian Studies 66/2 (2007), pp. 462 ; Gisela GOTTSCHALK, Chinas große Kaiser, Herrsching 1985, pp. 8-14.
- 22 Emperor Yu is traditionally regarded as the founder of the Xia dynasty (?-1600 BC) and one of those praised in The Book of Mencius for his humanity. These kings did not know what they were building. Cf. Chen XIYUAN, Shengwang dianfan yu rujia 'nei xian wai wang' de shizhi yihan - yi Mengzi dui Shun de quanjie wei jidian" [The model of wise kings and the meaning of the Confucian adage "Inwardly a sage, outwardly a king" based on Mencius' interpretation of Shun], in: Junjie HUANG (ed.), Historical Development of Mencius' Thought, Taipei 1995, pp. 23-67.
- 23 Richard WILHELM (ed. and trans.), Mong Dsi. Die Lehrgespräche des Meisters Meng K'o, Cologne 1982 (Diederichs Gelbe Reihe, 42).

noisy<sup>24</sup>. The emperors believed that sounds and music established a harmonious relationship both between the subjects themselves and between the emperor and his subjects, that they acted as an exhortation, or more precisely that they created order. The sound of the drum, to which a rolling motion was imparted, was associated in Chinese musical theory with encouragement. This roll incarnated the courage of the drummer and proclaimed the existence of a disharmony between subject and sovereign, a disharmony that ideally needed to be overcome through a discussion that would re-establish harmony. Similarly, in battle, the drum signalled the meeting of troops and their confrontation<sup>25</sup>. The bell, too, illustrated the courage of the person blowing it to force the attention of his listeners. In the eyes of Confucius, those in power had no need to use murderous, punitive violence against their subjects. To be virtuous, it had to rely on the strength of character and morals, which enabled the people to grow in conscience and achieve goodness<sup>26</sup>. The emperor therefore had to show himself attentive to the needs of the people and allow himself to be informed of the deficiencies in organisation of the state. This is what happened when the drum was used.

In his first engraving, Helman erred in attributing the institution to Yao. It was a remarkable mode of communication between the sovereign and his vassals. It invited the viewer to take an interest in Yao's successors and to question the critical purpose of these images. The engraver even went so far as to make his audience take on the role of critic by inserting two bells into scenes illustrating the misuse of power, such as those depicting Jie's misdeeds, and symbolically placing them at their disposal. The work thus demanded that we approach it using our reason and our faculty of judgement. It associated the spectator with the event, seeking to educate him by making him think.

For the "Memorable Facts of the Emperors of China", Helman chose from the 117 original woodcuts of the "Dijian tushuo"<sup>27</sup>. The work had been conceived by Zhang Juzheng (1525-1582), tutor to the future emperor Wanli (1523-1620), then ten. It was reprinted many times under the Ming and then the Qing, and served as an instruction manual for many generations of servants<sup>28</sup>. The "Dijian tushuo" followed the same principles as the mirrors of the

24 Mei-Ling SHYU, *Wechselbeziehungen zwischen Musik und Politik in China und Taiwan*, typed thesis, Hamburg 2000, p. 33, URL: <http://ediss.sub.uni-hamburg.de/volltexte/2001/454/pdf/ShyuDiss.pdf> (accessed 4 August 2018).

25 Cf. chapter "Aufzeichnung über die Musik", in: *Das Buch der Riten*, 1990, vol. 2, p. 634. See Richard WILHELM (ed. and trans.), *Li Gi. Das Buch der Riten, Sitten und Gebräuche*, Munich, 1997 (3<sup>th</sup> ed.) (Diederichs Gelbe Reihe, 31), p. 85; SHYU, *Wechselbeziehungen* (see n. 24), p. 28.

26 See the "Wenzheng" chapter in Lunyu, in: *Auslegungen der vier Kanonischen Bücher*, 1991, p. 112. See Richard WILHELM (ed. and trans.), *Kungfutse. Gespräche*. Lun Yü, Munich 1996 (7<sup>th</sup> ed.) (Diederichs Gelbe Reihe, 22), p. 42.

27 In Europe, there was little access to illustrated sources on the relationship between power and agriculture, except in the form of illustrated Chinese books and above all, images on rice paper hangings.

28 Martin GRIMM, *Kaiser Qianlong (1711-1799) als Poet*, Stuttgart 1993 (*Sinologica Coloniensia*, 15), p. 16. It was even read in Japan. Cf. Karen M. GERHART, *The Eyes of Power. Art and Early Tokugawa Authority*, Honolulu 1999, p. 39 ff.

European princes. It was a collection of *exempla* presenting mythical and historical figures of sovereigns from various dynasties, in which the exercise of power, whether or not it conformed to the political ethics of Confucius, was depicted in *gushi hua* ("narrative paintings from the ancient")<sup>29</sup>. As in Europe, history was used to instruct and guide princes, especially future monarchs (see ills. 3 and 4).

The Jesuits showed an early interest in this work, which offered an annotated history of the Chinese sovereigns. early as the eighteenth century, the Beijing Jesuits had already working on the subject. Martino Martini (1614-1661) and Philippe Couplet (1623-1693) had drawn up genealogical and chronological tables of the different reigns and commented on the civilising or political merits of the Chinese emperors. The breadth of the empirical material, the antiquity of Chinese state structures and their place in a long tradition, all combined to produce an impressive and contrasting effect. Couplet listed 86 sovereigns in two thousand four hundred and fifty-seven years history<sup>30</sup>. In his "Tabula chronologica", he had already provided Europeans with a wealth of knowledge about the emperor Fuxi, founder of the first political system and legislator, about Shennong and his civilising policy, and about exemplary monarchs such as Yao and Shun<sup>31</sup>. Like Europe, China had a long history, an "antiquity". Despite the debates that took place in France at the end of the eighteenth as part of the quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns, Antiquity remained a point of reference when it came to great sovereigns. It was much the same in China. This observation, along with the many similarities noted by the Jesuits in their conception of power, led them to draw parallels Europe and China, and to establish China's exemplary status, a widely held, albeit criticised, opinion.

The Jesuits saw the 'Dijian tushuo' as an illustrated supplement to their and Confucian studies, and emphasised their educational value. For he not only portrayed the heroes of Chinese politics, but also those who destroyed it. According to tradition, the Xia dynasty of Jie had been the

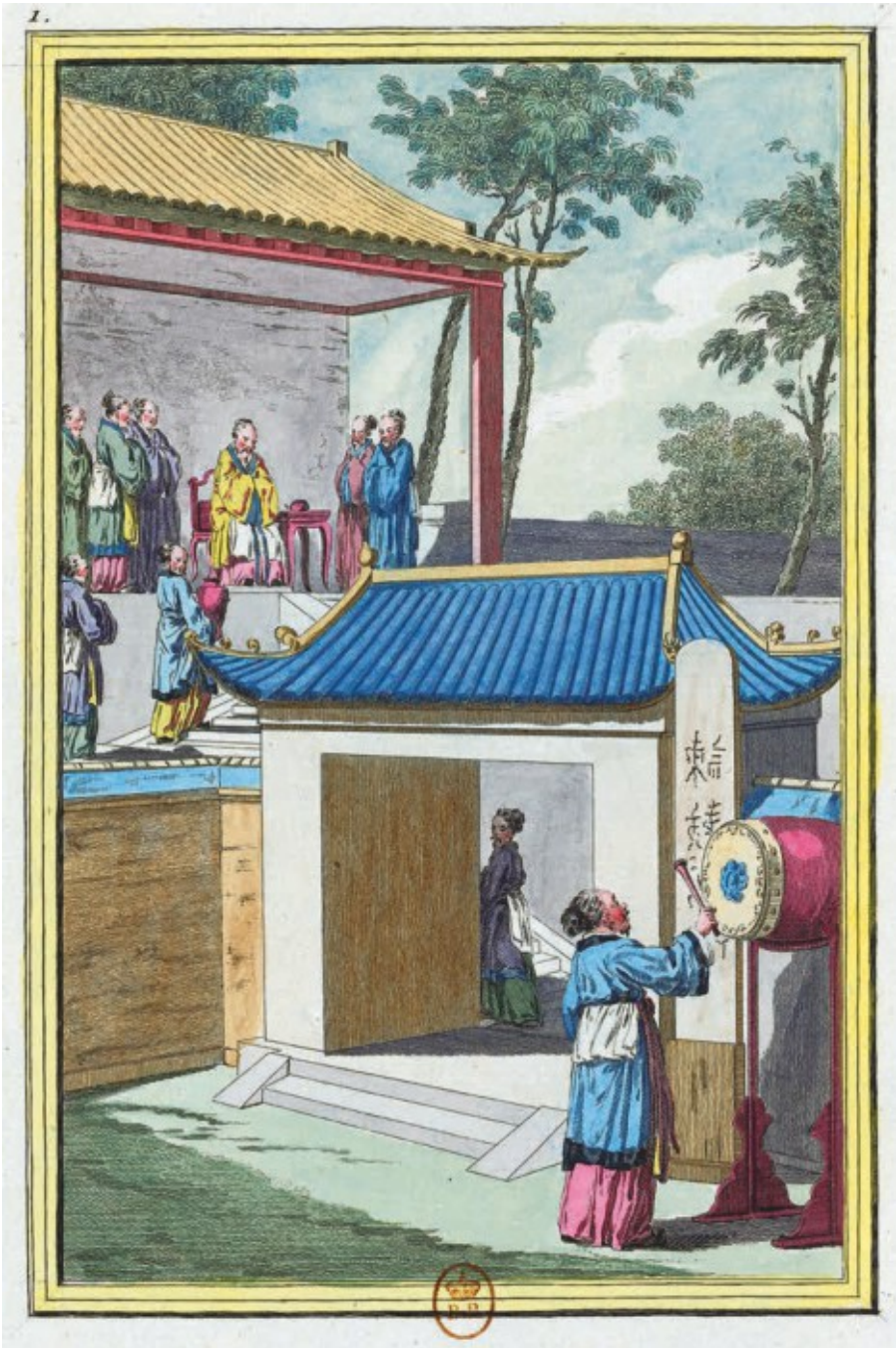
29 On the *gushi hua* tradition, see Murray, *Mirror of Morality* (see n. 2), p. 7 ff

30 Philippe COUPLÉ, *Tabula chronologica monarchiae sinicae juxta cyclos annorum LX. Ab anno post Christum primo, usque ad annum praesentis saeculi 1683*, Paris 1686; idem, *Tabula genealogica trium familiarum Imperialium Monarchiae Sinicae*, Paris 1687, p. XI ff. On the classification of the Tabula and the identification of Couplet's indications, see Henri CORDIER, *Histoire générale de la Chine*, Paris 1920, t. 1; David E. MUNGELLO, *A Study of the Prefaces to Ph. Couplet's Tabula Chronologica Monarchiae Sinicae (1686)*, in: Jérôme Heyndrickx (ed.), *Philippe Couplet S. J. (1623-1696). The Man Who Brought China to Europe*, Nettetal 1990 (*Monumenta serica*, Monograph series, 22), p. 183-199. Jandesek emphasises the confidence the Jesuits had in the authority of the written word when it came to these Chinese historical works. Cf. Reinhold JANDESEK, *Das fremde China. Berichte europäischer Reisender des späten Mittelalters*, doctoral thesis, Pfaffenweiler 1992 (*Weltbild und Kulturbegegnung*, 3), p. 327 ff.

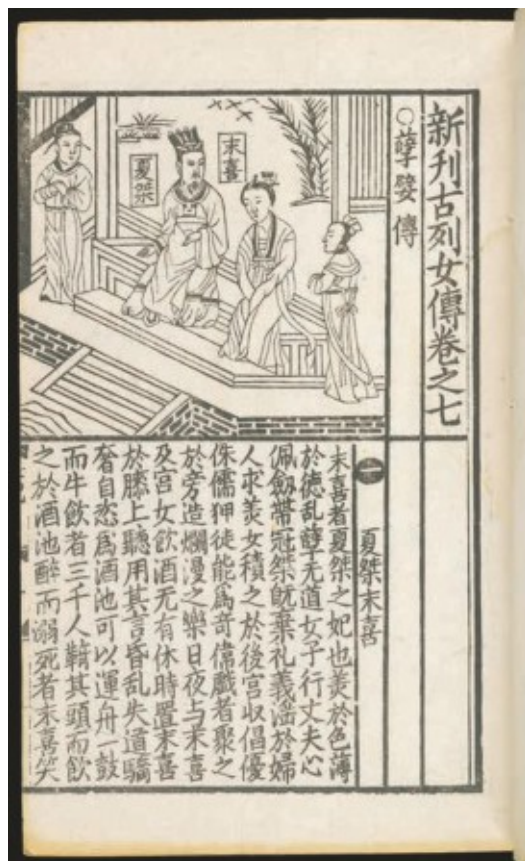
31 Martino MARTINI, *Sinicae historiae decas prima res a gentis origine ad Christum natum in extrema Asia*, Munich 1658; Edwin J. Van Kley, *Europe's "Discovery" of China*, in: *American Historical Review* 76/2 (1971), p. 363; John W. WITEK, *Chinese Chronology. A Source of Sino-European Widening Horizons in the Eighteenth Century*, in: *Actes du III<sup>e</sup> colloque international de sinologie*, Chantilly, 1980, *Appréciation par l'Europe de la tradition chinoise à partir du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris 1983, p. 227.



Ill. 1: Food wastage, "III<sup>e</sup> Estampe", in: HELMAN, *Faits mémorables* (see n. 2), unpaginated (Bibliothèque nationale de France, RES GR FOL-02N-624, 1-3).



III. 2: The emperor's audience, "1<sup>e</sup> Estampe", in: HELMAN, *Faits mémorables* (see n. 2), unpaginated (Bibliothèque nationale de France, RES GR FOL-02N-624, 1-3).



Ill. 3 and 4: Liu, Xiang (劉向: Xinkan Gu Lienu Zhuan (新刊古列女傳), in: Wenxuanlou Congshu (文選樓叢書, collection of Wenxuanlou books), ed. Ruan Heng (阮亨) 1823, t. 1, ch. 7, pp. 1-2. (8 juan. CT 3710. L58 1930v4. Special Collections, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA).



first to succeed the mythical emperors (such as Yao, for example). In accordance with the Chinese cyclical conception of history<sup>32</sup>, it had begun with a formidable founder (Yu) and its end was brought about by Jie's moral decline and despotism. The story of his appalling reign and the misdeeds of his concubine Moxi, who, out of sheer malice, amused herself by tearing silk for the sheer pleasure of the sound, spread rapidly in Europe thanks to the numerous transcriptions Chinese historical works made by the Jesuits<sup>33</sup>. Jean-Baptiste Du Halde, in his abridged "Description de la Chine"<sup>(34)</sup>, also took up a long passage from the Chinese history and found a European counterpart to the immoderate luxury of the Chinese emperor Nero<sup>35</sup>.

32 Ernst SCHWARZ, *Die Weisheit des alten China. Mythos, Religion, Philosophie, Politik*, Munich 1994, p. 125.

33 In the *Lie nü zhuan*, a collection of biographies by Liu Xiang (77-6 BC) written at the request of the emperor Cheng Tang (reign 48-32 BC), it is said about the actions of the concubine:

桀既棄禮義，淫於婦人，求美女，積之於後宮，收倡優侏儒狎徒能為奇偉戲者，聚之於旁，造爛漫之樂，日夜與未喜及宮女飲酒，無有休時。置末喜於膝上，聽用其言，昏亂失道，驕奢自恣。為酒池可以運舟，一鼓而牛飲者三千人，晷其頭而飲之於酒池，醉而溺死者，末喜笑之，以為樂。

Liu, Xiang 劉向: *Xinkan Gu Lienü Zhuan (新刊古列女傳 Reprint of the Biographies of Exemplary Women in History)*, in: *Wenxuanlou Congshu (文選樓叢書 Wenxuanlou Library)*, Ruan Heng (ed.) (阮亨), 1823, chap. 7, p. 1, URL: <http://ctext.org/lie-nv-zhuan/xia-jie-mo-xi> (accessed 14 August 2018). Translation: "Jie began to break the rites and laws honesty.

He behaved badly towards women and had young beauties brought to his harem. He invited acrobats who offered extravagant entertainment and musicians who played dissolute music. He drank day and night without interruption with Moxi and other ladies of the court. He would sit Moxi on his lap and listen to her. This life of debauchery led him, and he became arrogant and spendthrift, always believing himself to be in the right. He had a navigable pond filled with wine and, at the signal of the drum, forced three thousand people to drink like cows at the trough. The drinkers' heads were held down to force them to drink relentlessly. When some of them drowned in their drunkenness, Moxi laughed, finding it very entertaining. - On the harmful role of women in relation to the rich and the dynasties, see Albert Richard O'HARA, *The Position of Woman in Early China: According to the Lieh nü chuan "The Biographies of Chinese Women"*, Taipei 1978 (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), p. 186 ff.

34 For a long time, Du Halde's *Description de la Chine* was considered to be a great synthesis of everything that was known about China, or more accurately, a manual. It was based on correspondence, the best-known reports and a selection of studies by Martino Martini. The rest were exclusively documents from French Jesuits. He had taken their reports and shortened or reworked them stylistically. As a result, his contemporaries criticised him for presenting a French image of China. Du Halde was assisted in his task by his colleague Contancin, a missionary in China. See Walter DEMEL, *Als Fremde in China. Das Reich der Mitte im Spiegel frühneuzeitlicher europäischer Reiseberichte*, Munich 1992, p. 41; Werner LÜHMANN, *Konfuzius. Aufgeklärter Philosoph oder reaktionärer Moralapostel? Der Bruch in der Konfuzius-Rezeption der deutschen Philosophie des ausgehenden 18. und beginnenden 19. Jahrhunderts*, Wiesbaden 2003 (*Lun Wen - Studien zur Geistesgeschichte und Literatur in China*, 2), p. 75.

35 *The cruelty and infamies of this emperor [Jie] made him regarded as a monster. His name is still held in the same contempt today as that of Nero is in Europe, and no more infamous title can be given to an evil prince than to say that he is another Kié. [...] Kié had a fairly large area of land dug into the shape of a pond, G after having it filled with wine, he ordered three thousand of his subjects to immerse themselves in it. There was a secret flat in his palace, where by order of the emperor G and the empress, G in their presence, the most abominable debaucheries were indulged in. These dreadful scandals revolted the whole empire: the princes, the nobles and the people were on the point of taking up arms; they were stopped by the prince's ministers, whom one of the emperor's ministers, the empress and the emperor's wife, the emperor's wife, the empress.*

## The removal of the bad sovereign

Emperor Jie's misdeeds led to his dismissal, banishment and the end of the Xia dynasty and the dissolution of his empire<sup>36</sup>. He lost everything - as indicated in the "Memorable facts about the emperors of China": dignity, throne, family and empire.

For a European, the removal of a monarch by divine right could only be conceived and carried out on very rare occasions. Interestingly, the modern era an accumulation of destitutions in the Holy Roman Empire on the grounds of the prince's actual or alleged mental illness. Mental illness led to legal incapacity, and therefore the impossibility of reigning, which had to be established, especially when there were inter-dynastic conflicts (for example, over the introduction of primogeniture)<sup>37</sup>. As a general rule, however, God put an end to the reign of the

*of tenderness still attached to his person. They reminded him, with respect, of his disorders, G of the imminent danger to which his licentious and tyrannical conduct exposed him; but these admonitions only served to make him angrier. One of these ministers, who had spoken out, was condemned to death, G executed in his presence. The emperors anger did not slow the zeal of these wise ministers: they addressed a memorial to the prince, in which they freely reproached him for his murders, his cruelty and the horrors of his life. As soon as he had read it, he became furious and resolved to put the perpetrators to death. [...] These acts of violence, which only increased, united all levels of government against the tyrant. By common consent they chose Tching tang to take his place, and forced him to declare war on him. This virtuous prince, G disinterested, declared that he had no right to the crown, G that if he took up arms, it could only be to force the emperor to recognise himself, G to return to duty. His army was soon ready, and each of the princes provided him with troops. [...] In such universal abandonment, he resorted to feigning G to dissimulation; he confessed his crimes, G appeared to repent: only mercy he asked for was to be granted his life. Tching tang relented, G convinced that the emperor's change was sincere, and not only let him live, but also gave him back his crown. He immediately left the command of the army and returned to his small state, thereby setting an example of moderation and disinterestedness which was admired by the whole empire. No sooner had the emperor been restored to the throne than he plunged back into his old vices; he did even more, for he hastily raised an army against Tching tang, whom he called a traitor and a rebel. Tching tang immediately led his troops in defence. But when the two armies came face to face, the emperor's soldiers abandoned him, and when G joined Ching Tang's army, they threw their weapons at his feet and recognised him as their sovereign. Kié's only recourse was to flee: he banished himself on leaving the empire, G after three years exile, he ended his criminal life, which has made his name and memory abhorrent to posterity. Jean-Baptiste DU HALDE, Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique, et physique de l'empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie chinoise, enrichie des cartes générales et particulières de ces pays, de la carte générale et des cartes particuliers du Thibet, & de la Corée; & ornée d'un grand nombre de figures & de vignettes gravées en taillédouce, Paris 1736, t. 1, p. 303 et suiv.*

36 On the Xia dynasty, see Wolfgang BAUER, *China und die Hoffnung auf Glück. Paradiese, Utopien, Idealvorstellungen in der Geistesgeschichte Chinas*, Munich 1989. Current research questions the order of succession of the dynasties. It tends to think that the three dynasties competed for supremacy.

37 See the reference work by Erik H. MIDELFORT, *Verrückte Hoheit. Wahn und Kummer in deutschen Herrscherhäusern*, Stuttgart 1996, pp. 55-67. See also, with brief case studies, id. in *Geisteskranke Fürsten im 16. Jahrhundert. Von der Absetzung zur Behandlung*, in: *Jahrbuch des Instituts für Geschichte der Medizin der Robert-Bosch-Stiftung* 7 (1988), pp. 25-40;

sovereign sickened by death. Death, whether natural or the result of tyrannicide, brought the sovereign before his celestial judges, to whom he had to give an account of his actions. Usually, it was God who awarded him the just punishment for his faults. Only tyrannicide, a feature of political treatises from Antiquity to the modern era, deprived the deficient sovereign of power and life by a human act. It was not until the late <sup>eighteenth</sup> and early <sup>nineteenth</sup> centuries that impeachment emerged as appropriate means of ending a sovereign's reign. The case of Louis XVI is a rare example. His deposition took place against the backdrop of the French Revolution and the resulting upheaval in the political order.

On 26 August 1789, the National Assembly passed the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. Article 3 established that the principle of sovereignty resided in the nation<sup>38</sup>. No body or individual could rule without the consent of the nation. The Constituent Assembly, relying on the separation of powers advocated by Montesquieu, gave the king executive power and a supreme right of veto in legislative matters. The king was required to submit to the Constitution. Louis, King of France and Navarre by the grace of God, became King of the French by the grace of God and by virtue of the Constitution of the State. Thereafter, he was no longer deemed to reign by the grace of God and by virtue of historical law, but by delegation of the National Assembly, in the service of the nation and as the first agent of the State. The Constitution did, however, establish the sanctity and inviolability of his person and body, so that he could not be deposed by any other State body. But this "democratic" monarchy not exist. Eleven months after Louis XVI had sworn to obey the Constitution, he was first suspended by the Constituent Assembly as a mere employee, and then removed from office, in other words deposed. In the conception of the law at the time, dismissal was tantamount to political death, and it was therefore necessary to think about the succession. Around six weeks later, on 21 September 1792, the National Convention proclaimed the abolition of the monarchy and the establishment of the Republic.

Impeachment was not a voluntary act on the part of the sovereign. by force (physical or psychological violence). If the coercion was such that the action was taken against the monarch's will or without his consent, there was impeachment. In criminal law terms, this is known as *vis absoluta*<sup>39</sup>. Impeachment

Werner TROSSBACH, Fürstenabsetzungen im 18. Jahrhundert, in: Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung 13 (1986), pp. 425-454. On mental illness as a non-conforming way of acting, see Susan RICHTER, Abgesetzt wegen blodigkeit - Geisteskrankheit als Legitima- tionsstrategie für erzwungene Herrscherwechsel am Beispiel Markgraf Christophs I. von Baden, in: Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins 161 (2013), p. 85-111.

- 38 Volker SELLIN, The Breakdown of the Rule of Law: A Comparative View of the Depositions of George III, Louis XVI and Napoleon I. Murder and Monarchy, in: Robert von FRIEDEBURG (ed.), Murder and Monarchy. Regicide in European History 1300-1800, Basingstoke 2004, pp. 259-289; Michael WALZER, Regicide and Revolution. Speeches at the Trial of Louis XVI, London 1974 (Cambridge Studies in the History and Theory of Politics): Régicide et révolution: le procès de Louis XVI, trans. J. Debouzy, Payot 1989].
- 39 Susan RICHTER, Dirk DIRBACH, Introduction, in: id. (ed.), Thronverzicht. Die Abdankung in Monarchien vom Mittelalter bis in die Neuzeit, Cologne, Weimar, Vienna 2010, p. 14.

required a procedure<sup>40</sup> for which there were no structures or ceremonies in European political theory under the Ancien Régime.

But why did a violent revocation suddenly become an option at the end of the eighteenth century? In Europe, the Enlightenment had radically rethought the legitimacy of monarchical power. This renewal of political knowledge and traditions subjected monarchy to the critical scrutiny of reason. The invocation of tradition gave way to the argument of utility. Eminent figures of the European Enlightenment had ample opportunity to express their thoughts to the sovereigns and to take an interest in reforming the monarchy. They had suggested that the monarchy should constantly ensure its own legitimacy and develop strategies for adapting to social change. Helman's work was part of these debates on the need for reform<sup>41</sup> and, in 1788, could serve as a warning. However, the European sovereigns did not perceive the danger threatening them. Louis XVI was one of the first to be forced by the Revolution to adapt, or more precisely to submit. By changing the concept of monarchical power, the evolution of the *general will* had stripped it of its legitimacy. It was no longer time to adapt the monarchy. For the revolutionaries, particularly the Jacobins, the traditional monarchy had turned into a despotism. And despotism could, or rather should, be done away with.

In China, on the other hand, the conditions which the celestial mandate is exercised, and therefore the legality of this mandate, are governed by the law. Legitimacy were traditionally based on moral quality<sup>42</sup>. To believe oneself the irrevocable holder of a celestial mandate was, for a sovereign, to demonstrate an unwelcome presumption, since the people, as an organ of heaven, could theoretically depose him after having duly called to order if he forgot his duties<sup>43</sup>.

The Confucian scholar Mencius drew up rules governing relations between the sovereign and his subjects with a view to good governance: the sovereign had to be humane (*ren*) and just (*yi*). If these precepts were not respected, Mencius considered it legitimate to revolt against unjust power and even went so far as to authorise regicide. This right to kill, however, was granted only to the semi-noble relatives of the reigning sovereign. For Mencius, the legitimacy of revolt stemmed from the principle that placed the people (*min*) at the origin of the state. The people could therefore perform an act of resistance by deposing an unjust ruler<sup>44</sup>.

The sovereign must be aware of the danger of revolt: *the prince must be like a ship; the people, the waves that carry the ship: the prince is the ship, his subjects are the water. The prince is the ship, his subjects are the water. Water is what carries the ship, but it can also capsize it.*

40 Hans HATTENHAUER, Die Abdankung von Monarchen vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart. Eine begriffsgeschichtliche Einleitung, in: *ibid*, pp. 22-29.

41 Philippe MINARD, La "réforme" en France et en Angleterre au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, in: *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 56/4 (2009), p. 5-13; Isabelle MOREAU, *Les Lumières en mouvement. La circulation des idées au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Lyon 2009.

42 On the cosmic and political background of the "heavenly mandate", see David W. PANKENIER, The Cosmo-Political Background of Heaven's Mandate, in: *Early China* 20 (1995), pp. 121-176.

43 Herlee G. CREEL, *Confucius. The Man and the Myth*, New York 1949, p. 268.

44 "Dominance over the world [China] is lost through unjust behaviour." Cf. Alfred FORKE, *Die Gedankenwelt des chinesischen Kulturkreises*, Munich, Berlin 1927, p. 185.

*must he think of the danger*<sup>45</sup>. The metaphor of water and the ship characterising the relationship between the subjects and the emperor also played a major role in Tang Taizong's "Dijian" (Emperor's Mirror<sup>46</sup>), which was part a collection, the "Liu jian zhi yao" (Collection of the Six Mirrors), and appeared in partial French translation in Du Halde's "Description de la Chine". This metaphor enabled the reader to understand why, in China, the emperor had to show respect to each of his subjects: water had the power to capsize a ship.

Inspired by Mencius, the Jesuits saw the celestial mandate as a transmission of power based on natural law. Through their writings, they made known in Europe the right to resistance formulated by Confucius. However, they on solutions that favoured teaching rather than removing the sovereign. The "Dijian tushuo" and its European variant, the "Memorable facts of the emperors of China, drawn from the Chinese annals", presented removal as a sanction against abuses of power, but without illustrating them visually. Instead, the mirror of the princes showed the abuse that led to the sanction. The Jesuits' ou- vrages, but also the mirror in here, spread in Europe an image of Chinese governance in which those in power, much more than in Europe, were accountable to their subjects and could not hope to enjoy impunity in the event of abuse<sup>47</sup>. Even though impeachment remained Chinese's last resort and had only been used in very remote times, Zhang Juzheng, tutor to the future emperor Wanli, considered it still relevant when he wrote the "Dijian tushuo". And under the Ming, the subjects also theoretically had the possibility of deposing their sovereign and the legitimacy to do so.

But reaching that point, it was up to the loyal subject to call the monarch back to his senses.

order, which sometimes cost him his life. But it was still his duty to bang the drum to make himself heard.

## Conclusion

With "Memorable facts about the emperors of China", Helman had transposed a Chinese illustrated work for educational purposes by adapting it to the European technique of copper engraving. And he did so with the same intention: to educate through images. In this respect, the visual element had a high value in the estetic discourse of the time.

In his "Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture", Jean-Baptiste Du Bos assumed that images were easier to access but did not pose the same complexity as writing. In his view - and in this he followed John Locke - the use of visual art to convey content was limited and superficial, but more effective than text<sup>48</sup>. The image could easily show relationships

45 Tchia-yü I, 12r. Quoted in FORKE, Die Gedankenwelt (see n. 44), p. 184.

46 This is an established term in the field of sinology.

47 Montesquieu admired this. See Rudolf WEINMANN, Denken und Gesellschaft Chinas im philosophischen und politischen Diskurs der französischen Aufklärung, Hamburg 2002 (Studien zur Geschichtsforschung der Neuzeit, 25), p. 220 ff.

48 Ibid, pp. 414-416. John LOCKE, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, ed. by Peter H. NIDDITCH, Oxford 1975, p. 519. See KERNBAUER, Platz des Publikums (see n. 11), p. 103 ff.

between objects where writing required laborious verbal elaboration. It gave a quicker idea of the whole. What was essential, however, was that the object depicted should produce enough effect on the viewer to make them react and convince them.

The importance of visualisation was also in line with the widespread idea at the time that the eye, or more precisely vision, in reference to the eye of God, was the most significant symbol of the intelligence and political knowledge of the earthly kingdom<sup>49</sup>. In this context, the sovereign's gaze had to be focused on objects of the highest order. With "Memorable Facts about the Emperors of China", Helman was symbolically equipping the princely eye of his recipient and the entire royal family a long view to the distant Chinese space, with its good and bad rulers. He surely hoped that this work would earn him protection and future commissions. In so doing, he elevated the public figures mentioned to the rank of aesthetic judges<sup>50</sup>. But they were nonetheless the recipients of the warning message delivered by the collection.

This message was both appeal to ethics and a warning against the possible loss of sovereignty. Helman's work symbolically represented the drum informing the princely spectator of dysfunctions. Those of a culture far removed in space and time. But the themes dealt with, the excessive profligacy of the court, for example, were easily transposable; criticism of luxury fuelled the most contemporary debates throughout Europe. In France, however, criticism was confined to the intention of supporting the monarchy and urging it to reform itself and give itself new legitimacy. The danger to the sovereign (impeachment, for example) virtually ignored.

In China, it was up to the loyal subject to call sovereign to order. And it was not uncommon for the advisor or the disgruntled person to pay for this audacity with their lives. But it was still their duty to bang the drum to make themselves heard. In this context, the "Dijian tushuo" could be seen as a drummer, in the same way as its Europeanised counterpart, the "Memorable Facts of the Emperors of China", as well as the hundreds of other European mirrors that had preceded it. But to no avail. In 1604, Li Weizhen deplored the fact that the Wanli emperor did not hesitate to follow the critical examples represented in the "Dijian tushuo"<sup>51</sup>. Helman's work was no more successful and, ironically, in 1793 the engraver had to depict the execution of the deposed monarch Louis Capet<sup>52</sup>.

49 FRÜHSORGE, *Privatklugheit* (see no. 8), pp. 6, pp. 68 ff.

50 On the role of the public, see Bernadette FORT, *Théorie du public et critique d'art, Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 265 (1989), pp. 1485-1488; KERNBAUER, *Platz des Publikums* (see n. 11), pp. 89 ff.

51 Murray, *Mirror of Morality* (see n. 2), p. 4.

52 Isidore Stanislas Henri HELMAN, "Journée du 21 janvier 1793, la mort de Louis Capet sur la place de la Révolution: présentée à la Convention nationale le 30 germinal". Cf. Antoine de BAECQUE, *Glory and Terror: Seven Deaths Under the French Revolution*, London 2001, p. 100 [orig. fr.: *La gloire et l'effroi: sept morts sous la Terreur*, Paris 1997].