

2005年11月25日、日本学士院と東京大学史料編纂所との共催による「国際学士院連合関連事業 日本関係海外史料研究 国際研究集会Ⅱ ティツィングとシーボルトーオランダ語史料から探る人物史研究ー」が開催された。その記録として、前号に引き続き、同研究集会で講演したフランク・レクイン博士（ティツィング研究所長）の論文を今紀要に収録することができた。同集会は、レクイン博士の他、ベギー・ブランドン（シーボルトハウス）館長による「Siebold Huis, Japanese cultural heritage in a Dutch historical setting（シーボルトハウス、オランダ史跡を彩る日本文化遺産）」という講演があり、それぞれに、鳥井裕美子大分大学教授「ティツィング研究の可能性」、沓沢宣賢東海大学教授「近年のシーボルト研究の動向について」と題するコメントが行われた。開催にあたっては、久保正彰先生および尾藤正英先生をはじめとする日本学士院の諸先生方、事務局の皆様、および科学研究費基盤（A）「日本前近代史料の国際的利用環境構築の研究」（研究代表者：石上英一）、同「17-18世紀アジア諸地域の港町における異文化交流の諸相の比較研究」（研究代表者：羽田正 東洋文化研究所教授）の御協力をいただいた。記して感謝の気持ちを表したい。（横山伊徳記）

Isaac Titsingh's Private Correspondence (1783-1812) as the reflection of an enlightened 'voyageur philosophique'.

Frank Lequin

I am pleased and honoured to have been invited by the Japan Academy in collaboration with the Shiryô Hensan-jo of Tôkyo Daigaku to enlighten you today at such an illustrious institution on the theme *Isaac Titsingh's Private Correspondence (1783-1812) as the reflection of a truly enlightened 'voyageur philosophique'*, on the pretext of a quotation by Friedrich Nietzsche:

'Es gibt noch eine andere Welt zu entdecken - und mehr als eine! Auf die Schiffe, ihr Philosophen!' (Nietzsche)

'Still another world there is to be discovered - and more than one! Aboard ships, you Philosophers!'

I am grateful for the personal invitations of my oldest Japanese friend Professor Nakagawa Hisayasu Professor Emeritus of Kyoto University, eminent *Diderotiste*, and of the President of the Japan Academy Professor Saburo Nagakura.

On behalf of Titsingh himself, I allow myself to be proud of the fact that a team of five colleagues at the Shiryô Hensan-jo directed by Professor Yokoyama Yoshinori have devoted their precious time during several years in translating into Japanese one third of the 300 letters from Titsingh's Private

Correspondence in chronological order and accompanied by an excellent commentary. This much appreciated work by Kimura Naoki, Matsui Yoko, Matsukata Fuyuko, Nishizawa Mihoko, Torii Yumiko, and Yokoyama Yoshinori was published in January 2005 with Yoshikawa-Kobunkan of Tokyo. This labour of affection for Titsingh has convinced me that *in Japan* the intrinsic importance of Titsingh is being intellectually appreciated and emotionally felt.

The year 2005 is a special year for me as a person and as a researcher in music and in history. This year I play the piano for 50 years, 35 years ago in March 1970 I visited Japan for the first time while travelling around the world as a classical pianist, giving recitals in the theatre of one of the last unplasticized passenger liners, the Holland America Liner s.s. Rotterdam. Without music and the piano no Titsingh in my life. Forty years ago, in 1965, the Japan Academy invited my dear Dutch *sensei* Professor Marie Antoinette Petronella Meilink-Roelofs (1905-1988), at the invitation of professor Iwao Seiichi; a foreign woman travelling in Japan in those days was unusual. It is 30 years ago when my life started to be accompanied by Isaac Titsingh, inspired by the brilliant writings on Titsingh by my much loved English *sensei* one-man historical army Professor Charles Ralph Boxer (1904-2000).

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Isaac Titsingh was born at Amsterdam on the 10th of January 1745, son of Albertus, well-known Amsterdam surgeon and accoucheur of the Stadhouders-family; he died in Paris 2 February 1812 and was buried at Père-Lachaise, where I look after the well-being of his tomb. Titsingh received from his father an 'enlightened education' ('een milde opvoeding'). In 1764 he entered the Amsterdam *Chirurgijngilde* and became Doctor of Law at Leiden University in January 1765. For the best part of the rest of his life Titsingh (1765-1796) served as an employee to the VOC: administrative functions in Batavia 1766-1779; Director of the Japan-trade (*Opperhoofd*) Dejima 1779-1784, twice Ambassador at the *Shōgun's* court Edo [Tokyo] 1780, 1782; Director of the Bengal-trade 1785-1792; from 1792 to 1794 he was a Batavia *Ordinaris Raad van Indië*; 1794-1795 Ambassador Court of Peking 1794-1795. He lived in London 1796-1801, and in Paris 1802-1812. Titsingh was a member of various learned societies: the Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen, the Hollandsche Maatschappij der Wetenschappen (Haarlem), the Asiatic Society of Bengal (Calcutta), and the Royal Society of London.

Titsingh was the only *philosophe* who served the VOC (1602-1795), Europe's greatest employer in the 18th century with a yearly average of 20.000 employees in Asia, and the most learned of all the VOC-servants in Japan 1600-1853. Titsingh justifies his name as a philosopher on account of his private correspondence, which as an early type of Internet covered three-quarters of the globe. Here Titsingh expresses himself on his human and religious emotions, his encounter with the outside world. As a Company-man, merchant and diplomat, Titsingh made a brilliant career, but he was unconventional in his antipathy of pompousness and his scholarly conscience. In comparison to his

〈 2 〉 Isaac Titsingh's Private Correspondence (1783-1812) as the reflection of an enlightened 'voyageur philosophique'. (Lequin)

other high level colleagues, he was a polyglot: Latin, French, English, German, Portuguese, Japanese, and Chinese. In the margins of the official stage, he preferred the role of a ‘forgotten citizen of the world’, devoting himself to his scholarly vocation: his passion for Japan, incredibly remote even more in his days, his urge to introduce Japanese civilization in all its aspects to the European public. Contemporary to the 18th-century European Enlightenment, the Tenmei period 1779-1784 in Japan can be qualified as a period of relative Enlightenment during its isolation from the western world 1641-1853. Titsingh became the exemplary interpreter and intermediary in a two-way traffic pioneering exchange of learning and culture between Europe and Japan. Titsingh’s official position, his uncommon learning and open mind to non-European civilizations and religions impressed high placed learned Japanese *Rangakusha* like Kutsuki Masatsuna (*Daimyō* of Fukuchiyama; 1750-1802), Shimazu Shigehide (father-in-law of the later *Shōgun* Ienari; 1745-1833), and Gotō Sōzaemon (1725-1780), member of the Nagasaki government. He was allowed to pursue private correspondence with Japanese *savants*. Titsingh’s medical education gave his relationships with court physicians from Edo and Kyoto a special dimension.

He was able with the help of his Japanese relations to collect authentic source materials on Japan during and after his residence in Japan. This became the earliest European collection on a scholarly basis on Japan: printed books, manuscripts, prints, maps, cityplans, coins. Titsingh had a special interest in cultural-anthropological things, he preferred two-dimensional materials to three-dimensional things. His collection was principally meant to form the reliable foundation for his innovative Natural, Civil, and Political History of Japan: complete translations of Japanese sources, short introductions and annotations by Titsingh, Japanese illustrations. Contrary to well-established opinion, Titsingh is the Founder of European Japanology. In his turn Titsingh organized through unofficial channels import in Japan of books in Dutch containing European knowledge on various branches.

The exchange of learning in Titsingh’s days in Japan did not always take place on the highest intellectual level: Titsingh’s successor Johan Frederik Baron Van Rheedee tot de Parkeler (1757-1802), who had a positive feeling for Japan, offers in a long letter to Titsingh (Dejima 30/11/1787) a concise character description of flesh and blood of every Dejima *Tsuji*, a nice example of language instruction in the case of:

‘Katsemon, [Namura Shinpachi (Katsuemon)] a totally incompetent creature, no good for anything except for cursing now and again as *Rapporteur* the thievish and villainous coelis, saying with an exceptional grace *J:C: donder Blixem / Jesus Christ Bloody Hell!.*’

[PC74/41].

Katsemon, totaal onbekwaam schepsel, nergens anders goed toe dan om als hy Rapporteur is eens helder teegen de schelm- en diefagtige coelis te vloeken, want hy kan met een bysondere gratie *J:C: donder Blixem* zeggen.

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Although I am working on Titsingh since March 1975, the actual Titsingh Project of the one-man historical research institute 'Titsingh Instituut Leiden' dates from the 1st of October 1997 and ends formally on the 1st of October 2012. As an independant freelancer taking his own financial and other risks, the project is realized with financial support from and in cooperation with the Stichting Isaac Alfred Ailion Foundation (related to Leiden University). In these fifteen years six volumes of *Titsingh Studies* are planned to be published, or are already published, all by my excellent publisher Canaletto in Alphen aan den Rijn, nearby Leiden.

In April 2002 Titsingh's very first full-scale biography saw the light of day *Isaac Titsingh (1745-1812): een passie voor Japan / leven en werk van de grondlegger van de Europese Japanologie* [ISBN 90 6469 77 1 X].

In March 2004 appeared my catalogue raisonné of Titsingh's collection: *A la recherche du Cabinet Titsingh / its history, contents, and dispersal / catalogue raisonné of the collection of the Founder of European Japanology* [ISBN 90 6469 794 9].

In June 2005 *Isaac Titsingh in China 1794-1796 / het onuitgegeven Journaal van zijn Ambassade naar Peking*, [ISBN 90 6469 809 0].

As an extra volume *Titsingh Studies*, in October 2005 a second revised edition of my PhD-thesis on the VOC-personnel in Asia in the 18th-century was published: *Het personeel van de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie in Azië in de achttiende eeuw / meer in het bijzonder in de vestiging Bengalen*, [ISBN 90 6469 804 X], where Titsingh plays already an important role. My commentary on Titsingh's Private Correspondence is supposed to reach my publisher in the Fall of 2007. In the period 2007-2012 I will prepare two more volumes: one volume concerning Titsingh's official reports and correspondence with Japanese and Dutch authorities, and another volume *Opuscula Selecta Titsinghiana / Addenda & Corrigenda*, containing miscellaneous texts.

In December 2004 I started on a laborious and fascinating job, the commentary to Titsingh's Private Correspondence, 300 letters 1783-1812, which will be volume 4.2 of my *Titsingh-Studies*, a separate volume to volume 4.1 containing the letters in chronological order; a new edition of the letters was unavoidable, my edition in two volumes of 1990 and 1992 is sold out, the publisher does not exist anymore. A new numbering of the letters was necessary, but a concordance old/new letter number *vice versa* helps out.

Renewed study of the letters (almost every one of them retraced and copied by myself), familiar since a long time, still offers new perspectives, like reading a familiar score of a great composition of music. Titsingh's Private Correspondence is a unique source, I do not know of such a versatile private correspondence of any other VOC-servant from the 17th or 18th century: the logistics of exchange of learning, scholarship, Japanese High Society and Top Intellectuals, and (last but not least) sex, are dealt with in abundance, information which radiates by its absence in most official VOC-sources. Close-reading the complete text of the letters once again, I decided from the start to analyze

them systematically according to certain themes and catchwords, illustrative and characterizing for Titsingh as a human being of flesh and blood, I recite them here:

money [geld] / God, religion [godsdienst] / greatness [grootheid] / commerce [handel, koopmanschap] / man [mens] / travel [reis(z)en] / sex / tolerance / enlightenment [verli(ch)gt, verli(ch)gting] / freedom [vr(y)ijheid] / woman, marry [vrouw, trouwen] / disgust [walging] / adversity [warsheid] / curiosity [weetlust] / soul [ziel].

This story is the result of this analysis. With gratefulness and all kinds of pleasure on my part, I invite Titsingh to express himself here in detail.

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Some general remarks:

Visitateur-Generaal Sebastiaan Cornelis Nederburgh (1762-1811) who kept silent in his confidential detailed report to Stadhouder Willem V dated 1 July 1795 about the worst of the evils of Batavia VOC-administration, characterized Titsingh (not particularly a soul mate) as ‘thoroughly honest’ in the best character sketch of Titsingh made by a contemporary VOC-servant:

‘Mr Titsingh is a man of great intelligence, utterly capable of performing the Embassy in China, but I very much doubt whether he could accustom himself to the slavish work of the post of Governor- or Director-General, jobs he would never aspire to, as he declared to me more than once. He was firmly resolved to return to *patria*, how far present circumstances will change this, I don’t know. He is a thoroughly honest man, charming, having a *savoir-faire* which is very rare in these regions.’

De Heer Titsingh is een man die veel verstand heeft, volmaakt geschikt tot de Ambassade in China welke hij thans bekleed, dog ik twijffel zeer of hy zig zoude kunnen gewennen aan den slaafschen arbeid van het Gouverneur- en Directeurschap Generaal, welke bedieningen hij my trouwens meer dan eens verklaard heeft nimmer te zullen ambieeren. Hij is vastelijk van voorneemen geweest om te repatrieeren, dog in hoeverre de tegenswoordige omstandigheeden daarin verandering zullen hebben te weeg gebragt, weet ik niet. Hij is overigens een door eerlyk man, van beminlyke hoedanigheden, en eene wellevendheid die men in deeze oorden schaars aantreft.

The *Cabinet Titsingh* (Titsingh’s Japan-collection) consisted almost entirely of scholarly materials in two dimensions to be used for his innovative *Beschryving van Japan* [Description of Japan]. The collection’s items are described in the Private Correspondence as ‘Liefhebberij’, ‘seldzaamheden’, ‘rariteiten’. But: Titsingh was no collector of curio’s, he did not want objects as presents from his Japanese friends, but answers to his scholarly questions.

Most people discussing the period 1600-1850 talk *Dutch-Japanese* relations, but they are in fact, no more no less, *European-Japanese* relations. *Rangaku* / *Oranda gaku* / Dutch studies imply the study

of Dutch-language books, imported into Japan via VOC-channels or via private relations. These books transmitted European knowledge on diverse fields translated into Dutch. By the way, the VOC-personnel surely did not come from Holland alone, it came from all corners of Europe.

Titsingh's vision on the Japanese language:

The Netherlands hardly ever had a structural foreign policy as intermediary in cultural and scientific matters. Crucial here is Titsingh's advice to the VOC-administration in Batavia to send learned personnel to Japan and on learning Japanese, adequately worded in their resolution of 28 August 1785, 185 years after the earliest contact between Japan and a Dutch trading company: 'it was not a question of opportunity for the VOC-servants, but more a lack of appetite to learn Japanese; among the Japanese are distinguished men who are eagerly learning Dutch and earnestly wish to be instructed in various sciences; it would be most profitable for the VOC to wish that *Opperhoofden* of the Japan trade should be chosen from among men who as well as possessing commercial ability should also have some knowledge of the arts and sciences, while the Japanese appreciate people with these qualities only; however, regarding the latter remark, how gladly one admits the salutariness of this proposal, its fulfillment is more to be desired than to be expected, since it is the general rule in these parts to *sacrifice to Mercury, but never to Pallas.*'

dat het aan de kant van de bediendens niet aan gelegenheid, maar veeleer aan lust ontbreekt tot't aanleeren der Japansche taal en dat onder de Japanders aanzienlyke lieden gevonden worden, die zig, niet alleen met allen yver op de Nederduitsche taal toeleggen, maar ook seer begeerig syn om in verscheiden weetenschappen meer en meer onderrigt te worden, mitsgaders dat het ten meeste nutte van de Maatschappy te wenschen was, dat steeds tot Opperhoofden van den *handel* op dit ryk konden gezonden worden lieden, die, nevens kundigheid in den *handel*, ook eenige kennis van konsten en weetenschappen bezaten, wyl de Japanders alleen de sodanige hoog agten daar indertyd heilzame gevolgen voor de Compagnie zouden kunnen resulteren; onder aanmerking egter nopens deese laatste bedenking, dat, hoe gaarne men't heilzaame derzelve ook avoueed, het egter eerder te wenschen, dan te verwagten is dat aan dit voorgestelde zal kunnen worden voldaan worden, wyl in het generaal bevonden word, dat in deese gewesten doorgaans wel *aan Mercurius, dog geenszins aan Pallas werd geofferd.*

In the same context:

PC101/263; Chinsura 4/4/1789, to Van Rheede.

'provided one ever wishes to do something successfully for the Company, one has to speak Japanese in order to avoid the interference of a third party, only in that case something solid can be realized; usually one has too unfavourable an opinion on the positive attitude of the Japanese towards us, I always think with gratitude of the continuous polite treatment from the top people, *the people around*

< 6 > Isaac Titsingh's Private Correspondence (1783-1812) as the reflection of an enlightened 'voyageur philosophique'. (Lequin)

us in Dejima is the rabble, and is excluded when I speak of that Nation.'

zo men immer iets met succes voor de Comp: wil onderstaan, moet men de taal magtig zyn om de tussenkomst van een derde te kunnen missen en dan zal men zig tot iets groots in staat bevinden, men heeft in het algemeen een te ongunstig denkbeeld van de geneigtheid der Japanders omtrend ons, de beleeftheeden aanhoudend van de aansienlijkste genooten zullen my steeds met hoogagting aan hen doen denken, *het volk dat ons omringt is het uytshot* en word, als ik van die Natie spreek, daarvan uytgesondert.

Titsingh's vision on his scholarly and human mission:

PC288/204; Amsterdam 3/2/1809, to Marsden.

'To form a proper idea of the spirit, the character, and the customs of a Nation, almost unknown in Europe, I deemed it preferable *to represent them in their own dress*, rather than to enter myself into particular details, always *infected by the manner of considering the facts*, notwithstanding the utmost endeavours to be guided by truth in the most essential parts; to obtain this end, I applied during my stay in Japan to some friends, reputed as men of learning, and *free from all national prejudices*; they procured me such works on various topicks, as enjoy'd with them the highest regard; having succeeded in this, a litteral translation appeared to me more congenial with the purpose, and likely to be more satisfactory to the desire for more distinct notions on a people almost unknown, though fully deserving the attention, since a number of years so profusely lavish'd on the Chinese.'

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Titsingh's Private Correspondence is engrained with the spirit and the tonality of his three motto's:

- *I despise money, as it is unable to satisfy my curiosity.*

- *ik veragt het geld, wyl het myn weetlust niet kan voldoen.* [PC26/227]

- *our life is too short to waste it with trivial things.*

- *ons leeve is te kort, om den teid met beuselingen te verspillen.* [PC25/226]

- *my only desire is to end my days in quietness as a forgotten citizen of the world.*

- *myn eenige sugt is, myne dagen als een vergeete wereldburger in rust te slyten.* [PC263/187]

Here are the catchwords and themes I analyzed from Titsingh's Private Correspondence.

money, commerce / geld, handel

PC24/225; Chinsura 8/3/1786, to the Tolken.

‘Please, do not save any *money*, Messieurs Romberg, Van Rheede, Chassé or Ulps will pay with thanks everything for me, it will not be too expensive, even when fifty painters have to be hired, *I despise money*, as it is unable to satisfy my curiosity.’

Gelieft geen *geld* te ontsien, de Heeren Romberg, Van Rheede, Chassé of Ulps zullen alles voor my in dank betaalen het zal my niet te duur zyn, al worden daartoe vijftig schilders in dienst genoomen, ik *veragt het geld*, maar hou veel van seldzaamheeden.

PC83/251; Chinsura 28/3/1788, to Kluppel.

‘This proves completely the idea I always had, *the more money I have, the more indifferent I get to it*, only what triggers my curiosity can please me, as we are the only nation to be allowed to trade with Japan, there is no other country which kindles my *curiosity*.’

De uytkomst bewaarheid ten volle aan het denkbeeld’t geen ik my steeds heb gevormd, *hoe meerder geld ik heb, hoe onverschilliger ik er voor ben*, wat de zinnen scherpt kan my alleen behaagen daar het buyten alle natiën ons als alleen vergund is Japan te bezoeken, is er ook geen land dat meer myn *weetlust* kan opwekken.

PC95/260; Chinsura 26/2/1789, to Ulps.

‘I never made *money* into my *God* and never valued it higher in so far it could be used for my amusement.’

ik heb van het *geld* nooit mijn *God* gemaakt en het nimmer hooger geschat dan voor zoverre het tot mijn vermaak kon strekken.

PC165/101; Chinsura 2/1/1792, to Jan Titsingh.

‘You see, I am becoming a financier, *I never bothered much about money matters*, but now it is unavoidable.’

UwEdle bespeurd hieruyt dat ik een financier word, *ik heb my nimmer veel met geldsaaken bekommerd*, dog het word thans noodzakelyk.

PC26/227; Chinsura 10/3/1786, to Kutsuki Masatsuna.

‘Wouldn’t it be possible for the *Ryksraaden* [*Rôjû*] and the *Daimyô* of Satsuma, given the plain fact our nation will never create any serious trouble, to arrange permission only to an *Opperhoofd* to visit in complete freedom any place of interest he fancies, while being treated with more respect. Having experienced so much goodness in Japan, I hold your Nation in the greatest esteem; I often had good reason to complain about the behaviour of some people in Nangasacki but it would be bad manners to blame the whole nation for it, the most distinguished members among you are not to blame. Provided one could arrange for me, in case of my return to have *complete freedom*, and being properly treated, [...] the perils of the sea would not prevent me from coming to Japan in order to satisfy my *curiosity*, *no one in Nangasacki can say I ever sold anything for my own account*; I would not

come as a Merchant, but outside of any Company's service, only to visit my friends once more.'

Zou het niet mogelyk zyn de Ryksraaden [Rôjû] en den Landsheer van Satsuma voor te houden, dat onse natie nooit tot eenige beroertens in het Ryk zal aanlyding geeven, en door haar voorspraak te bewerken, dat aan een Opperhoofd alleen, volle vryheid word vergund na zyn goedvinden, alle plaatsen waar iets byzonders te zien is te moogen bezoeken, en men hem met meerder agting behandeld, ik heb zooveel goedheid in Japan genooten dat ik uwe Natie steeds de grootste agting toedraag, ik heb dikwils reede gehad my te beklagen over het gedrag van verscheide menschen tot Nangasacki maar het zou slegt zyn dat ik dit de geheele natie ten laste leide, de aansienlyke lieden onder u hebben daar geen deel aan indien men kon bewerken dat ik terugkoomende volle *vrijheid* genoot, en met behoorlyke agting wierd behandeld, zou ik, in het leeve blyvende, nadat ik hier vyf jaaren had doorgebracht niet rusten voordat de Generaal my verlot verleende weeder na Japan te gaan, de gevaaren op zee, zouden my niet afschrikken om mijn *weetlust* te voldoen, *ik heb my nooit met koopmanschappen opgehouden*, en geen mensch op Nangasacki kan seggen dat ik immer iets verkogt heb, ook zou ik niet als Koopman koomen, maar buyte eenige Companies dienst, en alleen om nogmaals myne vrienden te bezoeken.

Titsingh was desperate to see Nikko:

'during my last Hofreis, I asked while in Edo for permission to go to Nikko on my own expense, but lacking any precedent, I did not get permission.'

by myn laaste Hofreis versogt ik in Jedo op eige kosten derwaards te gaan, dog kon by gebrek aan vroegere voorbeelden geen verlot erlangen.

PC101/263; Chinsura 4/4/1789, to Van Rheede.

Man, God, religion

Titsingh was a Deist, a freethinker, who recognizes an inexplicable and abstract First Being as the underlying principle of *Man* and the World. Several intellectual explosions took off after his arrival in August 1779 in Japan. The first one is dated 14 December 1779, when he signs and dates his seminal *Discours Philosophique*, a 28-pp. treatise on 'Man and what happens to the human soul after death' in the guise of a letter to Gotô Sôzaemon as a reply to an untraced letter in Dutch by Gotô. Titsingh's religious and undogmatic views on elementary characteristics of *Man* in relation to himself, to the planet Earth (its place in the cosmos), and to the First Being are concise and holistic.

Titsingh starts business right away by stating categorically: in treating this matter as lucidly as possible, he will consciously refrain from:

'imposing in this text statements which are in conflict with received sentiments of this Nation, believing the possibility of happiness for every people by respecting the First Being, through obeying

the laws of his country, through observing one's duties to his fellow beings, without regard to religion.'

Next to the Aristotelian principle of the Prime Unmoved Mover, Titsingh introduces also Descartes' 'Cogito ergo sum'. Socrates, Pythagoras, Plato and Zeno appear on stage. Titsingh contemplates the question 'where can we situate *Man's Soul*?' and casts a view upon the Copernican cosmos, a vision far from generally accepted in Japan. A remarkable proof of Titsingh's enlightened and Buddhist coloured vision is his respect on equal divine footing for great minds from East and West: the popular thirteenth-century *Kugyô* and poet Teika Kyô, the fifteenth Japanese Emperor Ojin-Tennô, *Taiko* Toyotomi Hideyoshi, Confucius, Leibniz, Newton, Locke and Wolff. In December 1779 for the first time, the spirit of Diderot's *Encyclopédie* sneaked into Japan via Titsingh's *Discours philosophique*. Titsingh shows himself in his *Discours* more enlightened than the standard enlightened European of his days. The cliché idea: European Enlightenment as *per se* anti-religious, is not valid for Titsingh's thinking, it is much too rigid and too simple in general. In Titsingh's mind a tension lives between *Ehrfurcht* [holy fear] for the First Being (the abstract principle which people call God) and his own humanity, aimed at independent contemplation and action with the help from rational knowledge and experienced emotions. According to Titsingh, different religions offer different names to the prime origin of the rationally inexplicable.

PC152/89; Chinsura 12/3/1791, to Jan Titsingh / on the death of their father Albertus Titsingh: 'this is the course of life here below, '*l'homme propose Dieu dispose*' [Man proposes, God decides / de mens wikt, God beschikt]; Reason teaches us to accept the decisions of Heaven with equanimity, *Religion* offers us the consolation that this change of being transferred him [their father] in eternal joy, and that he received, by fulfilling his duties here, the reward prepared by the merciful *God* for all good people.'

dit is het beloof van het ondermaansche, '*l'homme propose Dieu dispose*' [de mens wikt, God beschikt]; de reede leerd ons met gelatenheid ons aan de besluuten des Heemels t'onderwerpen, *Godsdienst* geeft ons die troost, dat deeze staatsverwisseling ZEdle in eeuwige vreugde deed overgaan, en hy voor de vervulling zyner pligten by het doorwandelen van dit Mesech het loon ontving door den genadigen *God* alle braaven van harte toebereid.

PC207/131; Canton 12/5/1795, to Tintelaar / on the death of his brother Jan Titsingh: 'Of course *man* must resign to the arrangements of providence, she knows best what is beneficial for us, the course of life teaches us that our life was given only for a short enjoyment and we have to prepare in time for a better world, but it is impossible, in spite of the *influence of religion and reason*, to put aside the *human whole*. The ties which bind us to this world, break off gradually and the loss of those who were dearest to us serves as a warning to be prepared for ourselves.'

Zeeker moet den *mensch* in de schikkingen der voorsienigheid berusten, zij weet best

wat ons heilsaam is, 's werelds beloop leerd ons dat ons dit levee maar tot een kortstondig genot is gegund, en wij ons in teids tot een beeter wereld moeten voorberijden, maar het is niet doenlijk, in weerwil der *inspraak van godsdienst en reede*, het *menschelijke geheel* af te leggen. De banden die ons aan deese aarde binden worden dus allenks verbroken, en het gemis van die ons waardigst waaren dient ter waarschouwing om op ons zelven bedagt te zijn.

greatness, status / grootheid

PC141/86; Chinsura 14/1/1791, to Jan Titsingh.

'I am *averse* of slaving away day and night, and to receive in return offensive and impertinent remarks; therefore I prefer to pass my few remaining years quietly, while sacrificing all Indian *greatness* to my inner sense of enjoyment.'

ik ben *warsch* van nagt en dag te wroeten, en grievende en ongepaste remarques ten loon t'erlangen, waarom ik de weinige jaaren die my overig zyn prefereer in rust te slyten, en alle Indise *grootheid* aan myn inwendig genoeege op te offeren.

PC144/270; Chinsura 15/2/1791, to Ulps.

'I would willingly change my residence to Japan, *I sneer at all Indian greatness*, satisfying my *curiosity* for a Country which represents so many uncommon phenomena and which is hardly known in Europe, is my only enjoyment.'

gaarne wilde ik myn verblyfplaats voor Japan verwisselen, *ik spot met alle Indise grootheid*, het voldoen aan myn *weetlust* omtrend een Land dat zo veel zeldsaams inhoud, en in Europa nog zo wynig bekend is kan my alleen vergenoegen.

PC186/117; Batavia 20/7/1793, to Jan Titsingh.

'I am curious to hear what kind of figure Mr Greeve will cut in patria, according to the rumours one can not praise his behaviour at the Cape at all, it looks as if *people raised above their own sphere show themselves always in the end*; he has excellent qualities, but he is not up to high so ciety.'

Ik ben benieuwd te hooren welk figuur de Heer Greeve in het vaderland zal maaken, op zijn gedrag aan de Caap valt volgens de loopende gerugten gands niet te roemen, het scheidt dat *lieden boven haar spheer verheeven zig altoos doen kennen*; hij heeft uijtmuntende bekwaamheeden maar is voor de grote wereld niet berekend.

relativity

Titsingh is able to relativize both his passions and himself thanks to his talent for irony; an exceptional case:

PC59/240; Chinsura 30/3/1787, to Van Rheede.

‘It is true enough, here I enjoy everything a mortal being can wish for, a healthy climate, a good constitution, everything depends from my wishes, thousands of amusements which make life agreeable, an honorable post, the respect of foreign nations, a reasonable income, a sociable community, all this however can not satisfy my desire to know more about a nation, so civilized and so little valued in Europe, which allows access only to us, *this reaches even to the ridiculous*: with a kind of reverence I touch a Japanese paper or something coming from there; depressed by many distressful troubles caused by the unfavourable times in the management of affairs, I look at an item from my collection, which makes disappear all my depressing thoughts and has a more healing effect on me than a complete pharmacy on a sufferer.’

‘T is waar, ik geniet hier wat een sterveling op aarde kan verlangen, een gezond klimaat, goede constitutie, alles van myn goedvinden afhingende, duysende vermakelijcke die het leeven veraangenaamen, een honorabele post, de agting van vreemde natiën, een behoorlyke geldwinning, een gesellige sameleving, dit alles kan egter niet voldoen aan myne begeerte om meer te weeten van een volk, zo beschaaft, en zo weinig na waarde in Europa bekend, tot hetwelk alleen aan ons de toegang vrijstaad, *dit gaat zelf tot het bespottelyke*, met een soort van eerbied raak ik een Japans papier aan of iets dat vandaar komt, als ik door veele verdrietelykheden die ik door de ongunstige teiden in het bestier van zaaken ontmoet, neerslagtig ben, sie ik eenige myner versamelingen na, ’t geen op een ogenblik alle swaarmoedige bedenkingen doet verdwijnen, en heilsamer uytwerking op my heeft, dan de geheele apotheeq immer op een lyder.

sex

PC266/190; Bath 17/4/1797, to Captain De Jongh.

‘During my stay in the Indies *I never married*, I went along with the usual custom, I had a son with one of my nymphs in 1790, I brought him with me to China.’

By myn verblyf in Indië *nimmer getrouwd geweest zynde*, schikte ik my na het gemeen gebruyk, en had by een myner nimfen in 1790 een zoon, die ik met my na China bragt.

Titsingh is a caring person, he arranges a monthly income for Amaril in Bengal, the mother of his son.

In fact, Titsingh was married to his passion for Japan and to his curiosity, his thirst for knowledge. He could stand solitude well. *Malgré tout*, he wasn’t a slave of his passions. Like other intelligent enlightened 18th-century spirits (Mozart’s *Spielerei* with so-called dirty words, his fascination for anal sex), Titsingh writes his friends free and easy about sex and women, not to his most loyal correspondent brother Jan the Amsterdam wine-merchant to whom he is frank about his little son

< 12 > Isaac Titsingh’s Private Correspondence (1783-1812) as the reflection of an enlightened ‘voyageur philosophique’. (Lequin)

William from his steady relationship with his Bengali friend Amaril. Hypocritical protestant prudishness, Titsingh did not know what it was.

Titsingh was a lover of Asiatic women, especially Japanese women, he did not forget the emotional commitment for his partners. He did not forget Ukine-san at Dejima, he kept sending her and her mother money and presents, long after his departure from Japan.

A romantic writes:

PC59/240; Chinsura 30/3/1787, to Van Rheede.

'I often smoke from the pipe used by Oekinesan and which she exchanged with mine on my departure; [...] while writing this I am smoking her pipe.'

ik rook dikwils uyt de pyp die Oekinesan gebruykte en met de myne ruyde by myn vertrek, dog myn provisie van tabak is byna op, ter overvoer zal ze in een berottingde pot best te preserveeren zyn, dit schryvende rook ik uyt haar pyp.

PC62/243; Chinsura 30/3/1787, to Ulps.

'up till now, I have not seen a Bengali *meisje* which can stand comparison to Japanese women, although I have a daily opportunity to get everything beautiful, *one amuses himself nowhere better than in Japan*; [...] could I have Oekinesan here for ten thousand tael [c. 70.500 Euro / 10 million Yen], the money was paid instantly.'

tot nog toe heb ik geen Bengaals *meisje* gesien dat met de Japanse in vergelijking kwam, schoon ik dagelyks gelegenheid heb al wat fraay is te bekoomen, *men amuseerd zig hieromtrent nergens beeter als in Japan*, het heeft my in den beginne wel gestuyt, zooveele zwagers zelf onder het gemeene slag van volk te vinden, maar dit is een verbeelding, zo het door het menigvuldig gebruyk naauwer wierd, had men reede van klaagen, nu blyft er altoos plaats genoeg dikwils maar te veel over, de mot word er uyt gehouden, zy voldoen aan haar metjé, daarenteege heeft men vrolyk geselschap, meisjes schoon, bevallig, vriendelyk, welleevend, die zig met smaak kleeden, en in de manége volleerd zyn, *mogt ik Oekinesan voor tienduysend thailen hier hebben, het geld was in een ogenblik betaald*.

PC94/259; Chinsura 26/2/1789, to Chassé.

'I remember a thousand times the pleasure in the intercourse with the *Japanese girls [meisjes]*, really no country has more loveliness therein, up till now I found no one comparable to them here, one tells me in Benares and in Delhi there are girls so white and with red cheeks like in Europe, but I have no desire to make this trip and waste so much of my time only for a passion which gets *nauseating* after a few months.'

Ik herinner mij duisendmaalen het genoeg in den ommevang met de *Japanse meisjes*, waarlijk geen land heeft daarin meerder aanvalligheid, tot nog toe vond ik er geen bij

hen te vergelijken, men segt mij dat men te Benaris en tot Delhij meisjes vind zo blank en met roode wangen als in Europa, dog ik heb geen lust tot het doen dezer reis zooveel van mijn teid te spillen, en dit om het genot dat in korte maanden *walgeligk* word.

PC188/119; Batavia 12/10/1793, to Boesses.

'At my arrival in Batavia I was so stupid to buy a country seat and settle myself, I wasted twenty thousand rijksdaalders [c. 23.000 euro / 3.2 million Yen] with it. I escaped a greater stupidity, one tried to pair me off to the widow Keijser, daughter of Governor de Bruijn, I received flowers but threw them in the pisspot, so that was clear enough. One tried to make other suggestions, one made little avances, which I did not wish to remark.'

Bij mijn komst deed ik een grote folie met een thuijn te kopen en mij vast te nestelen, waarmede ruijm twintig duysend rd^o: zijn verspild, een groter heb ik ontgaan, men sogt my van die komst aan de wed^o: Keijser, dogter van den Gouverneur de Bruijn te krygen, ik ontving bloemen, dog wierp se in de *pisspot*, dit was genoeg geseget; men heeft wel van terzeide wat geoppert, en deed veele kljne advances, die ongemerkt blijven.

Titsingh can be a romantic towards women, but he also is a realist; Titsingh on women in his *Discours Philosophique*:

'One has to obey one's authorities. That is obvious, outside the law, aimed at keeping peace in society, everyone would wish to act as he pleased, one would succumb to the wicked tendencies of his heart, not to submit himself to anybody who would hinder him, kill the other and through his evil actions disturb even more the peace of this world, which is already and since time immemorial disturbed among all peoples thanks to the superstition of the Priests and the *lust for power of women*.'

men diend zyn overheeden te gehoorsaamen. Dit spreekt vanself, buyten de wetten, geschikt om de rust in de zameleving te onderhouden, zou ider na zyn goedvinden willen handelen, hy zou de verdorve neigingen van zyn hart toegeeven, aan nimand willen onderworpen zyn, die hem in zyne voorneemens hinderlyk was, vankanthelpen en dus door zyne wanbedryven, nog meer toebrenge, om de rust dezer aarde, die door de bygeloovigheid der Priesters en *heersugt der vrouwen* van de oudste teiden af, by alle volkeren al genoeg beroerd is, nog meer te verstooren.

Heterosexual Titsingh also has an open eye for the beauty of young Japanese men. He sees no problem in the natural phenomenon of homosexuality, which was not sincerely despised in Japan in contrast with Europe, where it was considered in those days as a serious flaw in God's creation. One of Titsingh's remarks in the margin in his copy of Pierre-Claude Lejeune's *Observations critiques*

from 1780, while reading it on his way to Peking, deals with this topic. Lejeune was disgusted with this ‘passion abominable’, Titsingh was not.

tolerance

Tolerance [tolerant/tolerantie] does not literally figure in Titsingh’s Private Correspondence; the spirit of this connotation is omnipresent in his letters. The most brilliant opinion on the connotation of Tolerance comes from Jean Cocteau: ‘je n’accepte pas qu’on me tolère.’; ‘I do not accept one tolerates me.’

Titsingh, a baptised protestant Christian, did not look on Japan from the viewpoint of the standard superior (Christian) European. Many Japanese did not look at Titsingh as a monkey on a bike.

He is convinced the Japanese ‘have been already a civilized and enlightened nation at the time our modern empires were either unknown, or plunged in the utmost barbarism.’ [PC290/206], and knows very well Descartes saying: ‘Ceux (d’entre les nations) qui ont des sentiments fort contraires aux nôtres, ne sont pas pour cela barbares ni sauvages.’ / ‘The fact that nations have ideas very different to ours, does not make them barbarians for that reason.’ Titsingh has respect for all religions, generously surpassing Voltaire’s *Traité sur la tolérance* (1763). Titsingh’s library included the Koran, the Bhagavat Guita, and works by Confucius. However, Titsingh in his formal report on the VOC-personnel from 1792 states explicitly, high VOC-posts should only be held by Europeans: ‘it would be improper if ever a *black* [een zwartje] would held a leading position.’

One can not be enlightened all the time!

enlightenment / verlichting

PC175/111; Batavia 28/10/1792, to Jan Titsingh.

‘The sad story of your third child did hurt me bitterly. I am fully aware how painful it is for you, Heaven may protect you from further miseries, there are so many examples of children taken away from the loving arms of their parents, in *a century, considered to be enlightened*, what may plead so much against the inoculation?’

Although I am assured of the solidity of your motives, the well being of its children is the dearest wish of a parent and the main aim of his actions. Many considerations arise in me which do not hold me back one moment from inoculation; I have to confess to you in confidence I have a son, around two years old, I have remembered him with a ‘donatie inter vivos’ [a donation among the living], and when I do not come myself, I will send him next year under proper care, but with a wrong name to you, in order to give him the best education; he enjoys like me perfect health, but before his leaving I will have him inoculated against the children’s disease [de kindersiekte; small-pox], trusting not to intervene with Providence but aiming to react to the possibilities to alleviate the miserable consequences of this disease. Please forgive me I did not tell you earlier, an irrational shame prevented me from doing so.’

Het treurig relaas van uw derde kind heeft my zeer getroffen, ik bezef ten volle hoe

grievend het voor UwEd. was, de Heemel behoeve UwEd. verder voor dusdanige slaagen, daar zo veele bittere voorbeelden exteeren van kinderen door die kwaal de liefdearmen hunner ouders ontrukkt, wat mag dan in *een Eeuw, die men de verligte oordeeld*, zozeer tegen de inenting plyten?

Schoon ik mij verseekerd houd van de soliditeit uwer motiven, en dat een ouder het heil zijner kinderen het dierbaarst is, waartoe hij dan ook het beste beraamd, koomen egter veele bedenkelijkheeden bij mij op, die my geen ogenblik van de inenting zouden weerhouden: ik moet UwEd. bij deeze in vertrouwe kennis geeven dat ik een zoon heb, circa twee jaaren oud, ik heb hem bij een ‘donatie inter vivos’ bedagt, en kom ik zelf niet, zend ik hem in het volgende jaar onder een goed opsigt, dog verkeerde naam aan UwEd. toe, om hem de bestmogelijkste educatie te doen erlangen, hij geniet met my het geluk van volmaakt gezond te blijven, eer hij vertrekt, zal ik egter de kindersiekte doen inenten, vertrouwende daardoor niet in de weegen der voorsienigheid te treden maar aan het oogmerk te beantwoorden waartoe zij ons de middelen ter versagting der akelijke gevolgen van die kwaal heeft meedegeedeeld, verschoon mij dat ik UwEd. hier niet eer van kennis gaf, een onberedeneerde schaamte weerhield mij.

freedom / vrijheid

Titsingh’s personality displaying a relatively high degree of freedom towards himself and towards the world, is excellently formulated by the great pianist Claudio Arrau (1903-1991) when he discusses the role of self-consciousness and vanity for an Interpreter, who naturally is a permanent researcher of musical scores; Titsingh, didn’t he try to be an Interpreter of Japan for Europe, and *vice versa*? Claudio Arrau:

Vanity, vanity is the most terrible, blocking thing for an interpreter. If you are sure that what you have to say is unique, then you are not out to please or not to please, to impress or not to impress. You have your message, and that’s it. If they like it, it is all right, if they don’t..., it doesn’t make any difference, *tant pis*.

Self-consciousness is often mistakenly confused with vain arrogance, a phenomenon alien to Titsingh; ‘we are no prophets, we can not foretell what at a more distant period is to happen, but for the present, it is a fact, *nobody exists in Europe but me*, who can give such an ample and faithful detail about a nation, quite unknown there, though fully deserving to be so in every respect.’

PC289/205; Parijs 10/10/1809, to Marsden.

Titsingh feels free to express himself in writing and orally what he thinks fit.

‘I was never able to accustom myself to a flattering or creeping style, *I write like I think*, when it is not liked, I will not give any reason for offence, one seems to look upon me from a height. I

do not feel attached to my birth or a feeling of superiority, performing my duties is my only obligation; long ago I choose as a motto: ‘Nam genus et pro avos et qua non fecimus ipsi, vix ea nostra voco.’ [‘I do not claim any merits of those who lived before me.’] When one is above me in rank or birth, in the grave we all are equal and it remains to be seen who enters a better world after having performed as a *human being*, as a subject, and a citizen his various obligations with satisfaction.’

Ik kon my nimmer aan een vlyende of kruypende styl wennen, en *schrijf zoals ik denk*, mishaaagd het, zal ik verders geen reede tot aanstoot geeven, men scheidt als van een hoogte op my neer te sien; aan *geene prejugees van geboorte of meerderheid kleevende*, is het betragten van myn pligt myn eenig doelwit; reeds lang koos ik my ten zinspreuk: ‘Nam genus et pro avos et qua non fecimus ipsi, vix ea nostra voco.’ [Ik maak geen aanspraak op de verdiensten van het voorgeslacht.]

Is men in rang of geboorte boove my verheve, aan den rand van het graf zyn wy gelyk, en daar zal het te besien staan, wie met een geruster geweete van als *mensch*, als onderdaan, als burger zyne onderscheidene verpligtingen na vernoege te hebben betracht een beeter wereld intreed.

PC124/69; Chinsura 31/3/1790, to Jan Titsingh.

So, no useless verbosity as a façade for showing off as being important. On the other hand, Titsingh starts his Journal of his Embassy to Peking as follows:

‘I herewith have the honour to offer Your Honours a detailed story of my Embassy, accompanied by relevant appendices - *while a simple brief mention* of the first encounters at Canton, of the placenames which passed by daily, of my experiences in Peking, would result in a dry exposé, I thought best, while *deviating from the usual way of reporting*, to arrange it in the following way, hoping it will not displease Your Honours.’

Thans heb ik de eer Uw Hoog Edele Gestrengens aan te bieden een omstandig relaas myner Ambassade, vergeseld van zodanige stukken als daartoe betrekking hebben - *wyl eene blote aanstipping van de eerste ontmoetingen op Canton, van de namen der plaatsen die wy in de op en afreise dagelyks aandeeden, en van myn wedervaren te Peking, een schraal vertoog opleverde, heb ik best gedacht, mogt ik ook daarin van de gewone wijze van verslag afwyken*, het in deezer voege in te rigten, in hoope dat zulks Hoogstdezelve niet onaangenaam zal zyn.

Titsingh on travel:

Why did Titsingh leave his risk-free safe Amsterdam world? Not for money, the family was well-to-do. The desire to escape from deadly daily routine of an already known world, fear for *horror vacui* caused by the chronic inconstancy of life, dissatisfaction with a *status quo* are plausible reasons for Titsingh leaving Europe.

PC165/101; Chinsura 2/1/1792, to Jan Titsingh.

'how much I long to see you and the rest of the family; I must confess, that, this being realized, I need more to make life enjoyable, especially after having lived a life for years on such a hospitable, distinguished and splendid level; what may help is *a desire for travel which I can not master*, while longing all the time for my country, *without a wife, no children, I can satisfy that desire*; the courteous reception by all foreigners I have met, created connections among the European nations residing here, the relaxed, well-meaning and frank character of these connections are essential for making life enjoyable and is not found in Europe in such a high degree for those who spent many years in India.

I consider this to be the driving force of many repatriated colleagues to settle themselves where more of them live, Mr de Vriese counts me eight families in Groningen.'

hoe groot ook myn verlange is om UwEdle en de verdere familie te moogen weedersien, beken ik meede, dat hieraan eens voldaan zynde, er meer vereischt word om het leeve te verangenaamen, vooral na op zulk een hospitabele, gedistingueerde, en splendide voet, jaarenlang te hebben doorgebracht; wat my hierin zou tegemoed koomen, is, *een sugt tot reisen die ik niet kan meester worden*, en my steeds rykhalsend na het vaderland deed uyt sien, *zonder vrouw, zonder kinderen, kan ik daaraan buyten eenige inconveniënten voldoen*; de minsaame receptie die alle vreemdelingen steeds by my ontmoeten heeft my onder de hier resideerende Europese Natiën van teid tot teid connexies doen vormen, het onbedwongene, welmeenende, openhartige, dat het essentiele ter veraangenaaming der zamenleving is, word zeeker in Europa niet in zulk een ruyme maate gevonden dan by die een reeks van jaaren in India sleeten, en ik beschouw dat in veelen onser gerepatrieerden als den dryfveer om zyn domicilie te neemen ter plaatse waar er meerder geseeten zyn, de Heer de Vriese teld my dus agt familiën in Groningen op.

PC188/119; Batavia 12/10/1793, to Boesses.

'How precarious you may describe the state of our country, it will not put me off, when I do not like it there, I will go to England, Switzerland or elsewhere where it is peaceful, *travelling is my main aim*, to do this in a pleasant way I made acquaintance with several friends during my seven years stay in Bengal which will facilitate my travels very much.'

Hoe haggelijk ook den toestant van het vaderland moogt beschrijven, het zal mij niet afschrikken, bevalt het my niet ga ik na Engeland, Zwitserland of elders waar rust heerscht over, *het reisen is mijn voornaam oogmerk*, om dit met agrement te doen heb ik bij mijn seevenjarig verblijf in Bengale een aantal vrienden gemaakt wier ommevang en introductie dit zeer kan veraangenamen.

PC4/216; Batavia 2/6/1785, to Kutsuki Masatsuna.

‘It is deplorable the *error of the people [volksdwaling]* lasts so long, giving no opportunity to your Nation to visit foreign countries.’

Beklagelyk is het dat de *volksdwaling* zoo lang duurt, en men Uw natie geen gelegenheid geeft *vreemde landen te bezoeken*, wanneer ik mij vlyen mocht UWEd: eens weeder te sien.

PC215/139; Canton 20/12/1795, to Nederburgh.

‘Without any prejudice attached to any piece of land, any country with peace and quiet will please me in case I do not like living in the Republic; when I can not find it in Europe, it is still time to return to the Indies.’

Door *geene prejugees aan een plek gronds gebonde*, zou, zo de Republiq mij niet bevald, ider land waar men in rust en *vrijheid* leeft, mij aangenaam zijn, en was dit al in Europa niet te vinden, is het nog teid na India terug te keeren.

Yet, *patria* and his family exercise their influence:

‘Almost living under the same sky and yet so far away from each other; [...] one shows me here [in London] every kind of courtesy, I see a lot of Bengal friends, everyone is doing their best to make my stay agreeable, but despite all that, *I long for my country [patria], we all seem to have an innate and natural desire for it.*’

Genoegsaam onder denzelfden heemel en nog zo verweiderd, is ondragelyk; ik ontving uwe aangename te Bath, werwaerds ik my begeef op aanrading van den Heer Hope, seggende, dat het my nog beeter dan London zou bevallen; ik bevond het zo, en in steede van tien à twaalf daagen sleet ik er niet alleen de gandse maand Feb: maar ben voornemens my er permanent te vestigen, totdat de omstandigheden gedogen, myn verdere leeftheid onder myn familie en vrienden te kunnen doorbrengen; men bewyst my hier alle mogelyke politesse, ik vind er meenigte Bengaelse vrienden, een ider empressieert zig om myn verblyf te veraangenamen, dog in weerwil van al dat, *haak ik na myn vaderland, waarna den mensch als door de natuur een overheerschende sugt scheidt ingeschapen.*

PC249/173; Londen 6/3/1797, to Boesses.

Titsingh’s best Japanese friend Kutsuki Masatsuna, *Daimyô* of Fukuchiyama in Tamba was unable to travel freely as he pleased like Titsingh. Both were amateurs of arts and sciences. Both had a highly developed scholarly conscience. In order to facilitate an illusion of travelling, Titsingh presented his friend with a copy of the first French world-atlas, the *Atlas Nouveau* of the *Géographe du Roi* Nicolas Sanson (1600-1667). Not a practical little pocket atlas, but a book of 12,6 kilogram. Not something to import in Japan unnoticed. On the general map of Europe, a circle around Holland is

made in red Chinese ink, which visualises for Japanese eyes the relatively small geographical space of Holland in comparison to the rest of Europe and the world. This copy of the atlas symbolizes a bridge over political and national boundaries, a bridge between two enlightened minds of the *République des Lettres*. It was also the basis for Masatsuna's publications on the geography of Europe. Titsingh and Kutsuki were convinced that a free exchange of information of any kind for the benefit of better education should be shared by everybody.

PC263/187; Londen 2/4/1797, to Rhenius.

'My only desire is to end my days in quietness as *a forgotten citizen of the world*.'

Myn eenige sugt is, myne dagen als een *vergeete wereldburger* in rust te slyten.

PC290/206; Parijs 15/6/1810, to Marsden.

'they look on me here as a *misanthrope*, *it does not affect me*, taught by experience what value to put on the opinion of the gross of mankind.'

curiosity / weetlust

Albert Einstein has ideas worthy of listening to, regarding *Curiosity* [Weetlust / Neugier]

'Wichtig ist, dass man nicht aufhört zu fragen. Neugier hat ihren eigenen Seinsgrund. Man kann nicht anders als die Geheimnisse von Ewigkeit, Leben oder die wunderbare Struktur der Wirklichkeit ehrfurchtsvoll zu bestaunen. Es genügt, wenn man versucht, an jedem Tag lediglich ein wenig von diesem Geheimnis zu erfassen. Diese heilige Neugier soll man nie verlieren.'

It is important not to stop asking. *Curiosity* has its own reason for existence. One can only be amazed with *Ehrfurcht* [holy fear] at the secrets of eternity, life or the structure of reality. It is sufficient, when one tries each day to understand a little bit of this secret. This *holy curiosity* should never be losed.

'Neugier ist ein verletzliches Pflänzchen, das nicht nur Anregung, sondern vor allem Freiheit braucht.'

Curiosity is a vulnerable little plant, which needs not only stimulation, but freedom in particular.

Einstein sagt / Zitate, Einfälle, Gedanken, Alice Calaprice ed., München/Zürich (Piper) 2005⁸. 226.

PC27/228; Chinsura 10/3/1786, to Katsuragawa Hoshû.

'In case I could obtain permission to go as I please to visit all the places of interest and also be treated with proper respect, I would endeavour after five years to visit Japan once more, outside the Company's service and only for my own enjoyment, to visit my friends and further satisfy my *curiosity*.'

indien ik vrijheid kon krygen om in Japan te rysen waar ik goed vond en alle plaatsen waar iets besienswaardig was te moogen bezoeken, en teffens met een behoorlyke

agting wierd behandelt, zou ik myn best doen, na verloop van vyf jaaren buiten dienst der Compagnie en alleen voor myn liefhebberij nog eens na Japan te koomen, om mijne vrienden te bezoeken, en myn *weetlust* verder te voldoen.

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portrait

Titsingh was a man, he was proud and yet humble, he believed in his own dignity, he did not want to bow; he marched to his own drummer and hated mediocrity. He was a gentleman, passionate, not sentimental. He had an Erasmian *humanitas*, that is: sincere interest in the other self-reflecting fellow human being. Titsingh's life proves once again Aristotle was right: amazement and inquisitiveness lie at the beginning of all knowledge, of all philosophy. Titsingh's voice is unique in the history of the meeting between European and Asiatic civilizations, notably between Japan and Europe. His influence reaches far beyond the relatively short period of his stay in Japan. Titsingh contributed to the discourse among learned Japanese on the reorientation of Japan versus Europe. Titsingh was a *Voyageur philosophique*. The Napoleonic wars and personal intrigue were responsible for the world-wide dispersal of the *Cabinet Titsingh*.

His passion for Japan, his friendships with individual Japanese, English, French and Dutchmen did not refrain him from remaining critical. Frequent accusations from the VOC in Holland and in Asia: he was a friend of *the* Japanese, of *the* English, of *the* French, is nonsense. He was not everybody's friend, far from it. Titsingh on *the*

Japanese: their pride has to be curtailed.

English: their imperial entrepreneurship in India is known to me only too well. [PC180/116]

French: they are cunning snakes. [PC294/210]

The Administration (Bewindhebbers) in Holland: stupid cattle.

Titsingh was well aware he had few qualities to think of modestly, though he was not complacent. People considered him difficult, meaning: he was competent and straightforward. He was not monogamous, no monomaniac, no dull recluse, he was a loyal person. He loved society life in Calcutta, London and Paris, but not everything had to be highbrow: Titsingh rides on horseback, was a skater, a big game hunter, he attends the opera, he wants to rummage funfairs with his little godchild De Wit, he loves all kinds of alcohol ('The Dutch Governor could drink gin like water') and was mildly addicted to 'Lady Nicotine'.

Titsingh the completeness-freak, suffered from an obsessive need for punctuality. When the stage-coach from Paris arrived five days later in Amsterdam and was half an hour late, he was irritated. Titsingh shared his unwillingness to compromise with several family members; he was the only one of his family who, having an iron constitution, led such a risky adventurous life, travelled so unbelievably widely. He saw a lot; he digested his experiences thoughtfully.

Not being parochial, he considered the so-called sciences, the humanities and the arts as one

interrelated whole. He was a professional craftsman who tried to go to the bottom of things, a perfectionist. Diversity before everything else. Having a subversive character, he felt free to disturb his fellow human beings, not bothered by polite cliché and political correctness. Titsingh lived his scholarship according to the 18th-century ideal of a Republic of Letters, a worldwide community of *savants* without national and political boundaries, sharing the same intuition. He was at home in the cosmopolitan intellectual elite in Edo, Calcutta, London and Paris.

It asks almost heroic courage to formulate one's own truth clearly, one's own convictions all one's life, while being able to relativize these ideas, without clinging to any orthodoxy.

Titsingh could cope easily with the worldly world on many social levels, but in the end he was a very private person. Doctor Titsingh, the medical man, with his worldwide human experience, diagnosed his fellow human beings with a warm heart and a cold clinical eye, the eye of a realist not of a cynic, the eye of an idealist not of an utopist.

Buffon has famously stated: Style is Man himself: 'Le style est l'homme même', but a man of feeling can't do much with this. Can one explain with words what Style means? Titsingh had style. One can not explain everything.

*

References in the text to letternumbers are from Titsingh's Private Correspondence, the second number refers to the old edition in 2 vols:

Lequin, Frank. 1990

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the *first number* refers to my new edition in 1 vol. to be deposited with publisher Canaletto, Fall 2007: Volume 4.1. of the series Titsingh studies.