

THE CHINESE STUDIES OF ANDREAS MÜLLER¹

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WITH the conclusion of the Peace of Westphalia (1648), Europe entered upon an era of commercial and colonial expansion. The wondrous stories of eastern Asia brought back by traders and missionaries were almost unbelievable to the generation which had witnessed the horrors of the Thirty Years' War. This fabled new world of Prester John appeared as a veritable El Dorado. The new Weltanschauung caused great repercussions in learned circles. Even the most bigoted of orthodox scholars became aware of a drama existing apart from the European stage.

One of the most cosmopolitan of these world-conscious Europeans was Andreas Müller (1630?-1694).² His early life was spent on the farm of his father outside Greiffenhagen, a small town south of Stettin in Pomerania. At the age of sixteen, he studied Latin, Greek, and Hebrew at the University of Rostock. After Rostock he worked further at the universities of Greifswald and Wittenberg. Like so many of the educated men of his day, Müller was trained for the church. In Brandenburg the prevalent denomination was that of the Reformed Church. In 1653 Müller received his first charge at Königsberg in the Newmark. Shortly thereafter he was elevated to the rank of Provost and was transferred to Treptow.

After a short stay at Treptow, the young clergyman left for England to aid Edmund Castell, professor of Arabic at Cambridge, and Bryan Walton, Bishop of Chester, in their joint enterprise of

¹ This article does not attempt to review all of Müller's Chinese studies. The ones mentioned here are only representative. A complete bibliography of Müller's published and manuscript works yet extant may be found in August Müller, "Eröffnungsrede," ZDMG 35 (1881). III-XVI. This bibliography was compiled from the library of the Marienstiftsgymnasium at Stettin, the university library at Greifswald, the Prussian State library, and the library of the Orphanage at Halle.

² The first biography of Müller was written by Sebastian Gottfried Starke as an appendix to Starke's edition of Müller's *Alphabeta ac Notae diversarium linguarum* (1703). Although this account is not devoid of errors, it has formed the basis for all subsequent studies of Müller's life and works.

a universal dictionary.³ Müller lived in Castell's home and collaborated closely with him over a period of ten years. The two men devoted the major portion of their time to a comparative study of near-eastern languages. After years of labor, the results of this enterprise had the misfortune to be almost completely wiped out in the London fire of 1666.

In the same year Müller returned to Brandenburg where he became Provost of Bernau—Bernau, a town noted in the seventeenth century for its excellent beer! Because of his sermons, Müller soon attracted the attention of Frederick William, the Great Elector. In 1667, the year in which Anathasius Kircher's *China Illustrata* was published, he became Provost at the Nicolaikirche in Berlin.

With his position in the church established, Müller was enabled to devote considerable time to other studies. Meanwhile, Frederick William had conceived the idea of organizing an East India Company to compete with the companies established by the French and the English. To gain a modicum of knowledge of China the Elector bought the Chinese library of the Dutch Admiral Giesel van Lier. Other Chinese works were also obtained through Dutch sources. In this way was formed the nucleus of what came to be a great collection at Berlin. This rapidly growing library on China was at the disposal of Müller, and formed his first really important fund of information concerning the "Middle Kingdom."

According to his own account, Müller invented in 1667 a *Key to Chinese (Clavis Sinica)*.⁴ While going through certain Arabic materials, he claimed to have found several hints for the solution of the Chinese-language puzzle. From these he evolved his *Key*. The first references to the existence of the *Key to Chinese* are to be found in his correspondence. He exchanged letters on the subject with such men as Kircher, Ludolf, and Christian Mentzel.⁵

³ A two volume dictionary was published in 1669 entitled, *Lexicon Heptaglotton*.

⁴ See Müller, *Sinicae Clavis Historia Chronologica in Epitomen redacta in Tentzels Monatliche Unterredungen*, 9 (1697). p. 982. See also G. S. Bayer, *Museum Sinicum* (Petropoli, 1730), I, 35-6.

⁵ Hiob Ludolf was a reputable scholar of near-eastern languages. Christian Mentzel, a contemporary of Müller in Brandenburg, was also greatly interested in China. Mentzel studied Chinese with the Jesuit, Father Couplet. Both Müller and Mentzel were advisers on Chinese subjects to Frederick William.

Although the *Key* was never published, its history is closely connected with Müller's other studies of China and the Chinese language. The first of these, *A Geographical and Historical Disquisition on Cathay (Disquisitio geographica et historica de Chataja)* (1670), was dedicated to Edmund Castell. In the light of this dedication it may be surmised that Müller had become interested in the Middle and Far East even while in London. The *Disquisition* is little more than a brief review of travel accounts and missionary works concerning Cathay—the type of thing a man might make for personal reference. It is topical in form and alphabetical in arrangement. Probably the most significant portion of the study is that which lists the Chinese “twelve branches,” the “ten stems,” the twenty-four seasonal divisions, and the sexagenary cycle. In these lists Müller followed with great exactness the scholarship of Jacob Gohl (1596-1667), an eminent Dutch orientalist who had received most of his knowledge of Chinese from Father Martini.⁶ The Chinese characters listed by Müller are simply copies of those in Gohl's *Additional Information Concerning the Kingdom of Cathay (De regno Catayo Additamentum)* which was included as an appendix to Martini's *Atlas* (1655).

One year after publishing his *Disquisition* Müller edited a Latin version of Marco Polo's *Travels*.⁷ The manuscript used was one found in the Electoral library. It was a copy of the Latin version made by Pipino and is known as the P² manuscript.⁸ Müller's preface to his edition of the *Travels* shows a thorough acquaintance with the work of earlier editors of the various Marco Polo manuscripts.

Neither of the works already discussed holds a hint as to Müller's *Key to Chinese*. The best clue is given in his edition of the inscription on the Nestorian monument of Sianfu, the *Monument of China (Monumenti Sinici)* (1672). In this work he used the Nestorian

⁶ For a discussion of Gohl and his relations with Martini see J. J. L. Duyvendak, “Early Chinese Studies in Holland,” TP 32 (1936), 298-302.

⁷ Müller called this edition, *Marci Pauli Veneti, Historici fidelissimi iuxta ac praestantissimi, de Regionibus Orientalibus*. . . . As late as Oct. 12, 1813, Goethe borrowed Müller's version of Marco Polo from the Weimar library. See “Goethe und China,” in *Das Buch in China und das Buch über China* (Frankfurt am Main, 1938), p. 94.

⁸ See L. F. Benedetto, *Marco Polo. Il Milione* (Firenze, 1928), p. xxxiii. See also A. C. Moule and P. Pelliot, *Marco Polo. The Description of the World* (London, 1938), I, 512.

inscription as presented by Father Kircher in the *China Illustrata* (1667).⁹ Müller, however, includes no Chinese characters, only Portuguese transliterations. He placed each transliteration of a Chinese character under a note inscribed on an ordinary western musical staff.¹⁰ Thus, by a process, very similar to our system of coördinating the words and music of a song, he hoped to explain away the tonal difficulties of Chinese.

Müller's contemporaries were skeptical. Father Kircher wrote to him time after time urging him to publish his materials on the *Key*. In answer, Müller published in 1674 a small pamphlet called *A Plan for a Key to Chinese (Propositio Clavis Sinicae)*—which is nothing more than a discourse as to his reasons for not publishing! The general tone of the pamphlet indicates that he was unwilling to reveal anything at his own expense. Perhaps the experiences of Castell in the debtor's prison at London had made a strong impression on the German scholar. In any case, his primary concern seems to have been to secure himself financially by finding someone to publish his *Key to Chinese*.

Müller realized the potential importance of the *Key* to traders and missionaries. For this reason, he felt that a work with such great possibilities should give him something more solid, if possibly less enduring, than fame. To be precise, he demanded two thousand thalers before he would agree to publication. One thousand thalers was awarded him in 1678 by Frederick William. This contribution, Müller held, was not sufficient. He steadfastly refused to reveal his secret.¹¹ Confidently he declared that his studies had resulted in a solution to the difficulties of reading and speaking Chinese. In his commentaries on the *Monument of China* he writes:

Indeed, I really wish I could be as certain of a stipend from the official or ecclesiastical lists, as I am certain that even women by studying Chinese characters for a year, or a shorter space of time, will be able to read Chinese and Japanese books . . .¹²

⁹ Kircher gives a reproduction of the stone and its inscription. This is followed by a table which gives the pronunciation of each character in Portuguese transliteration. A literal and a free translation of the inscription are also included. The translations are by Michael Boym.

¹⁰ Müller argued that the Chinese recognized only five tones. These five tones are roughly equivalent to the European do, re, me, fa, sol. He insisted that the Annamites used a sixth tone, la.

¹¹ Cf. August Müller, *op. cit.*, p. x.

¹² *De Monumento Sinico Commentarius Novensilis in Opuscula nonnulla Orientalia* (Francofurti ad Oderam, 1695), p. 12.

An interesting sidelight revealed in this quotation is Müller's apparent belief that a knowledge of Chinese characters meant also the ability to read Japanese.

Gottlieb Siegfried Bayer (1694-1738), a student of Chinese born in the year of Müller's death, commenting on Müller's Chinese studies, unkindly observed that it might be easier "to teach fish to sing, than men to speak" by this method.¹³ The Abbé Renaudot was also critical. Referring to Müller's emendations of Kircher's edition of the Nestorian monument, Renaudot was not able to comprehend how "a scholar who has never been outside of Europe, is able to correct a Chinese inscription with the aid of a few dictionaries."¹⁴

Closer home Müller's critics were not as acid in their comments. Despite the extravagances of his claims, Müller was one of the outstanding German authorities on Chinese subjects. He had read practically everything on China written in western languages. In 1682 he was even asked by the Holy Roman Emperor for advice on Chinese books in the imperial repositories. His knowledge, too, of several near eastern languages made him a respected scholar. The official position of Provost at the Nicolaikirche seemed to affirm his knowledge of religious subjects. When a man of such reputation reported that he had found a *Key to Chinese*, it is little wonder that he stirred the educated world.

No less an intellectual than Leibniz became intensely interested in the reports of the *Key*. Most of Müller's works had been sent to Leibniz through Johann Sigismund Elsholz, physician to the Great Elector.¹⁵ On June 24, 1679, Leibniz directed to Müller a series of fourteen questions concerning the *Key* and its possibilities. The philosopher asked:

1. Whether such a *Key* is unfailing and certain as in reading our a, b, c's or numbers, or whether from time to time one is in need of help, as often happens in reading hieroglyphics.
2. Since Chinese writing, as is well known, is worked out not on the

¹³ G. S. Bayer, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

¹⁴ Renaudot, *Anciennes Relations des Indes et de la Chine . . .* (Paris, 1718), p. 241. The author also gives a detailed criticism of Müller's comments on the religious implications of the Nestorian monument.

¹⁵ See the correspondence of Leibniz and Elsholz on this question in Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften (eds.), *G. W. Leibniz. Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe* (Darmstadt, 1927), Series I, Vol. II, pp. 419-20.

basis of words, but rather on objects, so I should like to know if the characters are always made according to the constitution of the object.

3. Whether the whole language is based on certain common elements, or a basic alphabet from which the other characters are evolved.

4. Whether inanimate objects are expressed in terms of the animate.

5. Whether the Chinese language was artificially constructed, or whether it has grown and changed by usage like other languages.

6. Whether the Chinese language was also artificially constructed on a certain *Key*.

7. Whether H. Müller therefore believed the Chinese to be unconscious of the *Key* to their own language.

8. Whether he thinks that this language can be introduced easily and beneficially into Europe.

9. Whether those who constructed this language understood the nature of things and were highly rational.

10. Whether the characters take notice of such natural objects as animals, plants, and stones, and whether thereby the characteristics of objects differentiate one object from the other.

11. Whether and to what extent is the bare nature of objects added to.

12. Whether the person having this *Key* and using it can understand everything written in the Chinese language no matter what material it comprises.

13. Whether the person having the *Key* can also write something in Chinese and whether such writing could be understood by a learned Chinese.

14. If one should ask several Chinese and several holding this *Key* to translate something word for word (like "Our Father") from our language into Chinese, whether their translations would be so similar that a person holding one up against the other could detect that for the most part they were one.¹⁶

Although Müller replied to these questions, his answers were evidently unsatisfactory to Leibniz.¹⁷ A more striking evidence of his interest, however, was Leibniz's desire to have Müller translate and transliterate a certain Chinese book "in quarto, long and thin, having around eighty pages." At first Müller agreed to do the job, but demanded that he be sent the book, or its title, to decide whether it was worth translating. Upon receipt of the book, Müller stated that he would rather do a somewhat less common work, since excerpts from the title suggested by Leibniz had already been translated by Father P. Intorcetta (1626-1696).¹⁸

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 491-92.

¹⁷ See *ibid.*, pp. 499; 508.

¹⁸ This probably refers to a Latin translation of excerpts from the moral teachings of Confucius which were published in 1672 under the title *Sinarum scientia politico-moralis* in Thevenot's *Relations de divers Voyages curieux*. For further information on Intorcetta see A. Backer et al., *Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jesus* (Paris, 1893), IV, 641-3.

Besides his work with the *Key to Chinese*, Müller tried to synthesize the various European studies on China. He had a peculiar custom, as was previously mentioned, of presenting his facts in topical form. The first example of this tendency has been noted in his *Disquisition on Cathay* (1670). The practice was also adopted in the format of several other treatises. In 1674 he published his *Seven Observations on China* (*Hebdomas Observationum Sinicarum*). In the first observation, Müller discusses the antiquity of China and establishes the Chinese deluge at about 3000 B. C. The second part is an historical discussion of Christian missions in China with a great deal of attention to near-eastern missions. The third observation is an attempt to collate accounts given by Martini and Mendoza¹⁹ of the Chinese emperors and their reign dates. The fourth section deals with ginseng, its medicinal uses in China and its possibilities for Europe. The fifth observation concerns astronomy and the establishment of a Chinese solar calendar. In the sixth section Müller attempts to establish place-names mentioned in Marco Polo by studying contemporary near eastern accounts of geographical spots of importance. The final observation deals with astrology and attempts to collate the Chinese and western astrological systems.

In 1679 Müller published a chronological table of the Chinese emperors entitled *Chinese Royalty* (*Basilicon Sinense*). As sources he used accounts given in Martini, Mendoza, Abdalla,²⁰ and some "Chinese manuscripts." His "Chinese manuscripts" probably consisted of the Nestorian inscription plus the few translated excerpts from the Chinese Classics and the Chinese works in the Electoral library.²¹

Müller's work of synthesizing European accounts of China was continued in 1680 with the publication of *The Geographical Nomenclature of the Chinese Empire* (*Imperii Sinensis Nomenclatur Geographicus*). As a basis for his table, he used the map brought to western Europe by Nicolas Witsen, Bürgermeister of Amsterdam, after the journey of the latter to Russia in 1666.²² The list of

¹⁹ Müller used Mendoza's *Historia de las cossas mas notables ristas y costumbas, del gran Reyno dela China . . .* (1585).

²⁰ See *infra*, p. 571.

²¹ See *infra*, p. 571.

²² This map was later published in Witsen's *Noord en Oost Tartarye, ofte bondigh ontwerp van eenige dier landen en Volken, zo als voormals bekend zyn geweest . . .* (1692). For further details see P. A. Tiele's *Nederlandische Bibliographie van Land- en Volkenkunde*.

place-names is preceded by a preface which reviews the previous works on China and their significance to the study of geography. The list includes 1783 place-names with the longitude and latitude of each. Several samples taken from this list and compared with the modern figures of longitude and latitude are within a few degrees of accuracy.

Müller did not overlook near-eastern writers on China. In 1678²³ he translated into Latin and edited the *Chinese History* (*Historia Sinensis*) of a Persian whom he supposed to be Abdalla. In reality, the work which he translated was the eighth book of Banakati's world history, the *Rautzatuli-uli-albab* (1317).²⁴ Since this book had been printed in the period of Mongol dominion in Persia, it is not difficult to understand where Banakati got his information of China. Five of the nine sections of the Persian history are devoted to non-Moslem peoples.

Nobody was better acquainted than Müller with the Chinese collection in the Electoral library. In his studies he must have ransacked the library. In 1679 he prepared a printed *Catalogue of the Chinese Books in the Electoral Library of Brandenburg* (*Catalogus Librorum Sinicorum Bibliothecae Electoralis Brandenburgicae*).²⁵ The list includes twenty-five titles. Among the Chinese titles is Ssü-ma Kuang's history, the *Tzū chih t'ung chien*. This work composed in the Sung period embraces the era from the fourth century B. C. to the end of the "Five Dynasties." Another Chinese title mentioned was the *Ssü shu*, the "Four Books." Besides these the *Catalogue* listed the historical novel, *San kuo chih*, as well as a Chinese dictionary, *Tzū hui*, and two medical works from the *Pên ts'ao*. In addition to these essentially Chinese works, Müller enumerated nine Catholic missionary works and

²³ P. Pelliot in Cordier's *Bibliotheca Sinica*, col. 581, gives the date as 1677. The date on the book itself is 1679. Because of Müller's habit of publishing the parts of books as he finished them, it is likely that by 1678 most of the *Chinese History*, except the title page, had been published. Müller's *Catalogue* (cf. *infra*) gives the date as 1678. August Müller, *op. cit.*, p. xiv, has found 1678 as the date given in other sources.

²⁴ Cf. *The Catalogue of Persian Books in the British Museum*, col. 188. Also Cordier, *op. cit.*, col. 581.

²⁵ For a reproduction of the *Catalogue* see Hermann Hülle, "Die Fortschritte der Ostasiatischen Sammlung," *Fünfzehn Jahre Königliche und Staatsbibliothek*, ed. by die wissenschaftlichen Beamten der preussischen Staatsbibliothek (Berlin, 1921), p. 193.

three Chinese translations by Jesuits of European works of science.²⁶ The *Catalogue* does not include Chinese characters. Only the Portuguese transliterations are given. At the end Müller appends the note: "Number of volumes, around 300."²⁷ This list of Chinese books was the first printed catalogue possessed by the Electoral library.

In 1683 a second catalogue of Chinese books was published by Müller. It comprised fourteen folio pages and was intended for the public, whereas the first catalogue appears to have been prepared for private use. There are many copies of the second catalogue. The first is rare.

Not all of Müller's time was taken up by his work as a cataloger. In 1685 he published his *Disquisition on the Passional Eclipse* (*De Eclipsie passionali disquisitio*). In this work he attempts to identify the solar eclipse of the first Good Friday with an eclipse noted in the Chinese annals.²⁸ Here was an attempt to reconcile Chinese and Christian tradition in an effort to escape condemnation at the hands of rigid theologians.

Despite his precautions, Müller's Chinese studies were the cause ultimately of his downfall. As early as 1668 he was in the center of the syncretistic controversy.²⁹ Müller sympathized with the followers of Calixtus at Helmstadt against the exponents of pure Lutheranism and pure Calvinism. In 1678, Elias Grebnitz (1627-1689), professor of Logic and Metaphysics at Frankfort on the Oder, published a treatise entitled *Instruction in the Reformed and Lutheran Churches* (*Unterricht von der Reformirten und Lutheri-*

²⁶ For further information see *ibid.*, pp. 192-4. Consult also Kurt Tautz, *Die Bibliothekare der Churfürstlichen Bibliothek zu Cölln an der Spree* (Leipzig, 1925), pp. 206-11.

²⁷ According to Müller's testimony "without preparation the author [Müller] explained to His Highness, the Elector, the contents and titles of the Chinese books which came from India . . . It was commanded that this list should be added at once to the annals of the Passional Eclipse." *Tentzels Monatliche Unterredungen*, 9 (1697). 985. This is the only place in which a copy may be found today; cf. Hülle, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

²⁸ It is not clear to what Chinese eclipse he refers, but obviously it must be one which occurred during the Later Han in the period of Kuang Wu Ti (25-58 A. D.); cf. *Tentzels Monatliche Unterredungen*, 1 (1689). 328.

²⁹ Cf. A. B. König, *Versuch einer historischen Schilderung der Hauptveränderungen der Religion, Sitten, Gewohnheiten, Künste, Wissenschaften etc. der Residenzstadt Berlin seit den ältesten Zeiten, bis zum Jahre 1786* (Berlin, 1793), II, 137.

schen Kirchen). In this study Grebnitz attacked the Chinese language as a product of the devil. He insisted that as soon as the name of God should be used in this picture-writing a sin would be committed against the second commandment. He attacked Müller as an individual who was about to release the full horror of this sinful language in the *Key to Chinese*.

Müller prepared a counter-attack which he published in 1680 under the title *Better Instruction in Chinese Writing . . . than Is Contained in Dr. Elias Grebnitz's Instruction in the Reformed and Lutheran Churches* (*Besser Unterricht von der Sineser Schrift . . . als etwa in Hrn. D. Eliae Grebnitzen Unterricht von der reformirten und lutherischen Kirchen enthalten ist.*) It happened, however, that Grebnitz acquired a copy of Müller's reply, before it was published. The Frankfurt professor at once circulated pamphlets in Müller's congregation denying the as yet unpublished allegations made by Müller.³⁰

News of Müller's difficulties reached the ears of the Great Elector. Being a staid member of the Reformed Church, Frederick William would make no compromise with the unorthodox. Although Müller had always enjoyed Electoral favor, in 1685 he was relieved of his position and accused of heresy. Shortly thereafter, he was thrown into jail at Spandau, for his further publications against rigid Reformed orthodoxy.³¹ After his stay in prison, he returned to Stettin and his native Pomerania where he spent his last days.

Müller's misfortune in Berlin was followed by periodic spells of illness. While undergoing one of these, he was so distracted that he threw a great portion of his manuscript material into the fire. Among the manuscripts destroyed was very probably the much discussed and ill-fated *Key to Chinese*.³² Shortly before his death in 1694, Müller willed a large number of his books and manuscripts to the library of the Marienstiftsgymnasium in Stettin.³³ In 1685, when he left Berlin, he donated to the Electoral library, as part

³⁰ Müller's difficulties with Grebnitz were not finished until 1685. The part of the controversy concerning Chinese ended in 1680. After this date the issues were largely of a religious nature.

³¹ Cf. König, *op. cit.*, III, 25.

³² See especially Carl Stichler, "Zwei altberlinische Chinakundige und Orientalisten zur Zeit des grossen Kurfürsten," *Der Bär, Illustrierte Wochenschrift für die Geschichte Berlins*, 22 (1896). p. 173.

³³ See J. C. C. Oelrichs, *Historisch-Diplomatische Beyträge zur Geschichte der Gelahrtheit, besonders im Herzogthum Pommern* (Berlin,

compensation for the Electoral stipend, his cupboard-like printing press and his wooden blocks for printing Chinese characters.³⁴ This final trace of Müller's enterprise with his *Key to Chinese* may still be seen in the Prussian State Library at Berlin.

In the last sentence to one of his defenses of the *Key to Chinese*, Müller broaches the question: "On which account will posterity judge: whether the author should be tried for his errors or for the discovery itself and the remainder [of his works]?"³⁵ The majority of writers in that posterity has judged the man by his errors. Few consider his complete record. It can hardly be denied that in his time and place he was one of the most eminent of European scholars. Since he trod a path to which his immediate successors could see no end, he was reviled as a dreamer.

Although a *Key to Chinese* is fantastic to modern scholars, Müller seemed to feel that he had uncovered the secret whereby traders and missionaries could read and speak Chinese without the aid of an interpreter. He was censured by his contemporaries for refusing to publish the *Key*. Later writers regarded it as a myth, a bid for publicity. Neither of these positions can be justly maintained.

As a figure prominent in the Church, it is unlikely that Müller would have jeopardized his position by circulating false reports of his activities. His other works are sincere and scholarly. The association with Castell and Walton in the *Lexicon Heptaglotton* attests to his abilities as a near eastern student.³⁶ In all probability,

1767), II, 64-74 for Müller's correspondence concerning his donation of books. There is also included a list of the last fifty books which he gave the library. In all, the Müller collection numbered well over one thousand titles. For a discussion of the modern status of this collection see M. Wehrmann, "Geschichte der Bibliothek des Marienstiftgymnasiums in Stettin," *Baltische Studien*, 44. 206-9.

³⁴ Müller wanted to print the characters in the *Catalogue*, but for some unascertainable reason was not able. The blocks are very large with raised margins. Cf. Hülle, *op. cit.*, p. 194. In connection with his attempts to fit out a printing press for Chinese, Müller held the theory that printing had originally come from China to Europe. Cf. *Tentzels Monatliche Unterredungen*, 9 (1697). 977-8.

³⁵ "Sinicae Clavis Historia Chronologica in Epitomen redacta" in *Tentzels Monatliche Unterredungen*, 9 (1697). 986.

³⁶ A. Müller, *op. cit.*, p. x, asserts that Müller's Persian translations were inaccurate. There are no indications that his ability in the other near eastern languages has been questioned.

he could not read Chinese as well as he read Hebrew or Syriac. All the Chinese he knew was acquired by comparison of characters and their translations. He was a pioneer in the wilderness of Sinology—in which there yet remains a great, unconquered frontier. Had he realized the presumptuousness of his assertions concerning the *Key to Chinese*, he probably would have exercised moderation in his claims. His belief in the *Key* appears to have been sincere. His limited resources in books and other materials were responsible for his naive conviction that he had solved the Chinese language problem.

Moreover, Müller must not be condemned for his refusal to publish the *Key*. Fellow scholars had been thrown into prison for debts incurred while trying to complete their researches or publish their books. He was aware of this fact and probably did not fancy such an end to his own career. Since traders and missionaries both would profit by the publication of the *Key to Chinese*, he seemed to feel that someone should be willing to subsidize his efforts and the publication of his results. His worst error was rashness. In this connection, Leibniz, shortly after Müller's death in 1694, wrote to Father Verjus:

Here in Germany we have lost an excellent man, named Müller, who was good in oriental languages, and even in Chinese. He hoped to make a *Key to Chinese* . . . I told Father Grimaldi of him and they had some correspondence. But this Mr. Müller was too impetuous. This trait deterred his ambitions and deprived the public of the works which it had awaited.²⁷

²⁷ *Excerptum ex Epistola Leibnitii ad Amicum, numus Bibliothecarii Caesarei ambientis in Leibnitii Scriptorum Collectio* (Leipzig, 1718), p. 6.