



Foreign Wisdom: Ethnological Knowledge in the Work of Franciscus Ridderus

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Abstract: This article examines the reception of ethnologic knowledge in the work of Franciscus Ridderus resulting from Dutch expansion. Against the backdrop of the concepts of 'domestication' and 'foreignization', it highlights the difficult position of the theologian at a time of cultural transformation during which he endeavours, on the one hand, to make non-European knowledge accessible to his contemporaries whilst, on the other hand, warning against the dangers of using this knowledge carelessly. The technique of 'foreignization' of Christianity and 'domestication' of other religions, in particular Islam, will be examined in this context.

Keywords: Cultural Turns, Translational Turn, Knowledge Transfer, Cultural Exchanges

Introduction

The Dutch expansionist drive in the seventeenth century was not only responsible for the economic and political development of the Republic, it also led to an important exchange of knowledge in many areas.¹ The integration of this knowledge into the European way of thinking considerably challenged the early modern Dutch scholars and theologians. However, this knowledge transfer is still of interest to current research. The scientific debate about the processes and shapes of 'cultural exchanges' (Burke) centres on avoiding an altogether too Eurocentric perspective and emphasizes the mutual influence of European and non-European cultures.² One of the main methods for analyzing transfer processes has been put forward by practitioners of 'translational studies' with their focus on 'cultural translation': the emphasis no longer lies on a binary approach whereby an 'original' (text or cultural artefact) is being transposed into another language or culture, with the resulting 'translation' becoming a secondary object. It is rather, in the words of Susan Bassnett, a 'process of negotiation between texts and between [48] cultures, a process during which all kinds of transactions take place mediated by the figure of the translator'.³

The 'figure of the translator' is not necessarily considered as belonging to the literary world but, in this role of cultural mediator, he can be a merchant, a military man, a politician, a traveller or a scholar. This research trend has become known under the term 'translational turn' and seeks primarily to examine in a critical way the power exercised by 'translations'. The extent of this power is shown by a story used by Stephen Greenblatt as a starting point for his study *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (1991). Greenblatt reports that Columbus wrote in his log on 18 December 1492 that a young local chief from the island of Tortuga visited him aboard his ship. Columbus was undaunted by the fact that they were unable

to understand each other's language: 'And he and his tutor and counsellors were very troubled because they did not understand me nor I them. Nevertheless, I gathered that he told me that if something from this place pleased me that the whole island was at my command'.⁴ Columbus as 'translator' is therefore able to subjugate the entire island and its population to his Spanish sovereign by interpreting words.

Seeing other cultures in order to subjugate them was thus frequently the aim of European thinking in respect of indigenous people. As a result, colonial actions were often linguistic actions, as documented by many travel stories from that time which embody this European vision. On the other hand, non-European cultures also had a considerable influence on European thinking. Multiple processes of 'transculturation' developed in the 'contact zones' between cultures and the perception of the world on both sides were influenced by 'the other'.⁵ Research into the relations between Christianity and other religions ('mission history') has been especially helpful in this context.⁶

'Domestication' and 'Foreignization'

A fundamental assumption in 'translational studies' consists in revealing the differences between cultures and clarifying their historic and dynamic character. The Columbus story may help to illustrate this: by ironing out the differences between the local chief and the Spanish captain, the native king is subjected to the European value system without being able to oppose this European display of power. His language and thus he himself are being 'domesticated'. According to the 'translational studies', a better translation would have been achieved if the representational shapes of Tortuga Island had been mirrored in the perception of the European traveller. Only then would a respectful mutual communication have been possible.

The translation theorist Lawrence Venuti considers exposing the differences between the translated text and its 'original' to be one of the main prerequisites [49] of a good translator. Venuti describes two possible translation methods, along the lines of Friedrich Schleiermacher:

In an 1813 lecture on the different methods of translation, Schleiermacher argued that 'there are only two. Either the translator leaves the author in peace, as much as possible, and moves the reader towards him; or he leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author towards him'. [...] Admitting (with qualifications like 'as much as possible') that translation can never be completely adequate to the foreign text, Schleiermacher allowed the translator to choose between a domesticating method, an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values, bringing the author back home, and a foreignizing method, an ethnodeviant pressure on those values to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad.⁷

By 'domestication' Venuti means the Columbus technique, which returns a foreign text entirely back to the values of the target culture, in this case the Spanish readers of the log, thus bringing 'Indian' culture as discursive booty to Europe. Venuti argues in favour of 'foreignization', which clarifies the foreign text's linguistic and cultural differences and sends the reader on a journey to foreign countries. The image of a journey has caught on in 'translational studies'; it is no longer a matter of discovering 'roots' but rather of analysing the 'routes' of cultural influences.⁸

Venuti therefore considers estrangement as a founding strategy for translation in order to uncover the cultural and social power structures. The 'foreignization' should ideally show the discursive strategies that have led to the creation of both the 'original' text and its translation:

On the other hand, resistant strategies can help to preserve the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text by producing translations which are strange and estranging, which mark the limits of dominant values in the target-language culture and hinder those values from enacting an imperialistic domestication of a cultural other.⁹

Venuti's critical translation theory is not only particularly relevant to cultural history research but also to the observation of the world in an age of globalisation. It aims to make a contribution towards the political and economic justice of this century.¹⁰ [50]

Translating Pagan Knowledge for the Benefit of Christian Readers

This article focuses on Franciscus Ridderus's text *De Beschaemde Christen door Het Geloof en Leven Van Heydenen en andere natuerlijcke Menschen* (1669). The Rotterdam clergyman uses the knowledge gathered in the Republic about the various non-European people to prove that God's truth exists even in the remotest corners of the world. Another seventeenth-century theologian, Abraham Rogerius, provides a similarly elaborate description of a foreign culture, in this case Hinduism, in his book *De open deure tot het verborgen heydendom* (1651). Ridderus has based his own study on this work.¹¹ Also belonging to this group of authors is Simon Oomius who, in *Het geopende en wederleyde Muhammedisdome of Turckdom* (1663), examines in detail the history and doctrine of Islam with a view, as the title suggests, to refuting the tenets of this foreign religion.¹² Ridderus also collected data from this book. Ridderus, Rogerius and Oomius represent a group of Dutch theologians who sought to develop the knowledge about both non-European religions just before the Christian mission work and that of their *European* contemporaries. Their premise was that amongst 'pagans', i.e. followers of any religion other than Judaism or Christianity, loyalty to their deities and the fulfilment of their religious duties is more prevalent than amongst Christians in the Republic and elsewhere in Europe. Thus Ridderus came to appreciate Islam and Rogerius produced a detailed study of Hinduism, whereas Oomius shed a more systematically critical light on Islam as he had described it.

These theological works have been particularly instrumental in spreading knowledge about non-European cultures. Against the backdrop of the 'translational studies' concepts outlined above, the question arises as to how this knowledge has been translated for early modern Dutch readers. Are foreign cultures and their knowledge systems seen as inferior to European culture and, as a result, do their standards and values have to undergo a process of 'domestication'? How are clearly different religious doctrines (for example, in polytheistic cultures) dealt with? And what place is allocated to Christianity when directly compared to foreign religions?

This article purports to be a preliminary study for a broader discussion about a genre of its own, so to speak, in seventeenth-century literature: the theological-chorographical literature.

Franciscus Ridderus

Although somewhat forgotten today, Franciscus Ridderus (1620-1683) was one of the most prolific and best-loved authors of the Further Reformation.¹³ His years as a preacher in Rotterdam (1656-83) were particularly important, a time in which he made his name as an erudite author and cleric with Orange sympathies. In 1665, the time of 'true freedom', his efforts on behalf of the Prince brought him [51] into conflict with the city authorities after he had criticized the existing political situation and testified to his support for the later William the

Third. Ridderus was a good friend of Simon Simonides (1629-1675) who was notorious in circles loyal to the State and who, as a fierce opponent of the brothers De Witt, was considered by Joachim Oudaen (1628-1692) in his *Haagsche Broeder-Moord* (1673) as the spiritual father of the lynching party.¹⁴

The preacher was a prolific writer and his bibliography comprises forty-two numbers.¹⁵ One of his first publications was an anthology of the works of Willem Teellinck (1579-1629), regarded as one of the pioneers of Dutch pietism.¹⁶ Like all the foundational and historical works of Ridderus, the aim of this publication was didactic: the work of Teellinck would become accessible to a wider readership. Such a broader audience was also aimed at by his work *Dagelijcxsche huys-catechisatie* (1657) in which, through thirty-one exercises each for morning, noon and evening, the imperatives of Christian teaching, life and biblical history were presented to the reader, exercises which were further subdivided into questions of differing degrees of difficulty according to the age and education of the public.

Apart from theological works and polemics on religious issues, Ridderus also published a large number of historical works. They were partly intended for historical instruction and partly served as useful compendia of historical knowledge. Such were his *Nuttige tyd-korter voor reysende en andere lieden* (1667) or his *Historisch A.B.C. tot een besige ledigheydt* (1664). He wrote four books, *Historischen Engelsman*, *Historischen Fransman*, *Historischen Hollander* and *Historischen Spanjaart* (1674-75), which relate to the crisis of the disastrous year 1672 and the ensuing battle of the Republic against England and France.

Another important work of Ridderus was *Historisch Sterf-huys, Ofte t'Samenspraeck uyt Heylige, Kerckelijcke en Weereltsche Historien Over allerley voorval ontrent Siecke en Stervende* (1665). This book is a large compilation of exempla regarding illness and death and the art of dying peacefully. Drawing on biblical, ecclesiastical and secular histories, examples are brought forward to illustrate the medical, legal, theological and ethical questions of dying. By means of a dialogue between a preacher, a doctor, a sick person and his wife, knowledge from these fields is presented. In this way the book resembles the medical compendia which became very popular in the second half of the seventeenth century. The author even uses well-known medical authorities: Daniel Sennert, Johan van Beverwijck, Andreas Vesalius, Gabriele Fallopio, Johannes Wier, Nicolaas Tulp and Johann Hebenstreit, to name but a few. This book served as a compilation of an important amount of ethnological knowledge since examples of how to deal with sickness and death were taken from Turkey, the West and East Indies and Africa.

The success of his work extended beyond the Dutch Republic, moreover, as thirteen of his works were translated into German in the seventeenth century.¹⁷ [52]

De Beschaemde Christen

The text of Ridderus's book *De Beschaemde Christen door Het Geloof en Leven Van Heydenen en andere natuerlijcke Menschen* is set up in the form of a dialogue between a 'listener' only recently schooled in the true faith and allowed to participate in (reformed) communion, and a 'preacher' battling against the deep-seated prejudices the listener seems to harbour against pagan peoples.¹⁸ He does not mince his words: to him they are all animals without reason and only concerned with their bodily needs and who live as pigs in a sty!¹⁹ In the course of the dialogue the 'preacher' will cure him of this bias. The 'listener' will come to realize how often

the supposed superiority of Christianity is a sham and how it behoves one to get to know one's own faith and culture better before one is able to evaluate other cultures critically.

The use of dialogue also has consequences for the analysis of the concepts of 'domestication' and 'foreignization' in Ridderus's book. To a certain extent the 'listener' can be seen as the personification of the 'domestication' process: he can easily translate the knowledge about foreign peoples into his own world, as they are simply inferior in his eyes and stories about them have no more than anecdotal value. Therefore, a challenge of his worldview is unthinkable, at least at the beginning of the book. Conversely, the 'preacher' embodies the concept of 'foreignization': he makes the 'listener' realise the limitations of his perceptiveness and shows that a critical approach to one's own worldview is essential for understanding foreign cultures. Whereas the 'listener', according to the above-mentioned quote of Venuti, brings the pagan culture home, the 'preacher' sends him abroad and deprives him of Christian self-assurance and feelings of superiority. Both protagonists of the dialogue thus gain the freedom to cast a fresh look on the world, a freedom that is closely linked to the alienating way of translating used in respect of pagan cultures.

The stylistic form of the instructional dialogue typifies Ridderus's work. He also uses it in some of his other edifying writings, for example in *Dagelijcxsche huys-catechisatie of Historisch Sterf-huis*. Likewise, the way theological problems are dealt with in a question-and-answer game is typical of catechism and was therefore a literary technique familiar to the seventeenth-century reader. Incidentally, in *De open deure tot het verborgen heydendom*, Abraham Rogerius makes use of the message as literary form. However, dialogues do play a role in his work as well because his information about Hinduism had been gathered during conversations with Tamil Brahmins.

Ridderus comprehensively covers pagan society in thirty-three chapters: chapter 1 starts with the quest for a blissful life amongst the pagans and subsequently the book examines life after death, science and knowledge, religion, prayer, churchgoing, pagan virtues, their social system, their housekeeping and social customs. The book ends with the theme of death amongst pagan populations. [53] All in all Ridderus draws a very positive picture of pagan culture. The vast majority of these foreign populations possess all the virtues that one would expect to prevail amongst Europeans and Christians, had they not been relegated to oblivion by the European drop in moral standards, as the 'preacher' tirelessly reminds the 'listener'.

In the course of this discussion, Ridderus refers in passing to the sources from which he draws his chorographic knowledge. Apart from Abraham Rogerius and Simon Oomius, they concern famous Dutch works, such as Olfert Dapper's writings about Asia and Africa or Pieter van den Broecke's log (1634). Also quoted is Bartolomé de las Casas's *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* (1552, translated into Dutch in 1578 with the title *Seer kort verhael van de destructie van d'Indien*). To a Calvinistic author like Ridderus the stories about the Spanish crimes in South America obviously match the *black* legend about the Spanish arch-enemy. Yet one of the main sources he frequently quotes is *Magnum Theatrum Vitae Humanae* (1631) by the Catholic theologian Laurens Beyerlinck.²⁰ Beyerlinck was archpriest and censor in Antwerp and, as such, one of the famous humanists whom Rubens associated with. His encyclopaedic work, which was a continuation and a rewrite of Theodor Zwingers's *Theatrum vitae humanae* (1565), contained inter alia the current knowledge of that time about European and non-European cultures and provided Ridderus with a rich source of ethnographic material. The Catholic signature was apparently not an issue for the Calvinistic preacher as he was able to easily incorporate the knowledge about pagan cultures in its own framework.

The Challenge of Paganism

Ridderus's book *De Beschaemde Christen* treats a subject which had been variously and controversially discussed since the inception of the Christian Church and its mission: who are the pagans, do they possess the light of reason and God's grace, and are they able to achieve salvation without the conscious acceptance of Christ?

The author offers a traditional definition of paganism.²¹ It includes all descendants of Noah scattered over the earth who do not follow the true – Christian – religion. From a historical perspective, the pagans are those who, before Christ, were not Jewish and after Him did not follow Christianity. Muslims too (always called 'Turks' by Ridderus) are seen as pagans.²² In his listing of various peoples, he invokes the authority of the ancients, even though he actually writes about many peoples in Africa and the West and East Indies who only entered the European sphere of perception in the fifteenth century.

The preacher from Rotterdam wanted above all to combat prejudice against pagans. Regarding the question of their share of the light of reason he answers in the affirmative, showing that many pagans have, through nature and therefore reason, lived better than many a Christian did through the light of grace, and that [54] they sought their salvation in virtue and not in worldly life. In this way they also strove, according to Ridderus, for heavenly bliss.²³

In the preface Ridderus asks how the pagans may have acquired their wisdom because it is remarkable that many of their teachings are concordant with Christianity, even though they have never received instruction from the Bible. His explanation is that, though the original image of God was distorted by the Fall, the descendants of Adam nevertheless possessed certain basic principles of natural reason which allowed them to formulate just laws and a virtuous way of life. Above all, the contemplation of nature and its creatures taught them some things about God's wisdom. Moreover, Noah left behind a tradition of true religion of which traces are found amongst pagans, too. Finally, contact with the Jewish diaspora also taught them many true things.²⁴

Despite these words, it remains self-evident to Ridderus that only belief in Christ can lead to true salvation. He quotes Tertullian on this: who has ever found wisdom without God? Who has ever found the way straight to God without Christ? Who has ever learnt Christ truly without the Holy Spirit? And who has received the Holy Spirit without the true faith?²⁵

With this dogmatic justification, Ridderus defends himself against possible criticism for his positive views of foreign people.²⁶ The purpose of the book is to bring Christians to a life of piety according to the Christian commandments by means of examples from pagans. The chief means for achieving this end is provoking shame at the immoral conduct of many Christians and praising the exemplary life of other peoples.²⁷

Dangerous Knowledge

At the same time, through its sheer diversity, pagan knowledge remains problematic even for the preacher. The listener therefore has difficulty judging its true value. What can he do with all these pagan practices from the four corners of the earth? He is warned off the aimless gathering of facts in any case. It is not a question of satisfying one's curiosity in reading about marvellous forms of divinities or of feeling a pleasantly ticklish revulsion at hearing about animal and human sacrifices. The preacher condemns this kind of ethnological knowledge. One ought not to strive to be widely known as a learned man but to be famous for being called a pious one, he

says, following Seneca.²⁸ This is the true orientation: all knowledge serves but one purpose – growing in the faith and knowledge of the working of God's grace everywhere in the world.

Pagan knowledge is evaluated in a varying manner. On the one hand the ancient philosophers, especially the Stoics, are quoted approvingly by the preacher. Ridderus seems to have a particular liking for Seneca in this respect. Virtue and wisdom are united, as the striving for happiness is contained within the striving for a virtuous existence. In a second tier are the representatives of Islam, who are [55] also seen in a positive light. Numerous quotations prove their deep-seated fear of God and their striving to sanctify life at all levels. He then looks at Asian people and religions and there the reader already feels more of his distrust. The burning of widows and the suicides of the Japanese for their god Amida no longer have anything to do with stoical wisdom, even though they show the dedication of the faithful to their deities. They are foolishness and are pointed out as such. Finally, he comes to the less civilized peoples of Africa and America. Again, differences are pointed out. While American Indians are mainly critical of Europeans and their Christian belief, Africans are depicted as devil-worshippers who serve their idols more faithfully than Christians do their God.

Ridderus, who knew Erasmus's work well, elaborates various concepts of 'wisdom' and 'folly' just like the great humanist.²⁹ The idol worship, suicides and burning of widows are examples of a pious rage which is meant to provoke both revulsion and wonder in the reader: revulsion for the great extent of the deviation from the true teaching which is shown in pagan practices and admiration on the other hand for the incredible steadfastness with which these erring people cling to their religion. The 'folly' of Stoical philosophers is of another kind altogether. It is one chosen deliberately as a revulsion of the bodily, a despising of the earthly needs of human beings. It is an abnegation which is often seen as 'folly' by other humans, but which for the truly wise is the highest virtue. In this way the outer things – riches, power and fame – are held as unimportant, while the inner things – wisdom and virtue – are seen as the most excellent.³⁰ This holy life of the ancient pagans ought to shame Christians. In relation to the Stoical philosophers, but also to Muslims and other pagans, the 'folly' of Christians living but sporadically in accordance with their religious precepts, is made manifest. It is then the turn of the pagans to ridicule them.³¹

Islam

Amongst the various groups of people in his book, the 'Turks' or 'Moors' (North Africans) – in other words, the Muslims – are the most important representatives of non-ancient pagans. Ridderus, who owned a Dutch edition of the Qu'ran, was clearly positive about them. Next to the ancient philosophers, Muslims were most advanced in the knowledge of the divine light and divine wisdom. Although completely ignorant of Christ's mercy, they do know something of its workings: they teach that conversion and faith can only be the work of mercy and not human effort. Even Mohammed claimed, according to Ridderus, that he could only achieve salvation through God's mercy. They also value spiritual purification highly, expressed in Islam through ritual ablutions that are symbolic of the cleansing of the heart, soul and human feelings, so that the believer will only serve God and forget his worldly inclinations.³² [56]

The author also shows great respect for the Islamic teaching of wisdom which corresponds on important points with Christianity: the fundamental principle remains that fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Quoting an Arabic saying, he says the wisest wisdom is divine bliss and the greatest folly godlessness.³³ This knowledge leads Muslims to effect good works which

are, in Ridderus's Protestant perspective, the fruit of faith rather than its precondition. He speaks with admiration of their skill in concentrated praying, in which they surpass most Christians by far. He explicitly condemns prejudice, as if they prayed to 'idols', though their first article of faith is that there is but one God.³⁴ This realisation is shared by all the Muslim faithful without social distinction: the Turkish emperor, the soldier or tradesman – all serve God in the same devout manner.

Lastly, Muslims share with Christians their reverence of the holy book. The Qu'ran means more to them than the Bible does to many Christians. Ridderus tells the anecdote about professors Hottingerus and Golius in Leiden who had bought a Qu'ran from an Islamic acquaintance. Hottingerus was inclined to read it and also frequently made notes in it in the presence of the Muslim. Three years later the Muslim returned and demanded the Qu'ran back in order to burn it since it had been profaned by Christian usage. According to Ridderus, this was proof of their reverence for their holy scriptures because they rightly saw Christians, because of their godless lives, as impure.³⁵ Furthermore, the author from Rotterdam points out that Islamic teaching also reserved an important role for the Bible. It explicitly states that the Gospels are a light of truth and that a true believer follows the laws of the Old and New Testaments as well as the Qu'ran.³⁶

In his positive valuation of Islam, Ridderus clearly goes much further than other authors. In his *Het geopende en wederleyde Muhammedisdome of Turckdom*, the theologian Simon Oomius draws a rather negative picture of Islam, although his book too was meant to inspire increased religious zeal in the Christian reader. However, there is the bad example from a foreign religion from which Christians can learn something. Oomius uses, for example, the old Christian topos of Muhammad as a liar and speaks of 't doodelicke *fenijn der Muhammetisterye*' (the deadly *venom of Muhammadisms*), whilst Ridderus never refers in those terms to the prophet or the Islamic religion. Although Ridderus uses material by Oomius, he clearly places the facts in a different context: it is precisely the positive virtues of Muslims that Christians should emulate.³⁷

Polytheism

A comparison with Abraham Rogerius, another theologian interested in non-European societies who inspired Ridderus's book, shows how both Calvinistic authors dealt with another area, namely polytheistic cultures, and Hinduism in particular. [57]

In his book *De open deure tot het verborgen heydendom*, Rogerius gives one of the first detailed descriptions of the life and religious ideas of Tamil Brahmins on the south-east coast of India, where he had lived for many years as a preacher.³⁸ Rogerius's text reproduces information about Hinduism as gathered by the author during conversations with two Brahmins, with whom he was able to exchange ideas in Portuguese. Virtually all the data contained in the book come from these learned men. He therefore relies heavily on local knowledge and the indigenous sources are treated with respect. The author seldom opposes his Christian views to the teachings of Hinduism and, when it happens, it concerns a discussion between the Brahmins and the preacher in which Christianity has to argue and prove its privileged position. However, Rogerius hardly ever expresses any feeling of superiority. Regarding the positive appreciation of religions with several deities, Ridderus follows cautiously in Rogerius's footsteps. For him the main precondition for an understanding of the polytheistic religions is that these pagans also know God and worship Him. He concedes that

many worship more than one god but he puts this down to the priests having instituted differing cults in order to gain greater profit from them.³⁹

When he speaks of Hindus, he usually brings in the Brahmins. They know God, heaven and hell, and believe in the resurrection of the dead. Furthermore, he names the belief in reincarnation as one of the teachings of Hinduism and he suspects the origin of this belief to lie in the ideas of Pythagoras.⁴⁰ Ridderus, however, does not think this belief is central to Hinduism. Yet even he cannot surmount all the prejudices of the Calvinistic European with respect to this faith. The Brahmins, he writes, worship the sun and the moon because they see them as the eyes of God. They know angels, yet it is clear that they also serve the devil since they possess terrible images of the devil which they anoint, pray to and in front of which they sacrifice. Even though they know an omnipotent, omniscient and immortal God in heaven, they do not worship him because the devil has persuaded them it is unnecessary. Instead, they serve the idols described above out of fear of the Evil one.⁴¹ In this respect Ridderus differs from Abraham Rogerius for whom the so-called devil adoration of the Hindus plays a marginal role.

The lowest place in the hierarchy of different religions is given by Ridderus to Africans. Although he cites the Amsterdam chorographer Olfert Dapper and his *Naukeurige beschrijvinge der Afrikaensche gewesten* (1668) as a source in various places, his critical description of West African religion seems more strongly influenced by the travel accounts of Pieter de Marees, in his *Beschryvinge ende Historische verhael, vant Gout koninckrijck van Gunea* (1602). Where Dapper gives a relatively objective account of African beliefs, De Marees, following then current European commonplaces, only sees Africans as devil-worshippers who do not even qualify for missionary action.⁴² [58]

Ridderus would like to use Africans to shame Christians for their poor record in piety but keeps his distance from their religion. They are under the sway of animism, and hence worship fish, birds, trees and mountains and also sacrifice to their devilish idols the Fetishes. They would never break promises made to these idols, as many a Christian would his vow to God. Even young children in West Africa are promised to the idols: parents make certain promises in their name which they will have to live up to their whole adult lives.

European Crimes

Ridderus reserves a rather different role in his work for indigenous Americans. Where the inhabitants of West Africa are meant to frighten Christian readers because of their loyalty to devil worship, the Indians have a much nobler nature. This is mainly because they have a great desire to be instructed in Christianity. Following *De conversione Indorum et gentilium* (1659) of Johannes Hoornbeek, he narrates that Indians listened with great zeal to the teachers of the Gospel. They even went further by seeking out preachers in their homes in order to receive the right Christian instruction. After their conversion to Christianity, they wanted to study further and questioned the clerics about the practice of faith in daily life, something that many European Christians would never bother with. Ridderus draws up a whole catalogue of these ethical questions asked by the native Indians.⁴³

This zeal in faith gives the Indians the moral upper hand and allows a harsh critique of European colonial practice. In this, Ridderus often leans on Bartolomé de las Casas and his *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias*. There is no doubt that for a Dutch Protestant the cruelty of the Spaniards in the West Indies belonged to the dark legends disseminated in the Republic for political reasons. Indeed, the author had himself contributed

to this with his *Historischen Spanjaart*. In the context of the *Beschaemde Christen*, however, the criticism extends beyond the Spaniards to the immoral behaviour of all Christians, something preventing a successful missionary action.

In a well-known story from De las Casas used by Ridderus, some Indians show each other a gold coin and say: 'See here the God of the Christians, for which they came from Castile, subjected us and turned us into slaves and for the sake of this Gold-God Christians wage war on each other and perpetrate all kinds of evil'.⁴⁴ The 'listener', one of the interlocutors in Ridderus's book, voices the hope that the name of the Dutch is not tainted by this greed but the 'preacher' cannot reassure him: the Tapoyer of Brazil, for example, could not be converted to Christianity because they had seen the immoral conduct of the Europeans, including the Dutch. In New Holland the natives listened carefully to the preaching of the teachers and then asked them afterwards why Europeans themselves seemed to disdain such good precepts.⁴⁵ The Dutch expansion too, was guilty of misconduct. [59]

'Domestication' and 'Foreignization' of Pagans and Christians

For Ridderus, the knowledge provided by other cultures is problematic. To him and his contemporaries, contact with foreign cultures and religions represented a new challenge: how could a fruitful communication be established with this other world, without belittling Christianity but also without exposing the non-European knowledge to premature condemnation? Interestingly Ridderus does not opt for 'domestication', the quick subjugation of the foreign way of thinking to the European knowledge system. He seems convinced by the intrinsic value of both the pagan wisdom from antiquity and the contemporary philosophy of, for example, Islam or Hinduism.

One could argue that the novelty of his book lies in the separation of the object of faith, God, that can only be perceived adequately, according to Ridderus, by Christian theology and the praxis pietatis, which actually allows Christians to learn from pagan wisdom. This dualistic approach gives Ridderus the freedom to collect ethnological knowledge in an unbiased way and to candidly translate pagan ideas for the benefit of his Christian readership. In this context Descartes's duality concept springs to mind, as does his distinction, crucial for scholarly debate, between 'res extensa' and 'res cogitans'. To Ridderus, pagan culture is 'res extensa' as it were, which the intelligence can observe and whose perception can be fruitful for the development of one's own philosophical and social ideas. It allows pagan culture to shed its alarming image, whilst stemming the flow of knowledge brought in by European expansion.

In dealing with non-European wisdom, the author resorts to another strategy. He turns the concepts of 'domestication' and 'foreignization' around. Although pagan cultures remain ethnologically foreign, they become familiar when placed against the backdrop of Christian values and norms, as Ridderus does. This is because they follow, however unconsciously, a great number of Christian precepts. This allows Ridderus to translate their religion in a positive manner adapted to the capacity for perception of his Dutch readership. The seemingly familiar Christians – and here one ought to think of the figure of the 'listener', and hence a reformed Christian – in fact experience a strong 'foreignization' on all levels: where pagans are pious they are godless, where heathens are virtuous they are immoral, where heathens are loyal they are fickle, and so on. Ridderus expands on these oppositions at some length.

Christians are alienated from themselves and this makes any mission questionable, something emphasized by Ridderus's critique of Europeans. It also goes to show the actuality of

this early modern discussion of values which still plays an important role in contemporary debates between religions or Western and non-Western value systems. Loss of identity, which is the real subject of his book, is a feeble basis on which to stake claims to ethical leadership and feelings of superiority. Discovering oneself in the other is, on the contrary, motivation for re-evaluating [60] one's own principles. Although, dogmatically speaking, Ridderus never abandons the perspective of a reformed preacher, he has nevertheless brought a new viewpoint to bear on Christian practices: he has created a 'pagan vision' of Christianity which shows the lifestyle and beliefs of Christians through foreign eyes and which might inspire them to re-examine their self-knowledge and knowledge of other cultures. In other words, a process of 'cultural exchanges' has occurred.

Notes

1. Regarding the transfer of knowledge from and to the Dutch Republic, see e.g. Inger Leemans, Jan Konst and Bettina Noak (eds), *Niederländisch-Deutsche Kulturbeziehungen 1600-1830* (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2009); Siegfried Huigen, Jan L. de Jong and Elmer Kolfin (eds), *The Dutch Trading Companies as Knowledge Networks* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).
2. See Peter Burke, *Cultural Translation in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
3. Susan Bassnett, *Translation Studies* (London / New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 6. Regarding the 'translational turn', see Doris Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural Turns. Neuorientierungen in den Kulturwissenschaften* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2007), pp. 238-83.
4. Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 13.
5. These concepts have been formulated by Mary Louise Pratt. See Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London / New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 6-7.
6. Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural Turns*, p. 264.
7. Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London / New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 19-20.
8. Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural Turns*, p. 258.
9. Venuti, *Rethinking Translation: Discourse, Subjectivity, Ideology* (London / New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 13.
10. 'I want to suggest that insofar as foreignizing translation seeks to restrain the ethnocentric violence of translation, it is highly desirable today, a strategic cultural intervention in the current state of world affairs, pithed against the hegemonic English-language nations and the unequal cultural exchanges in which they engage their global others. Foreignizing translation in English can be a form of resistance against ethnocentrism and racism, cultural narcissism and imperialism, in the interests of democratic geopolitical relations.' Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility*, p. 20.
11. Abraham Rogerius, *De open deure tot het verborgen heydendom* (Leiden: Hackius, 1651).
12. Simon Oomius, *Het geopende en wederleyde Muhammedisdom of Turckdom* (Amsterdam: Van Beaumont, 1663).

13. About Ridderus, see Herman Postema, *Strijder op de middenweg: leven en werk van Franciscus Ridderus* (Kampen: De Groot Goudriaan, 2005).
14. Joachim Oudaan, *Haagsche broeder-moord of Dolle blydschap* (Utrecht: De Vooys, 1984).
15. See the bibliography of his book possessions in Postema, *Strijder op de middenweg*, pp.170-208. [61]
16. See Willem Jan op 't Hof, *Willem Teellinck (1579-1629): leven, geschriften en invloed* (Kampen: De Groot Goudriaan, 2008).
17. See Johanna Bundschuh-van Duikeren, *Niederländische Literatur des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011).
18. Franciscus Ridderus, *Der böse Maul- und Heuchel-Christ, beschämt Durch den Glauben und das Leben der Heyden und anderer natürlicher Menschen* (Nürnberg: Endter, 1677), pp. bviii r-ci v. The Dutch version was published under the title: *De Beschaemde Christen door Het Geloof en Leven Van Heydenen en andere natuerlijcke Menschen* (Rotterdam: Borstius, 1669).
19. Ridderus, *Heuchel-Christ*, p. 2.
20. Regarding Beyerlinck, see Friedrich Stegmüller, 'Laurent Beyerlinck', in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, vol. 2 (Freiburg: Herder, 1958), pp. 330-1; Wolfgang Brückner, 'Laurentius Beyerlinck', in *Enzyklopädie des Märchens*, vol 2. (Berlin / New York: De Gruyter, 1979), pp. 279-81; Nils Büttner, Herr P.P. Rubens. *Von der Kunst, berühmt zu werden* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), p. 45.
21. In what follows I speak, with Ridderus, about pagan religion, pagan knowledge, and so on. This is a seventeenth-century concept and does not imply a value judgment on my part.
22. From the inception of Islam there had been no consensus about the theological approach of this new religion in the Christian discussion: Muslims were considered to be either heretics or pagans. With the arrival of scholasticism, Muslims were increasingly seen as pagans. See in this respect Hartmut Bobzien, 'Islam und Christentum', in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, vol. XVI (Berlin / New York: De Gruyter, 1987), pp. 336-49. Regarding the use of the German word 'Heide': 'Im Deutschen wurde das etymologisch nicht hinreichend geklärte Wort 'Heide' einmal üblich als umfassende Bezeichnung für alles Nicht- und Außerchristliche, die Muslime später eingeschlossen [...]'. Hans-Werner Gensichen, 'Heidentum I', in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, vol. XVI (Berlin/ New York: De Gruyter, 1985), p. 593.
23. Ridderus, *Heuchel-Christ*, pp. avii v-bi r.
24. Ridderus, *Heuchel-Christ*, pp. cij r-cij v.
25. Tertullianus, *De anima*, cap. 1; quoted in Ridderus, *Heuchel-Christ*, p. biiij r.
26. 'Aber noch eines dörrfte, allem Ansehen nach, getadelt und bestraffet werden [by the reader – B.N.]: daß, weil der Glaube und das Leben der Heyden dergestalt vorgestellt worden, es scheinen möchte, als ob man ihnen auch den Himmel zueignen wolte: Wiewol wir nun diejenigen, so draussen sind, nicht zu urtheilen; noch, indem [in case – B.N.] Gott auch den // Heyden den Himmel geben wolte, wir sie deswegen zu beneiden hätten, so wissen wir jedoch nichts desto weniger sehr wol, daß die Seeligkeit allein in Christo Jesu ist (Apost.Gesch.4.v.12.).' Ridderus, *Heuchel-Christ*, pp. bij v-biiij r.
27. In this sentence Ridderus quotes Simon Oomius approvingly: 'Insonderheit kan von uns // nicht ohne innerste Empfindlichkeit angewiesen werden, das Absehen, welches wir hierinnen haben, nemlich die Beschämung so vieler Nam-Christen, die in so vielen und verschiedenen Dingen von den

Mahumetanern, oder Türcken, weit übertroffen werden, so wol in denen Dingen, die geglaubet, als in denen, so gethan werden müssen, etc.' Ridderus, Heuchel-Christ, p. avi r-v. Luther also used the example of the pagans to shame immoral Christians, see Gensichen, 'Heidentum I', p. 597. [62]

28. Ridderus, Heuchel-Christ, p. 39.
29. The library of Ridderus contained several works of Erasmus; for the complete list of his books, see Postema, *Strijder op de middenweg*, pp. 170-208.
30. Ridderus, Heuchel-Christ, pp. 8-9.
31. About the Muslims, he says: 'Und ob sie [the Muslims] wol keine Christen, so dienen doch ihre Sprüche zur Überzeugung und Aufweckung der Christen. Unter welchen dieses ein Arabisch Sprichwort ist: [...] Die Furcht des Herrn ist der Weisheit Anfang. Der Türckische Caliph Hasenus sagte nachfolgende sehr denkwürdige Worte: Die allerweiseste Weisheit ist die Gottseeligkeit, und die allernärrischste Thorheit die Gottlosigkeit. Ob dieser nun nicht, wann er unter uns wohnete, viel Christen für Thoren und Narren halten würde, gebe ich euch hiermit weiter nachzudencken.' Ridderus, Heuchel-Christ, p. 55.
32. Ridderus, Heuchel-Christ, pp. 36-8.
33. Ridderus, Heuchel-Christ, p. 55.
34. Ridderus, Heuchel-Christ, p. 197-8.
35. Ridderus, Heuchel-Christ, pp. 75-6. Johann Heinrich Hottinger (1620-1667), author of inter alia *Historia orientalis* (Zürich: Bodmer, 1660), and Jacobus Golius (1596-1667), an orientalist from Leiden who published widely on Islam.
36. Ridderus, Heuchel-Christ, pp. 76-7.
37. Regarding Oomius's views on Islam: 'Als 'er soo over al meerder Christenen in den name, als in de daedt bevonden wierden, soo heeft Godt, gheterghet zijnde door haere schandelicke ondanckbaerheydt, haer een kracht der dwalinghe ghesonden, op dat sy de leughenen Muhammeds soudon mogen gelooven. En alsoo oock dese dinghen tot waerschouwinge van ons Nederlanders geschiet zijn, soo soudon wy geluckigh wesen, indien wy den schrick des Heeren wetende, ons lieten bewegen tot het gheloove, en een hooger ach- // tinge der geopenbaerde waerheyt; en om liever van die volckeren, die soo jammerlicken versoncken leggen in 't doodelicke fenijn der Muhammetisterye, een exempel te nemen, dan om oock anderen ten exempel gesteldt te worden. Die is waerlicken wijs, die sich soo laet waerschouwen, door anderer menschen schade en verderf, dat hy daer door geleert wordt sijn eyghen voor te komen.' Oomius, *Het geopende en wederleyde Muhammedisdom*, p. *4r-*4v.
38. As yet, very little has been written about Rogerius. See the introduction to the modern edition of *De open deure: De open deure tot het verborgen heyndom*. Door Abraham Rogerius, ed. by Willem Caland (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1915), pp. xxi-ix.
39. Ridderus, Heuchel-Christ, p. 86.
40. Ridderus, Heuchel-Christ, pp. 106-7.
41. Ridderus, Heuchel-Christ, p. 97.
42. Pieter de Marees, *Beschryvinge ende Historische verhael, vant Gout koninckrijck van Gunea* (Amsterdam: Cornelis Claesz., 1602), pp. 33-8.

43. Ridderus, Heuchel-Christ, pp. 57-61.
44. Ridderus, Heuchel-Christ, p. 835. About this story, see Bartholomeus de las Casas, *Spiegel der Spaenscher tyrannye in West-Indien* (Amsterdam: Nicolaes Biestkens, 1596), p. B4v.
45. Ridderus, Heuchel-Christ, pp. 714-6. [63]

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