

lege, and was assisted in his inquiry by one of the most learned Lamas. He continued there near six months; during which time he had the satisfaction of finding many valuable pieces of antiquity, from some of which he has made very curious extracts, and has formed such probable conjectures concerning their authors, and the times wherein they were written, as proves him to be a man of great judgment and penetration, as well as most extensive reading.

But the most ancient piece he hath discovered, and which none of the Lamas for many ages had been able to interpret or understand, is a small system of morality, written in the language and character of the ancient Gymnosophists or Bramins; but by what particular persons, or in what time, he does not pretend to determine. This piece, however, he wholly translated, though as he himself confesses, what an utter incapacity of reaching in the Chinese language the strength and sublimity of the original. The judgments and opinions of the bonzes and the learned doctors are very much divided concerning it. Those who admire it more highly are fond of attributing it to Confucius their own great philosopher; and get over the difficulty of its being written in the language and character of the ancient Bramins, by supposing this to be only a translation, and that the original work of Confucius was lost. Some will have it to be the institutes of Lao kinn, another Chinese philosopher, contemporary with Confucius and founder of the sect Tao-sse; but these labour under the same difficulty in regard to the language, with those who attribute it to Confucius. There are others who from some particular marks and sentiments which they find in it, suppose it to be written by the Bramin Dandamis, whose famous letter to Alexander the Great is recorded by the European writers. With these Cao-Tsou himself seems most inclined to agree; at least so far as to think that it is really the work of some ancient Bramin, being fully