



## Introduction of Western Ideology During the Late Ming and Early Qing

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Received 12 July 2017; accepted 9 September 2017

Published online 26 October 2017

### Abstract

Western Ideology such as philosophy, religion and allegory was introduced into China by the Catholic missionaries during the Late Ming and Early Qing. When introducing Christianity and theology of the Middle Ages, the Catholic missionaries introduced the characters of early western thoughts at the same time. It was beneficial to the Chinese scholars both in understanding the multiplicity of the world cultures and in improving their thinking methods.

**Key words:** Catholic missionaries; Western ideology; Introduction

Liu, J. G. (2017). Introduction of Western Ideology During the Late Ming and Early Qing. *Cross-Cultural Communication*, 13(10), 6-9. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/ccc/article/view/10165>  
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/10165>

### INTRODUCTION

When studying the western culture introduced by the Catholic missionaries, we should not rest on the lay of science. What we should do be to analyze their ideology and religion concepts, thus we may understand the core of western culture introduced by them. They had been well trained before coming to China. Whatever they did, both in the palace and among civil folks, in exhibiting their talents in astronomy, mathematics, geography and physics etc., was for one purpose, i.e. to prove the validity and grandness of their religion. Science was only the passport and missionizing was the real motive.

### 1. THE WESTERN SOCIETY DESCRIBED IN THE WRITING OF THE CATHOLIC MISSIONARIES

Matteo Ricci began to introduce western culture in his book *Jiaoyou Lun (The Treatise on Friendship)*, in which twenty-six famous western ideologists' adages had been cited in *Jiaoyou Lun (The Treatise on Friendship)*, including Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Marcus Tullius Cicero and Aurelius Augustinus (Ricci, 1595/2013).

Jules Aleni, who was called a Western Confucius by the scholars in Fujian Province, wrote a book *Xixue Fan (The General Outline of Western Learning)*. In the book Jules Aleni divided western cultures into six fields: arts, science, medicine, law, education and philosophy. He introduced all the items one by one. What he called "Arts" was similar to Chinese traditional "Learning", including reading ancient oracles' lectures, studying histories of different counties, reading all kinds of poems and articles and practicing in writing (Aleni, 1623/2013).

Jules Aleni's book was written for Chinese scholars, so it was somewhat genteel. Later, in order to meet young Emperor Kangxi's need, Ferdinand Verbiest integrated several similar books and edited a pellucid book to introduce western culture. The book was named *Yulan Xifang Jiyao (Summary of the West for the Emperor)*. In the book, various kinds of knowledge and information about all European countries were introduced separately, including the country' name, state system, king, history, custom, judiciary system, moral and ethic, economy and trade, city construction.

Emperor Kangxi and Emperor Qianlong often discussed with the western missionaries about the similarities and differences in polity, religion and culture between China and the West. Because they often contacted with missionaries, these two emperors knew more about the western society and formed their own viewpoints on the whole world. Their eye shots were much broader than those anterior Chinese

emperors'. French Jesuit Michel Benoist detailed one of his conversations with Emperor Qianlong in a letter. From the conversation we can find out the status of introduction of western culture in the Qing Palace.

Missionaries always described Europe as a paradise of heaven. Didace de Pantoja introduced western judiciary system in his book *Qike (Seven Capital Sins and Seven Opposing Virtues)*. He said that in the West, a criminal had the right to ask for rejudgement if he did not agree with the former judgement, even the king had no right to decide life or death for a person. In his introduction, Didace de Pantoja tried to prove the healthiness of western judiciary system, which restricted both majesty and badness of civil folks. He gave an example in the book. He wrote:

There is a special rule in the West that a man who likes to drink will not be allowed to attend in official affairs. If a man drunk once, what he said would not be accepted by the court. Therefore, drinking is the same evil as lasciviousness. If a woman drinks, it is just like she has amour with the other man. And a man must not drink before thirty years old. (de Pantoja, 1614/2013)

Of course, these instructions of Didace de Pantoja were exaggerated.

In the missionaries' writing, westerners' moral level was not lower than Chinese. Although what they introduced was the ethic of Catholicism, yet missionaries did their best to weaken the religion color. They just emphasized on social culture in order to display the civilization level of European countries. This is really a wise method. Whether Matteo Ricci's *Jiren Shipian (Ten Discourses by a Paradoxical Man)*, Didace de Pantoja's *Qike (Seven Capital Sins and Seven Opposing Virtues)* or Alphonsus Vagnoni's *Xiushen Xixue (Western Ethics)*, *Qijia Xixue (Treatise on Family)* and *Tongyou Jiaoyu (Education of Children)*, they all adopted this method.

For the Chinese people, the most marvelous thing in the western culture introduced by the missionaries was the marriage system in the West. Didace de Pantoja pointed directly to the phenomenon of concubinage in Chinese marriage system. He first argued about the rationality of monogamy in the West and then criticized Chinese plural marriage. In fact, Didace de Pantoja discussed plural marriage on the basis of asceticism in Catholicism. Actually, in early Confucianism, there were similar views. And the statement in Didace de Pantoja's writing was somewhat similar to the statements in the moralistic books in the late Ming Dynasty. So Didace de Pantoja's book was accepted by a lot of Chinese scholars.

Certainly, Chinese scholars got wrong meanings of what missionaries introduced about the western world. Xu Guangqi even believed that under the influence of Christianity, the society in the West was so harmonious that all people there, no matter old or young, official or civilian, helped each other and respected each other, and they were all cautious and conscientious to not be blamed by the God (Wang, 1963).

Nevertheless, the social problems in Europe at the time were not less than the problems in China. Just take the sex ethic for example, during the 15<sup>th</sup> century in Britain, there were seventy-three prurient cases judged by Norfolk Court, among them fifteen cases were involved with churchmen; in Lisbon, there were one hundred and twenty-six similar cases, among them twenty-four cases were involved with churchmen; and in Lambeth, among fifty-eight similar cases, nine cases were involved with churchmen. About twenty-three percent of the offenders were churchmen, yet numbers of churchmen were less than two percent of the total populations (Lin, 2003).

## 2. INTRODUCTION OF WESTERN PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

The motive for missionaries coming to China was to missionize. Introducing science and culture were the means and transmitting religion thoughts and philosophy were their real motive.

In the works of missionaries, they all introduced many ancient Greek philosophers, such as Plato and Aristotle. They discovered that one of the characters of Chinese thoughts was lack of logicity. Matteo Ricci said once: "The Chinese don't have any dialectic methods. So when they speak or write, they just rely on instincts, without scientific methods or orders." (Ricci, 1953/1983) So the missionaries paid more attention to introduce logic of Aristotle.

Jules Aleni said in his *Xixue Fan (General Outline of Western Learning)*: "Aristotle was an outstanding man with vast talents and knowledge. One of his important contributions was to initiate logic and make logic the basis of all other learnings." (Aleni, 1623/2013)

Portuguese missionary François Fuetado and Chinese scholar Li Zhizao cooperated in translating Aristotle's book *logic* into Chinese and the Chinese version named *Mingli Tan*. Li Zhizao was sixty-five years old then and his eyes were suffering from illness. Though they finished the translation of whole book, they had not enough time to finalize the manuscript. That is why only the first half part of the book was published then. Later, the second half part of the book was included in Ferdinand Verblest's *Qiong Lixue (Study of Fathoming Principles)*. The publishing of *Mingli Tang* indicated western logic was introduced into China for the first time. It had great meaning to the development of Chinese culture. Mohism once appeared in China during the Pre-Qing Period, yet it had not been developed into an independent logic. This affected greatly the character of Chinese culture. The introduction of Aristotle's *logic* was a revolutionary transform in Chinese culture and laid a foundation of modern Chinese logic.

The missionaries exerted themselves to introduce Christianity philosophy. Michel Ruggieri's *Shengjiao Tianzhu Shilu (Veritable Record of the Lord of Heaven)*

was the first book about Christianity published in China. Emmanuel Diaz Junior's *Shengjing Zhijie (Direct Instruction of Bible)* was the earliest book to introduce *Bible*. Louis de Poirot's *Guxin Shengjing (The Old Testament and The New Testament)* was a paraphrase of *Bible*, but it was not printed. The Chinese translation of *Summa Theologica*, a book of Thomas Aquinas, a theologian in the Middle Ages, should be mentioned specifically. It was translated by Louis Bagkio and Gabriel de Magalhaens. *Summa Theologica* was the magnum opus of theology in the Middle Ages. The missionaries introduced all basic theories and concepts of Christian theology in the Middle Ages to China by translating this book.

Chinese territory was so wild but the number of the missionaries was too small to manage such a large deanery. From the period of Matteo Ricci, the missionaries took publishing theology and philosophy works as an important method to offset the understaffed situation. People cannot think how hard the missionaries worked on translating and editing these works.

Up to today, there is no general bibliography of books translated or written in Chinese by the missionaries. And there is no exact statistics of books introducing western philosophy and Christian theology. According to statistics of US researcher TsienTsuen-Hsue based on Louis Pfister's *Notices biographiques et bibliographiques sur les Jésuites de l'ancienne mission de Chine 1552-1773* and Henry Bernard's *Les Adaptations Chinoises d'Ouvrages Européens: Bibli-Ographie Chronologique*, the Jesuits coming to China had translated four hundred and thirty-seven western books into Chinese during the period from late Ming Dynasty to early Qing Dynasty, among them two hundred and fifty-one were religion books, up to seventy percent of the total amount. This can verify the real motive of missionaries coming to China was to promulgate Catholicism and theology.

### 3. TRANSLATION OF WESTERN ALLEGORY

The transmission of western literature by missionaries originated from the translation and introduction of *Aesop's Fables*. According to the latest study in China, altogether fifty stories of Aesop's Fables were introduced into China by the missionaries during the Ming and Qing Dynasties.

Matteo Ricci was the first person to introduce *Aesop's Fables*. In his book *Jiren Shipian (Ten Discourses by a Paradoxical Man)*, he quoted six stories of *Aesop's Fables*, including *The Swollen Fox*, *Two Hunters*, *The Lion and the Fox*, and *The Horse and the Ass*. Matteo Ricci introduced, "Aesop was an ancient wise man. His motherland was conquered and he was put in prison. He had thousands of students at that time." (Ricci, 1608/2013)

Didace de Pantoja quoted seven stories of *Aesop's Fables* in his book *Qike (Seven Capital Sins and Seven*

*Opposing Virtues)*. They were *The Crow and the Fox*, *A Poor Man Selling Wine*, *The Rabbit and the Frog*, *The Ass and the Horse*, *The Lion*, *The Wolf and the Fox*, etc. One of the reasons for the success of his book *Qike (Seven Capital Sins and Seven Opposing Virtues)* was to quote *Aesop's Fables*.

In the fifth year of Tianqi Period of Ming Dynasty (1625), a complete translated version of *Aesop's Fables* was published in China, which was dictated by Nicolas Trigault and recorded by a Chinese conversus Zhang Geng. Nicolas Trigault was a very important person in the history of cultural communication between China and the West. He came to China in 1610 and was sent back to Rome in 1614 to report to the Pontifex. During that period, he went around Europe to introduce Chinese culture. In 1618, he led twenty-two missionaries to China, among them there were Johann Adam Schall von Bell, Jean Terrenz and Jacques Rho etc. who later played important roles in introducing western learning in China. They carried more than seven thousand books with them that were collected from European countries.

Besides *Aesop's Fables*, missionaries introduced some other ancient Greek fables and Roman fables. These fables were belonged to the exemplum in literary type. Missionaries were metaphorizing the religion thoughts by telling these stories. Thus, an important literary type was formed gradually. Why missionaries preferred to promulgate religion thoughts by telling fables or say why they preferred to promulgate religion thoughts in literary form? Chinese researcher Li Shixue gave us a good answer. He said:

In China, telling fables were special capabilities of those ancient scholars, from Zhuang Zi to Han Feizi, many of them were quite good at lecture. Since the Qin Dynasty, Fables in China were aware year by year. As to the Ming dynasty, fables gained renaissance again. The Jesuits came to China just at the time so they were affected by the times style naturally. (Li, 2005)

### 4. CHRISTIANITY AND WESTERN THEOLOGY IN THE EYES OF CHINESE SCHOLARS

To Chinese ideologists, what the missionaries introduced about Christianity and western theology was entirely new. Naturally, various reactions were initiated in Chinese scholars and a conflict in ideology had been developed since then.

After the arrival of Matteo Ricci, some Chinese scholars had accepted Catholicism. Liang Qichao said in his book *Zhongguo Jinsanbai NianXueshu Shi (Academic History of China of the Past Three Hundred Years)*:

At the time, scholars who adopted Matteo Ricci's ideology were Xu Guangqi, Zhou Ziyu, Qu Shigu, Yu Chunxi, Fan Liangshu, Qu Rukui, Cao Yubian, Zheng Yiwei, Xiong Mingyu, Chen Liangcai, Xu Xucheng, Xiong Shiqi, etc. All of them wrote

prefaces or postscripts for the missionaries' books. From this we can see how large the group was. (Liang, 1936)

The most important reason why Chinese scholars accepted Catholicism then was that Matteo Ricci adopted a method of linking Catholicism with Confucianism. Most of the Chinese scholars comprehended Catholicism from their own points of view and they only paid attention to the similarity between Catholicism and Confucianism, ignoring the difference. Even to those scholars, who had papalized, their belief in Catholicism was built on the same base. In addition, Catholicism met the needs of the development of Confucianism in the late Ming Dynasty. Yangming Xinxue, a theory founded by Wang Yangming became more and more vacant up to the late Ming Dynasty. And the trend of real study was getting higher. At this time, the Chinese scholars naturally welcomed and accepted Catholicism introduced by the missionaries with the method of science.

But during the Ming and Qing Dynasties, only a few scholars accepted western religion ideology and the force of the opponents was still large. Most criticisms to Catholicism ideology had little incisive contents, but from these criticisms we still can find out the tremendous difference between Chinese and Western cultures.

These scholars criticized Catholicism ideology on the major basis of distinguishing between the West and China. They still believed that China was the only civilized nation in the world, and the missionaries intended to change Chinese by introducing their evil religion. Furthermore, the theories of Catholicism were totally strange and intricate for Chinese scholars. Even those who converted to Catholicism, such as Yang Tingyun, comprehended the concept of God in Catholicism on the basis of Confucianism. He said once: "The God takes all people as his children without any difference. So we should take God as our parents and pay our worship to the God as well as we pay respects to our parents." (Yang, 1621/1986) This was a typical Chinese expression of Christianity.

Confucianism and Christianity are two different expressions of eastern culture and western culture. Not only Matteo Ricci, but also people today cannot solve the problem of communications between different cultures completely. The major value of the western missionaries and those Chinese scholars who were opposite to Catholicism was that they exposed the problems occurred after the encounter of two cultures.

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## CONCLUSION

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When different cultures met each other, one part thinks and understands the other part on the basis of one's own culture. The most charming thing in history of cultural

communications between the West and China during the period from the sixteenth century to eighteenth century was that both parts were imagining the other part and took other parts as utopianism. From the view of cultural communication, ideology such as philosophy, religion and allegory is an important bridge for cultural communication, because Philosophy and Religion reflect essential characters of various cultures, and allegory is the same humor way to respond various cultural lives between China and the West. The Middle Ages in the West was the century of Christian theology. When introducing Christianity and theology of the Middle Ages, the Catholic missionaries introduced the characters of early western thoughts at the same time, whose benefit is helping the Chinese scholars to easily understand the multiplicity of the world cultures and improve the thinking methods.

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