

Paul Widmer (ed.)

# Europe in China – China in Europe

Mission as a vehicle  
to intercultural dialogue

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Europe in China – China in Europe  
Edited by Paul Widmer

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# Europe in China – China in Europe

Mission as a vehicle to intercultural dialogue

Lectures of the Symposium for the  
400th Anniversary of Matteo Ricci (1552–1610),  
Zurich University June 14th–15th 2010

Edited by Paul Widmer



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*PARENTIBUS IUSTE AC VALDE FORTITER MILITANTIBUS*

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## PREFACE

The Matteo Ricci commemoration year 2010 provided both the incentive and occasion to focus attention on the manifold aspects of the emergence of a thorough and unique intellectual and scientific exchange between Europe and China from the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The *Bodensee-Institut für Interkulturelle Zusammenarbeit und Bildung (BIIB)*, in partnership with the *East Asian Seminar* of Zurich University, mounted an exhibition in the Lichthof at Zurich University with the title *Europa trifft China – China trifft Europa*. Simultaneously, an accompanying international symposium was held at the same venue on June 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> 2010, under the title: *Europe in China – China in Europe: Science and Technology as a vehicle to inter-cultural dialogue*. Using an interdisciplinary approach, history and sinology scholars from America, China and Europe focused on the relationship between the Jesuit mission led by Matteo Ricci and the outset of the reception of Western scientific disciplines in China (Geography, Geometry, Astronomy and Mechanics), as well as, conversely, on the spreading of knowledge about China in Europe.

That the Jesuits, following the milestones set by the lifelong engagement of Matteo Ricci, were able to make a breach on the universal level of scientific and artistic exchange, and thanks to the apparent particularity of their missionary commitment over the period of two centuries, arouses astonishment and provokes further reflection. Matteo Ricci's appreciative attitude towards the roots of Chinese intellectual traditions and his philosophically and humanly credible testimony for a culture of friendship and understanding stem directly from the mature character and balanced personality of Matteo Ricci himself. Nonetheless these merits are also based on the wider intellectual horizon of the Italian Renaissance philosophy in which he grew up and which, in continuation of Marsilio Ficino and Agostino Steuco, matured under the concept of *Philosophia Perennis* and *Prisca Theologia* an intellectual attitude of highest regard toward different major ancient cultures of the world. This attitude, following a universally open concept of divine manifestation in history, was bent on finding and salvaging surprising vestiges and treasures of the original Revelation of God in the roots of alien cultures.<sup>1</sup>

Notwithstanding some deficiencies the specific quality of the Jesuits' self-conscious but respectful approach towards Chinese cultural roots appears more clearly if compared with the disdainful attitude of European colonialism especially in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This fact was elucidated during the Zurich Symposium by Prof. Benjamin Elman in a keynote address on the Macartney Mission and its later interpretation.

1 Cf. Charles Bernhard Schmitt: "Prisca Theologia e Philosophia Perennis: due temi del Rinascimento italiano e la loro fortuna", in: Giovannangiola Tarugi (ed.), *Il pensiero italiano del Rinascimento e il tempo nostro*, atti del V convegno internazionale del centro di studi umanistici Montepulciano, palazzo Tarugi, 8–13 agosto 1968, Firenze 1970, S. 211–236.

The following proceedings of the symposium *Europe in China – China in Europe* gather together contributions which deepen the understanding of the scientific and missionary engagement of Matteo Ricci and his followers. Supplementary contributions illuminating the historical and technical environment and the forms of reception of the China Mission in Europe are also presented. While Michela *Fontana* and Artur K. *Wardega* focus their attention on the deeds and accomplishments of Matteo Ricci, *Xu Wenmin* and *Yu Sanle* bring almost unknown Jesuits and China missionaries from Switzerland to our notice: Nikolaus *Fiva* from Fribourg and Franz *Stadlin* from Zug. In her profound article, Claudia *von Collani* gives an insight into the role of women in the China Mission and the special reception of that role in Europe through the instance of Lady Candida *Xu*. Erich *Zettl* in an article on the Jesuit painter Ignaz *Sichelbarth*, is illustrating in a fascinating and exemplary way the artistic side of the Jesuits' commitment at the court of the emperor in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In a comparative and well-documented article, Peter F. *Tschudin* expounds the history of paper production, which was eminently significant for the Christian mission and the success of scientific exchange. Two succinct articles by Jean-Pierre *Voiret* follow. In the first he takes position on the decisive question of the scientific and cultural development of China before the Jesuits' arrival and in the second he highlights the problems of the reception of Chinese thought in the West through examples of missionary interpretations of the Daodejing. In a short appendix Jean-Pierre *Voiret* reveals the existence of a remarkable collection in Zurich of western books and maps about China printed in early modern times.

I wish to express deep gratitude to Dr. Jean-Pierre *Voiret* (president of the BIIB until 2010) for his remarkable zeal; and also to his successor Prof. Dr. Erich *Zettl* who, with extraordinary diligence, planned the completion of the exhibition as well as the splendid catalogue.<sup>2</sup> Prof. Dr. Robert *Gassmann* and Prof. Dr. Wolfgang *Beer* from the Institute of East Asian Studies of Zurich University, who generously provided broad support for the symposium, both merit very special thanks. For the same reason I am also very grateful to the Swiss Jesuit Province. Moreover, I am particularly thankful to Priv.-Doz. Dr. Ulrich *van der Heyden* for his decision to include this publication in the series "Missionsgeschichtliches Archiv". I am sincerely grateful to Prof. Dr. Jackie *Pocklington* and Mr. Charles *Gallo* B.A. for the careful correction of several English texts. Finally I wish to express particular gratitude to the coordinator of the symposium Mr. Alois *Osterwalder*; without whose open-minded initiative and indefatigable support, exhibition and symposium would never have been successfully brought to fruition.

Winterthur, February 25, 2012

Paul Widmer

2 Europa trifft China – China trifft Europa. Eine Ausstellung zum 400. Todestag von Matteo Ricci, Lichthof der Universität Zürich 24. Mai bis 3. Juli 2010, Ausstellungsführer, Texte und Bildauswahl von Erich *Zettl* und Jean-Pierre *Voiret*, hg. vom Bodensee-Institut für Interkulturelle Bildung und Zusammenarbeit, Goldach 2010.

FROM MACAO UP TO BEIJING (1582–3 TILL 1610)  
MATTEO RICCI AND EURO-JESUIT ENTERPRISE IN CHINA:  
PORTRAIT OF A JESUIT

*Artur K. Wardega, SJ*

In this year of worldwide commemoration of the 400th anniversary of the death of Matteo Ricci in Beijing in 1610, I would like to draw some kind of human and intellectual portrait of this great man coming from the West and reveal some characteristics of his personality and his lifestyle in China. My humble contribution in this respect is mostly based on the MRI recent publication, “Portrait of a Jesuit: Matteo Ricci” as well as on the 2009 MRI International Symposium on the commemoration of Ricci’s Year held in Macao and dedicated to the *Ratio Studiorum* and Jesuit Education entitled: “Education for New Times: Revisiting Pedagogical Models in the Jesuit Tradition” (Macao, November 25–27, 2009).

For more than three centuries Ricci’s name has not always been widely known or admired as it is today. Ricci’s reputation suffered not only oblivion but also misunderstandings based on disputes over Chinese rites, raised after his death. His model of evangelization has encountered suspicion and criticism. He was blamed for his wide syncretism in his approach to present Christian faith and doctrine to the Chinese. However, Ricci was a person who combined in perfect balance wisdom and faith, and his life was entirely dedicated to the search of all that is Universal (like Chinese philosophy in the Western Zhou dynasty period). A radical difference between his concept of the world based on European Renaissance and of the concept he encountered on his way in the Middle Kingdom did not shake his Christian faith and his vision of the world. On the contrary, this difference invited him to find a common ground based on humanity and friendship, and to initiate a fruitful dialogue with the millenarian Chinese civilization.

With his scientific background and his cartography skills Ricci presented to the Chinese a newly discovered world of continents and nations, where China was not at the center, but one kingdom among the others. Astronomy, Mathematics and Euclid’s *Elements of Geometry* eventually provided Ricci with a supra language to communicate with the Chinese mind. The common sense of science and rationality became for Ricci a medium through which he could reveal a profound characteristic of man enlightened by his Creator (One Principium / One God in “*The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*”). His trust put into the Chinese language and his tenacity to master it well shows that he cherished direct communication and dialogue with his Chinese counterparts. In the Chinese characters he not only found an instrument, a medium of communication (through books and

treaties), but rather an inner vision of creation, God's wanted World. His education and Ignatian spirituality, both nourished by the *Spiritual Exercises*, deeply shaped his accommodation approach to the Chinese society and its spiritual traditions. In Fine, all these great achievements could only flourish because of his lifelong cultivated *friendship* with Chinese officials and intellectuals. Nowadays this basic approach in communication with China remains almost unchanged, fruitful and full of hope.

#### MACAO: MARITIME AND CONTINENTAL OPEN GATE TO CHINA

In the early 1580s, most of the Jesuits residing in Macao expressed the opinion that it was almost impossible to convert China. Such an opinion was based on a series of failed attempts in the past. After Francis Xavier had died in 1552 on the island of Shangchuan 上川, and by the time when Ricci and Ruggieri finally settled in Zhaoqing 肇慶 in 1583, other 25 Jesuits, as well as 22 Franciscans, 2 Augustinians and 1 Dominican had made an unsuccessful attempt to establish a permanent residence in China<sup>1</sup>.

For Fr. Alessandro Valignano, who, in the capacity of the Visitor of the East Indies (1573), which included China, set foot in Macao on September 6<sup>th</sup> 1578, Macao was a historical turning point in his conception and implementation of the mission. Indeed, he quickly realized that the failure of earlier attempts was due to the lack of training of the missionaries. In Macao, however, no Jesuit was willing to dedicate himself to the study of the Chinese language. Valignano in his letter to the Provincial of India, Rui Vicente, asked him to send Bernardino de Ferraris to Macao. Since de Ferraris was already engaged as dean of the college of Cochin (today also known as Kochi), the Provincial chose Michele Ruggieri, who had already proved being capable of learning the Tamil language. Upon his arrival at Macao in July 1579, Ruggieri found written instructions left by Valignano (the Visitor had already left for Japan), in which he stipulated that:

“About four Brothers set on purposely learning the Mandarin language, writing it and reading it, and studying also the customs and everything necessary to attempt this enterprise. They must not be distracted by any other occupations, nor should the local Superior distract them by occupying them in other matters. It is clear to me that until some of us are not able to speak the Mandarin language, it will be impossible to achieve anything in this much desired conversion of China.”<sup>2</sup>

- 1 This account is based on the presentation entitled “Matteo Ricci's Ascent to Beijing (1583–1610)” given by Dr Gianni Criveller to the MRI Forum on May 11th 2009 and published in the MRI Jesuitas Publication Series under the title: “Portrait of a Jesuit: Matteo Ricci”, MRI publisher, Macao, 2010.
- 2 Fonti Ricciane: Documenti originali concernenti Matteo Ricci e la storia dell'introduzione del Cristianesimo in Cina, ed. Pasquale M. D'Elia, SJ, 3 vols. (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1942–1949), vol. I, p. LXXXIX. All cited fragments quoted here come from Fr. Gianni Criveller's article “Matteo Ricci's Ascent to Beijing” presented at and published by the MRI un-

Ruggieri spent some time to learn the language, but his companions did not seem to have any interest in doing so, some of them even opposed him or passively continued to resist Valignano's directives. Feeling discouraged Ruggieri asked Valignano to assign him Matteo Ricci to be his companion in Chinese language learning and studies. Valignano followed up the matter asking the Provincial of India to send Ricci to Macao, where he arrived on August the 7<sup>th</sup> 1582. Then Ricci wrote a letter to his master of Novitiate Fr. Fabio de Fabii:

“At that time, Fr. Valignano's letters came from Japan, calling on me to go to the gates of China with other companions to find a way of entry into this kingdom, so impenetrable and so noble.”<sup>3</sup>

Once in Macao, Ricci reported to the Superior General Claudio Acquaviva about his difficulties he encountered in Macao and expressed his concern for the predicament in which his companion Ruggieri found himself:

“Father, I want You to know that I'm taking this liberty not to impart any lesson, but just to tell you what I have seen. Those who cannot see it cannot understand. Fathers and Superiors of the houses and colleges in Macao (...) not only are not interested in the conversion of China but rather feel a certain degree of disgust for it. The Father Visitor will give you information, Father, on all relevant matters. In the three years Fr. Michele Ruggieri has been here, he has been quite a martyr among the fathers.”<sup>4</sup>

Valignano acted with all his determination to overcome the dull resistance of his fellow Jesuits in Macao and to push Ricci and Ruggieri to establish the Jesuit mission in inland China (Zhaoqing) in September 1583.

In Macao, Matteo Ricci spent only one year (August 1582 – September 1583) on learning the Chinese language. During his stay there he was assigned to the charge of the Confraternity of the Holy Name of Jesus, dedicated to the religious formation of the young Chinese, founded by Valignano in 1582.

## THE DOOR OF FRIENDSHIP

If one word could summarize Ricci's approach to China, that word would be friendship, a humanistic value that Ricci greatly appreciated and cherished with a wide circle of friends, both European and Chinese. He always kept in contact with them, as his extensive correspondence testifies. According to Fr. Edward Malatesta's<sup>5</sup> words, Ricci was a martyr of friendship. His early death, on May 11, 1610, at the age of 57, was due to overwork in receiving and visiting friends.

der the title: “Portrait of a Jesuit: Matteo Ricci”, ed. by Dr Anders Hansson and Fr. Artur Wardega, SJ, Macao Ricci Institute, Macao, 2010, pp. 39–75.

3 Ricci to Fabio de Fabii, Shaozhou, November 12<sup>th</sup> 1592, in: Matteo Ricci, *Lettere*, (1580–1609), ed. Francesco D'Arelli (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2001), p.158.

4 Ricci to Acquaviva, Macao, February 13<sup>th</sup> 1583, in: Ricci, *Lettere*, (2001), p. 53.

5 Fr. E. Malatesta, SJ (1932–1998), an American Jesuit biblical scholar and sinologist, founding director of the Ricci Institute for Chinese-Western Cultural History at the University of San Francisco.

Ricci's Chinese friends and acquaintances obviously cherished his love of learning, his desire for truth and esteem of friendship, the universal values to be found in their own ancient culture. In China friendship was one of the five cardinal relationships established by Confucian social thought, a relationship based on free adherence, and not on common status, shared profession or family links. For an outsider like Ricci, friendship enabled him to enrich his web of relationships and to go beyond customary contacts. In late Ming China, friendship was reappraised as a great social virtue, and the thinker He Xinyin 何心隱 (1517–79) had advocated friendship as a medium to foster a sense of unity and responsibility of the individual toward the nation and its cohesion.

Apparently, in a world so distant, Ricci, because of his humanistic education, found himself very much at home. His cultivated friendship became a meeting point between two worlds, Western and Chinese, which both shared a humanistic approach to life. Common elements of this unique encounter were among others: a love of philosophy and science; a preference for moral and practical discussions over dogma, and his cultivation of relationships based on common intellectual interests and friendship, and a prominent role played by educational institutions such as schools and academies. The Chinese Ming dynasty and the European Renaissance, two among the most celebrated civilizations of all time, met together by a bond of friendship. Consequently, Ricci and his followers entered China through the door of a shared and cherished social value, of *friendship*.

According to the report written by the Jesuits, Ricci's last words before his death recalled the image of the door: "*I leave to you a door open to great merits, but also to a great deal of danger and hard work.*"<sup>6</sup> Manifestly, friendship was a door which has been opened by Ricci to his followers.

#### BEGINNING OF THE RICCI-RUGGIERI MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE IN ZHAOQING

The details of the Ricci and Ruggieri missionary method practiced in the early years in Zhaoqing are well known thanks to the "Catechetic Conversations", an untitled Chinese manuscript composed in 1585–88 and discovered in 1934 by the Jesuit sinologist, Pasquale D'Elia.<sup>7</sup> The authors state their missionary identity and refer to the dangers of their long journey as an evidence of the sincerity of their intentions. The manuscript might have been a working draft of Ruggieri's *The True Record of the Lord of Heaven* (Tianzhu shilu 天主實錄), published in Zhaoqing the previous year (1584), and compiled in collaboration with Ricci. From all

6 Fonti Ricciane, I, p. CXXXI. See also the Appendix to this paper, p.13–14.

7 The title is by Fr. Pasquale D'Elia, SJ, an untitled manuscript in Chinese, compiled in collaboration with Ruggieri in Zhaoqing in 1585–88. The manuscript has been found by Fr. D'Elia in 1934 together with the Ruggieri & Ricci Portuguese–Chinese dictionary. See D'Elia's: *Il domma cattolico integralmente presentato da Matteo Ricci ai letterati della Cina*, in: *La Città Cattolica*, 3 (1935), p. 35–53.

this we learn that in the early days, Ricci and Ruggieri were rather traditional in their preaching. Only later on Ricci had partially changed this initial method by adapting it to the surroundings in which he lived. Obviously Ricci did not start and conduct his mission with a premeditated strategy once decided at his desk. On the contrary, he modified it during his ongoing learning from accidents, mistakes and opportunities. He was eager to seek advice from Chinese friends and associates and to continue his systematic study of Chinese culture. His strategy and method changed in accordance to what he learned through experience. In this respect he followed the path of a humanist of the Renaissance.<sup>8</sup> In acting so, he was devoted to his cause, tenacious in his objectives, and flexible in his methods.

### SHAPING HIS CONFUCIAN MISSIONARY IDENTITY

Ricci as a Jesuit and European was a man of letters and not an anchorite or hermit monk. While a Buddhist identity was too tight for him, he felt much “at home” as a citizen of the “Republic of Letters”, as a man of humanistic culture, as a *litteratus*. After years of studying the Chinese classics, Ricci was ready for a change, for his new role in the Chinese society. When, in the mid 1590s, he decided to dress like a Confucian scholar, Ricci not only followed the advice of his friends but acted in harmony with his own philosophical and humanistic background. Later on, Ricci adopted an even more critical attitude toward Buddhism and Taoism. The conflict became increasingly harsh when Ricci had several disputes with outstanding Buddhist monks, in particular with Zhu Hong 祿宏.

### ACTING CUM CONSILIO ET PRUDENTIA

In early 1593 Ricci met Valignano in Macao for a thorough revision of his missionary practice in China. At that time, during Valignano’s longest sojourn in Macao (from October 24, 1592 till late November 1594), the Jesuit Visitor founded the College of Saint Paul, where the missionaries to be sent to China were to study the Chinese language.

Valignano also wished to give Ricci an opportunity to get treatment for the severe foot wound he had suffered during a night assault on the Shaozhou residence occurred previous July. But even Macao’s doctors could not heal Ricci’s injury. He reached Macao in late December 1592 and stayed on until the middle of following February, dealing with “*many matters that were very useful for the promotion of this enterprise in China.*”<sup>9</sup>

This meeting was their last one. In Macao they took decisions which have deeply affected the future of the China mission. Ricci described Valignano’s approval in following words:

8 “Homo sum, humani nihil alienum a me esse puto” (*Terentius*, *Heautontimorumenos*, I, 1, 25).

9 *Fonti Ricciane*, I, p. 323.