

*On Matteo Ricci's Interpretations of Chinese Culture*

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**Abstract:** On the contribution to introducing Western learning to China by Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), the 16<sup>th</sup>-century Italian Jesuit missionary to the Ming Dynasty, abundant research has been done; however, not so on his contribution to introducing Chinese learning to the West, and if so, not profoundly. Though Ricci's understandings of Chinese culture were found in every aspect of Ming Dynasty lives, this essay focuses on four important and representative aspects, and analyzes the political system of a government guided by philosophers, the confused outlooks of religious sects, Chinese ethics compared to Christian tenets, and the unique qualities of the Chinese language. It discloses Ricci's moderate (middle-of-the-road) attitude toward Chinese culture, especially his efforts to reconcile Confucianism and Christianity as well as his prejudice against Buddhism and Taoism, which shows on the one hand his broad-mindedness as a humanistic missionary, and on the other the historical or rather religious limitations of his absolute faith as a pious Catholic. Narrow-minded or broad-minded, Ricci's role as the first scholar who introduced Chinese learning to the West should not be neglected. One should bear in mind that it is Ricci who laid the foundation for European sinology.

**Key Words:** Matteo Ricci; introducing Chinese learning to the West; understandings of Chinese culture

## **1.The First to Introduce Chinese Learning to the West**

Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), the 16<sup>th</sup>-century Italian Jesuit missionary, is generally known as the pioneer in introducing Western learning to China. It is Ricci (and his partners) who brought to the Ming Dynasty the scientific knowledge prevailing in Renaissance Europe, such as world geography, Western astronomy, mathematics, and surveying and mapping. This knowledge broadened Chinese people's horizons, challenging and correcting long-standing misconceptions such as regarding China as the centre of the world, considering the Earth square and the Heaven round and some superstitious beliefs on eclipses. The new learning helped a group of broadminded Confucian scholars pursue new knowledge and construct new concepts in the sciences.

Ricci's contribution to introducing Western learning to China has been widely acknowledged and praised by Chinese and foreign scholars. However, his contribution to introducing Chinese learning to the West must not be forgotten. Some scholars have pointed out that Ricci was the first person who introduced Chinese learning to the West. For example, in the preface to the Chinese version of *Matteo Ricco's Reading Notes about China*, the translators He Zaowu and He Gaoji, stated that Ricco had blazed a trail for spreading Chinese learning. (Ricci, 2010:18) In the preface to the Chinese version of *Critical Biography of Matteo Ricci* written by the 19<sup>th</sup>-century French Jesuit missionary Henri Bernard, Guan Zhenhu also agreed that Ricci was the first person who disseminated Chinese culture in the West, if we do not take into consideration such technologies as paper-making taken abroad during the Tang Dynasty. (Bernard, 1993:7) In the preface to the historical novel written by Liu Enming, *Matteo Ricci—Cross-Cultural Angel between China and the West*, Zhong Linbing praised Ricci as a great angel for his enabling of cultural communication between China and the West. (Liu Enming, 2000:1)

Though Ricci's contribution to introducing Chinese learning to the West has been acknowledged, commentaries are sporadic without profound research. In the following sections, we will survey how Ricci introduced Chinese learning to 16<sup>th</sup>-century Europe. Or to put it more exactly, we will observe how Ricci understood and interpreted Chinese culture and we shall add our own commentaries on his understandings and interpretations.

## 2. Ricci's Interpretations of Chinese Culture

Matteo Ricci arrived in *Macao* in 1582 and began his missionary work from the next year on, moving from city to city, like *Shaozhou*, *Nanchang*, *Nanjing*, and *Beijing* and was finally buried in *Beijing* in 1610. He spent nearly 30 years, the best time of his life, in his second homeland without leaving it halfway. His introduction to China and interpretations of Chinese culture were found in his letters to his superiors and friends in Europe, in his journals and translations. It is easily forgotten that at the early stage of his learning Chinese, that is, during his stay in *Macao* (1582-1583), Ricci, together with Priest Michele Ruggieri, helped Priest Alessandro Valignano to finish *St. Francois Xavier's Biography*, the first three chapters of which being an independent booklet entitled *On the Wonders in China*. (Bernard, 1993: 62) And what is remembered is that in 1594 Ricci interpreted and translated into Latin four Confucian Classics, namely, *The Analects of Confucius*, *Mencius*, *Great Learning*, and *Zhongyong*<sup>1</sup>. What is more remarkable is his *Reading Notes about China* edited and translated into Latin by the French missionary Nicolas Trigault and published in 1615 in Europe. In Book One of *Reading Notes about China*, Ricci recorded extensively and minutely life in the Ming Dynasty, describing its geography, products, language, politics, customs, law and religion. In this essay, we will analyze four aspects of Ricci's interpretation of Chinese culture from the perspective of a 'Western Confucian' and a humanistic theologian.

### 2.1 A State Reigned by Philosophers-- Platonic Republic

Zhu Yuan-zhang, the founder of the Ming Dynasty, established a new governing system through abolishing the *zaixiang* (prime minister) and setting up a *neige* (cabinet), known as "civil servant politics", somehow similar to the western constitutional monarchy at present times. When Ricci came to China, Emperor *Wanli* was on the throne and continued to adopt Zhu Yuan-zhang's governing system. With his sensitive mind, Ricci observed that this system was comparable to the hereditary monarchy in his Europe but was different in that it was "somewhat aristocratic". (Ricci, 2010: 48) Instead of instating a tyranny, the emperor distributed his power to six cabinet ministries in the central government, namely, *li*, *hu*, *li*, *bing*, *gong*, *xing* (吏、户、礼、兵、工、刑). The imperial court reigned two imperial cities (*Beijing*, *Nanjing*) and 13 provinces, under which was established the hierarchy of administrative divisions of *fu*, *zhou*, *xian* (府、州、县). This system, with the help of imperial censors, who provided the Emperor with faithful and beneficial suggestions, and *Jin Yiwei* (锦衣卫, the imperial guards), who were supposed to fight severely against corruption, contributed to the order and stability of the national

economy and politics. As a result, at first Ricci was impressed by the social order, civil diligence and national peace in this land, though his missionary work was hindered by a lot of obstacles. No wonder Ricci said with admiration that “China is superior to other countries in administration, politics and order.” (Zhu, 2012:21) In his view, it was exactly a platonic republic, reigned by the brightest philosophers, all the classes working in close cooperation.

In the concept of Plato, the ancient Greek philosopher, an ideal state is an aristocracy ruled by the best, which consists of three ranks of people—the upper class of “guardians” (the brightest philosophers), the middle class of “auxiliaries” (army and police) and the lowest class of “producers” (the majority). According to this framework, all the classes should work in close cooperation to contribute to the stable structure of the political system. The upper class governs the supporting and feeding majority; in return, it should do its best to manage good education, public security and state defense for the majority. (Plato, 1986)

## **2.2 A Confused Religious Outlook**

First and foremost, Matteo Ricci came to China as a missionary with his holy mission to save the fate of pagans, and with a religious superiority complex. He observed the religious status quo in this land with the views of a pious Christian theologian—at first sight, there coexisted three religions, namely, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, the first dominating and the other two at its flanks. All the educated Chinese seemed to believe that all three religions had been integrated and people could embrace them together. Yet, this confused religious outlook made people at a loss as to which course to take. People pretended that they believed in a certain religion, but in effect, they “did not follow any of the religions” and thus the majority of people “fell into the abyss of atheism”. (Ricci, 2010: 113) Chinese people “seemed to lack insightful religious life”. (Bernard, 1993: 116)

What kind of religious life did Ricci witness at Chinese homes? Pictures of monstrous gods were hung high on the wall and down below was an altar-like table, on which memorial tablets of ancestors and an incense burner were displayed. With burned incense and candles, people bowed and kowtowed to worship, but without the Christian meditation and prayer, nor regular divine service. On some occasions, for instance, on the anniversary of the death of a family member, monks were invited to do services. Or when somebody suffered from lingering disease, the family would invite Taoist priests to invoke evil spirits to leave the patient. Chinese people worshiped all kinds of idols, such as the god of wealth, the kitchen god and eight immortals. Many people believed in

*fengshui*, or geomancy, and the zodiac. Others pursued longevity through alchemy. In the eyes of Ricci, who regarded Christianity as the only truth, all these practices were either insensible idolatry or superstitious beliefs. (Bernard, 1993: 116-7)

Despite the fact that Chinese history was not free of religious persecution (e.g. Emperor *Wuzong* in the *Tang* Dynasty preferred Taoism, thus forbade Buddhism and ordered the destruction of Buddhist temples during 841 to 846), Chinese people held tolerant attitudes toward religions. Ricci drew the conclusion from his own experience. On his way to *Nanjing*, he lodged at a Taoist temple called “The Iron Column Palace”. Seeing that he did not worship the statues of gods, people threatened him that he would encounter demons and persuaded him to show respect to the gods. But the “Chinese did not use force or arms to compel their fellowmen to believe in religions, let alone foreigners.” This kind of religious freedom, for Ricci, came from the “extremely confused outlooks of religious sects”. (Ricci, 2010: 284-5)

### **2.3 Ethics on a Par with Christian Tenets**

Matteo Ricci came to China to do his missionary work, but at the same time, his admiration of this empire was undeniable. “This ancient empire is worldly known as its people are polite and abide by codes of conduct. *Li* is one of the five most precious virtues in this land.” (Ricci, 2010: 63). The five virtues Ricci referred to are *li, yi, ren, zhi, xin* (礼、义、仁、智、信, roughly equaling etiquette, righteousness, benevolence, wisdom, credibility) and what impressed him most was *xiao*, or filial piety to parents, respect for teachers and contentment of life. “No one can compare with Chinese in *xiao*, or filial piety.” (Ricci, 2010:76), “The Chinese show more respect for teachers than we do.” (Ricci, 2010:86), “They are content with what they have without any ambition of aggression.” (Ricci, 2010:59)

Ricci read piles of Confucian classics and clearly knew that the Chinese ethic traditions stemmed from Confucian mottoes of teaching, which were on a par with Christian tenets. The ideal purpose of Confucian teaching was to establish a stable and harmonious nation, families being economically safe, individuals being morally cultivated. This purpose, for Ricci, was “compatible with the brightness of conscience and the truth of Christianity.” (Ricci, 2010:104) Ricci not only found compatibility between Confucian and Christian teachings in his study, but let local people know about it in his missionary work. For example, he translated the holy commandments into Chinese and printed them out as a booklet, which convinced the local people that “the holy commandments are really compatible with conscience and natural laws.” (Ricci, 2010: 169)

## **2.4 The Uniqueness of the Chinese Language**

In addition to being a theologian (to a large degree considered a scientist, too), Ricci was a linguist as well. In the beginning, learning Chinese was the arrangement made by his superior, Priest Alessandro Valignano, and Ricci, as a disciplined missionary who vowed to obey the Roman Church, had no other choice but to learn since the language was a “clanking bell” at the door of a stranger’s home. Ricci worked hard and with his intelligence and diligence, after several years of learning, he could work without the aid of an interpreter.

At the first stage of his learning, Ricci keenly found and summarized the characteristics of this language in its pronunciation, writing and grammar. In the letter to his former teacher who taught him classical languages, Ricci wrote:

I can assure you that it is totally different from Greek or German. Oral Chinese is always ambiguous. The same pronunciation may produce numerous meanings. Sometimes, when you raise your voice or lower your voice, with four tones, you will produce different meanings.... As for the “square character”, when you’ve never seen it or have personal experience, like me, it is incredible. A single word conveys one meaning, so how many you want to convey, how many words you need. Thus there are more than 6000 words, which are totally different but very confusing.... All the words are monosyllable. (Later Ricci also found some disyllable words according to our standard—original note) They write a character in the way of drawing a picture, using a brush, similar to the brush our artists use.... There is, however, an easy thing, that is no article is needed and no inflection is found in tense, case, sex, and singular and plural forms. Often adverbs are used to compensate the missing inflection. (Bernard, 1993: 59-60)

On the basis of his knowledge of the Chinese language, Ricci compiled, together with another priest, a Chinese Character Table, standardizing the way of writing Chinese pronunciation in Latin, and distinguishing five tones and voiceless and voiced parts of speech. This Chinese Character Table paved the way for Europeans to learn Chinese. (Bernard, 1993: 248-9)

Language is an indispensable means to communicate with foreign people. His talent for languages helped Ricci succeed in grasping this foreign language, and later in making friends with Confucian scholars, in his missionary work, and in translating Confucian

classics.

### **3. Analyzing Ricci's Interpretations of Chinese Culture**

Coming from Renaissance Europe, Ricci was well-educated in classical humanist science besides orthodox scholasticism, theology and natural sciences. Thus he knew Plato's idealism and Aristotle's "Golden Mean"<sup>2</sup> well. During his study in Rome, he had "experienced the whole process of Saint Ignatius's 'mind work'", (Bernard, 1993: 23) so it is reasonable to assume that Ricci was influenced by the thoughts of Saint Ignatius. The latter "was able to find a middle way in the chaotic conflicts between humanists and theologians", and, impartial towards both evangelism and Erasmus, claimed that "it is unwise to sacrifice theology for science or to sacrifice science for theology", and thought it was narrow-minded and anti-rational to deny absolutely either the achievements of the Renaissance or the achievements of the Medieval Age. (Bernard, 1993: 45-6) Likewise, Ricci in his tough missionary work found a middle way of preaching Christianity through disseminating culture, making numerous friends and integrating Confucianism while fighting against paganism. We will discuss his missionary strategy of long-term view elsewhere. Here we analyze his interpretations of Chinese culture.

#### **3.1 On the State Reigned by Philosophers**

For Confucian scholars (philosophers), the ideal of "self-cultivation, family harmony, country management and world peace" is what they pursue their whole life and it is considered "not righteous not to take office"; thus the ultimate purpose of studying hard for decades is to do civil service for the government. For Ricci, the aristocracy of the Ming imperial court might be more characteristic of humanism than the platonic hierarchical republic, since the Ming aristocracy consisted of scholars (philosophers) who had been selected not hereditarily, but through all levels of tests and who were supposed to have genuine talents in management. For this reason, Ricci appreciated the imperial examination system which ensured the appointment of real talents on their merits, learning and capability. (Ricci, 2010: 38-42) He respected particularly those scholar officials of integrity who dared to risk their lives to offer the emperor advice to the interest of public and country. For example, noble scholar officials like Feng Yingjing and Li Zuowu became the subjects of his admiration, and some diligent and famous scholars like Qu Wensu and Xu Guangqu became his good friends<sup>3</sup>. In Ricci's view, these humanistic philosophers in the Far-East were the cornerstones of Chinese empire.

The appreciation of the “civil servant system” was one of the motivations driving Ricci to transform into a ‘Western Confucian scholar’, in addition to the practical need for his missionary work. His way of identifying himself with Chinese scholar officials has been interpreted as doing as the Romans do. However, this adaptation embodied Ricci’s flexible thoughts of “middle way”, free from established rules and practices.

### **3.2 On Religions**

The careful observation of the religious status quo in China confirmed Ricci’s faith that it would be his mission to save the souls of the Chinese. In his views, Chinese people “have been trapped in the dark abyss of paganism for thousands of years” and they were worthy of compassion without blame, and his glorious mission was to bring them “Christian brightness”. (Ricci, 2010:87) The tactic of integrating Confucianism and rejecting Buddhism was, of course, to reach indirectly his end of preaching Christianity. It has been interpreted as the end justifying the means, and so some scholars hold that Ricci’s tactic was unscrupulous and prompted his failure in his legal missionary work. (Zhu, 2012: 28)

However, it is undeniable that he did find “the uniformity between Christian tenets and the Chinese ancient sage’s rationality and teachings.” (Ricci, 2010: 662) Ricci translated for the first time God into *Tianzhu* (天主), the master of *Tian*. In the Confucian learning, *Tian*, as an impersonalized god, runs everything in silence, ubiquitously and omnipotently. “Only *Tian* is great!” said Confucius in awe. Confucius claimed that it was at the age of fifty that he knew *Tian*’s mandate, whenever he came across adversities like the death of his family members or pupils he would appeal to *Tian*, which was the source of his courage. (Yan, 2011: 662)

Though the concept of *Tian* in original Confucianism was not totally compatible with the concept of *Tian* held by the christianised Confucian scholars in the late Ming Dynasty, it is easy for Chinese people in awe of *Tian* to accept this concept. On the other hand, Christian tenets such as the precepts of the Ten Commandments--honoring one’s father and mother, prohibition of murder, prohibition of adultery and prohibition of stealing—are compatible not only with Confucian ethics teaching, but with people’s psychological need to pursue good. When Xu Guangqu wrote the preface to Ricci’s *Twenty-Five Sayings*, Xu praised Christian tenets highly: among millions of words there’s no single word which is not compatible to the tenets of loyalty and filial piety, there’s no single word which goes against the moral norms.” (Zhu, 2012: 135)

However, Ricci held deep prejudice against Buddhism and Taoism. He compared the Taoist trinity (Supreme Laojun, Primitive Heaven Senior, Lingbao Taoist) to a three-headed monster more horrible than the Python in Lane Lake, which for thousands of years had reigned Chinese people tyrannically. (Bernard, 1993:9) He called Buddhist monks “idolatrous Priest-Satans” (Ricci, 2010:237) who notoriously led a corrupted dissolute and immoral life, so he would rather keep his distance from them. He adopted Confucian clothing instead of the monk’s gown dressed by the missionaries when they first came to China. What’s more, when he baptized new believers, he liked them to throw away or burn their original idols.

On the issue of religion, Ricci displayed both mediocre and radical thoughts. On the one hand, he mixed Confucian teachings and Christian tenets in an innovative way, which showed that he was open, flexible and willing to find a balance, compatible to the *Zhongyong* principle. On the other hand, he held a very radical bias against Buddhism and Taoism, which might be either out of his absolute adherence to Christianity or out of his missionary purpose. Whatever the reason, it is tell-tale evidence of his limitations as a Christian missionary in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

### **3.3 On Ethics**

In addition to the need of missionary work, Ricci’s tactic of integrating Confucianism and rejecting Buddhism was out of his preference of Confucianism, especially the original Confucianism based on his deep understanding of Confucian ethics. Though in Confucian ethics there are no such teachings as in Christianity on sin and salvation, for Confucius, there exists another kind of salvation, that is, “heaven” in the present world. In this mundane heaven, “the aged live an easy life, friends have faith in me and the youth cherish the memory of me”. (*The Analects*) In other words, heavenly reality, or ideal society is established through five harmonious relationships, namely, father and son, husband and wife, emperor and subjects, brother and brother, friend and friend. Then how could harmonious relationships be achieved? Only through benevolence and love, which lies in the golden rule: “Do not do to others what you would not have them do to you.”

This principle of loyalty and forgiveness through putting oneself in another’s place, in Christian tenets, becomes the golden rule of doing unto others as you would have them do unto you. In his *True Meaning of Christianity*, Ricci explained Christian love in this way: Christian love is the example the Lord sets for us, that is, loving people sincerely. A benevolent person loves others truly. He will feed them when they are hungry, give them water when they are thirsty, clothe them when they are bare, house them when they are homeless, comfort them when they are suffering, enlighten them when they are ignorant,

admonish them when they are wrong, forgive them when they offend, bury them when they die, and most of all, pray for God's blessing for them. (Zhu, 2012: 80)

Confucian benevolence stems from Confucius's firm belief in the existence of *Dao (Tao)* as Christians believe in the existence of the Kingdom of Heaven. In this sense, Confucian benevolence is very close to Christian love. (Yan, 2011:65, 74) The core of Confucian culture is "*Dao, De, Li*". *Dao* (the Way) is the essence of the world. When *TianDao* (the Way of Heaven) comes down to a person's heart, that is, when a person senses *TianDao*, he or she has inserted *De* (virtue). When *De* is exteriorized into *Li* (propriety), he or she has acquired the norm of conduct. (Cheng, 2005: 568-9) For Chinese people, "God" is not a necessary medium to self-cultivation and soul connection with *TianDao*. However, Ricci found the integrating point of Confucian and Christian ethic teachings, incorporating the two cultures from different backgrounds and thus made Chinese people accept the medium of "God" through reason. In this way, Ricci accomplished the purpose of his Christian mission of converting Chinese people, and on the other hand helped them to observe their original Confucian ethic morality to do good deeds. Xu Guangqu called Catholicism "Knowledge of Heaven". In his opinion, the Jesuits' Knowledge of Heaven could "compensate the teachings of *Tianzi* (the son of the Heaven), influence Confucianism, and redress Buddhism," and if Ricci and his partners were allowed to do their converting job, then "in several years people's minds would be purified gradually." (Xu Minglong, 1993: 65)

### **3.4 On the Chinese Language**

Chinese is an ideo-phonographic language, different from any in the Indo-European language family. The characteristics of Chinese have been well recorded by sinologists in Europe. However, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Ricci's knowledge of Chinese and his summary of its characteristics and rules based on his learning experiences were groundbreaking. *The Chinese Character Table* compiled by Ricci and his partner laid a foundation for Europeans to learn Chinese. In addition, on the basis of careful reading of Chinese classics, Ricci translated and annotated for the first time in Latin the Confucian classics, including *The Analects*, *Mengzi*, *Great Learning*, and *Zhongyong*. What is more, Ricci wrote ancient Chinese essays and booklets advancing his theory, such as *The True Meaning of Catholicism*, *On Friendship*, *Ten Chapters by a Non-conformer*, and translated into Chinese, together with Xu Guangqu, *Euclid's Elements*. What Ricci has contributed leaves precious spiritual wealth to both Chinese and Western scholars. For Ricci, the Chinese language became not only the communication tool in daily life, but the cultural medium linking up China and the West.

In a word, Ricci discriminated against Buddhism and Taoism. He also somehow noticed the corrupt customs of the Ming Dynasty, but did not go very far in revealing and criticizing them. However, on the whole, through analyzing Ricci's interpretations of

Chinese culture, we can see his attitude as a balancing out and going the middle way. Because of this, he could successfully incorporate Confucian and Christian teachings, imbibe Chinese culture, and thus be accepted by Chinese people as a 'Western Confucian' and so realize his missionary purpose.

#### **4. An Indelible Contribution—The Beginning of Sinology**

In theological history, there is no European lack of depreciation of Matteo Ricci —some thought he just won favor by showing his queer gadgets, some blamed him for ignoring his missionary duties, others even suspected that he conspired to usurp the throne. However, impartial scholars have fully evaluated his contributions to introducing Chinese learning to the West. In Bernard's words, if Marco Polo is the first European who discovered China, then Matteo Ricci is surely the second, but he is the first who did scientific research on the Chinese Empire. (Bernard, 1993: 105) Ricci's studying of the Chinese language and translating Chinese classics "marked the beginning of sinology". (Bernard, 1993: 158) Gallagher, the English translator of *Matteo Ricco's Reading Notes about China*, regards him as a "philosopher excelling in both Chinese and Western theories" and an "excellent elucidator of Confucianism". (Ricci, 2010:34) Nigel Cameron calls him a "half-Chinese", "truly respected by Chinese for his talents in Chinese language and literature". (Ouyang, 2011:34)

When Ricci finished his annotation of the Four Books, he had realized their significance for Europe: "The annotation I've done will help our work in China and Japan, but will be well received in Europe." (Bernard, 1993: 162) In addition, Ricci's essay on verifying the name of "China"<sup>4</sup> is also regarded as "the beginning of sinology". It is *Matteo Ricco's Reading Notes about China* that brought Europeans a more visualized China: "The Far East, having been blocked for thousands of years by high mountains and lofty hills, by the impassable Islamic barriers, is being unveiled gradually, with closer kinship to us than expected." (Bernard, 1993: 104-5) *Matteo Ricco's Reading Notes about China* is spoken highly of by Gallagher, who remarks that "its impact on European literature, science, philosophy, religion and life surpasses any of the other historical works in the 17<sup>th</sup> century". (Ouyang, 2011: 34)

The Chinese Empire described by Ricci is not the 18<sup>th</sup>-century China fancied by philosophers like Voltaire, nor the 19<sup>th</sup>-century China admired but despised as well by Europe. It is the personal memory of a Christian humanist in the circle of Eastern humanists. But no one could deny Ricci's pioneering work and his influence on his followers. After Ricci, none of the missionaries who made excellent contributions to

introducing Chinese learning to the West, especially those who followed Ricci's mission tactics during the "Rites Controversy", such as Nicolas Trigault (金尼阁), Martino Martini (卫匡国), Ferdinand Verbiest (南怀仁) and Joach Bouvet (白晋), have not been influenced by Ricci.

As stated above, the French missionary Nicolas Trigault reorganized and translated Ricco's reading notes about China, published in Germany in 1615, with the title of *Jesuit Matteo Ricci's Christian Expedition to China*. In the late 17th century, this book had been reprinted many times in different languages in Europe, which triggered "Sinomania" in various European countries. Following Ricci, Trigault also translated the Four Books and had them published in Europe, which comforted Ricci's unrealized desire of publishing them. The Italian missionary Martino Martini spent 10 years writing in Latin on his *Ten Volumes of Chinese History*, published in Germany in 1658. This book, "based on Chinese classics and in the form of chronicle, revealed fully and accurately to Europe the reliable China's ancient history". (Xu Minglong, 1993: 144) The French missionary Joach Bouvet, following his forerunner Ricci, continued to probe into the integration of Confucian and Christian teachings and went still further. Bouvet claimed, "The thoughts expressed in the Chinese classics are not only totally consistent with Christian teachings, but the earliest written records of Christian teachings." (Xu Minglong, 1993: 182)

Ricci's list of successors is very long as his influences are not just confined to his partners and successors. Ricci's dedication to introducing Chinese learning to the West is a valuable spiritual asset, deserving to be embraced and cherished.

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<sup>1</sup> *Zhongyong* (中庸) has been translated into different versions, like the Golden Mean, the Middle Way, but I think the connotations of *Zhongyong* will lose when thus translated, that's why I keep it in Pinyin. Referring to Chen Hong, 2010. *Going Zhongyong: Confucianism and Reader-Response Criticism as Basic Directions for English Literature Teaching/Learning in China*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.

<sup>2</sup> We should distinguish Aristotle's Golden Means and Confucian *Zhongyong*, however, there's some similarity, since the Middle Way is part of *Zhongyong* doctrine.

<sup>3</sup> Feng Yingjing(冯应京) was wronged and put into prison due to his honest performance in duties and consideration for the public interest. Li Zuowu(李卓吾) was wronged and put into prison for his frank writing and later died in prison. Qu Wensu(瞿文素) was a famous scholar who learned from Ricci Western learning and who offered Ricci much help in life. Xu Guangqu(徐光启) was a famous scholar who learned from Ricci Western learning and worked together in translating *Euclids Elements*. All of them were Christianized.

<sup>4</sup> It is Ricci who made Europeans know that "Cathay" is "China". (Ricci, 2010: 541) However, some

scholars hold it is Priest Diego de Pantoja (庞迪我) who first brought this judgment to Europe, 11 years earlier than Ricci. (Xu Minglong, 1993: 49)