

Ricci (Matteo)

利瑪竇

(1552-1610)



Matteo Ricci's portrait painted on the 12th May, 1610 (the day after Ricci's death 11-May-1610) by the Chinese brother Emmanuel Pereira (born Yu Wen-hui), who had learned his art from the Italian Jesuit, Giovanni Nicolao. It is the first oil painting ever made in China by a Chinese painter. The age, 60 (last word of the Latin inscription), is incorrect: Ricci died during his fifty-eighth year. The portrait was taken to Rome in 1614 and displayed at the Jesuit house together with paintings of Ignatius of Loyola and Francis Xavier. It still hangs there.

Matteo Ricci was born on the 6th Oct 1552, in central Italy, in the city of Macerata, which at that time was territory of the Papal State. He first attended for seven years a School run by the Jesuit priests in Macerata, later he went to Rome to study Law at the Sapienza University, but was attracted to the religious life. In 1571 (in opposition to his father's wishes), he joined the Society of Jesus and studied at the Jesuit college in Rome (Collegio Romano). There he met a famous German Jesuit professor of mathematics, Christopher Clavius, who had a great influence on the young and bright Matteo. Quite often, Ricci in his letters from China will remember his dear professor Clavius, who taught him the basic scientific elements of mathematics, astrology, geography etc. extremely important for his contacts with Chinese scholars.

Christopher Clavius was not a wellknown scientist in Europe at that time, but at the "Collegio Romano", he influenced many young Jesuits. Ricci is the best example.

One important contribution of Clavius was in the reform of the calendar.

By the middle of the 16th century, it was clear to Europeans that the calendar they'd been using since Roman times was becoming more and more incorrect. In fact, it was losing a little over 11 minutes per year. Eventually, that would put Easter around the time crops were harvested in Western Europe, which made the Pope Gregory XIII very uneasy. Clavius proposed our leap year system, which will hold us for many centuries. To switch systems, he proposed that Wednesday, October 4, 1582 in the old calendar system be followed by Thursday, October 15, 1582 in the new system. Both his calendar and switching method drew criticism for robbing the people of eleven days, but Pope Gregory so decreed it. It is called the Gregorian Calendar (after Pope Gregory, who promoted it), and is now commonly used all over the world (except in some Orthodox Churches). Clavius was also the first mathematician to use the decimal point.

In 1577 Ricci and four other students offered themselves for the East Indian missions. They were not ordained priests yet. Ricci (without visiting his family to take leave) and his companions proceeded to Portugal, where they had to wait for a few months for a boat to take them to the Indies. In these months of waiting, Ricci studied at the University of Coimbra (where Jesuit missionaries received formation before going to the Far East) and learned Portuguese. Finally on the 24, March 1578, Ricci together with his companions embarked at Lisbon on the boat St Louis and, after a six month voyage, on the 13 Sept. 1578, reached Goa (a Portuguese colony on the west coast of India). There Ricci continued his studies for the priesthood at the Jesuit seminary of Cochin (a Portuguese territory near Goa), and before his priestly ordination, taught rhetoric at the seminary. He was ordained priest on July 26, 1580. Two years later (totally Ricci remained in India four years), he was assigned to the China Mission by the superior of all Jesuits in the Far East, Fr Alessandro Valignano (Fan Li'an 范禮安), who had been Ricci novice master in Rome. After a two month sea voyage (passing through Malacca) Ricci arrives in Macao on the 7th Aug. 1582.

Macao had become a Portuguese colony since 1557.

In 1571 a house of the Jesuits had been set up at Macao, but for many years, their main Evangelization concern and attention had been Japan rather than China. Many attempts had been made to enter China, but all had failed. The very active and far-sighted Jesuit superior for the Far East, Fr Valignano, had been preparing a China Mission Plan, and for that purpose in 1579 had already assigned the Italian Jesuit priest Michele Ruggieri 羅明堅 to Macao for the study of the Chinese language and culture. But it was not until Valignano arrived in Macao on a visitation in 1582, that

the China Mission Plan was seriously taken up. For this purpose Valignano calls Ricci from Goa to Macao to help Ruggieri in this plan. Ricci is 30 years old when he puts his feet on Chinese soil. He will be 57 when he dies in Peking. The 27 years (almost 28 years) of Ricci's missionary activity in China can be described as a long and arduous journey from Macao to Peking. It is very enlightening to follow Ricci's journey, step by step. It is not only a geographical passage of places and people on the way to Peking. Ricci at the same time walks an internal spiritual journey towards an ever deeper understanding of Chinese culture and of his role in China. We are lucky to have an abundant literature covering each stop of Ricci's journey to Peking:

- a. Ricci's extensive and detailed book (written in Italian, "Della entrata della Compagnia di Gesù e Christianità nella Cina") "On the Entry of the Society of Jesus and Christianity into China", often called Ricci's Memoirs.
- b. Ricci's 54 letters that he wrote from the Orient to his superiors in Rome and to friends and relatives in Italy. Of these letters only six were written from India (where, as we have seen, Ricci spent the first four years of his mission in the Orient). All other letters were written from the Chinese cities, where Ricci stationed on his way to Peking. Ricci describes his journey, by writing: "I am discovering little by little". His journey is a continuous discovery of new situations, new insights and new approaches.

Ming Dynasty Empire (1368-1644)



The Route of Matteo Ricci

1. Macao 澳門 (1582-1583)
2. Zhaoqing 肇慶 (1583-1589)
3. Shaozhou 韶州 (1589-1595)
northern Guangdong
4. Nanchang 南昌(1595-1598) capital
of Jiang-si 江西
5. Nanking 南京 (1598-1600)
6. Peking 北京 (1600-1610)

1. Macao 澳門 (1582-1583). (Ricci writes two letters from Macao)

Ricci remains in Macao only one year. During this brief stay, he immediately starts learning the Chinese language and Chinese culture and we can notice the

first attempts to moulding what would become later Ricci's method of Evangelization in China:

1a. dialogue with Chinese scholars through science and culture.

In Macao, Ricci starts working on the first edition of his map of the world "Great Map of Ten Thousand Countries" 《萬國輿圖》. He will improve this map all along the journey. The final version will be made public in 1602 in Peking.

This world map is a remarkable scientific achievement, showing China's geographical position in the world with more accurate measurements and with many foreign cities and places written in Chinese. Chinese scholars were delighted.

Another important cultural contribution by the two Jesuit Priests, Ruggieri and Ricci, is the compilation of one of the first Portuguese-Chinese Dictionary 《葡漢辭典》 ever printed. It was meant primarily for the benefit of missionaries or other foreigners, who wanted to learn Chinese. The dictionary introduces for the very first time the romanization (created by Matteo Ricci) of the Chinese language spoken in the final years of the Ming period and constitutes a cultural milestone in the historical documentation of the development of Chinese studies.



This new edition (in Portuguese, English, and Chinese) of the Portuguese-Chinese Dictionary compiled by Ruggieri and Ricci, is an invaluable reference resource on the linguistics, commerce, philosophy, theology, and culture of the late 17th and early 18th centuries in both China and the West. (Edited by John W. Witek, SJ, published in 2001, Lisbon)

1b. Ricci very soon realizes that Macao is not an ideal centre of Evangelization in China. On one hand the presence of Portuguese in Macao is a symbol of Western colonialism hated by the Chinese and the behaviour of Portuguese is not accepted by Chinese culture. On the other hand, Ricci understands that Macao is at the bottom of the hierarchical ladder of Chinese society, which is centred on the emperor in Peking. Ricci has the intuition that any fruitful

missionary work has to start at the top of the ladder, in Peking, with the approval of the Emperor (or ideally with his conversion to Christianity).

Until this time Jesuit missionaries were allowed only brief stays in China proper, from a few days to a few weeks. After many failed attempts by the local Jesuit superior, Fr Ruggieri, to enter China, finally and unexpectedly, the viceroy of Guangdong and Guanshi, Guo Yingping 郭應聘, gives permission to the Jesuit priests to settle in Zhaoqing. Ruggieri and Ricci immediately leave Macao and on foot, after a journey of ten days, reach Zhaoqing (10 September 1583).

2. Zhaoqing 肇慶 (1583-1589)

(Ricci writes seven letters from Zhaoqing)

2a. Once in Zhaoqing, the Jesuit priests, assisted by the local prefect Wang Pan (王泮) are allowed to acquire a plot of land on which they construct a small house with a chapel, the first Catholic mission residence in China since “the Religion of Light” (Jinh-jau 景教) during the Tang dynasty and the Franciscans during the Yuan dynasty.

The first big problem the two missionaries have to face is the great suspicion Chinese people in general and authorities in particular have of all foreigners. Ricci understands that this suspicion is mainly due to the fact that Chinese people are more inclined to “culture than weapons”, and are very afraid that foreigners will use weapons to take over their kingdom (they had had sad experiences with the Portuguese and the Japanese!). Ricci understands also that the Chinese are very proud of their culture, which they believe, “is superior to all barbarians’ cultures”, and are “cautious about any new foreign doctrine preached in China”.

The two missionaries have to face this new situation, and their first Evangelization plan is: “to show to the people that they have no connections with the Portuguese in Macao; to let the Chinese people know that they are there first of all to understand and study Chinese culture and language; to go very slowly about baptisms and new converts, and to present themselves as religious monks”. They decide to dress as Buddhist monks, and have their hair and beard cut. This is also the wish of the viceroy, who honoured the foreigners’ residence with two dedicatory plaques reading “Xianhua Si” (僊花寺) and “Xilai Jingtú” (西來淨土). For the following 10 years, Ricci will be called “the bonze of the west”, or simply “the bonze” “*heshang*” (和尚) or

“*seng*” (僧).

At first Ricci is pleased to be able to be welcomed by the Chinese as one of them and to live with them as a Buddhist monk.

But soon, as he will grow in his understanding of Chinese society and culture, he will see things differently and take new decisions.

- 2b. While in Zhaoqing, Ricci continues his studies of Chinese literature and his work of contacting scholars and mandarins showing them his scientific artifacts: his world map, clocks, sun-dials or mathematical exercises. On display at the Jesuit residence at Zhaoqing is the world map which Ricci had begun working on in Macao. It greatly interest Chinese visitors. At their urging, Ricci makes a copy of the map and translates the names of different places into Chinese. This work, called in Chinese the “Yudi shanhai quantu” (輿地山海全圖) was first printed in 1584, but is now lost. Its outline is preserved in the “Tushu bian” (圖書編) by Ricci’s friend and associate, the eminent scholar and geographer, Zhang Huang (章潢).

Ricci will continue working and improving it. In 1600 a revised edition of this map was published with the slightly altered title “Shanhai yudi quantu” (山海輿地全圖). With the help of the eminent scholar and friend of the Jesuits Li Zhizao (李之藻), the third, fourth and sixth editions entitled “Kunyu wanguo quantu” (坤輿萬國全圖) will be published in 1603, 1604 and 1607 in Peking.

Ricci’s World Map, (Mappamondo, in Italian) contains the first representation of the New World (the America’s) on a Chinese map. Many Ming scholars immediately recognize these maps as important improvements on existing cartographic technology. Previously unknown regions were now charted in Chinese style and many of the foreign place-names used by Chinese today trace their origin to Ricci’s maps.

Ricci through his mappamondo, introduces many new lands to the Chinese people and at the same time he does not omit to add short notes in Chinese to places strictly linked to Christianity, like Judaea, Rome etc. Next to Judea Ricci adds: “it is called the holy land because it is the land where the Lord of heaven became man.” Next to Rome, it is added: here the head of the Catholic Church lives.”



This World Map “wanguo quantu”萬國全圖 originally drawn by Matteo Ricci, was reprinted around 1620 by another famous Jesuit missionary in China, Giulio Aleni “Ai Ru-lue” 艾儒略, (who was born in Brescia, Italy 1582 and died in Yanping, China, 10 June 1649).



The image of Ricci on this Italian commemorative stamp is that of a Chinese scholar. In the background Ricci’s World Atlas (Mappamondo).

Other curiosities, such as Western clocks, prisms, and books intrigue visitors to the residence.

In 1584, Dec. Ruggieri (with the help of a famous Chinese Scholar who had recently received baptism taking the name of Paul) publishes his Chinese Catechism “Tianzhu shilu” (天主實錄). Ricci cooperates with Ruggieri in publishing the book.

The first edition (followed by many more editions) printed 1.200 copies. This “Tianzhu Shilu” is the first book ever printed by foreigners in China. Years later Ricci will completely rewrite Ruggieri’s Catechism and publish his own Tianzhu shiyi(天主實義) Ricci’s aim in writing “Tianzhu shiyi” will be to introduce Christianity to Chinese readers and arouse their interest to learn more about this new religion. “Tianzhu shiyi” will become a powerful tool to reach non-Christians.

2c. The residence of the two Jesuit priests in Zhaoqing becomes a meeting place of Chinese scholars and mandarins, with whom the priests enter in dialogue.

What attracts the Chinese scholars to Ricci's house is both the scientific exhibits and the knowledge and the moral virtues of the two Westerners. Whenever questions are asked about religious matters, the missionaries are ready to explain and offer some printed material, like the Catechism and a new production on the ten commandments that the two missionaries have compiled, Zuchuan Tianzhu shijie (the ten commandments of the Lord of heaven, as transmitted by our ancestors. (祖傳天主十誡 肇慶 Zhaoqing, 1584).

Ricci writes: "We published the ten commandments for all those who requested them and said they would observe them because they are so close to reason and to natural law". And Ricci concludes: "We published the ten commandments after having published the Our Father, Hail Mary and the Creed".

As we can see, little by little, more Catechetical material and prayers are being published. Ricci will continuously revise the Chinese translation to make it more accurate and more readable. It will be only in 1605, in Peking, that Ricci will collect all these past translations, revise them again and publish them in a book, Tianzhu jiaoyao. "Tianzhu jiaoyao" is a book for newly baptized Christians, who need to learn more Catechism and daily prayers.

In the same residence hangs a copy of the painting of the Virgin Mary with the infant Jesus in her arms, that Ricci had taken with him before leaving for the Orient. It is an icon dear to all Romans. It is displayed in the basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome and it is called "Salus Populi Romani" (salvation of the Roman people). It is interesting to note that this painting aroused the curiosity of many Chinese, who wanted to know more about the meaning of it, and it was this painting that Matteo Ricci will present as a gift (among many other gifts) to the emperor Wanli in Peking.



This famous Icon of Mary holding her baby Jesus, is kept in the Basilica of St Mary Major in Rome. It is attributed to St Luke. An ancient tradition relates that St Helen (the mother of the Emperor Constantine) took this sacred image from the Holy Land and brought it to Rome. For centuries, both popes and ordinary faithful have shown great devotion to this Icon. The same devotion is shown to replicas of this sacred image scattered all over the world. Many stories are told of special graces obtained through the intercession of Mary.

It is evident that the Jesuits' personal deportment and dedication to scholarship are widely admired and commented on. This seems a successful application of the policy of inculturating Christianity in Asia instituted by the Jesuit Superior, Alessandro Valignano.

At this time Ricci decides to change his European name into a Chinese one: 利瑪竇 Li-ma-tou. This name is now mentioned in all books of Chinese history and is familiar to many Chinese people. Often to his name, Li-ma-tou, Chinese scholars add "Xitai" 西泰 or Taixi 泰西 (which literally means "far-west", the sage from the far west). The custom of changing the original name into a Chinese one, will later be adopted by all foreign missionaries in China.

2d. It seems that everything is going fine in Zhaoqing. The number of baptized (especially among well educated people) is increasing. But there is always the other side of reality as well. Ricci's success in gaining the friendship and respect of the scholars, and the political and material support of many officials must be weighed against a good deal of resistance, xenophobia, and simple jealousy from other circles. Ricci's personal qualities, his kindness, patience, and erudition, are well known and appreciated by his Chinese friends and associates. But he could not always control events.

Suddenly Ricci is left alone in Zhaoqing. Valignano, the far-sighted Jesuit superior (who was following the China Mission very closely) had understood that without an official recognition from the Emperor, the fate of any missionary work would depend on the whims of local governors or viceroys. On 25th Nov. 1588, Ruggieri (by order of Valignano) leaves Zhaoqing and returns to Italy. His mission is to convince both the Pope and the King of Spain to send an official representative to the Chinese Emperor in Peking, thus securing the Church's position in that immense empire. Ricci, with the help of a famous scholar immediately writes in formal diplomatic style a letter for the Pope to sign and send to the Chinese Emperor, asking the Emperor to give freedom of preaching the Gospel in China. Ricci in the letter puts his name together with Fr Almeida's as the future possible forerunners of the Pope's legates to the Emperor's court. However, for various reasons (in one year three Popes were elected and died), Ruggieri, once in Italy, can not carry out his mission and he is asked by his superiors to remain in Italy, where he dies in 1607 at the Jesuit college in Salerno.

Ricci is alone and in midst of growing difficulties. In 1589 the new

Governor-General of Guangdong-Guangxi, Liu Jiwen (劉繼文) expells the Jesuits from Zhaoqing. This first setback does not dampen Ricci's determination of reaching Peking. Ricci returns to Macao, but only for a very short while. He is able to secure a letter from the same Governor Liu Jiwen, which gives permission of residence in Shaozhou (韶州), in northern Guangdong(廣東).

3. Shaozhou 韶州 (1589-1595)

(During his five years in Shaozhou, Ricci writes nine letters)

3a. In 1589, a new Jesuit priest, Fr Almeyda, is sent to help Ricci. The two priests together start the new mission in Shaozhou . Unfortunately, in 1591 (after only two years from his arrival) Fr Almeyda dies. A new priest, Fr. Petris, is sent to help Ricci. But after two years, Fr Petris dies too. Ricci is left alone with the Jesuit brother Fernandez, of Chinese descent.

Shaozhou proves more welcoming than Zhaoqing. Ricci receives permission to purchase a plot of land, on which he builds a house and a church (this time Ricci adopts a Chinese style building), and he proceeds to establish friendly relations with scholars and officials throughout the region.

A rumor current at the time is that the Jesuits are alchemists (mysterious people who are able to achieve the transmutation of mercury into silver and gold). This was brought to the attention of a very famous young scholar Qu Rukui 瞿汝夔 (in some missionary accounts, Qu Taisu 瞿太素), who lived in Nanchang. Qu had previously heard about the European priests who were very learned people and who had welcomed many Chinese scholars into the Catholic Church. Out of curiosity and eagerness to find out more about the transformation of mercury into silver, Qu asks Ricci for instruction on Christianity. Though it turns out that alchemy is not among Ricci's skills, Qu continues to be instructed in the faith. Ricci teaches him not only about Christianity, but also mathematics, astronomy, and other sciences. Qu becomes a fervent Christian and an advocate for Ricci, the Jesuits, and Western science among many of his letterati acquaintences.

It is amusing to read how Ricci recalls the conversion of Qu Ru-kui. Ricci writes that "after baptism, the new convert frankly confessed to me that the real motivation he came to see "the bonze from the West", was not religious but very worldly. He had heard that the bonze from the West knew the secret formula of making silver out of mercury, and he wanted to see whether he

could get rich!” Ricci saw how the intelligentsia was drawn to him by different motivations, but once they believed, their faith was real! Ricci begins to see how Christianity becomes acceptable to and respected by the best minds of the Chinese intelligentsia.

It is Qu Ru-kui and other Confucian scholars that strongly encourage Ricci to become a Chinese scholar rather than a Chinese Bonze. Ricci “little by little” begins to realize that his decision to take up the dress of a bonze was taken too quickly without a deep understanding of Chinese society. He comes to realize that by using Buddhist terminology, many Chinese people had the mistaken impression that Ricci’s religion was a form of Buddhism. Reinforcing this belief was the fact that, at this early stage in the mission, Ricci and his Jesuit confrères dressed in similar fashion to the local Buddhist clergy and were also referred to as *heshang* 和尚 or *seng* 僧. He sees the need of a new change.

During his journey, he has the opportunity of meeting many Confucian scholars, who love to learn mathematics and astronomy from him. Ricci sees that in China, “the scholar” is more respected and plays a much more important role than “the Bonze”, and he sees himself much closer to the scholar. He decides to present himself as a scholar from the West. He explains his new plan to his superior Valignano and to the superior general in Rome, who both grant Ricci permission to wear the robe of the Chinese scholars (Ricci in his letters coins a special Italian term to describe this class of scholar-official, “Letterati”, the people of letters). Later the Pope will give his consent too. In order to further distance himself from the Buddhists, new terms are chosen. Discarding *heshang* and *seng*, Ricci chooses *daoren* 道人 (the man of the tao), and a few years later *shenfu* 神父 (Spiritual Father) and *siduo* 司鐸 (Priest).

- 3b. In 1589 Ricci prepares a Chinese version of the Gregorian Calendar (for the preparation of which in Rome, his former professor and dear friend, Christopher Clavius had had an important contribution). Ricci ingenuitly creates an adaptation of the Gregorian Calendar to the Chinese Calendar, so that Chinese can know exactly all the feasts of Christians. The Calendar is so admired by all, that many request its publication. Ricci refuses by saying that to publish a new calendar in China is a very delicate matter reserved to the Emperor. Nonetheless, Ricci’s fame as an expert in editing calendars will create the right atmosphere for future cooperation with Chinese authorities. In fact, after Ricci’s death, many Jesuits will work on the revision of the Chinese

calendar at court.

In 1694 Ricci sends to Europe his Latin translation of the Four Books of the Confucian Canon (*Sishu* 四書), the first such translation of its kind in Europe. Ricci wants the Europeans to read and admire Chinese culture. Many Europeans (among them renowned philosophers) admire the Chinese philosopher and draw inspiration from him.

Additionally, Ricci continues developing the first system of romanizing Chinese, which would be utilized in the earliest dictionaries and lexicons for Jesuits, other China missionaries and all foreigners in general. Ricci's mission to be a bridge between two cultures is becoming more and more visible.

3c. At the beginning of 1594, another Jesuit priest, Fr Cattaneo, comes to help Ricci. Ricci is happy that he can now leave the residence in the hands of the new priest and he may continue his journey to Peking (a dream Ricci will never forget!). Ricci had befriended a famous Mandarin who was going to Peking soon. Ricci had promised the Mandarin that he would take care of his sick son, and the Mandarin had given Ricci (together with two young Chinese boys from Macao, who wanted to join the Jesuits) permission to join his entourage to Peking.

The journey is very adventurous. The boat on which they are travelling hits a rock in the river. All fall into the water. Ricci (who doesn't know how to swim) is miraculously saved. One of the young boys dies in the water. Ricci is very saddened and shocked. The mandarin is afraid. He wants to send them back. Ricci begs him to continue. The Mandarin promises that he will take them to Nanking and leave them there. He would go alone to Peking. Ricci accepts. Once in Nanking, Ricci is not allowed to remain in the city without a permit (Ricci will return to Nanking later), but for the time being he has to leave the city and settle in Nanchang.

4. Nanchang 南昌 (1595-1598)

(During the three years Ricci spent in Nanchang, he wrote eleven letters.)

4a. Nanchang was the capital of Jiang-si 江西, very famous for the number and learning of its educated men. It must be noted here that by now Li-matou (Ricci Matteo) was already well known among the circle of letterati and therefore in whatever town Li-matou sought a new field of apostolate he was preceded by his reputation and he found powerful friends to protect him. At

Nanchang, Li-matou is received by the Governor of Jiangxi, Lu Wan'gai 陸萬垓. Governor Lu quickly issues the necessary permit, while Ricci is welcomed by two Imperial princes: the Prince of Jian'an and the Prince of Le'an 建安王和樂安王, who happen to live in Nanchang. We can fairly say that Nanchang is the place where the full blossoming of "Li-matou, the Scholar from the West (西儒)" takes place.

- 4b. At Nanchang, a great change takes place in Ricci's life. The "Bonze from the West" 「西方和尚」 turns into "The Scholar from the West" 「西儒」. Another common title given to Ricci is "xi-tai" 「西泰」 (the scholar from the far West) Ricci starts wearing the dress of the scholar, he grows hair and beard as the scholars did, and he begins to don that special hat (created by himself and which will become Ricci's icon). In his letters he says: "to wear a scholar's hat that resembles a bishop's mitre". In his letters you can feel Ricci's joy in describing his new scholar's dress. In this "new fine silk robe", the real Ricci comes out. He decides to be carried by four servants on a palanquin (as all scholars did) on visits to other scholars.

All he had learned in Rome from his professors (especially Christopher Clavius), about geometry, mathematics, astronomy, the art of drawing maps, making globes, constructing all sorts of clocks...), becomes very precious material for dialogue with Chinese scholars.

Ricci's interest in early Confucianism grows stronger and stronger. He sees in Confucius' description of Tian 天和 Shangti 上帝 the image of the true God of natural religion, based on reason alone, as the Christians do. Ricci sees in this a formidable link between early Confucianism and Christianity. At the same time, Ricci distances himself from Buddhism to the point of disputing the Buddhist concepts of reincarnation and (what he calls) their idol worshipping. Ricci had many debates on this topic.

Ricci is moving the Jesuits towards a closer relationship with the Confucian letterati, and his reputation as a scholar among both Chinese and Westerners stems from this fact. Ricci and his fellow Jesuits had begun intensive study of the Chinese language upon their arrival in Macao. By the time he reached Shaozhou, Ricci was likely reasonably fluent in Chinese, but he continued with tutors to study the classical language, especially the Confucian canon.

At Nanchang, Ricci's confidence of his knowledge of Chinese language and culture is stronger and he starts a deeper and more fruitful dialogue with

Chinese scholars. The bridge between two cultures, until then unknown to and suspicious of each other, becomes more solid.

4c. It is at Nanchang that Ricci writes his first Chinese book “On friendship”, “Jiaoyou lun” 交友論. (Ricci adds the Latin title “De Amicitia”). It is written for general non-Christian Chinese readership. It follows Ricci’s pattern of introducing the Chinese to “ancient saints and sages” of the West through passages and aphorisms translated or paraphrased from classical European sources, thus presenting a format easily recognizable to Chinese letterati, as similar to the Confucian tradition. The book is a very short one. It contains 100 maxims (3500 words).

Ricci describes in the book’s forward the details of how this book came about. He says that, after arriving at Nanchang he was warmly welcomed by the Prince of Jian’an, Zhu Duo-jie 朱多節, who offered a banquet in his honour. At the end of the banquet, the Prince took Ricci’s hands in his and warmly asked him “I would like to know what do Westerners think of friendship”. Ricci obliged. He goes home and begins writing down all he had learned since childhood and still remembered, about friendship. Ricci writes his maxims or proverbs about friendship not in a logical way, but in the style of Wisdom literature, where the reader can read each maxim or proverb separately without any connection with the rest of the maxims.

「吾友非他，即我之半，乃第二我也。故當視友如己焉。」(1)

(my friend is not “another person”, my friend is my half, another I.
So, I have to regard my friend as myself)

「友之與我，雖有二身，二身之內，其心一而已。」(2)

(my friend and I, though we have two bodies, the two bodies have only one heart)

「友於親惟此長焉：親能無相愛親，友者否。蓋親無愛親，親倫猶在：除愛乎友，其友理焉存乎？」(50)

(friendship prevails on kinship, because kinship can exist without mutual love, friendship can not. In fact, even without mutual love the relationship of kins is still there, but without mutual love how can friendship exist?)

The book is so well accepted by Chinese scholars that it will be reprinted many times and included in many collections with introductions and commentaries by famous Chinese scholars praising the work.

Ricci, the scholar from the West, discovers his vocation as “writer”.

Ricci writes in his letters: “in this kingdom, writing is more important, more accurate, more trustworthy than speaking...we are not allowed to go freely anywhere to preach, but we can through books reach the best minds of this people...we can lay the rational foundation for our religion...even writing scientific books becomes an important prerequisite for any further dialogue...and these books in Chinese can be read by people of other nationalities, who use Chinese writing, like Japan...” Ricci’s intuition is correct. His books will reach people outside China, who either speak or understand Chinese (like Korea, Japan, Vietnam...). These books will promote and foster Christianity in the whole of the Far East and create a new Christian terminology (acceptable to Chinese people) to express the Christian faith.

Ricci is seriously dedicated to this mission of writing, and follows famous Chinese masters to learn how to write books in Chinese.

He writes some books on his own, some in collaboration with his disciples. Ricci will write about 22 books in Chinese.

The topics chosen by Ricci for his books are very general: Euclidian Geometry, Cartography, The art of Memorizing, Friendship. Ricci’s aim is to open up a dialogue with Chinese scholars. He wants to tell them that he came to China to learn from Chinese culture and to let Europeans come in contact with this wonderful culture. At the same time Ricci wants to make the Chinese scholars realize that the West too has something to offer to China.

Ricci has learned that Chinese people in general and scholars in particular give great emphasis to memory and ability to memorize. In their educational system (and in particular in the very difficult exams for promotion to higher ranks, memory plays a vital role).

Ricci tries to enter into this area as a Western scholar. In 1596 he writes a treatise on memory Xiguo jifa 《西國記法》 (published in Beijing in 1625). In English it is often translated “Ricci’s Memory Palace”, because in the treatise Ricci describes the Western method of memorizing as a Palace within which there are many rooms. One has to sort out things to be remembered and categorizing them in these rooms.

Ricci in his letters writes how the Governor Lu Wangai 陸萬垓 one day asked him to write this book for his son who wanted to improve his memory.

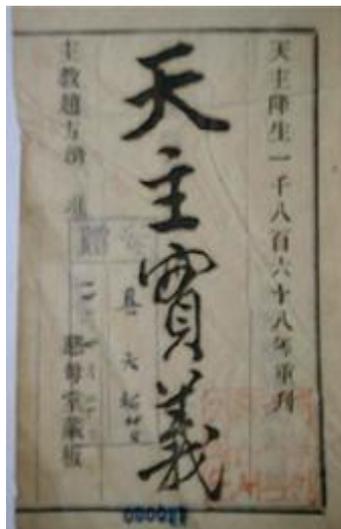
“Having read my book, Ricci continues with some wit, the Governor told me that all the rules and indications in the book are the true method of memorizing, but one has to have a very good memory to remember them all!”

Ricci had an exceptional memory. He had begun training his memorizing skill from the very first years at the “Collegio Romano”.

Although the Ricci’s Memory Palace is not a very innovative scientific discovery, it is well received by Chinese intellectuals.

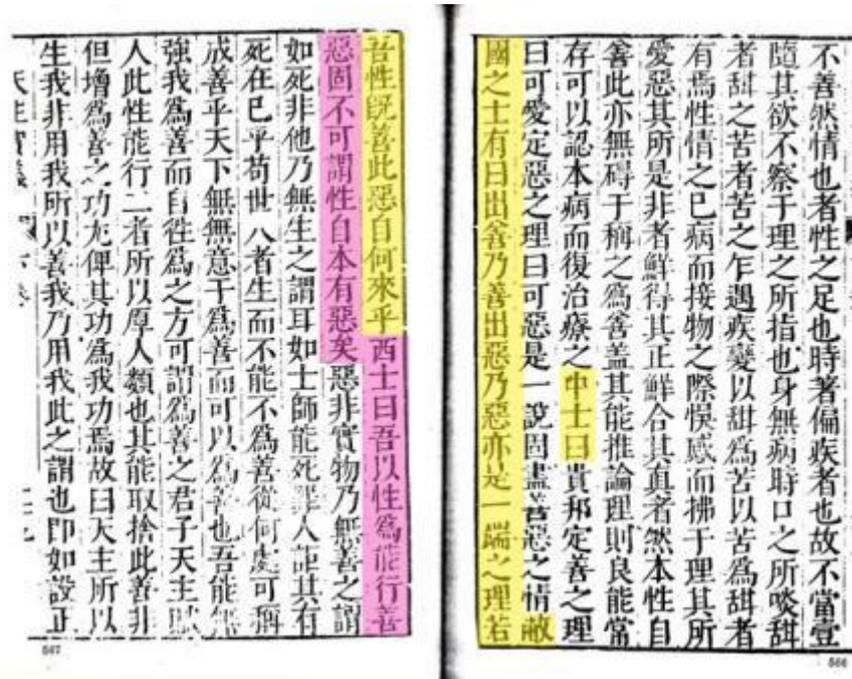
Ricci believes that unless the Chinese scholars open their minds to the West, it will be very hard for Western missionaries to preach the Gospel in China. Ricci believes that a previous preparation (a kind of pre-evangelization) is needed. And this is what he wants to do.

- 4d. During his stay in Nanchang, Ricci produces one of his best known works, the Tianzhu shiyi 《天主實義》 (translated in English as “The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven”, or sometimes “The True Meaning of God.”) The book is written in the form of a dialogue between a Chinese scholar and a Western scholar.



“Tianzhu shiyi” was known in Europe by the Latin title “De Deo Verax Disputatio” (True argumentation about God). The book was authored between 1593 and 1596, however, the draft was widely distributed prior to publication. Feng Ying Jing (馮應京) attempted to publish the book in 1601, but to failed to do so due to economic reasons, and was finally published in Beijing in 1603. The work consists of two books, eight volumes and 174 items in dialogue form between a Chinese scholar and a European scholar. The Chinese

scholar explains traditional Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism of China, and the European scholar quotes the classical works of the primitive Confucianists to explain the doctrines of Christianity using traditional European Catholic philosophy, Scholasticism.



Pages from the manuscript of Ricci's Tianzhu shiyi 《天主實義》

Two examples of dialogue between a Chinese scholar and a Western scholar from the manuscript of Ricci's Tianzhu shiyi 《天主實義》

“The Chinese Scholar says, ... the scholars in my humble country say ‘whatever comes from good is good; whatever comes from evil is evil.’ This is our doctrine. If my nature is good, then where does evil come from?”

「中士曰：... 敝國之士有曰：『出善乃善，出惡乃惡。』亦是一端之理。若吾性既善，此惡自何來乎？...」

The Western scholar says, ... I think that human nature can choose good or evil, but this does not mean that human nature is evil in itself.

西士曰：「吾以性為能行善惡，固不可謂性自本有惡矣。」

“The Chinese Scholar says, ... human nature must have virtues; without virtues, how can you call it good?”

「中士曰：... 性本必有德，無德何為善？...」

“The Western Scholar says, ... if one suddenly sees a child is on the verge of falling into a well, one’s immediate reaction is fear and apprehension. This is “good” ... how can you call it “virtue”? When I see the “right” and act accordingly, that is virtue.”

「西士曰：... 乍見孺子將入於井，即皆怵惕，此皆良善耳 ... 何德之有？乎見義而即行之，乃為德耳。」

“Tianzhu shiyi” is the book through which Ricci exercises the widest and most fortunate influence not only on catechumen and neophytes, but also on many Chinese without any specific religion. “Tianzhu shiyi” began as a revision of the previous Catechism by Fr Ruggieri, “Tianzhu shilu” 《天主實錄》. Ricci continued correcting and improving it while using it in his daily apostolate until it finally contained all the matter suggested by long years of experience and became Ricci’s masterpiece. In it Ricci explains the truth that human reason can understand without God’s Revelation. These truths which must be admitted as the necessary preliminary to faith -- the existence and unity of God, the creation, the immortality of the soul, reward or punishment in a future life -- are here demonstrated by the best arguments from reason. At the same time, Ricci shows the contradiction of idols-worship and reincarnation, very common at that time in China. To the testimony furnished by Christian philosophy and theology Ricci adds numerous proofs from the ancient Chinese books, which did much to win credit for his work.

A masterpiece of apologetics and controversy, the “Tianzhu shiyi” rightfully became the manual of the missionaries and did most efficacious missionary work.

Before its author's death it had been reprinted at least four times, and twice by non-Christians. It led countless numbers to Christianity, and aroused esteem for Christianity in those readers whom it did not convert. The perusal of it induced Emperor K'ang-hi to issue his edict of 1692 granting liberty to preach the Gospel. The Emperor Kien-long, although he persecuted the Christians, ordered the “Tianzhu shiyi” to be placed in his library with his collection of the most notable productions of the Chinese language. Even to the present time missionaries have experienced its beneficent influence, which was not confined to China, being felt also in Japan, Tong-king, Korea, Vietnam and other countries tributary to Chinese literature.

Although Ricci calls his book “Catechism”, in fact it is not a traditional

Catechism that presents all the Christian mysteries as revealed by God. Ricci writes: “this book should be useful both to Christians and non-Christians and it could reach far lands before any missionary sets foot there. The book should open the way to the rest of the revealed mysteries of our religion.”

In Ricci’s mind this book should be a sort of general introduction to Christianity, based on reason only. Ricci believes that truth is present in each human being and reason can draw it out from each human being.

Ricci explains that he began working on it since 1594 and, he adds with great satisfaction, “it came out very nice”.

It was polished and put in very elegant Chinese by the famous scholar Feng Yingjing 馮應京, “who is a very famous scholar and a friend of ours”, Ricci adds.

4e. At this stage of Ricci’s journey to Peking, we can already outline the main features of his vision of Evangelization in China:

4e1. “Great prudence”

The exercise of great prudence alone enables the Jesuit missionaries to remain in the region, which they had such difficulty in entering. Omitting all mention at first of their intention to preach the Gospel, they declare to the mandarins who question them concerning their object “that they were religious who had left their country in the distant West because of the renown of the good government of China, where they desired to remain till their death, serving God, the Lord of Heaven”. The missionaries stress the fact that they are “religious people desirous to learn” and that “they will never return to their motherland.” Ricci mentions in his letters the fear the Chinese authority had for foreign spies, who would go back to their countries to report on what they had observed.

4e2. “Gradual opening of Chinese scholars’ minds to the Western world”

Ricci knows that Chinese people in general (including the majority of scholars) do not know the West well, but have deep fears and suspicions towards it. They see the “west” as “barbarism”, and every innovation or doctrine coming from the West as dangerous to the stability of the

nation. Ricci is aware that had the missionaries immediately declared their intention to preach a new religion, they would never have been received.

Ricci sees that in order to achieve this opening of the Chinese scholars' minds to the outside world, he has to appeal to their deep sense of curiosity. The missionaries' residence becomes a small exhibition hall of all sorts of Western artifacts the missionaries had brought with them: large and small clocks, mathematical and astronomical instruments, prisms revealing the various colours, musical instruments, oil paintings and prints, cosmographical, geographical, and architectural works with diagrams, maps, and views of towns and buildings, large volumes, magnificently printed and splendidly bound, etc.

The scholars, who had hitherto fancied that outside of their country only barbarism existed, are astounded. Rumours of the wonders displayed by the religious from the West soon spread on all sides, and thenceforth their house is always filled, especially with mandarins and the educated.

It follows, says Father Ricci, that "little by little, the scholars' attitude towards our countries, our people, and especially our educated men changes and they begin having an idea vastly different from that which they had hitherto entertained". This impression is intensified by the explanations of the missionaries concerning their little museum in reply to the numerous questions of their visitors. And most of all, it is the holy lives and behaviour of the missionaries that strikes the scholars' curiosity.

We have seen how Ricci's world map was one of the articles which most aroused the scholars' curiosity. The Chinese had already had maps, called by their geographers "descriptions of the world". But those maps were rather maps of China alone, and China stood majestic among other tiny states. But these maps didn't give a clear and scientific dimension and position of each country in the world (including the newly discovered Americas). At first it is not easy for the scholars to accept Ricci's new "world vision", (at first they complained to Ricci as though his map was disrespectful towards China, but little by little, beginning with the wisest of them, they accept the evidence, and starting with the Governor of Zhaoqing, all urge Ricci to make a copy of his map with the names and inscriptions in Chinese. Ricci draws a larger map of the world on which

he writes more detailed inscriptions, suited to the needs of the Chinese; when the work is completed the governor had it printed, giving all the copies as presents to his friends in the province and at a distance. Father Ricci does not hesitate to say: "This was the most useful work that could be done at that time to dispose China to give credence to the things of our holy Faith. . . . Their conception of the greatness of their country and of the insignificance of all other lands made them so proud that the whole world seemed to them savage and barbarous compared with themselves; it was scarcely to be expected that they, while entertaining this idea, would heed foreign masters."

4e3. "Rediscover the greatness of Chinese culture and its hidden link to God" Ricci writes: "... discover the conformity of the law of God with natural reason and similar teachings found in the writings of the ancient sages of China".

One of Ricci's most important intuitions was to understand from his studies of Chinese classics and from dialoguing with eminent Chinese scholars, that early Confucianism was a sort of "natural religion" that taught people natural virtues, and made people "naturally good". Ricci saw early Confucianism very close to the notion of the Christian God and Christian virtues. Following this intuition, he translated the name of God with Confucian terms: Tianzhu 天主 (Lord of Heaven), or Shandi 上帝 (King above), or Tian 天 (Heaven).

It is surprising how Ricci writes about the first time he thought of the new Name of God.

One day, he visited one of his first Catechumens in China (whose full name is not given). Ricci, before leaving that place, had entrusted him with the Mass altar. Ricci noticed that during his absence, the Catechumen had placed the altar in one room in his house, and above the altar, for lack of any other image, he had attached to the wall a wooden tablet, on which he had written two Chinese words: Tianzhu (Lord of Heaven).

Ricci accepted this term, and used it in his Catechism. Later, this Name of God will become the focus of much controversy.

4e4. “Wait for the religious questions to be asked by the scholars”

It is soon evident to the missionaries that their religious artifacts, religious paintings, religious books and their own religious identity are no less interesting to many of their visitors than their Western curiosities and learning, and many questions about their religion are asked. To satisfy those who wished to learn more, the missionaries distribute printed matter well prepared in advance. They distribute hundreds, thousands of copies and thus "the good odour of our Faith began to be spread throughout China".

Ricci's bold, far-sighted plan consists in breaking down the century-old isolationism of the Celestial Empire by sharing the culture of those on whom the government of the country depended, the intellectual aristocracy. Ricci joins Confucian society on its own level of language, social customs, and philosophical reflection. He makes the ascendancy of learning the beginning of Catholic apologetics. This intellectual ministry, he would later write, was worth far more to him than making thousands of piecemeal converts. It was, he dreamed, the means that would eventually lead to "the universal conversion of the whole kingdom."

4e5. “Recognition from the emperor is vital”

Ricci writes:...”we won't be able to do any stable thing in this country, until we receive the blessing of the king...”

His Chinese friends support the idea: official permission from the Emperor in Peking will be essential to secure the establishment of Christianity in China, the freedom to preach and the freedom to publicly accept and spread Christianity. This is the final aim of Ricci's journey to Peking. He hopes to be able either to meet the Emperor in Peking (which will be an impossible dream), or, (with the help of the scholars he has befriended, through his own good reputation and fame and by presenting to the Emperor special gifts) let the Emperor know that Christianity poses no threat to China and that both China and Christianity can benefit from mutual acceptance and respect. Ricci's strongest witnesses supporting his vision are the many eminent Chinese scholars, who have met Ricci, learned from him many scientific discoveries helpful to China and (some of them) have even embraced Christianity.

4f. A sudden change in Ricci's position

During his stay at Nanchang, Ricci suddenly, in 1596, receives his superior's (Fr Valignano) nomination of "superior of all Jesuits and Jesuit activities in China". Ricci will exercise this function until his death in Peking. This nomination is both an open recognition of Ricci's work in China by the Jesuits, and at the same time it gives Ricci a freer hand to organize his missionary work. Before 1596, all decisions regarding the Jesuits in China (and their financial support) were made by the superior in Macao. Due to the immense distances and other problems, that created many unnecessary difficulties. With Fr Valignano's open support, Ricci's dream of reaching Peking gets new energy.

4g. At once Ricci begins contacting his friends in Nanchang and the princes of the imperial family who reside in Nanchang. Ricci finds out that one of his friends, the Nanking Minister of Rites, Wang Honghui 王弘誨 offers to accompany Ricci and Cattaneo to Beijing. Minister Wang had planned to introduce the Jesuits at court with the idea of using their mathematical and astronomical skills in calendrical reform and correcting the national almanac, essential for the accurate Imperial observance of Confucian rites and ceremonies and selection of auspicious days according to Chinese zodiacal principles. Ricci gladly accepts, and gathers scientific and musical instruments and other items, including intricately made clocks, a harpsichord, statues of the Madonna, crucifixes and optical prisms to present to Emperor Wanli. They leave Nanchang on the 25th of June. They stop at Nanking, where they meet many difficulties and are not welcomed into the city. After a very adventurous long journey they arrive in Beijing on September 7, 1598.

4h. In Beijing the Jesuits reside at the residence of Wang Honghui, but the ming of this journey proved unfortunate. The Japanese under Hideyoshi had invaded Korea, a traditional Chinese ally. With China now involved in defending the Korean peninsula, all non-Chinese come under suspicion as possible spies. Wang cannot help the Jesuits to get an audience at court. Some powerful eunuchs create endless obstacles for the foreign missionaries. Money is running out, and it becomes clear that a meeting at court is now impossible.

The two months spent at Wang's residence were not idle, however. Ricci, and Cattaneo edited a Chinese vocabulary arranged in alphabetical order, romanized in the modified system originated by Ricci, including aspirants and indicators for the five tones of the Nanjing official language, which Ricci

calls Quonhua 官話. Ricci later relates how important Cattaneo's contribution to the project was, "Father Cattaneo contributed greatly to this work. He was an excellent musician, with a discriminating ear for delicate variations of sound and he readily discerned the variety of tones."

Ricci writes: "we decided to return to Nanking, waiting for a better opportunity, before something could happen to us, that would jeopardize our presence in China and a second chance of returning to Peking". On the 5th of November they leave Peking arriving at Nanking on the 6th of February. During this trip by boat from Peking to Nanking, Ricci continues working on his dictionary.

5. Nanking 南京 1598-1600

(Ricci writes two letters from Nanking)

5a. Nanking was one the famous imperial capitals of China. Ricci is forced to return to Nanking from Peking on 6 Feb, 1599. He surprisingly finds a completely new situation, very different from that of the preceding year. Conditions in Nanking had improved markedly since the death of Hideyoshi in the Autumn of 1598 and subsequent withdrawal of most Japanese forces from Korea. Wang Honghui, Ricci's faithful friend, had preceded the two missionaries from Peking to Nanking. He invites Ricci to stay in Nanking, where Ricci becomes a celebrated guest. Wang Honghui continues helping and protecting the two missionaries. He introduces them to many scholars and mandarins, who feel honoured to visit the wise man from the West. Ricci's small house is crowded with these visitors, who love to listen to him speaking about astronomy, mathematics, geography and other scientific topics. The highest mandarins are desirous of seeing the holy doctor from the West take up his abode in their city.

5b. While residing in Nanking, Ricci is befriended by some of the most important scholars and intellectuals of the period, such as Li Huan 李環, grand commandant of Nanking, the powerful eunuch Feng Bao 馮保 and other ministers of the Nanking government, eminent scholars such as Zhu Shilu 祝世祿, Wang Kentang 王肯堂, Jiao Hong 焦竑, and the iconoclastic Li Zhi 李贄. Most importantly, he meets his future great friend and supporter, Xu Guangqi 徐光啟, who is passing through Nanking on his way to Peking to take the provincial examinations, and who later will become one of the "Three Pillars of the Chinese Church."

In 1599 Ricci writes in Nanking *Si yuannxing lun* 《四元行論》. In it Ricci analyses and refutes the ancient Chinese tradition of the five fundamental elements of the Universe: metal, wood, water, fire and earth, and introduces the European tradition of the four elements: water, air, earth and fire. This essay will be included in the selection of Ricci's writings called *Si yuanxing lun*, which will be published in Peking in 1614.

In 1600 Ricci publishes a revision of the *Mappamondo* entitled *Shanghai yudi quantu* 山海輿地全圖.

Ricci's reputation spreads, and, as his diary notes, he is invited to innumerable banquets and parties in his honor, where he presents and discusses questions concerning religion, science, and philosophy. He even accepts public debates on philosophical issues. Famous in this regard is the dispute Ricci has with a well-known Chinese scholar Tao-che 道士, who taught pantheism. Ricci's logical thinking, argumentation and quotes from Chinese classics leave Tao-che speechless.

- 5c. By now fluent and knowledgeable in the Chinese Classics, Ricci further impresses his audience by demonstrating his prodigious memory, frequently citing entire Chinese passages verbatim, and introducing Christian and Western concepts in his discussions.

Ricci sees the need of a new larger house. The occasion comes, when an entire large building (which people thought was haunted by evil spirits) is sold at very low price to the Jesuits.

Ricci's method of Evangelization proves to be effective. Among the Nanking intellectuals, many are interested in Christianity. The first baptisms of a famous mandarin (who is baptized by the name of Paul) and his entire family, make Ricci see a bright future in Nanking. Ricci immediately sends Fr Cattaneo to Macao to ask the superior there to send one more priest to help. Fr Cattaneo quickly returns to Nanking with a new Jesuit priest, Fr Pantojia 龐迪我 and an assortment of European artifacts: two clocks, two religious oil paintings, artistic religious books, prisms, mirrors, maps and a small harpsichord.

Although his zeal was rewarded with much success in Nanking, Ricci constantly longs to return to Peking. He feels that the mission is not secure in the provinces until it is established and authorized in the capital.

6. Peking 北京 1600-1610

(Ricci writes 18 letters from Peking)

6a. In the Spring of 1600 (May 18), Ricci, supported by many Chinese influential friends, decides on another attempt at entering Peking. With Fr Pantoja 龐迪我 and two Chinese lay brothers, Ricci travels, as before, via the Grand Canal. They carry precious gifts for the Emperor: two clocks (one big and one small, which rings the hours), a small harpsichord, two religious oil paintings, the world map etc. Ricci wants to present these gifts to the emperor.

The group stops at Jining 濟寧 to visit Ricci's friend Li Zhi, who introduces Ricci to Liu Dongxing 劉東星, commander of grain transport on the Canal, who is particularly helpful to the group. They travel without incident until they reach Linqing 臨清, where they are detained by order of the powerful, corrupt, and much feared eunuch Ma Tang 馬堂, director of tax administration for Linqing and Tianjin 天津. Confiscating their belongings and some of the gifts intended for Emperor Wanli, Ma holds them in custody in Tianjin for almost six months, and keeps on spreading all sorts of false accusations against the missionaries. But the Emperor has already heard of the renowned Westerner, who carries special gifts for the Emperor of China. He is eager to see the gifts and welcome the Westerner at court. A court official informs the Emperor of what is going on in Tianjin. The Emperor issues a decree to let the missionaries come to Peking immediately and to welcome them into the royal palace.

With winter the Canal is frozen, and the missionaries are taken overland as guests of the government, arriving in the capital on January 24, 1601. Ricci's dream comes true. He can present the gifts to the Emperor Shen-zong 明神宗, normally called Wanli 萬曆皇帝(the name of the period of his reign). Wanli had become emperor at the age of 9, and kept the throne from 1573 to 1620. Although Ricci has no chance of meeting him personally (in those days, only very few intimate people could talk to him), nevertheless Ricci can offer the gifts to him.

6b. On the 25 Jan 1601 Ricci and Pantoja hand to the court eunuchs the gifts for the Emperor: a big mechanical clock, a small one that rings the hours, a painting of the Saviour, two paintings of the Virgin Mary, a prayer Book, a precious cross with gems, Ricci's world map (with annotations) and a

harpsichord. Together with the gifts, Ricci writes the ritual letter of Introducing himself to the Emperor (Memorial to the throne, Shang Da Ming Huangdi gongxian tuwu zou 上大明黃帝貢獻土物奏), in which Ricci declares his willingness to put at the service of the Emperor all his talents.

“I have received the rank of Doctor in my country, I am a geographer, a cartographer, mathematician, astronomer, expert in using instruments to observe the sky and sun dials. I came to the Orient attracted by China’s great fame...”

Ricci is told that the Emperor has immensely appreciated the gifts, and that has ordered to allow Ricci and his companions to reside at the court. The Emperor’s wish is that the missionaries instruct the eunuchs in maintenance of the clocks and other mechanisms and teach them to play the harpsichord. Ricci obliges, and for this purpose writes eight songs for harpsichord in Chinese (Xiqin quyì bazhāng 《西琴曲意八章》). Fr Pantoja (who in Nanking had been encouraged by Ricci to learn how to play the harpsichord from Fr Cattaneo) now can instruct the eunuchs to play the harpsichord and to sing Ricci’s songs any time the Emperor wishes so.

The Emperor also loves Ricci’s world map and orders 12 copies for himself. Regarding the Emperor’s request for this special edition of the world map, Ricci has the following humorous remarks: “since we couldn’t think of any other means of talking to the emperor, who was always secluded in his Palace and didn’t talk to any outsider, we thought that this was a good chance for us to present to the Emperor a scientific map in which the kingdom of the Middle shows much smaller than in the previous maps of China, which occupied almost a room in the Royal Palace. By seeing the real size of His Kingdom, the emperor may become humbler and willing to contact outsiders!” With the help of Fr Pantoja and of two other Christians, Ricci in one month can give to the emperor the world map.

Another gift that attracts the emperor’s attention is the painting of the Virgin Mary with the infant Jesus in her arms, called “Salus Populi Romani” (salvation of the Roman people). The emperor is so excited about this gift that he orders one of his painters to make a copy of it in Chinese style, which is kept a Museum in Chicago (USA).

The missionaries will receive a royal salary as “honorary mandarins” at the court of the Emperor, who in order to have a closer look at the missionaries,

orders the royal painters to paint their portraits.

Ricci had said that “we won’t be able to do any stable thing in this country, until we receive the blessing of the king...” The now famous scholar from the West has been invited by the Emperor to live in the Royal Palace. Ricci’s journey has reached its climax. Though now treated respectfully, and assigned to live in the residence for foreign envoys, life at court is not easy and chances of Evangelization are very slim. The residence, where they live, is still isolated and they are unable to move freely about the city. The powerful eunuchs are watching them constantly, preventing any contact with other palace officials, fearing they might get too close to the Emperor.

- 6c. After more than 4 years at the court, finally Ricci, with the help of some influential friends, is able to leave the court and buy a house near the royal palace, where they can be freer to meet people and evangelize. The Emperor allows them to continue receiving the royal salary. This residence with a big chapel, had always been in Ricci’s mind. In this house Ricci will die on the 11th of May 1610.

With official recognition, Ricci feels secure and starts soon entertaining illustrious visitors at home, as he had done in Nanking. Among his admirers are Grand Secretary Shen Yiguan 沈一貫, Minister of War Xiao Daheng 蕭大亨, Minister of Rites Feng Qi 馮琦, and Minister of Personnel Li Dai 李戴. Several of Ricci’s friends become Christians or are seriously interested in Christianity. Such eminent scholar-officials as Xu Guangqi (baptized Paulus 保祿 in 1604), Feng Yingjing 馮應京 (editor of an encyclopedia), who was prevented from receiving baptism by his untimely death. Feng Yingjing was a high ranking official in the Government. He had offended some powerful court eunuchs, who retaliated by fabricating false accusations against him. He was put in jail. During the time in prison, he studied the Catholic doctrine, and wrote letters to his relatives encouraging them to become Christians. Unfortunately he died three years after being freed from prison and had no chance of receiving Baptism. Li Zhizao was baptized Leo in 1610. Together with Xu Guangqi and Yang Dingyun, Li Zhizao is considered one of the three pillars of the Chinese Church.

The first community of Chinese Christian scholars is born here in Peking. These scholars are willing to put their knowledge and experience at the service of Evangelization. Some of them help Ricci in polishing and publishing his writings. Some translate into Chinese scientific literature very

useful to China. Some write books on their own. A new Christian Chinese literature is coming to light. The first attempt had been made by the Jinh-Jao 景教 almost a thousand years earlier (635) in Chang-an (of which Ricci is not aware).

6d. The fruit of this marvelous cooperation between Ricci and the newly baptized scholars is a prolific production of various literary works.

6d1. One, maybe the greatest, of Ricci's collaborators in his work of writing, is Xu Guang-qi 徐光啟, whom Ricci had met in Nanjing, where later was baptized. He remained a very staunch believer until death. He was very close to Ricci in Peking, and did all he could to spread Christianity in China through literature.

With the help of Xu Guangqi, who later rose to the position of grand secretary, Ricci translates the first six books of Euclid's Elements (1607) and other texts on astronomy, trigonometry, geometry, and arithmetic. Published in Peking in 1608, "Jihe yuanben" 《幾何原本》 is based on Clavius's Latin version of Euclid's Elements, which Ricci had studied under Clavius's guidance while in Rome.

Ricci says that he did the translation together with Xu Guangqi, who "is a very cultured man and very much esteemed by all Chinese." Ricci specifies that Xu Guangqi did this work "especially to offer support and renown to our religion." "Jihe yuanben" is the first book on Euclidian geometry in China. The terms translated in Chinese by Ricci and Xu Guangqi have been used until modern times. The Book was welcomed in Korea and Japan as well. The full translation of the other books of Euclid's Geometry was done in 1857. The Chinese reaction to Ricci's book "Jihe yuanben", which shows them the logical construction in Euclid's Elements for the first time, is very enthusiastic. Ricci had introduced the method of "logical thinking" into China. The method of "deduction", by which principles are deduced from "assumptions", is very different from the traditional Chinese method of induction, by which a principle is drawn from a few concrete examples. Certainly the style of Euclid is far from the style of Chinese mathematics and this mixing of mathematical cultures constitutes a cultural shock to both sides.

Also together with Xu Guanqi, Ricci translates the third Book of

Clavius' Practical Geometry. It was finished in 1607. It is the first work on trigonometry in China. After Ricci's death, Xu Guanqi added six chapters of commentary called "Celiang Fayi" 《測量法義》(divergencies and convergencies of the European and Chinese method), and published it in 1617. This book introduces new measuring tools like the "Qudu" 矩度, the geometrical square, and it marks the beginning of the entry of western surveying methodology into China.

Another publication (of uncertain date), fruit of cooperation between Ricci and Xu Guanqi is "Si yuannxing lun" (which was initially written by Ricci in Nanking) It is a small treatise by Ricci containing six theorems on light to explain the eclipses: the sun is larger than the earth; the earth is larger than the moon. It contains also Xu Guanqi's 《乾坤體義》 work on three arguments to prove the roundness of the earth. "Si yuannxing lun" was included in the selection of Ricci's works Qiankun tij, which was published posthumously. Ricci also composed a song using the names of the stars already discovered in the West to make it easier for astronomers to memorize them.

6d2. Lzhizao 李之藻 had met Ricci in Peking in 1601. He was baptized Leon. Ricci in his Memoirs, speaks of Lzhizao's love for Christianity. Ricci says that before he was even baptized, he already was Evangelizing other scholars. Li Zhizao rose to a high ranking official in the public works department. Li Zhizao helps Ricci in Peking to publish his world map, his catechism, and his treatise on friendship.

Lzhizao loves mathematics and is very keen to learn from Ricci mathematics and astronomy. But suddenly, for political reasons Lzhizao has to leave Peking and return to his native city of Hangzhou 杭州. There he continues writing and spreading the Christian faith. In 1607, he publishes in Hangzhou, "Hungai Tongxian tushuo." 《渾蓋通憲圖說》 He did all the work of writing and publishing on his own, without the master's help. But while in Peking, Ricci had taught him Clavius' theory of the "astrolabe", which was a compact instrument used to observe and calculate the position of celestial bodies (before the invention of the sextant), and Clavius' concept of the sphere. When Ricci sent a copy of Lzhizao's book to Rome, he adds:

"you will see how clever the Chinese are. Lzhizao is able to put in good

writing what he heard from us.”

With the help of Li Zhizao, Ricci prepares and publishes a special copy of the world map for the emperor, as well as various polemics directed against Buddhism, especially the *Bianxue yidu*. 《辯學遺牘》 Ricci's pointed attacks on Buddhism, and the wide circulation of his books, called forth the opposition of the Buddhist clergy. One of the ablest who took their part was Chu-hang, a priest of Hang-chow, who had abandoned the literary status for the Buddhist cloister. He wrote three articles against the doctrine of the missionaries. These were brought to Ricci's notice in an ostensible tone of candor by Yu-chun-he, a high mandarin at the capital. This letter, with Ricci's reply, the three Buddhist declamations and Ricci's confutation, were published posthumously in a selection of Ricci's writings called *Bianxue yidu* 《辯學遺牘》.

- 6e. Through such constant contact with Chinese mandarins and scholars, Ricci understands better the Chinese mind and their way of thinking. This enables him to write more books, which make a deep impression on the majority of the educated class, and especially on those who hold public offices. He composes under various forms adapted to the Chinese taste little moral treatises, e.g., that called by the Chinese “Ershiwu yan” 《二十五言》 (The Twenty-five Words, Peking 1604), because in twenty-five short chapters it treats "of the mortification of the passions and the nobility of virtue".

It stresses that the objective of life is to serve God by nurturing the five basic virtues of mercy, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and faith.



“Ershiwu yan”

Still greater admiration is aroused by the “Qirenshipian” 《畸人十篇》 (in English it is translated: “Ten dialogues of a nonconformist” or "The ten paradoxes", Peking 1608). It is a collection of practical sentences, useful to a moral life, familiar to Christians but new to the Chinese, which Ricci developed with accounts of examples, comparisons, and extracts from the

Scriptures and from Christian philosophers and doctors. Not unreasonably proud of their rich moral literature, the Chinese were greatly surprised to see a stranger succeed so well; they could not refrain from praising his exalted doctrine, and the respect which they soon acquired for the Christian writings did much to dissipate their distrust of strangers and to render them kindly disposed towards the Christian religion.

- 6f. Ricci always gave great importance to divulging and memorizing traditional Christian prayers. In March 1605 he printed in Peking “Tianzhu jiaoyao” 《天主教要》, which is a new translation (more accurate and readable than the previous ones) of the basic Christian prayers, the Our Father, Hail Mary, the Creed, the ten commandments, corporal and spiritual works, the beatitudes, the seven capital sins, the three theological virtues, a brief explanation of the seven sacraments. Ricci used to call it Christian doctrine and he adds that the Book was written for both Christians and non Christians.

For the publication of this book (as he had done for the publication of tianzhushiyi) Ricci has to ask permission from the Inquisition in Goa 果阿. Ricci writes that he worked on this version very carefully because he had to translate in Chinese many new Christian terms. He Romanized all the prayers as well. Regarding the printing of books, Ricci says that the Jesuits in Peking had all the equipments to print and bound books at home. The only expenditure was the paper. If some people offered the paper, the Jesuits could print books for free.

- 6g. It is due to this extraordinary cultural dialogue, which Ricci initiates with the Chinese intellectuals, that Ricci can open the door to Evangelization in China. And Ricci is honest about it. He is aware that he is not using Western science as propaganda to sell Christianity to China. He sees the value of this slow and demanding mission of dialogue. His primary aim is to open the minds of both sides (Europe and China) to the richness hidden in their respective cultures.

It is very appropriate here to recall the greatest of Ricci’s disciple, Xu Guangqi, who after his baptism, in line with his master’s plan, writes many scientific books very useful for the advancement of China and only one or two religious books. And Xu Guangqi is one of the three pillars of the Church in China.

Ricci remains faithful to his words “we came here to learn and to serve”.

When he arrived in Beijing, he wrote a Memorial to the Emperor Wan-li, in which he introduced himself as a celibate religious who sought no privilege at court, asking only to be able to place at the service of His Majesty his own person and the expertise in the sciences which he had acquired in the "great West" from which he had come.

- 6h. To those who accuse him of being too "adapting and lenient" towards Chinese customs and traditions and weak in the direct approach of converting Chinese to Christianity, Ricci answers: "I see the preparatory work of disposing Chinese people's hearts towards Christianity more important than making ten thousand more Christians."

But Ricci's method in fact bore its fruits of conversions too. Let us briefly see some statistics: in 1584 the Chinese Christians are 3. In 1585 they are 20; 40 in 1586; 80 in 1589; in 1596 there are more than a hundred; their number goes up to 600 in 1603. When Ricci dies in Peking on the 11th May 1610, the number of Chinese Christians is 2.500 (of whom 400 in Peking). The majority of them are intellectuals and ruling class people.

Although as yet the number of Christians is not very great, Ricci in his "Memoirs" says: "considering the obstacles to the entrance of Christianity into China, the result is a very great miracle of Divine Omnipotence. To preserve and increase the success already obtained, it is necessary that the means which had already proved efficacious should continue to be employed; everywhere and always the missionaries, without neglecting the essential duties of the Christian apostolate, had to adapt their methods to the special conditions of the country, and avoid unnecessary attacks on traditional customs and habits. The application of this undeniably sound policy was often difficult. In answer to the doubts of his fellow-workers Ricci outlines rules, which received the approval of Father Valignano and the Jesuits in general. These rules insured the unity and fruitful efficacy of the apostolic work throughout the mission and are often referred to as "the rules of Matteo Ricci".

The Church of the Immaculate Conception is commonly known as the South Church. In May 1601 a Chinese Imperial decree gave Matteo Ricci and his Jesuit confreres land and funds for a chapel and permanent residence in the South Gate district of Peking. This is where the first Church, that of the Immaculate Conception Church, was built, now known as Nan tang or the Southern Church. Ricci put up a building in 1605. In 1650 Adam Schall von Bell expanded it to its present size. Two tablets granted by the emperor are

along the east and west walls in front of the church. The church was damaged by a fire in 1775. The present Church was rebuilt in 1904.



Commemorative stamp of the 3rd centenary of the establishment of the Beijing-Nanking Diocese, issued by the Vatican.

6i. By this time the Emperor Wanli had granted the Jesuits a piece of land inside the Xuanwu Gate, and financial help to build a house and a large Church later known as Nantang (South Church). The new large Church and the Jesuits' residence in Peking become the meeting place of Ricci's friends. There Ricci one day receives the visit of Ai Tian, a Chinese Jew from Kaifeng, who tells them about the history of the Jewish community in China and of the Jinh-jao presence in Chang-an. By then also, Ricci's suspicion that China was identical with the legendary land of Cathay is confirmed.

Regarding this particular subject of "Cathay", it is worth mentioning here one of Ricci's special contribution to European cartographers.

Until Ricci's journeys to Beijing and other Chinese cities, Europeans thought "Cathay" and "China" were separate countries, and mapmakers placed the country called "Cathay" north of China.

Marco Polo, the famous Italian traveller, who had begun his journey from Italy in 1271, writes in his accounts, that he "lived in Cathay for 17 years before returning to Italy." Ricci was convinced that Cathay and China were the same country, but this could not be confirmed.

During his many journeys within China, Ricci is always attentive to the

topography of places. He accurately calculates the latitudes of and distances between the cities passed through, based on solar observation.

His growing familiarity with Chinese topography provides further evidence that: “the Kingdom of China is one and identical with what some writers call the Great Cathay, and that Peking was the seat of the Mongul Great Can, the present King of China”.

During Ricci's 1601 stay at the residence for foreign envoys at the Royal Palace in Peking, Ricci has the chance of meeting various ambassadors from central Asia, who confirm his assumption: that Cathay and China are the same country, and that the city of “Khanbalik” mentioned by Marco Polo is indeed Peking. Ricci immediately writes back to Europe advising scholars to correct their erroneous globes, maps, and atlases.

- 6j. Another important contribution to Europe is Ricci's “On the Entry of the Society of Jesus and Christianity into China”. As he explains it is his diary of all “I saw personally or heard from trustworthy witnesses”, from 1582 to his death, 11 May 1610. He completed this book in the two final years of his life, 1608-1610, in Peking.

Ricci is a very observant scientist, and he notes in his diary every detail about the people, habits, topology, geography, latitude, history, weather etc of the land he is visiting or passing through. The purpose of writing is “to let Christians give thanks and glory to God, should the little seed grow into a huge tree. Should the little seed on the contrary be unable to bear the abundant fruits that at present the buds foretell, then it will be a witness of the suffering and difficulties our confreres have endured to sow that seed.” The original was written in Italian “Della entrata della Compagnia di Gesù e Christianità nella Cina”, to let Europeans know more about China from someone who has spent his life in China. It was translated in Latin as well. For many decades it remained the main source of data and information on China for European scholars.

- 6k. As superior of all missionaries and missionary activities in China, Ricci from Peking remains in constant contact with all the Jesuit communities in China. In his journey to Peking, Ricci had founded many communities, that he never abandoned. Before leaving for the next stop, Ricci always left a Jesuit priest or a brother to continue the missionary work in the same spirit. By now there are four communities: Shaozhou, Nanchang, Nanking and Shanghai.

On the 8 Sept 1609, Ricci institutes the first Christian confraternity in China, called Confraternity of the Mother of God. Those who join it, have to practice Christian virtues, receive the Sacraments frequently, help the poor, bury the dead, and meet once a month to hear the director's instructions, discuss with him doubts and problems and assign the work of charity to be done.

The residence in Peking becomes his missionary centre. His work is becoming heavier and heavier. His complicated dealing with the court, the daily visit of dignitaries, who are eager to listen to the scholar from the West, his frequent contacts by correspondence with each missionary in China, teaching Catechumens and forming the neophytes, the unceasing writing and publication of new books and lately the building of the first large Church in China (Nantong 南堂) all this puts to the test the already fragile health of Ricci. On the 3rd of May, 1610 he is so sick that he can not get up from bed. His confreres recall that, although Ricci was very weak and in grave suffering, when he saw the priest bringing the blessed sacrament into his room, he jumped out of his bed, knelt on the floor and received Holy Communion. Next morning, he receives the last sacraments and gives the last recommendations to his confreres: ... "show true affection and true friendship to the new missionaries who will come to China.." Then he chooses Fr Longobardi as his successor.

That day, 11th May 1610, in the evening, Limatou, the Scholar from the West dies in Peking. He was 57, after having spent almost 28 years on a long journey from Macao to Peking.

61. A few days before falling ill, Ricci had written his last letter to his confreres in China. In it he says: "My confreres, often I think by which means I could advance the cause of Christianity in China and I can not think of anything better than I die."

Prophetic words of a saintly sage from the West in China. His death is a great gift to all believers in China. His death gathers a huge crowd of believers, scholars, mandarins and people of the ruling class to pay homage to one of the greatest mediators between East and West.

Before Ricci's death, all Jesuit priests who had died in China, had to be carried to Macao for burial. The emperor had never allowed a foreigner to be

buried on Chinese soil. Ricci's friends (in particular Li Zhizao, who considered Limatou as his father) starts using all possible means to ask the emperor for a special permission. During this period, Ricci's body is kept in a huge wooden coffin close to the Chapel in the residence). After a year of intense diplomatic activities, finally the decision came: the Emperor granted a piece of land in Peking for the burial of Matteo Ricci's body and his companions.



The following words are engraved on Ricci's tomb, in Chinese and Latin:

“Tomb of the Italian Jesuit Matteo Ricci Limatou, also known as Xi-tai. He joined the Society of Jesus when he was very young. He came to China in 1582 as a missionary, during the reign of Wanli. He came to the capital in 1600. He died in 1610. He lived 59 years and served in the Society of Jesus 42 years.”

6m. Matteo Ricci's tomb in Peking remains an outstanding symbol of how deep roots Christianity had taken in China. Ricci's journey into China, from Macao to Peking, becomes a spiritual journey into Chinese culture, . Before the beginning of the journey, Ricci had written from Macao: “we keep knocking on the door of China, until the merciful God will open it to us”.

When Fr. Alessandro Valignano, who had been his superior in Rome, and then his superior, supporter and friend in Asia, died in Macao(1606), while waiting to enter China and meet Ricci in Peking, Ricci writes: “Fr. Valignano died at the door of China, just like Francis Xavier died on the island of Shangchuan. Both were anxious to enter into China. Both missionaries died at the door of their dream. Their intercession from heaven will be more effective than their sweat on the field.”

Ricci had been always aware of the great difficulty of entering and remaining in “this magnificent, different from all others, unique kingdom.” His long and difficult journey from Macao to Peking, more than opening a door into China, had opened the minds and hearts of many people, both European and Chinese, into the mysterious presence of God in all cultures and nations.

No European name of past centuries is so well-known in China as that of Li Ma-t'ou, scientist, artist, philosopher. The wise man from the West, pioneer of cultural relations between Europe and China, founder of the modern Chinese Church, Ricci remains one of the most remarkable and brilliant man in history.

- 6n. Unfortunately, what followed after Ricci's death, was the saddest chapter in the history of Evangelization in China. Soon after Ricci's death (after only twenty years!), the controversy over his Evangelization method, which was well accepted by the Chinese scholars, erupted violently within the Church. Other missionaries, of different religious congregations, attacked Ricci and the Jesuits in general, for allowing "Chinese superstitions" and practices to find their ways into the teachings of the Church. After accusations and counter-accusations, after endless disputes that damaged gravely the Church in China, after contradictory decisions from a not well informed Holy See, Ricci's method of Evangelization in China was eventually condemned by the Pope in 1645 (more than a century after Ricci's death).

- 6o. After the condemnation of Ricci's practices, the door that he had worked so hard to open, was shut once again. All missionaries were expelled, except some Jesuits who remained in Peking with special permission from the emperor. But Ricci's memory in Chinese history is there to stay, and cannot be erased so easily. His contributions to mutual understanding and respect, his personal holiness, and his wisdom are part of a treasure in the history of Asian Evangelization. Ricci, of course, does have his limitations too. These limitations were due in part to his complete isolation from Europe. Ricci believed that to gain complete trust by the Chinese people, he had to remain in China until his death, which he did. Contacts with Europeans, especially Portuguese, would have created suspicions among the Chinese. Therefore, his only contacts with Italy were by his letters to his superiors and friends. (Ricci wittingly adds: "at times it takes six or seven years to get an answer to a letter. When I realize that I have kept writing letters to dead friends, I don't want to write any longer!" In those days it took two to three years for a letter from China to arrive in Italy!) In another letter he wrote: "Publication of books is very important in China, but all the reference books I have with me are those in my memory". (And he had an extraordinary memory, but he could not recharge it!) His theological thinking reflects the prevailing theology taught in seminaries of his times. Then, there are people, who have accused Ricci of using his scientific knowledge only as a bargaining chip to get what he wanted from the Chinese authorities. But Ricci believed in the

value of all that is true and good as coming from God (and science is true and good). Ricci often said that scientific and cultural dialogue had to precede a more direct Evangelization.

Also Ricci's gradual method of teaching Christianity (starting with what the Chinese can accept from reason and can be drawn from Chinese ancient writings, and then gradually leading to the revealed truths), has often been the target of accusations as though Ricci did not teach the whole Christian dogma; Ricci's assertion that whatever Confucius said of Tian and Shangti is the description of the same true God of the natural religion that we Christians accept is not accepted by all. But everybody today must admit that, above all these accusations and different judgments on Ricci's method of Evangelization in China, Matteo Ricci remains the most innovative Evangelizer in China in the history of mission activities, and is admired both in China and in Europe, as a true bridge between two worlds!

6p. Today's Evangelization in China lives with a long and controversial historical past. Evangelization in China began almost 1400 years ago at Chang-an, the then capital of China, with the arrival of the first missionaries from Persia (Jinhjau). It is interesting to note what Ricci's disciples wrote at the news of the discovery of the famous "jinhjau" stele. 「大秦景教流行中國碑」(Ricci had died by then). They said: "The Good News our master Limatou taught us about Jesus, Chinese people had already heard it, 1000 years ago!" They suddenly realized that Christianity had ancient roots on Chinese soil, and they were chosen to continue that tradition. Limatou had enkindled what was already hidden in Chinese history and culture.

Although it seems that Christianity may have never succeeded in making a deep penetration into Chinese culture and society, nevertheless, it is there to stay. The strength of the Christian Faith rests in the strength of the believers. Today's more than 30 million Christians (belonging to the Catholic or Protestant Churches) are too precious a national patrimony to exclude them from the main cultural, economic, and spiritual stream in China.

What China needs today is that all of its national energy, both economic and spiritual, be directed to the renewal of Chinese society. Christianity has its contribution to offer to this great nation today as it had in the past. To deny this truth is simply to turn a blind eye on reality! The younger generations are now ready to accept Christianity as an integral part of the Chinese way of life. As evidence of this reality, consideration must be given to the millions of

Chinese Christians who are now scattered all over the world (especially the younger generations) and are looking at China with a hope to be able to make their own personal contribution for the renewal of their mother land. Overseas Chinese have always been a powerful source of renewal for China. Overseas Chinese Christians have their unique mission to enkindle that same spiritual treasure that 400 years ago Ricci enkindled and which has been handed down from generation to generation for the scientific, cultural, economic, moral and spiritual renewal of the new China.

Controversy of the Divine Names and of the Chinese Rites

The most difficult problem in the evangelization of China had to do with the rites or ceremonies, in use from time immemorial, to do honour to ancestors or deceased relatives and the particular tokens of respect which the educated felt bound to pay to their master, Confucius. Ricci's solution of this problem caused a long and heated controversy in which the Holy See finally decided against him. The discussion also dealt with the use of the Chinese terms Tian (heaven) and Shang-ti (Sovereign Lord) to designate God; here also the custom established by Father Ricci had to be corrected. The “Chinese Rites Controversy”, which dragged on for more than a century (the Pope’s final document on the matter is dated 11 July, 1742) can be called the most tragic and devastating controversy in the history of Evangelization in China. This famous controversy was singularly complicated and embittered by passion by rival religious orders in China.

Let us see first the disputed doctrinal points and then the historical events that caused and nurtured it.

1. The names for God

With regard to the designations for God, Ricci always preferred, and employed from the first, the term Tian zhu (Lord of Heaven) for the God of Christians; he used it in the title of his catechism Tianzhushiyi.]

Ricci goes one step further by affirming that in the most ancient Chinese books (ancient Confucianism) whatever is said of Tian (Heaven) and Shang-ti (Sovereign Lord) is exactly what we Christians say of the true God. Ricci clarifies that ancient Chinese books describe under these two names Tian and Shanti a sovereign lord of spirits and human beings, who knows all that takes place in the world, the source of all power and all lawful authority, the supreme regulator and defender of the moral law, rewarding those who observe and punishing those who violate it. Hence Ricci concludes that, in the most revered monuments of China, Tian and Shangti designate nothing else than the true God whom he himself preaches.

Ricci maintains this opinion in several passages of his Tianzhushiyi; “What we call “God” tianzhu is what the ancient Chinese books call “Shangdi” the Heavenly King”. 「我天主，乃古經書所稱上帝也。」 it will be readily understood of what assistance it was to destroy Chinese prejudices against the Christian religion. What Ricci is saying to the Chinese people is that the God he is

preaching was already present in the most ancient Chinese literature. The God he is preaching has deep roots in Chinese culture. Christianity would only fulfil, not destroy, the treasure already present in the hearts of the Chinese.

It is true that, in drawing this conclusion, Ricci has to contradict the common interpretation of some contemporary scholars who followed Chu-Hi 朱熹 in referring Tian and Shangti to apply to the material heaven; but Ricci shows that this material interpretation does not do justice to the texts and it is at least reasonable to see in them something better. In fact Ricci affirms that the educated Confucianists, who did not adore idols, were grateful to him for interpreting the words of their master with such goodwill. Therefore it was not without serious grounds that Ricci, the founder of the modern Chinese mission and his successors believed themselves justified in employing the terms Tian and Shangti as well as Tianzhu to designate the true God.

However, there were objections to this practice even among the Jesuits, the earliest rising shortly after the death of Father Ricci and being formulated by the Japanese Jesuits. In the ensuing discussion carried on in various writings for and against, which did not circulate beyond the circle of the missionaries, only one of those working in China declared himself against the use of the name Shangti. This was Father Nicholas Longobardi, Ricci's choice of his successor as superior of the mission, who, however, did not depart in anything from the lines laid down by its founder. After allowing the question to be discussed for some years, the superior ordered the missionaries to abide simply by the custom of Father Ricci.

2. Rites and ceremonies in honour of ancestors and Confucius

Regarding the rites and ceremonies in honour of ancestors and Confucius, Father Ricci was also of the opinion that a broad toleration was permissible without injury to the purity of the Christian religion. Moreover, the question was of the utmost importance for the progress of the mission in China. To honour their ancestors and deceased parents by traditional prostrations and sacrifices was in the eyes of the Chinese the gravest duty of filial piety, and one who neglected it was treated by all his relatives as an unworthy member of his family and nation. Similar ceremonies in honour of Confucius were an indispensable obligation for scholars, so that they could not receive any literary degree nor claim any public office without having fulfilled it. This law remained inviolable; K'ang-hsi, the emperor who showed most goodwill towards the Christians, always refused to set it aside in their favour. In the following centuries, the Chinese Government showed no more favour to the ministers of France, who, in the name of the

treaties guaranteeing the liberty of Catholicism in China, claimed for the Christians who had passed the examinations, the titles and advantages of the corresponding degrees without the necessity of going through the ceremonies; the Court of Peking invariably replied that this was a question of national tradition on which it was impossible to compromise.

After having carefully studied what the Chinese classical books said regarding these rites, and after having observed for a long time the practice of them and questioned numerous scholars of every rank with whom he was associated during his 27 years of missionary work in China, Ricci was convinced that these rites had no religious significance, either in their institution or in their practice by the enlightened classes. The Chinese, he said, recognized no divinity in Confucius any more than in their deceased ancestors; they prayed to neither; they made no requests nor expected any extraordinary intervention from them. In fact they only did for them what they did for the living to whom they wished to show great respect. Their duty towards their ancestors is "to serve them in death as though they were alive." "They do not for this reason think that the dead come to eat their offerings (meat, fruit, etc.) or need them. They declare that they act in this manner because they know no other way of showing their love and gratitude to their ancestors. . . . Likewise what they do (especially the educated) for Confucius, it is meant to thank Confucius for the excellent doctrine which he left them in his books, and through which they obtained their degrees and mandarinships. Thus in all this there is nothing suggestive of idolatry, and perhaps it may even be said that there is no superstition." The "perhaps" added to the last part of this conclusion shows the conscientiousness and honesty with which Ricci acted in this matter. That the people in general mingled superstition with their national rites Ricci never denied; neither did he overlook the fact that the Chinese, like all religions in general, mixed superstition with their most legitimate actions. In such cases superstition is only an accident which does not corrupt the substance of the just action itself, and Ricci thought this applied also to the rites. Consequently he allowed the new Christians to continue the practice of them avoiding everything suggestive of superstition, and he gave them rules to assist them to discriminate.

Ricci added, however, that this tolerance, though licit, should be limited by the necessity of the situations; in the future in a completely new and free environment, the Chinese Christian community might reconsider their rituals and see whether changes would be needed. These principles of Father Ricci, followed by his fellow-workers during his lifetime, and after his death, served for fifty years as the guide of all missionaries.

3. Historical events that caused and nurtured the Chinese Rites Controversy

- 3a. In 1585 Pope Gregory XIII had given the Jesuits the exclusive right to work in China and Japan, but this restriction was later lifted by Popes Paul V and Urban VIII. As the result, the Dominicans and Franciscans from the Philippines entered China in 1630s. They were joined by the Augustinians in 1680 and the members of the Paris Foreign Mission Society in 1684. These new arrivals' disagreement with the Jesuits' method of Evangelization was the main cause, which started the very dramatic and long protracted Controversy.

Twenty years after Ricci's death, new religious orders were sent to China. In 1631 the first mission of the Dominicans was founded at Fu-kien by two Spanish religious; in 1633 two Franciscans, also Spanish, came to establish a mission of their order. The new missionaries, without taking sufficient time to become acquainted with Chinese matters and to learn exactly what was done in the Jesuit mission, were so alarmed by the danger on the purity of religion which they thought they discerned in the communities founded by their predecessors, that they sent a denunciation to the bishops of the Philippines. The bishops referred it to Pope Urban VIII (1635), and soon the public was informed. As early as 1638 a controversy began in the Philippines between the Jesuits in defence of their brethren on the one side and the Dominicans and Franciscans on the other. In 1643 one of the chief accusers, the Dominican Father Moralez, went to Rome to submit to the Holy See a series of "questions" or "doubts" which he said were disputed between the Jesuit missionaries and their rivals. Ten of these questions concerned the participation of Christians in the rites in honour of Confucius and the dead. Moralez's petition tended to show that the "ten questions" on which he requested the decision of the Holy See, represented the real practice authorized by the Jesuits. As soon as the Jesuits learned of this they declared that these "ten questions" were imaginary and that they had never allowed the Christians to take part in the rites as set forth by Moralez. The Decree of 12 Sept., 1645 (approved by Innocent X) declared the ceremonies (as described by Moralez) illicit. The Jesuits did not oppose the Decree, they only reiterated their position that what the Decree condemned was not what they were actually practicing.

In 1651 the Jesuit Father Martini was sent from China to Rome by his

brethren to give a true account of the Jesuits' practices and permissions with regard to the Chinese rites. Martini reached Rome in 1654, and in 1655 submitted four questions to the Holy See. The Holy See in its Decree of 23 March, 1656, approved by Pope Alexander VII, sanctioned the practice of Ricci and his associates as set forth by Father Martini, declaring that the ceremonies in honour of Confucius and ancestors appeared to constitute "a purely civil and political cult".

Did this decree annul that of 1645? The Dominicans immediately asked the Holy See this question. On Nov. 20 1669, the Holy See replied that both Decrees should remain "in their full force" and should be observed "according to the questions, circumstances, and everything contained in the proposed doubts". The answer did not help the contenders to find a solution.

- 3b. Meanwhile an understanding was reached by the hitherto divided missionaries in China. This reconciliation was hastened by the persecution of 1665 which assembled for nearly five years in the same house at Canton nineteen Jesuits, three Dominicans, and one Franciscan (then the sole member of his order in China). Profiting by their enforced leisure to agree on a uniform missionary method, the missionaries discussed all the points on which the discipline of the Church should be adapted to the exigencies of the Chinese situation.

After forty days of conferences, which terminated on 26 Jan., 1668, all (with the exception of one Franciscan) subscribed to forty-two articles, the result of the deliberations, of which the forty-first was as follows: "As to the ceremonies by which the Chinese honour their master Confucius and the dead, the Decree approved by Pope Alexander VII, in 1656, must be followed absolutely because they are based on a very probable opinion, to which it is impossible to offset any evidence to the contrary, and, this probability assumed, the door of salvation must not be closed to the innumerable Chinese who would stray from the Christian religion if they were forbidden to what they may do licitly and in good faith and which they cannot forego without serious injury." It seemed that the storm was over. However, some Dominicans (among these there were a few, who had signed the Canton agreement!) continued in Rome to lay all sorts of impassioned accusations against the Jesuit missionaries regarding their missionary method and especially their toleration of the rites.

- 3c. The Controversy took another bad turn with the arrival of the Vicar Apostolic (later Bishop) Maigrot, who belonged to the newly founded Paris Foreign Missions. He arrived in China in 1683. He became the Vicar Apostolic of Fu-kien and suddenly on 26 March, 1693, he addressed to the missionaries of his Vicariate a mandate proscribing the names Tian and Shangti; forbidding that Christians be allowed to participate in or assist at "sacrifices or solemn oblations" in honour of Confucius or the dead; prescribing modifications of the inscriptions on the ancestral tablets; censuring and forbidding certain, according to him, too favourable references to the ancient Chinese philosophers; and, last but not least, declaring that the exposition made by Father Martini to the Holy See was not true to the real situation in China and that consequently, the approval which Father Martini had received from Rome was not to be relied on.
- 3d. By order of Innocent XII, the Holy See resumed in 1697 the study of the Chinese Controversy, based on the documents furnished by the procurators of Mgr Maigrot and on those showing the opposite side brought by the representatives of the Jesuit missionaries. It is worthy of note that at this period a number of the missionaries outside the Society of Jesus, especially all the Augustinians, nearly all the Franciscans, and some Dominicans, were converted to the practice of Ricci and the Jesuit missionaries. The difficulty of grasping the truth amid such different representations of facts and contradictory interpretations of texts prevented the Holy See from reaching a decision until towards the end of 1704 under the pontificate of Clement XI, who on 20 Nov 1704 had already decreed against Ricci's Chinese rites, but he did not publish this decree in Rome, because he wanted it to be published first in China.
- 3e. The Pope sent then his trusted legate Charles de Tournon (whom he had consecrated bishop and named Patriarch of Antioch and to whom he had already given the secret decree of condemnation of Chinese rites) to the Far East to investigate the real situation of the missions and take all necessary decisions.

Leaving Europe on 9 Feb, 1703, Mgr de Tournon arrived in India on 6 November, 1703. He remained in India only for a few months, where he began showing his real impulsive character. During his very brief stay, he thought he had enough knowledge of the Malabar Rites (inspired by the Jesuit Roberto de Nobili on the same spirit as his confrere Ricci in China) to issue a decree of condemnation of the Indian rites, dated 23 June, 1704.

On 11 July, 1704, he set sail for China by way of the Philippine Islands, arriving in Macao on April 2, 1705 and in Peking on 4 December of the same year. Emperor K'ang-hsi accorded him a warm welcome and treated him with much honour until he learned, perhaps through the imprudence of the legate himself, that one of the objects of his embassy, if not the chief, was to abolish the rites amongst the Christians. Mgr de Tournon was already aware that the decision against the rites had been given since 20 Nov., 1704, but not yet published in Europe, as the pope wished that it should be published first in China.

It is interesting to read the historical accounts of the discussion between Emperor K'ang-hsi and Tournon's delegation regarding the controversy of Chinese rites.

The emperor asked the delegation: "Since when are Chinese rites not in accordance with Christian morality? Before or after Matteo Ricci?" The emperor proved to know Matteo Ricci's writings much better than the Roman delegation!

Forced to leave Peking, Tournon returned to Nanking, where he learned that the emperor had ordered all missionaries, under penalty of expulsion, to come to him for a piao or a certificate granting permission to preach the Gospel in China. This certificate was to be granted only to those who promised not to oppose the national rites and promised to follow the "Rules of Matteo Ricci". On the receipt of this news the legate felt that he could no longer postpone the announcement of the Roman decisions. By a mandate of 15 January, 1707 from Nanking, he required all missionaries in China under pain of excommunication to reply to Chinese authority, if it questioned them, that "several things" in Chinese doctrine and customs did not agree with Divine law and that these were chiefly "the sacrifices to Confucius and ancestors" and "the use of ancestral tablets", moreover that "Tian" and "Shang-ti" were not "the true God of the Christians".

When the emperor learned of this Decree he ordered Mgr de Tournon to be brought to Macao and forbade him to leave Macao before the return of some Jesuit priests whom he himself had sent to the pope to explain the emperor's objections to the interdiction of the rites. While in Macao under house arrest, Tournon died on 1 August, 1707 (shortly after being informed that he had been created cardinal by the Pope).

Upon the announcement of his death at Rome, Clement XI highly praised him for his courage and loyalty to the Holy See and ordered the Holy See to issue a Decree (25 September, 1710) approving the acts of the legate. Tournon's remains were brought to Rome by his successor, Mezzabarba, and buried in the church of Propaganda, 27 September, 1723.

- 3f. A few extracts from emperor K'ang-hsi's two decrees, one before Rome's interdiction of Chinese Rite and one after the interdiction, can make us realize the huge impact of the condemnation of Chinese Rites on the Emperor and Chinese people.

From the Decree of K'anghsi (1692) (before the Interdiction of Chinese Rites)

“The Europeans are very quiet; they do not excite any disturbances in the provinces, they do no harm to anyone, they commit no crimes, and their doctrine has nothing in common with that of the false sects in the empire, nor has it any tendency to excite sedition . . . We decide therefore that all temples dedicated to the Lord of heaven, in whatever place they may be found, ought to be preserved, and that it may be permitted to all who wish to worship this God to enter these temples, offer him incense, and perform the ceremonies practiced according to ancient custom by the Christians. Therefore let no one henceforth offer them any opposition.”

From Decree of K'ang-hsi (1721) (after the Interdiction of Chinese Rites)

“Reading this proclamation, I have concluded that the Westerners are petty indeed. It is impossible to reason with them because they do not understand larger issues as we understand them in China. There is not a single Westerner versed in Chinese works, and their remarks are often incredible and ridiculous. To judge from this proclamation, their religion is no different from other small, bigoted sects of Buddhism or Taoism. I have never seen a document which contains so much nonsense. From now on, Westerners should not be allowed to preach in China, to avoid further trouble.

- 3g. Meanwhile Mgr Maigrot and several other missionaries having refused to ask for the piao had been expelled from China. But the majority (i.e. all the Jesuits, most of the Franciscans, and other missionary religious, having at their head the Bishop of Peking, a Franciscan, and the Vicar Apostolic of

Kiang-si, an Augustinian) considered that, to prevent the total ruin of the mission, they might postpone obedience to the legate until the pope should have signified his will. Clement XI replied by publishing the strongest condemnation of the Chinese rites with the Apostolic Constitution *Ex illa die* (March 19, 1715), confirming Tournon's position and reaffirming the injunction granted in 1704. To add force to his rulings, Clement XI attached the penalty of excommunication to their violations and required missionaries to take an oath on the Bible that they would observe his instructions "exactly, absolutely and inviolably ... without any evasion."

This Constitution, promulgated in Peking on November 5, 1716 by the vicar general Charles Castorano, met with much opposition. The emperor ordered Castorano to go to Canton, where the decree was circulating, to retrieve all the copies of *Ex illa die* and send them back to the pope. The Constitution found no rebels among the missionaries, but even those who sought most zealously failed to induce the majority of their flock to observe its provisions. At the same time the hate of the Chinese people was reawakened, enkindled by the old charge that Christianity was the enemy of the national rites, and the neophytes began to be the objects of persecutions to which K'ang-hsi, hitherto so well-disposed, now gave almost entire liberty.

- 3h. Clement XI sought to remedy this critical situation by sending to China a second legate, John-Ambrose Mezzabarba, whom he named Patriarch of Alexandria. This prelate sailed from Lisbon on 25 March, 1720, reaching Macao on 26 September, and Canton on 12 October. Admitted, not without difficulty, to Peking and to an audience with the emperor, the legate could only prevent his immediate dismissal and the expulsion of all the missionaries by making known some alleviations of the Constitution "*Ex illa die*", which he was authorized to offer, and allowing K'ang-hsi to hope that the pope would grant still others. Then he hastened to return to Macao, whence he addressed (4 November, 1721) a pastoral letter to the missionaries of China, communicating to them the authentic text of his eight "permissions" relating to the rites. He declared that he would permit nothing forbidden by the Constitution; in practice, however, his concessions relaxed the rigour of the pontifical interdictions, although they did not produce harmony or unity of action among the missionaries.
- 3i. To bring about this highly desirable result the pope ordered a new investigation, the chief object of which was the legitimacy and opportuneness of Mezzabarba's "permissions". The investigation began

under Clement XII and a conclusion was reached only under Benedict XIV. On 11 July, 1742, this pope, by the Bull "Ex quo singulari", confirmed and reimposed in a most emphatic manner the Constitution Ex illa die, and condemned and annulled the "permissions" of Mezzabarba as authorizing the superstitions which that Constitution sought to destroy. This action terminated the controversy among Catholics.

Benedict XIV wanted to settle the Chinese rites controversy once and for all with his Constitution, which he proclaimed to "remain in force, all of it for all time to come."

- 3j. But history goes on and new situations arise when a new judgement will be needed. An example happened in Japan on the 5 May 1932, when some students from the Jesuit Sophia University in Tokyo, refused to bow to a national shinto shrine for the dead. The archbishop of Tokyo inquired about the meaning of the ceremony and he was officially told that the bow "has no other purpose than that of manifesting the sentiment of patriotism and loyalty." A year later, Edward Mooney, the Apostolic Delegate to Japan, issued a statement allowing Japanese Catholics to perform such a bow. This concept of distinguishing "civil or cultural ceremonies" from "religious ceremonies", where there is a religious element of adoration or petition of graces to the dead or the idols, has become very common among believers.

As the result of these governmental declarations on the non-religious character of the cult of Confucius and the veneration of ancestors, Propaganda Fide issued on December 8, 1939, with Pope Pius XII's approval, the instruction "Plane compertum est" in which it is said that (1) it is lawful for Catholics to participate in public honors paid to Confucius; (2) the image or name tablet of Confucius may be placed in Catholic schools and saluted by a head bow; (3) if Catholics are required to assist at public functions that appear to be superstitious, they should maintain a passive attitude; and (4) bows of heads and other marks of respect in front of the deceased or their images or name tablets are lawful and honorable.

In addition, the requirement of the oath was abolished.

With this document of Propaganda Fide, which the historian of the Chinese Rites Controversy, Francis A. Rouleau, S.J., called the "Liberating Decree" for China, a painful and lengthy chapter of the history of the Church in Asia came to an end. The instruction brought an immense relief to missionaries in Asia (not only in China, but Korea, Japan, Vietnam and India as well) by

abolishing the requirement of the oath and removed a serious obstacle to the conversion of many Asians, in particular the educated class, by permitting, under certain conditions, the cult of Confucius and especially the veneration of ancestors. Nevertheless, in spite of its short-term missionary gains, it left many theological issues unresolved which are of great consequence for the project of liturgical inculturation.

- 3k. At the time of the condemnation of Ricci's ideas and practices, some historians spoke of a kind of Ricci's "damnatio memoriae" (condemnation of his memory), and, as a matter of fact Ricci's name was seldom mentioned in any official document of the Church. The last decades though have seen a revival of Ricci's studies and full rehabilitation of this great saint of the Chinese Church.

The 2nd Vatican Council, in all its documents and directives is in perfect line with Ricci's vision. Pope John Paul II "on the occasion of the International Conference commemorating the 400th anniversary of the arrival in Beijing of the great Italian missionary, humanist, and man of science, Father Matteo Ricci, a celebrated son of the Society of Jesus"(1), writes very touching words about Ricci:

- 3l. "From his first contacts with the Chinese, Father Ricci based his entire scientific and apostolic methodology upon two pillars, to which he remained faithful until his death, despite many difficulties and misunderstandings, both internal and external: first, Chinese neophytes, in embracing Christianity, did not in any way have to renounce loyalty to their country; second, the Christian revelation of the mystery of God in no way destroyed but in fact enriched and complemented everything beautiful and good, just and holy, in what had been produced and handed down by the ancient Chinese tradition. And just as the Fathers of the Church had done centuries before in the encounter between the Gospel of Jesus Christ and Greco-Roman culture, Father Ricci made this insight the basis of his patient and far-sighted work of inculturation of the faith in China, in the constant search for a common ground of understanding with the intellectuals of that great land." (3)
- 3m. "Father Ricci's merit lay above all in the realm of inculturation. Father Ricci forged a Chinese terminology for Catholic theology and liturgy, and thus created the conditions for making Christ known and for incarnating the Gospel message and the Church within Chinese culture. Father Matteo Ricci made himself so "Chinese with the Chinese" that he became an expert

Sinologist, in the deepest cultural and spiritual sense of the term, for he achieved in himself an extraordinary inner harmony between priest and scholar, between Catholic and orientalist, between Italian and Chinese.”(2)

- 3n. “History, however, reminds us of the unfortunate fact that the work of members of the Church in China was not always without error, the bitter fruit of their personal limitations and of the limits of their action. Moreover, their action was often conditioned by difficult situations connected with complex historical events and conflicting political interests. Nor were theological disputes lacking, which caused bad feelings and created serious difficulties in preaching the Gospel. In certain periods of modern history, a kind of "protection" on the part of European political powers not infrequently resulted in limitations on the Church's very freedom of action and had negative repercussions for the Church in China. This combination of various situations and events placed obstacles in the Church's path and prevented her from fully carrying out for the benefit of the Chinese people the mission entrusted to her by her Founder, Jesus Christ. I feel deep sadness for these errors and limits of the past, and I regret that in many people these failings may have given the impression of a lack of respect and esteem for the Chinese people on the part of the Catholic Church, making them feel that the Church was motivated by feelings of hostility towards China. For all of this, I ask the forgiveness and understanding of those who may have felt hurt in some way by such actions on the part of Christians. The Church must not be afraid of historical truth and she is ready, with deeply felt pain, to admit the responsibility of her children. This is true also with regard to her relationship, past and present, with the Chinese people. Historical truth must be sought serenely, with impartiality and in its entirety. This is an important task to be undertaken by scholars and is one to which you, who are particularly well-versed in Chinese realities, can also contribute. I can assure you that the Holy See is always ready to offer willing cooperation in this research.” (5)

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