

Conflict and Integration: Cultural Exchange between Western Missionaries and China in the Late Ming Dynasty

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Abstract

Since the late Ming Dynasty, Western missionaries have gradually set foot in China, among which Ba Fanji, Michele Ruggieri, Matteo Ricci and so on are representatives. In the cultural exchange and integration between China and the West, many advanced natural sciences were introduced to China by missionaries, such as astronomy, geography, mathematics, physics, etc. which promoted the development of science and technology in the late Ming Dynasty and set off a trend of Western learning in the Ming and Qing dynasties. However, there are also contradictions in the fusion of Catholic doctrine and Middle-earth traditions. In particular, Matteo Ricci's successors insisted on the so-called "purity" of doctrine, so that Catholic doctrine became progressively more difficult to reconcile with Chinese cultural traditions.

Keywords

Late Ming; Christian; Missionary; Ricci; Cultural exchange.

1. An Introduction to The Spread of Christianity in China

"Culture, or civilization, in its broad ethnographic sense, is a complex that includes all knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and any other talents and habits which are mastered and accepted by man as members of society." [2] Constrained by various conditions, Culture is unique to each nation, and while there are commonalities across civilizations, the cultural differences between them are more prominent. United States scholar Samuel Huntington believes that in the post-Cold War world, the root cause of human conflict is no longer the conflict of ideologies, but the conflict between various civilizations and cultural differences. In the modern era of globalization, the cultural differences between countries are all like this, and in the late Ming Dynasty, when cultural exchanges almost stopped, it is conceivable that the differences were enormous. The cultural exchange between China and the West in the late Ming Dynasty produced a wonderful spark between the collision.

"The spread of Christianity in China has gone through four periods, which also shows the long history of exchanges, collisions and mutual influences between Christianity and Chinese culture in the process of contact. In the first two transmissions, Protestantism, the product of the Reformation movement in the modern history of Christianity, had not yet emerged, and Christianity had little impact on Chinese society." [3]

The first period of the spread of Christianity in China was in the Tang Dynasty, the second in the Yuan Dynasty, the third in the Late Ming Dynasty, and the fourth in the Opium Wars. The impact of the first two transmissions was too small to be mentioned. Driven by the Protestant Reformation and the Age of Exploration, the spread of Catholicism in China during the late Ming Dynasty had a significant impact, with relatively pure motives behind it. Shang Chuan commented: "The arrival of Western missionaries in China in the late Ming Dynasty was the third introduction of Christianity in Chinese history. Its influence far exceeded that of the previous two times, but at the same time, it did not have the obvious aggressive nature of colonization as the fourth invasion after the middle of the nineteenth century, so this time the

introduction of Christianity highlighted the connotation of cultural exchanges between China and the West.”[4]

But China in the Ming Dynasty was a closed and conservative world. "In the 16th century, China, under the rule of the Ming Dynasty, had a very difficult problem with the spread of Catholicism. Here Catholicism is confronted not only with a highly developed culture, but also with a unified political entity that is completely self-sufficient behind the walls of isolationism. China is not merely a country; to itself, it is a world— a closed-off world. China regarded itself as synonymous with civilization, while those beyond its borders were seen as uncivilized outsiders. China could tolerate the world beyond its borders, but only with minimal contact. [5] Missionary work during this period was made exceptionally challenging due to both internal and external constraints.

2. Major Missionary

The first Western missionary to attempt to open the closed doors of the Ming Dynasty into China was the Spain Francis · Xavier, one of the first members of the Western Society of Jesus at that time. Francis Xavier only reached St. John’s Island (Shangchuan) near Guangdong and died there without entering the China's mainland.

In the first missionary activities, the missionaries tried to push the closed door of China open a gap to facilitate the missionary work with a "European" attitude, demanding that all Chinese who were taught by others must first take the Portuguese name, learn the Portuguese language, and also Portatize the way of life. This method of preaching did not conform to China's national conditions at that time. At this time, China's national strength was strong, and it held the mentality of "the heavenly empire" that was conquered in all directions and was the only one. Both China and the West have an unruly mentality, so that there is little communication between the two sides, let alone missionary work.

"Europeanism" is a kingdom of the spirit. It exists in the narrow, arrogant assumptions that end with European cultural forms. These cultural forms are attached to them with absolute values, so that it is impossible to recognize the intrinsic values of other cultures. [5]The missionaries who tried to infiltrate China did not succeed in overcoming their ignorance of the Chinese language and customs in Chinese a European-centric way, so that all attempts came to naught. It wasn't until the advent of a Jesuit missionary in Italy, Van Lien, that changed this strategy. He “transplanted Catholicism as a foreign seed into the resistant and unfriendly trunk of Chinese culture, allowing it to quietly permeate and bring about gradual internal changes”. [5] This new strategy, which Dunn referred to as the principle of ‘acculturation,’ involved respecting and understanding local culture and customs while carefully integrating Western elements into Chinese society, approaching the locals with humility.”

Van Li'an's new proposal was approved by the Society of Jesus, and three missionaries in India – Francis Xavier, Michele Ruggieri and Matteo Ricci – were transferred to Macau and began to practice this strategy.

Michele Ruggieri diligently followed the principle of ‘acculturation,’ adapting to Chinese customs, learning the language, befriending Chinese officials, and wearing Confucian robes. He formed good relations with the feudal officials of Guangdong, and he was later allowed to live in Zhaoqing, and built the first Catholic church to carry out covert missionary activities. His groundbreaking efforts earned him the title of ‘the pioneer of Western missionary work in Ming China”.

Matteo Ricci was Luo Mingjian's assistant, who later inherited Luo Mingjian's missionary career in China and pushed it to a climax in his missionary activities.

“...Matteo Ricci entered China from Guangdong during the time of the Ming God Sect. Entering the capital, the high theory is amazing, from the bell clairvoyant mirror to show people, salty and surprised, called the West Confucian. The Ministry of Rites of Staying in the capital then consulted and sent it to Beijing, and Feng Qi, the great uncle, said it. It is said that there is a difference in the unification calendar, and it is a place to live in the history of the bureau.... Matteo Ricci died in 1610 (the 38th year of the Wanli reign), and he was honored with a courtier's burial outside Fucheng Gate.” [6] Matteo Ricci was better at adapting to Chinese culture than Michele Ruggieri. He spoke Chinese, wore Confucian robes, interacted with Confucian scholars, and even used his knowledge of Confucianism to write and disseminate books, through which he promoted Christian doctrines. “It is said that when Matteo Ricci first arrived in Guangdong, he was mistaken for a Western monk and was led to a Buddhist temple. He shook his head and refused to worship, saying, ‘I am a Confucian.’ Then he went to the museum, extended the teacher to read Confucianism, and in less than one or two years, the four sons and five classics were all righteous. and into the Beijing Division, his books include the Theory of Making Friends, Twenty-five Words, Ten Articles on Freaks, and On the Principles of Catholic Doctrine. As for all of them, they also have their own treatises, and there are two kinds of words and reasoning instruments, which are engraved and called the first letter of heavenly learning. He also carried more than 7,000 volumes, but he did not have time to translate” [7] Of course, everything Ricci did was to make the missionary path smoother. Clearly, these efforts paved the way for his missionary success, and Matteo Ricci became synonymous with Western missionaries in China.

In addition to Matteo Ricci, the missionaries who came to China at that time also included "Italy Long Huamin, Wang Fengsu, Xiong Sanba, Bi Fangji, and Irulio, Spain João Rodrigues, Portugal Yang Mano, Switzerland Deng Yuhan, and Germans John Tang and Luo Ya Valley." Han Lin and Zhang Geng's "Sacred Religious Faith" also contains: There are still Italy Luo Mingjian, Du Ouding, Wei Kuangguo, Portugal Meng Sande, Luo Ruwang, Su Ruhan, Fei Qigui, Fu Xunji, Fei Ledu, Fu Shanwang, Qu Ximan, Guo Najue, He Dahua, Meng Ruwang, An Wensi, Switzerland Guo Jujing, Rindiac Jinnico, Sizilian Jia Yimu, Pan Guoguang, etc., and have writings. Expound the doctrine while the stocking spicy man Francis ·Xavier, in the Jiajing Dynasty, died at the border of our country, which was 30 years earlier than Matteo Ricci's arrival in China.”[8]

3. Communication – The Spread of Science and Technology and Religious Beliefs

Matteo Ricci successively established churches in Shaozhou and Nanchang, and in the 27th year of Wanli in Nanjing. Different from the influence of the previous two churches, Nanjing was the capital of the empire, second only to Beijing in political status, and was one of the two major cultural centers of the Ming Dynasty. [4] It can be seen that its influence in China is gradually expanding and has reached a certain height.

The climax of the mission was set off at the beginning of the 28th year of Wanli, when Matteo Ricci, with the help of the eunuch Ma Tang, presented tribute to the Wanli Emperor, which allowed him to gain access to the imperial court, so that he was allowed to come to the imperial capital Beijing again to develop.

"During the Wanli period, his countryman Matteo Ricci went to Beijing to write a complete map of all countries, saying that there are five continents in the world....It is said to be absurd, but if its people are full of Middle-earth, it is inherent in its land and cannot be blamed. [9] Although the scholars were skeptical of the idea that there were five continents in the world, this unheard of statement had a great impact on their traditional geographical understanding. Yang Tingyun's preface to "The Outer Discipline of the Staff" said: "Chu Ci asked where the world is? Confucianism can't be interested in... Western people, unique through the ages, create a family,

said that the world is poor, but the reality is endless; With its shape, it is all round and round, so there is no beginning and no end, and there is no middle....However, it is an excerpt from the compilation, which is still the one hundred and one in the picture book, that is, the record of the picture book of the other country, and the one in the universe, and the strange and wonderful, it is already incredible. [10] For thousands of years, there seems to be a crack in the deep-rooted concept of China as the center of the world and the Celestial Empire as the kingdom of heaven in all directions.

"The solar eclipse of the first day of November. The calculations of the officials are wrong, and the court will revise them. Next year, the five senses are Zhou Zi's foolish words: 'Atlantic naturalized people João Rodrigues, Xiong Sanba, etc., know the calendar. The almanacs he carried were unrecorded in China. When the order is translated, it is selected by the information. 'Weng Zhengchun, the waiter of the Ministry of Rites, and others asked to imitate the example of Hongwu's early establishment of the Hijri department, so that Pang Di and I were equal to the test. from it. The proposal to establish a calendar bureau was put on hold for a period of time due to various reasons, and finally under the insistence of Xu Guangqi, it was successfully implemented in the second year of Chongzhen. After the establishment of the Bureau, Xu Guangqi and the missionaries worked together in translating the books, and between the fourth year of Chongzhen and the seventh year of Chongzhen (1635), they were divided into five times, and a total of 137 volumes were translated, known as the Chongzhen Almanac. However, due to the eventful autumn of the late Ming Dynasty, the "Chongzhen Almanac" was not implemented, and the official implementation of this almanac was in the first year of Shunzhi. In the first year of Shunzhi, the status of the missionaries rose further, and they began to serve as the Qin Tianjian, and later there were missionaries who continued to hold this position until the seventeenth year of Daoguang. This shows that "the scientific knowledge they bring is not only at the level of arousing the curiosity and admiration of Chinese, but also shows that this knowledge has actually played a role in Chinese society." From the sea ban of the Ming Dynasty about 200 years before Matteo Ricci, to Matteo Ricci's ability to gain a foothold in Beijing, and then to John Tang's generation as an official in the imperial court and leading the imperial court, it can be seen that the exchanges between China and the West are gradually deepening, and it also shows that one of the 'practical studies' of Western studies has been recognized by China." [11]

The missionaries introduced not only astronomy and geography but also key mathematical works such as Euclid's Elements. They also brought the mathematical works "Geometry Original", "Measurement Method", "Measurement Similarities and Differences", "Sentence Meaning", "Circle Tolerance", geographical works "Occupation Outside the Discipline", "Tianwen Luo", "Spatial Grid", "Western Q&A", "Earthquake Solution", physical works "Diagram of Strange Instruments", physiological works "Diagram of the Human Body", firearms and Buddha machines, etc., which promoted the development of science and technology in the late Ming Dynasty and set off a trend of Western learning in the Ming and Qing dynasties.

The missionaries also translated Chinese doctrinal texts and languages into Western languages or Chinese and Western editions, such as the Tianru Ear and Eye Zi by Jin Nige and the Portuguese-Chinese Dictionary co-authored by Matteo Ricci and Luo Mingjian, so that they could learn more deeply about Chinese culture. This practice is subjectively to facilitate the close contact with China's feelings, and objectively promotes the integration of Chinese and Western cultures.

"The success of Western missionaries in the Ming Dynasty was due to their efforts in missionary thought, one was their efforts to sinicize Catholicism, and the other was their efforts to integrate Chinese Confucianism. As a result, they gained the support of a group of scholars from the upper echelons of Ming society, the most famous of whom were Xu Guangqi, Li Zhizao, and Yang

Tingyun. ...This is directly related to the situation of the Ming Dynasty scholars themselves at that time. Xu Guangqi and others were key advocates of the Late Ming 'practical learning' movement. They not only embraced the teachings of Catholicism but also welcomed the Western technologies introduced by the missionaries. [4] After the missionaries sinified Christianity and made extensive contacts with scholars and doctors in Beijing to gain their support, and won the favor of the supreme ruler, the missionaries were allowed to build churches in the first good place, "and then built a Catholic church in the Xuanwu Gate, and placed the images of Jesus and the Virgin in the church, Jesus holding the armillary sphere in his hand, and the Virgin holding a child in his hand, that is, Jesus." He who is called God means that Jesus can be the Lord of God's affairs. Later, Catholic churches were established in other counties of other prefectures..."[6], and although there were only about 200 baptized Catholics in Beijing in the first year, it was in the capital that all matters of great and small attention were paid attention to by the whole world, far greater than the impact of the construction of churches in Nanjing, which further expanded the influence of Catholicism in China.

4. Conflict - Take The Nanjing Lesson Plan as An Example

"Western missionaries and Chinese believers and apologists, they all feel that Catholicism and Confucianism are the same; On the other hand, the monks climbed with Confucianism. Confucianism has become the object of competition between these two cultures, and Confucianism has become a "treasure of feng shui" that both sides want to compete for. [11]Buddhism in China was introduced from the Han Dynasty to the end of the Ming Dynasty has developed for more than 1,000 years, through centuries of interaction with Confucianism, Buddhism's distinctive traits have gradually softened, becoming highly integrated with Chinese society as a deeply rooted indigenous religion, so there are many Zen Confucian scholars. The missionaries believed that Confucian principles such as revering and fearing Heaven were in line with the Catholic belief in God. Matteo Ricci tried to use Confucian culture to propagate Christianity and tolerate Chinese patriarchal rituals in practice, so he established the mainstream of the Jesuit missionary strategy in China, one of the most important of which was to rebuke Confucianism and Buddhism.

(Missionary)" is worse than the Buddha's words. The big finger returns... Specializing in the Buddha as a thing, seeing all the scriptures and ghosts and gods, persuading people to tear them up, all the slanders of the Buddha's coarse people were born... However, his words of God have lost the purpose of being silent and odorless, and he said that heaven and hell are no different from Buddhas and are absurd and absurd. [7] The doctrine of Catholicism, the behavior of missionaries and believers, was difficult to accept for the Confucianists of the late Ming Dynasty, who considered the spread of Catholicism to be "an attempt to wipe out the tradition of Chinese sages" and therefore a "cult." Some scholars wrote articles denouncing Catholicism for this purpose, such as the dynastic-style "Words of Guilt", Li Shengguang's "Dialectic of Apostasy", and Huang Zhen's "Collection of Breaking Evil Spirits".

In the twenty-eighth year of Wanli, Matteo Ricci died and was succeeded by the Italy missionary Long Huamin. Loong rejects the principle of "acculturation" and the covert and low-key missionary strategy pursued by Luo Mingjian and Matteo Ricci, and returns to the strategy of "Europeanism", which develops the exclusivity of Christianity to the extreme. Long's missionary activities became more and more public, "his disciples boasted that their local characters were far superior to those of China", and even openly criticized traditional Chinese culture such as Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. Not only did it spread Catholicism among the upper strata of society, but it also vigorously developed Catholics in the middle and lower strata of society. Wang Fengsu of Nanjing also changed his initial cautious missionary attitude, and established a church in Nanjing in the 28th year of Wanli, often holding

Masses in a public manner, with spectacular scenes and gorgeous clothes, and his influence gradually widened, and the number of believers increased. The development of Wang Fengsu's missionary activities aroused the dissatisfaction of a group of conservative scholars and doctors in Nanjing, such as the Shangshu of Yu Maoyu in the Like Affair, who put Catholicism in the same category as the White Lotus Sect, which was strictly forbidden by the government: "Wang Fengsu and Yang Manuo in the capital incited no less than 10,000 people. There are thousands of pilgrimages. ...Those who are in the middle of the south, gather at night, follow the white lotus, and do nothing. ...Today, we will disband the party lantern, strictly punish Guanjin, and sincerely guard against the slightest plan. [15] He also requested that the Mass be dissolved to prevent a "rebellion."

In the forty-third year of Wanli, Shen Yu served as a waiter in Nanjing's Ministry of Rites, and in the following year began to play the "Shen Yuan Yi Shu", saying that "when the ministers first arrived in Nanjing, they heard that they had gathered disciples and had rooms in the camp, that is, they wanted to capture and expel them, and the speaker may say that it is really complicated, and his words are infiltrated into people's hearts, that is, the scholars and gentlemen also believe in it"[13], "The emperor's royal world is also, this Confucianism is to determine the discipline outline, and the discipline outline is to clear rewards and punishments, so that the people can change the evil and persuade the good, and not be moved by foreign objects." The so-called common wind is a plan to uphold the hearts of the people and maintain the national lineage. [13] He also listed Wang Fengsu as trying to win the hearts of the people and plot rebellion; Privately changing the calendar and changing the chaotic system; Not sacrificing ancestors, the crime of incest. However, Shen Yu's two times before and after were not approved by Emperor Wanli, and the third time was supported by Fang Congzhe, a scholar of the Cabinet University. Wang Fengsu and some of the missionaries and believers were arrested. The following year, Wang Fengsu was sent to Macao along with João Rodrigues and Xiong Sanba from Beijing.

Although there was still a ban on religion after the "Nanjing Incident" turmoil, "the order was postponed for a long time, and the department was not supervised." "Fengsu changed his name, re-entered Nanjing, and practiced his religion as before, and the courtiers could not observe it" [9] The missionaries quietly sneaked back and continued their work. In October of the first year of the Apocalypse, Ye Xianggao, who was sympathetic to Catholicism, became the first assistant of the cabinet, claiming that not to reprimand Shen Yu was not enough to make the people angry. The Shangshu of the Criminal Department impeached Shen Yu and compared him to Cai Jing, the traitor of the Song Dynasty. Passed on by fate, died over the years. [9] After Shen Jing was dismissed, the ban was stopped, and the turmoil in the lesson plan gradually subsided.

Someone commented: "Only a dozen missionaries and dozens of believers were persecuted in the Nanjing case, but it had a profound impact on the history of cultural exchanges between China and the West in the late Ming Dynasty, and it was a head-on conflict between Western Catholic doctrine and Chinese traditional cultural ideology." The contradictions and conflicts of the Nanjing teaching plan were mainly confined to the upper class of bureaucrats and doctors, and the ordinary people of the lower classes had almost nothing to do with the teaching plan, and had little impact on ordinary Chinese except for the ban on religion and the expulsion of Jesuits." [14]

"Modern scholars generally believe that the 'Nanjing Lesson Plan' is a typical cultural dispute between the East and the West that is 'culturally xenophobic'. At that time, some missionaries said that Shen Yu had accepted a bribe of 10,000 taels of silver from Nanjing Buddhists, so he initiated this teaching plan. Although this was only a legend, it was quite obvious at the time that Buddhist monks were involved in the rejection of Catholicism." [4]

The "Nanjing Incident" was the first influential anti-Catholic incident that occurred after the spread of Catholicism in the late Ming Dynasty. This represents the introduction of foreign

cultures, which have a side of integration with the local culture, as well as a side of conflict. In the process of integration, Western science, technology, and cultural beliefs were disseminated, injecting a touch of vitality into the relatively quiet society of late Ming China. In the midst of the conflict, Catholicism became more and more insistent on the "purity" of its doctrine after Matteo Ricci, "neglecting to converge with the local culture, and did not form a Sinicized philosophical system like Buddhism and Islam, so that the 'Kingdom of God' could not truly descend on the land of China."

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the cultural interchange catalyzed by the dissemination of Christianity in Late Ming China encapsulates a period of significant transformation. This study has traced the contours of this dynamic exchange, highlighting both the profound challenges and the mutual benefits encountered by the Chinese and Western interlocutors. The introduction of Western scientific methodologies through the endeavors of missionaries like Matteo Ricci and others did not merely introduce new knowledge into Ming society; it also provoked a deeper introspection among Chinese scholars about their own intellectual traditions and cultural identity.

The nuanced strategies employed by these missionaries, particularly the approach of acculturation rather than assimilation, underscored a form of engagement that respected the rich tapestry of Chinese culture while subtly integrating Western ideas. This delicate balance between respect for local customs and the introduction of foreign concepts is illustrative of a broader dialogic process that characterizes successful cultural exchanges.

As we reflect on the historical implications of these interactions, it becomes apparent that they offer enduring lessons on the complexity of cultural integration. The legacy of this period provides fertile ground for further academic exploration, particularly in understanding the mechanisms through which cultural elements are adopted, adapted, and resisted. Future research could profitably expand on how these historical exchanges have shaped contemporary cross-cultural interactions and the global dissemination of ideas.

This examination thus not only enriches our understanding of a pivotal era in Sino-Western relations but also contributes to the broader discourse on the dynamics of cultural exchange and adaptation in an increasingly interconnected world.

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