

Europe meets China China meets Europe

The Beginnings of
European-Chinese Scientific Exchange
in the 17th Century



*P. Mathaeus Riccius Sacerdos Societatis Iesu
primus Christianae Fidei in Regno Sinarum
propagator.* *Abbas Xu Guangqi Sinarum
Legatus Christianae propagator.*

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THERESE GEULEN

With an introduction by
ALOIS OSTERWALDER

COLLECTANEA SERICA

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Abbreviations

- AN/TT Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Lisbon (National Archives of Portugal).
- AP “Acta Pekinensia seu Ephemerides Historiales eorum, quæ Pekini acciderunt à 4.â Decembris Anni 1705 1.â adventûs Ill.mi et Exc.mi Dñi. D. Caroli Thomæ Maillard de Tournon Patriarchæ Antiocheni Visitatoris Apostolici, cum potestate Legati de latere &c.”, ARSI, Jap. Sin. 138.
- ARSI Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu, Rome.
- BAJA Biblioteca da Ajuda, Lisbon, Jesuítas na Ásia Collection.
- BAV Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.
- BnF Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

- BncR Biblioteca nazionale centrale di Roma.
- BNL Biblioteca Nacional, Lisbon.
- HCC 1 Nicolas Standaert (ed.), *Handbook of Christianity in China. Volume One: 635–1800*. (Handbook of Oriental Studies, section 4: China 15/1. Handbuch der Orientalistik, Abt. 4: China 15) (Leiden – Boston – Köln: Brill, 2001).
- LThK *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*. Revised version of the 3rd ed. (Freiburg: Verlag Herder, 2009).
- SF VI Georgius Mensaert (1961) (ed.), *Sinica Franciscana. Volumen VI. Relationes et epistolas fratrum minorum italarum in Sinis saeculis XVII et XVIII* (Romae: apud Collegium S. Antonii).
- SF VIII Fortunato Margiotti (1975) (ed.), *Sinica Franciscana. Volumen VIII. Relationes et epistolas fratrum minorum hispanorum in Sinis qui a. 1684–92 missionem ingressi sunt* (Romae: apud Collegium S. Antonii).

**A CHINESE TREATISE ATTRIBUTED
TO XU GUANGQI (1615)
HOW THE JESUITS IN CHINA
DEFINED "SACRED IMAGES"***

HUI-HUNG CHEN

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Holy Image and Catholic Missions

Art, or sacred art, to be exact, has a significant position in Catholicism. For centuries, Catholicism has developed the images, iconography and the articulation of a discourse on imagery associated with its theology and faith. And given these long-standing visual traditions, Catholic fathers basically did not need to explain the legitimacy of the image.¹ Perhaps only during the time of the Council of Trent (1545–1563), Catholicism felt it incumbent to re-

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¹ An old writing in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* states as follows: "Painting has always been associated with the life of the Church." As quoted in this entry of the encyclopedia, the statement of the Second Council of Nicaea (787) is summed up as below: "The composition of the image is not the invention of the painters, but the result of the legislation and approved tradition of the Church," see Gillet 1911.

elaborate this legitimacy while facing various doubtful voices from Protestants as to the visual and material conventions of the Church. However, after about the 1570s, related ecclesiastic writings did not define so much as emphasize the significant and proper uses of the image for Roman Catholicism. In post-Tridentine Catholicism, there was a tendency for the Church to have a definite strategy to defend art; and especially with regards to its opposition to Protestantism, art was often assumed to be part of the controversy.² Nevertheless, when this issue is considered in relation to the prominent Jesuit order and their missions, among the most active orders representative of post-Tridentine Catholicism, whether the Church or the order in question had any strategy to promote or use images for any purpose is not so thoroughly understood. Yes, we can answer in response to this “whether” question, and yet the “how” following a positive answer is not easily explained. As we might observe some primary principles that the apologetics of the Church held, but it is not very clear that the Church has issued any guidebooks applied to any cases or areas.

One of the best-known scholars on Christian iconography, Émile Mâle (1862–1954), whose books are considered to be very influential and classics, has summarized that “the art of the Counter Reformation defends all the dogmas attacked by the Protestants.”³ Mâle’s definitions of the Counter Reformation and its art may be outmoded for current scholarship, but because of the influential nature of his works, his statement shows a more or less popular view of post-Tridentine Christian art. For this defense, Mâle also attributed a very important role to the Jesuits. Nevertheless, scholarly works from the latter half of the twentieth century have broken with the image of the Jesuits as having proposed any definite style or iconography of their own, to denounce Protestant attacks, strategically and theologically. The specific category of “Jesuit style” might have been an invention, and thus the Jesuits were not associated with any particular style or iconography.⁴ Moreover, an earlier impression that the Jesuits used art as a dogmatic vehicle has been expelled. As Juan Plazoala Artola states, the myth of the

² Émile Mâle 1951, pp. 20–22.

³ Mâle 1982, p. 168. Mâle’s original works comprise four large volumes on religious art, published from 1898 to 1932, and an extract version by the author himself appeared in 1949. In addition, for the original volume on the art after the Council of Trent, one of the above-mentioned four volumes, that elaborates on this idea, see Mâle 1951, pp. 511–512.

⁴ The most prominent work to argue that Jesuit thinking on art and architecture was not uniform, and thus the term “Jesuit style” is not a useful concept, is that of Wittkower and Jaffe (eds.) 1972. A more recent and overall discussion of the historiographical debate on “Jesuit style” is that of Bailey 1999b.

Jesuits’ artistic insensitivity could have been widely diffused, but now that this order did promote and encourage art is emphatically confirmed by recent research.⁵ In other words, what the Jesuits had to do with the visual arts became a complex matter. The Jesuits could have overall responded to Protestantism with a strong voice, but they would have had various approaches and means to achieve this purpose, of which art was only one in the Catholic “package.” In addition, the complicated questions regarding sixteenth-century European styles, and the flexible Jesuit “way of proceeding,” have compounded the above issues even more – the European artistic style and forms were then undergoing transformations.⁶ Besides, the adaptations to local conditions both in Europe and any other missions in non-Christian lands were the principal Jesuit distinction. The Jesuits, in other words, might not have had fixed criteria or methods to decide style or iconography when Christian art was employed, especially if in the meantime they were considering local circumstances.

While we keep the above complex question in mind, it is worthwhile to investigate “mission art,” to borrow Gauvin Bailey’s term to describe visual arts produced in a foreign, mission or colonial land.⁷ In this article, I focus on mission sacred art, and the discussion would be linked to a comparison of this art with the Catholic art traditions and relevant questions in post-Tridentine Europe. The case of the Jesuit China mission is intriguing but also challenging to scholars, because the objects of Christian art that the Jesuits brought in are mostly fragmentary and dispersed, and the missionaries do not seem to have discussed sacred art to a considerable extent in their abundant works on China. This will be discussed in the following. In the Jesuit literature in Chinese, the authors did not use the same weight and tone as in the Catholic apologetic works on sacred art appearing in Europe. Most of the instances of Jesuit written descriptions from the China mission mention the subjects of sacred images, sometimes relating a personal judgment of the work for its quality – this might be able to corroborate Jesuits’ sensitivity to artistic matters, but rarely suggesting how these subjects might be conceived, or how to use them for what kinds of circumstances (except for the cases of the miraculous function of sacred images). Although it is understood that Catholic missionaries would use sacred images to persuade non-Europeans to

⁵ O’Malley – Bailey (eds.) 2005. The Prologue of this book was written by Juan Plazoala Artola, and here the citation appears on p. xi.

⁶ For the complicated questions about sixteenth-century European styles, esp. stylistic transformations overlapped with one another as using the following three traditional stylistic labels: Renaissance, Mannerism, and Baroque; see an insightful discussion in Bailey 2003, pp. 3–37.

⁷ Bailey 1999a, pp. 4–5.

approach Christian teachings, a considerable number of Christian visual objects in missions cannot be explained in terms of their absolute priority in preaching and evangelizing. Missionaries used sacred images as objects for being a gift to Chinese people much more than for their religious functions.⁸

For example, in the Jesuit missions in China and Japan, at least as described in Jesuit written letters and accounts, there were a great number of sacred images or objects extant from the earliest periods.⁹ However, the first Jesuit who landed in Japan, Francis Xavier (1506–1552), suggests outright in his letter of 1549, the year of his arrival, that the missionary should start learning the Japanese language as soon as possible.¹⁰ And there is another notable epistolary source in which the Jesuits in Japan claimed to have been able to speak and understand all the local language [Japanese] (“... ja falamos & entendemos todos a lingua”). This letter written in Japan by the Jesuit Gaspar Vilela in Hirado, who first arrived there in 1556, is dated October 29, 1557.¹¹ Xavier also brought a few of sacred images to be used. From this, we can infer that Xavier did not think that non-verbal images could substitute entirely for what language can convey.

Thus it is neither surprising nor inconsistent that the missionaries brought European sacred images along with them from the very beginning of their mission journeys; but at the same time, the urge to study local languages at the earliest opportunity possible was incessantly heard and put into practice. It is truly possible that the missionaries definitely needed the ca-

⁸ For the cases in the period of the Jesuit Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), see Chen Hui-Hung 2010, pp. 55–123.

⁹ The following old articles give an overall narrative of those visual images brought in by the Jesuits to Japan and China, and we can see that many objects appeared in Asia in the earliest stage: McCall 1947, “Early Jesuit Art in the Far East. I,” *Artibus Asiae* 10, pp. 121–137; “Early ... the Far East. II,” *Artibus Asiae* 10, pp. 216–233; “Early ... the Far East. III,” *Artibus Asiae* 10, pp. 283–301; “Early ... the Far East. IV,” *Artibus Asiae* 11 (1948), pp. 45–69.

¹⁰ Xavier wrote this letter at Kagoshima, Japan, dated November 5, 1549: “... if we knew how to speak the language, I have no doubt whatsoever that we would make many Christians. May it please Our Lord that we may learn it soon, for already we begin to appreciate it, and we learned to repeat the Ten Commandments in the space of forty days which we applied ourselves thereto.” The English translation of this letter is provided by Boxer 1967, pp. 401–405; the above quotation is on p. 402.

¹¹ This letter is included in a Jesuit epistolary compendium, entitled *Cartas que os padres e irmãos da Companhia de Iesus, que andão nos Reynos de Iapão escreuerão aos da mesma Companhia da Índia, & Europe, des do anno de 1549 até o de 1580* (Evora, Portugal, 1598), pp. 54–61; the quotation is on p. 60. The copy I have consulted is in the Otori Collection 大島文庫 of National Taiwan University Library, call number BR1305 I47z (Otori 398).

capacity of local languages to explain European images, in terms of their persistence on reading images in the correct sense. In this necessity of explanation, we can even suggest that mastering the local languages would still have been more important than showing or attracting with images for the missionaries. Language study was always among the primary concerns for those who would be expected to evangelize local peoples, which happened in all the Jesuit missions of India, Japan, and then China.

In addition, recent research on visual images of the Jesuit China mission provides an insight into the history of how visual objects could have been used in evangelical activities. In 2003, Sun Yuming’s study on “the presentation of Christ as portrayed in visual images,” as the title indicates, attempted to offer a systematic story of the visual presentations of Christ in late-Ming Jesuit contexts from the time of Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) to Giulio Aleni (1582–1649). Sun maintains basically that visual images have played a significant role in the Jesuit China mission.¹² In 2007, Nicolas Standaert and Eugenio Menegon published works that deal with two kinds of visual images which happened to be employed by the Jesuits, respectively a set of prints of the life of Christ destined to the Chinese emperor and the allegorical images used to explain Christian morality and devotion to the literati. These two cases studies do show an effectual communication via visuality. These two scholars again emphasize the importance of visual aids to Jesuit evangelization, and also point out that those visual sources have been increasingly understood in the missionary settings rather than in the context of Western artistic influence on the Chinese tradition.¹³

When I state that a considerable number of Christian visual objects in missions cannot demonstrate their absolute priority in preaching and evangelizing, I do not mean to negate the significance of visual images or visual aids for the Jesuits in China. My point is to be defined in the domain of “sacred images” alone. As I will discuss one of them below, there are two treatises in the Chinese language that elaborate on Christian sacred images, or what was called *shengxiang* 聖像. These two Chinese works have been studied very little. They are also the only two works in seventeenth-century Jesuit publications, composed in the Chinese language, to focus entirely on this very subject.¹⁴ Compared to other topics in Christianity, which were

¹² Sun Yuming 2003, pp. 461–498.

¹³ Standaert 2007; Menegon 2007, pp. 389–437.

¹⁴ According to Xu Zongze, who was from the family of Xu Guangqi (1562–1633), the old book collection of his family, known as the Zikawei (Xujiahui 徐家匯) collection, has a book entitled *Shengxiang jijie* 聖像集解 (Compilation and Annotation of Sacred Images). Although part of the Zikawei collection has been transferred to Taipei, in the Fu Ssu Nien library (Fu Sinian tushuguan 傅斯年圖書館) of the Academ-

translated and revealed in Jesuit Chinese works more than once, this amounts to very little. Although sacred art played an important role in Catholicism, there was no salient aspect to show that the Jesuits in China would have had to use them for preaching. In a sense, we could infer that such art was not even so important, or merely as one of the possibly several means, in the Catholic "package" or paraphernalia that the Jesuits presented to the Chinese. The cases of Standaert and Menegon demonstrate an effectual visual method in the Jesuit cross-cultural preaching. However, it does not mean that the Jesuits would have had to use similar visual aids on all other occasions to a greater extent. In other words, the Jesuits would not have consciously and purposely displayed sacred images for explaining their sacred connotations. In this research, the two Chinese treatises show that sacred images do not replace language for their universal functions, which had been elaborated on in post-Tridentine art, and that sacred images might have been used in specific occasions. The two brilliant cases that Standaert and Menegon show also refer to two specific situations.

In addition, in his book on the Catholic reform of the Early Modern Period published in 1998, R. Po-chia Hsia states, "One of the prominent themes ignored in the traditional historiography of early modern Catholicism, and still neglected in the current crop of texts, is the history of non-European Catholicism."¹⁵ In the years since this statement, research on the history of non-European Catholicism has been growing continuously, and the case of China has even occasioned much exploration into this fascinating, yet controversial page in the history of Catholicism and the cross-cultural history of seventeenth-century Europe.¹⁶ A prominent feature of the Jesuit China mission, compared to other mission areas, is the great number of publications on Christianity and Europe in the Chinese language. In the Jesuit global missions overall, China may be the only place where European works were printed and published locally to such a great extent in the local

ia Sinica, the whereabouts of this title remains unclear. See Xu Zongze 1949, p. 422. The Chinese scholar Li Tiangang noted this title in his research on the *Zaowuzhu chuixiang lüeshuo* 造物主垂象畧說 (General Explanation of the Descending Portrait of the Creator), one of the two treatises to be discussed in the present article, see Li Tiangang 2000, p. 63.

¹⁵ Hsia 1998, p. 6.

¹⁶ This can be observed from the publications after the 2000s, such as Liam Brockey's book, in which he states in the Introduction that he treated the Jesuits in China as "a component of early modern Catholicism" and that this story was full of complex factors, see Brockey 2007, pp. 5-6. Moreover, Luke Clossey establishes a global network to have the China mission positioned, thus integrated into a picture of non-European Catholicism, see Clossey 2008.

language. Furthermore, it has been recognized that devotional literature in non-European languages is a valuable, but so far, understudied sources for Early Modern Catholicism. As Carlos Eire states, "All of the literature connected with mission activity, within and outside Europe, has a devotional dimension and an intimate connection to translation."¹⁷ Thus, the great amount of Jesuit Chinese publications all have their devotional dimension, and they are part of the "global inclusion" of devotional literature in the Americas, Asia and Africa.¹⁸ Rather, this particular heritage of non-European Catholicism and its missions still remains quite unknown to most of the scholarship of European and Western languages. My research intends to focus on one of two understudied Chinese works on sacred images, in particular, and thus to respond to lesser-known aspects in the study of global Catholicism. I have also attempted to respond to the complex issues regarding Jesuit uses of visual arts, especially in the case of the China mission, to see whether in this instance, my study might contribute to our understanding of part of post-Tridentine Catholic art.

The *Zaowuzhu chuixiang lüeshuo* and Xu Guangqi

One of these two treatises that elaborate on Christian sacred images or *shengxiang* in the Chinese language is entitled *Zaowuzhu chuixiang lüeshuo* 造物主垂象畧說 (General Explanation of the Descending Portrait of the Creator), or *Tianzhu shengxiang lüeshuo* 天主聖像畧說 (General Explanation of the Holy Image of the Heavenly Lord, abbreviated *Tianzhu shengxiang*). The other treatise is a folio only, entitled *Tianzhu shengxiang laili* 天主聖像來歷 (The Origin of the Holy Image of the Heavenly Lord). The former, abbreviated henceforth as the *Zaowuzhu chuixiang*, has seven folios in total, including recto and verso. It is the topic of this article. The latter has only one known copy.¹⁹

For the *Zaowuzhu chuixiang*, there are at least nine editions and copies surviving to the present, with either title but with the same contents.²⁰ Some are in printed format, and some in manuscript. The writing style, interest-

¹⁷ For this point of view, refer to Carlos Eire's relevant research, although the author does not mention Chinese publications: Eire 2007, pp. 83-100.

¹⁸ Eire 2007, pp. 99-100.

¹⁹ The only one copy of this work is housed in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris (BnF), Chinois 7276-XI.

²⁰ They are housed in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vatican (BAV), call numbers Borgia Cinese 334 (21), Borgia Cinese 334 (22), Borgia Cinese 350 (18), and R.G. Oriente III 221 (6); Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (ARSI), Jap. Sin. I 140, and BnF, Chinois 6690, 6691-I, 6915-IV, 7174-XX.

ingly, includes colloquial and vernacular terms, used to introduce the basic doctrine and precepts regarding Christianity. Early in the twentieth century, when cataloguing the large number of Chinese Christian literature housed in the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris (BnF), Maurice Courant commented about it: "texte en langue vulgaire" (text in ordinary language).²¹ According to this text, Christ was born as a man 1,615 years ago, so this year could be seen as the latest date of this work:

The Lord of Heaven was incarnated 1,615 years ago, the year *gengshen*, when it was the second year of *yuanshou* of the Ai Emperor of the Han Dynasty. His name was Jesus, and he was the Savior. The one that is venerated above there is right the sacred image of Jesus. He incarnated as a man for thirty-three years. When he was alive, he transmitted the scripture by himself.²²

Because of the colloquial and vernacular idiom, the text looks like that of a missionary preaching to the local masses with an image of Christ alongside, thus indicating to the reader that a venerated being is situated above the speaker. The situation was as vivid as portrayed. Sun Yuming's research even emphasizes that this text "must have accompanied the image of Christ on display," linking this text to the background of the Chinese difficulty in comprehending the image of the Lord of Heaven, *Tianzhu* 天主, because *Tian* 天 was abstract and "beyond representation."²³ For the spoken tone, the best proof might be found in the following text:

The Ten Commandments are only explained in the *Tianzhu jiaoyao* (Key Points of Catholicism) by titles. There are still important points to be known. After all, this must be carefully talked about with those who evangelize in order to understand and abide by them.²⁴

²¹ Courant (ed.) 1902–1912, p. 1345 (for No. 6690).

²² 天主降生于一千六百一十五年之前，歲次庚申，當漢哀帝元壽二年，名曰耶穌，曰救世者，上邊供敬的，正是耶穌聖像也，降生為人三十三年，在世親傳經典。 *Zaowuzhu chuixiang lieshuo* 造物主垂象畧說 (General Explanation of the Descending Portrait of the Creator), in *Tianzhujiao dongchuan wenxian sanbian* 天主教東傳文獻三編 (Literature of Catholicism to the East, Third Series), 6 vols, vol. 2, p. 557. The original folio number is 5r. This facsimile is one of the copies in BAV (call number Borgia Cinese 334 (21)), and it is also the one digitalized and accessed fully over the website of the Hong Kong Catholic Diocesan Archives: <http://archives.catholic.org.hk/>. In addition, a full English translation of the *Zaowuzhu chuixiang* is offered by Xiaochao Wang, see Wang 1998, pp. 132–140. The quotations here are translated by me.

²³ Sun 2003, pp. 468–470.

²⁴ 那十戒在天主教要上只說得箇題目，中間還有道理要曉得，畢竟要與傳教的仔細講解方得明白，方能遵守。 *Zaowuzhu chuixiang*, p. 556 (orig. 4v).

In this quotation, "those who evangelize" is a literal translation, and a circumlocution that resembles more an oral appellation. A more elegant or literary form of writing would presumably use "missionaries."²⁵ The tone and written style of this treatise also resemble those in the scriptures of the clandestine folk religious sects in contemporary China, which were aimed at the commoners and were even meant to be transmitted orally to those who could not read. Take two examples of the following texts:

... this is the unseen "Heaven," and we are able to go there until we have good deeds.

People do not recognize the Lord of Heaven and do not practice good works. By so doing, [people] would be beguiled and lured by Lucifer to many bad works, then will suffer with him [Lucifer] in the hell after they die.²⁶

Not only the tone of the oral expression, but also the simple morality of good/bad and heaven/hell is often found or highlighted in the local texts of Chinese popular religions.

As far as the editions and copies I have examined are concerned, at least three have the name of one of the most significant Chinese Christians of the seventeenth century, Xu Guangqi 徐光啟 (1562–1633; baptized as "Paul" in 1603) on the first page to indicate that the text was narrated by him (BAV, Borgia Cinese 334 (21); as well as that of and R.G. Oriente III 221 (6); ARSI, Jap. Sin. I 140). Another edition (BAV, Borgia Cinese 350 (18)), composed in a calligraphical form rather than in printed type, does not have Xu's name in the beginning, but that of the Jesuit João da Rocha (Chinese name Luo Ruwang 羅儒望 or 羅如望, 1565–1623) and two other Chinese given at the end to indicate their revision of this work (耶穌會士羅儒望、黎寧石、丘良秉全校). The title of this book is changed to *Tianzhu shengxiang*, and the time mentioned in the text for Christ's incarnation is 1619 years ago, and not 1615. A slightly different opening from other editions refers to the image of Christ prior to the subsequent teaching:

The above venerated [image] is the Heavenly Lord; that is, "Deus" (Dousi), [so] called by the countries of the great Western ocean and all

²⁵ Wang's translation instead just uses "the missionaries" (p. 137). This translation, in my opinion, cannot convey the colloquial tone of the text.

²⁶ ... 這就是如今看不見的天，是我們做好人纔上得去的。人不識認天主，不能力行善道，便要被他 [露際弗爾] 哄誘了去做許多惡事，死後便與他同在地獄受苦。 *Zaowuzhu chuixiang*, pp. 550 (orig. 1v), 553 (orig. 3r), for both quotations.

over the world. He is the great Master who has in the beginning created Heaven, Earth, spirits, humans, and things.²⁷

Xu was baptized by da Rocha. Xu wrote a postscript to the already renowned Jesuit Matteo Ricci's work, *Ershiwu yan* 二十五言 (Twenty-Five Sayings) in 1604, just after the year he himself was baptized. He calls Ricci "Mr. Li" (Li *xiansheng* 利先生) there, and even praises him "the savant who knows everything and is erudite."²⁸ Compared to this tone of literati, "those who evangelize" in the above quotation of the *Zaowuzhu chuixiang* testifies a different nature of this text – one of the textual functions was to be used for speaking, not for literary apprehension. Albert Chan proposed that the *Zaowuzhu chuixiang* might have been dictated by da Rocha and recorded by Xu, since these two maintained a long-term friendship.²⁹ Also, the indication of the author on the first page of the *Zaowuzhu chuixiang* says that Xu "narrates," rather than "writes" it (*Wusong Xu Guangqi shu* 吳淞徐光啟述). Whatever the role Xu played, his name on the first page would considerably increase attention to the treatise, as if at least for around the area of Shanghai, due to his high esteem and social fame there. This indication of Xu was even made intentionally – it was "narrated" or "spoken" by Xu, rather than by da Rocha, especially for those editions without the name of the missionary.

Viewed as one of the most significant Chinese Christians in the late-Ming period, Xu received significant attention in Jesuit-related scholarship. As a member of the Chinese elite who converted to the Western truth of the Lord of Heaven, Xu thus was praised both in Western and Chinese circles, as revealed in the respective literature. However, his religious works and those that have been attributed to him have not been fully studied. Although his involvement in Western sciences and his pivotal status as a Jesuit supporter at the imperial court were both based on his religious inclination, his

²⁷ 上邊供敬的是天主，即大西洋與天下萬國所稱陡斯，是當初生天生地生神生人生物的一箇大主宰。 *Tianzhu shengxiang lüeshuo*, BAV – Borgia Chinese 350 (18), 1r, 4v. This edition can also be found digitalized and accessed fully over the website of the Hong Kong Catholic Diocesan Archives. The Jesuit bibliographer Louis Pfister is wrong to confuse this work with another Jesuit publication *Song nianzhu guicheng* 誦念珠規程 (Method for Reciting the Rosary, abbreviated *Nianzhu*; first edition ca. 1600–1619), see Pfister 1932, p. 69. [On the latter work, see Qu Yi, "Song nianzhu guicheng (Die Anweisung zur Rezitation des Rosenkranzes): Ein illustriertes christliches Buch aus China vom Anfang des 17. Jahrhunderts," *Monumenta Serica* LX (2012), pp. 195–290. – Ed.]

²⁸ Xu Guangqi 1964, vol. 1, p. 325. The original Chinese text is as follows: 此海內博物通達君子矣。

²⁹ Chan 2002, p. 185.

religious works have been overshadowed by his scientific efforts.³⁰ Therefore, previous studies have been more concerned with his seminal scientific works in China than his personal religious experiences, which have even been doubted.³¹ Nevertheless, due to Xu's supposedly unprecedented prestige, seventeenth-century Christian writings in Chinese were often attributed to him. And yet none of the writings regarding Christian doctrine attributed to Xu can actually be confirmed as having been written by him.³² Some of these works were probably attributed to Xu because of his fame. In the twentieth century, several compilations of Xu's works were extremely hesitant regarding the authority of Xu's religious works, and the *Zaowuzhu chuixiang* was removed not only once from anthologies of Xu's writings.³³ Because of assumptions concerning the unreliability of his religious works, less attention has been given to his religious experiences. Consequently, the *Zaowuzhu chuixiang* is understudied, and Xu's conversion experience remains unclear.

When Xu was baptized in Nanjing in 1603, he had not yet received the highest degree that was required to join the Chinese bureaucracy, i.e., *jinshi* 進士, which he finally obtained in 1604. Based on all known records, Xu had several experiences in which he viewed Christian images, which would influence part of his early access to Christianity. In 1596, he was a local gentry member and passed through Shaozhou 韶州 in the province of Guangxi 廣西, where he first met the Jesuit Lazzaro Cattaneo (1560–1640). This was his first encounter with the Jesuits and their sacred image. During this visit, Xu saw an image of Christ (*Salvatore*; savior type) from Rome in a chapel while meeting with Cattaneo.³⁴ A Chinese source relates Xu's emotional reception of the image.³⁵ In 1600, he first met Ricci. According to a posthumous biography, Xu had dreamed about a triple image (maybe the one for the Holy Spirit), including one of God and another of God's son.³⁶

³⁰ For this scholarly view, see Jami *et al.* (eds.) 2001, pp. 1–20.

³¹ Wang 1998, pp. 107–112.

³² For the problems of the attribution of Christian works to Xu, see Dudink 2001, pp. 99–152; Wang 1998, pp. 107–140; Fang Hao 1969, vol. 2, pp. 1604–1606.

³³ Li Tiangang 2000, pp. 59–63.

³⁴ D'Elia (ed.) 1942–1949, vol. 2, p. 253. According to Ad Dudink's chronology, this occurred in 1595, see Dudink 2001, p. 401.

³⁵ This Chinese source quoted by Pasquale M. D'Elia states Xu's astonished respect and paying devotion to the image (...心懷然，輒為頂禮)，see D'Elia 1942–1949, vol. 2, p. 253. It was originally written in a biography in the early twentieth century, see Li Wenyu 1962, p. 2.

³⁶ Li Wenyu 1962, p. 3.

Xu stated that he had worshipped an image of Christ from Europe during the years he first knew Ricci.³⁷ When he was baptized in Nanjing, da Rocha showed Xu an image of Madonna with Child in St. Luke's style.³⁸ The Chinese biography states that Xu was so moved by beholding the Holy Mother image that he asked da Rocha to introduce him to Christianity, and later decided to be baptized.³⁹

In 1608, Cattaneo left for Shanghai to establish a mission. Possibly during 1608–1610, while Xu stayed home for the mourning period of three years for the death of his father, Cattaneo gave him an image of the Madonna of St. Luke.⁴⁰ However, Xu resumed his position in the central government of Beijing in 1610. During 1613–1616, Xu took a leave of absence because of an illness, although he may have left because of the antagonistic attitude at the court toward the Jesuits, whom Xu greatly supported. Xu stayed in Tianjin 天津 in the Province of Northern Zhili (Bei Zhili 北直隸).⁴¹ There are no Chinese or Western sources that prove that he narrated or wrote the *Zaowuzhu chuixiang* during this period. In 1616–1617, the Nanjing persecution occurred. Xu defended the Jesuits in Beijing, and at the time or soon after, he resumed his government position. Xu was not appointed as the Minister of the Board of Rites and the Grand Secretary until 1632. It is more accurate to state that Xu had a nationwide reputation then, rather than vaguely assuming that he was influential all his life. Xu died in 1633.

From the mentioned story, his perception of the Holy Image seems to have been an important aspect of Xu's experience with Christianity. Although there are no additional sources that elucidate the relationship between Xu and the *Zaowuzhu chuixiang*, this work was a target of the Nanjing persecution of 1616–1617. Because of the evidence provided by an official list of the confiscated property from the mission, the Chinese authorities found many Jesuit Chinese works. One work, which was entitled *Tianzhu shengxiang lue*, was possibly an early or different version of da Rocha's *Tianzhu shengxiang* of 1619. The term *lue* 略 is the same as *lueshuo* 略說, which was used in the title of the *Tianzhu shengxiang*. Thirteen copies of the *Tianzhu shengxiang lue* were confiscated. In addition, the

³⁷ Xu Guangqi 1964, vol. 1, p. 325.

³⁸ D'Elia 1942–1949, vol. 2, pp. 247, 254.

³⁹ Li Wenyu 1962, p. 8.

⁴⁰ D'Elia 1942–1949, vol. 2, pp. 505–506; Chen Hui-Hung 2010, p. 77.

⁴¹ “Xu Wending gong nianpu” 徐文定公年譜 (Chronology of Xu Wending). See Xu Guangqi 1908, p. 3.

Chinese authorities seized several images of Christ.⁴² As mentioned above, at least nine editions of the *Zaowuzhu chuixiang* survive to the present. However, there were supposedly more in circulation at the same time, mostly in the seventeenth century.⁴³ The mentioned official inventory list from the Nanjing persecution corroborates this point. In addition, the information from the inventory indicates that there was a work entitled *Tianzhu shengxiang lue*, whose title was probably changed according to the model text of the *Zaowuzhu chuixiang*, or was an earlier version of the *Tianzhu shengxiang* of 1619. This source shows that the contents of the *Zaowuzhu chuixiang* were known in Nanjing, and that the mission residence had numerous images of Christ. Furthermore, as mentioned, Xu had not gained a very high position at this time and was not an influential official. When he became a *jinshi* and entered the hierarchy of government administration, he was well-known in his hometown, although his fame may not have expanded yet to the circles of literati and administration.

Regarding inferences related to whether Xu's attribution to the *Zaowuzhu chuixiang* was intentional, we can locate where this text circulated – possibly in Shanghai, or only in the greater areas of Nanjing and the Jiangnan 江南 areas, where his local fame could have been mostly useful. Although we cannot establish an exact historical framework to locate Xu's relationship to the *Zaowuzhu chuixiang* and its narrative, this Christian text elucidates the early life of Xu. Because most studies focus on Xu's later life, when he was an important state secretary and introduced the Jesuits to the court, thus his fame and scientific works were usually noted. Xu's early life, personal religious encounters with Christianity, and even his works on Christianity have been overshadowed by his other accomplishments. The *Zaowuzhu chuixiang* should be a part of the ignored aspects of his story.

In addition, the dating of the *Zaowuzhu chuixiang* might well be associated with da Rocha's evangelizing work. Da Rocha had a Catholic catechism composed, entitled *Tianzhu shengjiao qimeng* 天主聖教啟蒙 (Cate-

⁴² This inventory was included in a collection of Chinese documents regarding the persecution, entitled *Nangong shudu* 南宮署牘 (Memorials and Documents of the Nangong), authored and published by the key protagonist of this event, Shen Que 沈淮 (1565–1624), the Vice Minister of the Board of Rites (Nanjing *libu* 南京禮部, that is *Nangong*) I owe my first examination of this rare text to Prof. Yi-long Huang 黃一農 in the Graduate Institute of History at National Tsing Hua University in Taiwan, and hereby express my gratitude. A detailed and thoughtful study of the *Nangongshudu* and the event is Dudink 2000, pp. 133–265. This inventory was included in the third *juan* 卷 (volume) of the *Nangong shudu*. The relevant descriptions cited here are on fols. 43r–44v.

⁴³ Dudink 2001, pp. 124–126.

chism for Catholicism), which might have been finished around 1600–1619.⁴⁴ This book was also presented in a common idiom to appeal to ordinary people. In addition, five extant copies and editions, out of seven, of another Jesuit work, *Song nianzhu guicheng* 誦念珠規程 (Method for Reciting the Rosary, abbreviated *Nianzhu*) are bound with this catechism manual.⁴⁵ The *Nianzhu* is a prayer manual for reciting the rosary (the fifteen decades of Ave Maria). It includes fifteen woodblock illustrations depicting the life story of the Virgin Mary and Christ. Although there is no author attribution under the title of the *Nianzhu*, this work presents the same tone and style appealing to the common people as those of the *Tianzhu shengjiao qimeng*, and in all likelihood, it could be attributed to da Rocha as well. The *Nianzhu* uses sacred images to highlight the Ave Maria. These works, including the *Zaowuzhu chuixiang*, have the common theme of employing sacred images; hence the *Zaowuzhu chuixiang* could have mirrored a part of da Rocha's missionary work and circle. Moreover, they also show his efforts to introduce to the lower classes basic Christian doctrine, which can be perceived via the veneration of the sacred image, or through the use of images as devotional aids.

Response of the Literati to the Holy Image and the Apologetics of Johannes Molanus

Furthermore, the edition of the *Zaowuzhu chuixiang* without mention of Xu's contributing authorship and entitled *Tianzhu shengxiang*, was noticed in a Chinese treatise attacking Catholicism, composed around 1620–1640. It was presented to a Confucian in a conversation between a literatus and his

friend, speaking of the recent popularity of Catholicism. The ensuing attack made by this Confucian not only points to the Christian doctrine in general, but also to the fallacy of the veneration of the Holy Image.⁴⁶ This appearance in an anti-Catholic Chinese work reveals that the Holy Image was not only directed to speak to the masses, but also aroused the attention of the literati. If we may suppose that the *Zhaowuzhu chuixiang* was addressed first to the masses or the illiterate, it was subsequently noticed by the literary circles, perhaps indeed because of its great popularity. Besides, at least three copies of the *Zaowuzhu chuixiang* have a postscript signed by Yang Tingyun 楊廷筠 (baptized as Michael, 1562–1627), which explains why the Christ image had to be made (BAV, Borgia Cinese 334 (21) and R.G. Oriente III 221 (6); ARSI, Jap. Sin. I 140). This also proves that the literati were attentive to the work. Yang's remarks on the Christ image are quoted as below:

... somebody said that what we believe in is the bodiless [or formless] and voiceless *Shangdi*. However, as we depict him [*Shangdi*] as an image, and elaborate on his teachings, he is not different from other human beings. But by so doing, this seems to be blasphemous to him, and [those who doubt this] do not dare to believe in it. The answer is as follows. The spirit of *Shangdi* encompasses Heaven, Earth, and the whole outside of them, and precedes the beginning of all things. He can transform nothing into being, and vice versa. Hence, the greatness of the universe includes everything and just reveals the omnipotence of *Shangdi*. What need is there to insist that *Shangdi* must be bodiless [or formless] and voiceless, and that whoever has body [or form] and voice must not be *Shangdi*?⁴⁷

Yang's key point is that the Christ image created in concrete form is to make to truly confirm *Shangdi*. In view of God's capacity to transform the invisible (nothing) into the visible (being), the making of the image not only shows the omnipresence and omnipotence of God, but also justifies the truth of God or the Doctrine.

Yang's postscript actually elaborates on the purpose of the missionaries in showing the Christ image. Here I propose two aspects concerning the missionaries' purpose to further this discussion. The first regards the relationship of the justification of God's truth and its images. The second, the

⁴⁴ Da Rocha's name appears in the front of the *Tianzhu shengjiao qimeng* as *Taixi Yesuishi Luo ruwang yizhu* 泰西耶穌會士羅儒望譯著 (Great Western Jesuit João da Rocha translates and composes). See a reprint of one earlier edition, collected in Standaert and Dudink (eds.) 2002, vol. 1, p. 377. With regards to its dating, scholars in earlier years also accepted a possibility of around 1619, see D'Elia 1939, pp. 68–70. A date of before 1600 derives from an inscription on the cover of the above-mentioned edition (call number Jap. Sin. I-43): "Hic catechismus non cum Imaginibus Passions Dominicae fuit impressus jam ante annum 1600." See Chan 2002, pp. 70–71. The Latin inscription follows Chan's transcription, and it is in Chan's catalogue, p. 70. Without further evidence to prove the exact date, we would roughly date this text around 1600–1619.

⁴⁵ Except for a copy in the Getty Research Institute Library, Los Angeles, USA (Special Collection, 1365–379), the European locations and call numbers of the other six copies and editions of the *Nianzhu* are as below: ARSI, Jap. Sin. I, 43; BAV, Borgia Cinese 336 (5); BnF, Chinois 6861I-II, Chinois 7382; Biblioteca nazionale centrale di Roma (BncR), Collezioni Orientali 72C542, 72B298. The latter two libraries each have two copies respectively.

⁴⁶ Zhong Shisheng 1966, vol. 2, pp. 914, 923. For the dating, see Fang Hao's brief introduction in vol. 1, p. 29.

⁴⁷ 或者曰吾所信者無形無聲之上帝，今繪之為象，演之為教，不殊人類，似反襲之，故不敢信。曰上帝之靈，包乎天地之外，超乎萬物之先，既可造無為有，化有為無，則宇宙之大，何所不有，正顯上帝全能，安見執無形無聲必為上帝，有形有聲必非上帝？*Zaowuzhu chuixiang*, p. 562 (orig. 7v).

necessity of God's "form," thus related to its image, which in the Jesuits' Christian doctrine was destined for Chinese comprehension.

With regard to the relationship of the justification of God's truth to its images, Yang himself had a visual experience to testify for this. His experience was described by another literatus, Ding Zhilin 丁志麟, in his booklet on Yang's religious experience and story, *Yang Qiyuan xiansheng chaoxing shiji* 楊淇園先生超性事蹟 (Spiritual Story of Mr. Yang Qiyuan [Qiyuan was Yang's *hao* or pen-name]). Ding was from Jinjiang 晉江 in the Province of Fujian. In this booklet, Ding stated that he had heard much from the Jesuit Giulio Aleni about Yang when he studied with Aleni. After Aleni had come to Fujian from Hangzhou, Ding intended to introduce Yang's story as a moral model of devotion to the Fujian mission.⁴⁸ Yang had actually contacted Aleni in his hometown of Hangzhou, and they worked together on a geography book for publication. Ding described Yang's experience as follows: "[Yang] sincerely beheld the image of God, holding his breath, regarding and venerating it respectfully. It seems that the Great Master descends and commands."⁴⁹

This description intends to convey the reality of Christ via the veneration of the image. The confirmation of God's appearance by means of this image shows Yang's sincere devotion, and the experience tells as well that, by venerating the image, Yang may have been in a state of visual ecstasy with God. To ponder over God, as well as the truth, by means of the Christ image was a theological view of sacred images of Catholicism at that time. The Belgian theologian Johannes Molanus (Jean Vermeulen, 1533–1585) had his work *De picturis et imaginibus sacris* (On Sacred Images) published in Louvain in 1570. This Catholic writer clearly stated the relation between Christian verity (*vérité*) or truth, and sacred images. While explaining those images in relation to the subjects of well-established stories, Molanus said that the image "reproduisant la réalité" (reproducing reality) should receive the piety of the faithful as respectful as that (piety) dedicated to the particular story in question, whether a biblical story or that of saint, etc. He cited further a biblical passage to testify that God the Savior wanted all of us to be saved and know the truth, while discussing a type of Christ image, primarily known as the Savior, holding a globe topped with a cross in his hand (Fig. 1).⁵⁰

The *Salvator Mundi* (Savior of the World), a popular appellation for this type of Christ image, was actually the best-known Christ image in Jesuit China missions. The most well-known *Salvator Mundi* to survive in late-Ming China is the title page image of the *Tianzhu jiangsheng chuxiang jingjie* 天主降生出像經解 (Biblical Explanations and Illustrations of the Heavenly Lord's Incarnation, abbreviated *Chuxiang jingjie*; the first edition 1637), under the authorship of the Aleni (Fig. 2). While Molanus thought that the image was able to – and should – reproduce the reality while holding up its devotional function, he stated that the images would not actually "signify" (*signifiant*) more than what should be addressed, which Molanus called "elements certains" (certain, or definite elements).⁵¹

Besides these, according to Molanus, the artist has judgments at his disposal. In other words, the images should not present something uncertain; what they present is definite, that is, certain. However, those definite elements "possess" (*posséder*) a "probability" (*probabilité*) that would be distinguished in the judgment of the artist (the author). The editors of the 1996 reprint version of this treatise point to the similarity of Molanus's view here to the later viewpoint of another Catholic bishop, Gabriele Paleotti.⁵² Furthermore, in talking about the representations of parables, Molanus once again emphasized that the images rarely signify something beyond themselves.⁵³ The above points of view of Molanus tell us two things: First, the Holy Image is a representation which reveals what it should present (certain or definite elements), and those definite elements are the responsibility of the Church. Thus, those images do not signify anything beyond the legitimate boundary; yet the artist has his judgment to decide on the representation (and so, the probability). Second, the Holy Image should be able to direct the reader to the truth of God. It is very intriguing that the above example, in which Molanus intends to specify the image as directed to the meanings of the Savior and the truth, is the type of the *Salvator Mundi*. This best known Christ image to the Chinese was brought to Japan and China by the Jesuits.

Molanus and Paleotti were both recognized as being among the most important ecclesiastic writers to transfer the decree of the Council of Trent into a practical guideline. Paleotti's treatise *Discorso intorno alle imagini sacre e profane* (Discourse on the Sacred and Profane Images), was written in 1582 and published in 1584. In the atmosphere of the post-Tridentine Church, although Molanus' treatise of 1570 was not the first one to respond

⁴⁸ Ding 1996, vol. 1, pp. 236–237.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 218: 而懇觀主像，竦息瞻拜，恍若大主臨而命之。

⁵⁰ Molanus 1996, vol. 1, pp. 172–173. The image shown here as Figure 1, was suggested by the editors of this modern annotation in Note 7 of p. 173.

⁵¹ Molanus 1996, pp. 177–178.

⁵² Molanus 1996.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 179–180.

seriously to the decree of the Council of Trent with respect to sacred images, his work was confirmed as the first one to do so systematically, and especially to deal with their legitimate use and abuse.⁵⁴ Moreover, Paleotti's *Discorso* recognizes the Catholic apologetic traditions on art with respect to painting as a universal language ("... the art to form images, which having been seen, are recognized at once indiscriminately and serve as a common speech for all nations").⁵⁵ This statement was in agreement with the global view of Early Modern Catholicism, which saw a universality of Christian theology and doctrine, in justifying the massive Christianization of non-Europeans.⁵⁶ The works of Molanus and Paleotti were two of the most important by the clergy to be devoted to the Holy Image by the 1590s. Subsequently, two other Jesuits stood out for their discussions on this topic: Jean-Baptiste-Bernardin Possevin's *Tractatio de poesi et pictura* (Treatise of Poetry and Picture, 1593), and Louis Richeome's (1544–1625) *Trois discours pour la religion catholique, les miracles, les saints, les images* (Three Discourses for the Catholic Religion, the Miracles, the Saints, and the Images, 1598).

The above discussion attempts to link the key concept of the *Zaowuzhu chuixiang* and Yang's perception of the Christ image to Molanus and Paleotti in post-Tridentine Catholicism. It is quite possible to note that the Jesuit method expressed in the contents of the *Zaowuzhu chuixiang*, and the proximity of the conceptions of sacred images to their close Chinese Christians, both echoed contemporary European discussions on the use of sacred images.

Necessity of God's "Form" and the Incarnation

Secondly, let us move to another aspect concerning the missionaries' purpose of furthering the discussion of sacred images: the necessity of God's "form," which is thus related to its image, in the Jesuit Christian doctrine was destined for Chinese comprehension. The whole account of the *Zaowuzhu chuixiang* is firsthand to define who God is, to explain God's grace and His creation, then His incarnation. As quoted above, the introduction of the sacred image of Jesus Christ is immediately followed by explanations of the Christ descending and His thirty-three-years of being in this world. A

⁵⁴ Molanus 1996, vol. 1, p. 95.

⁵⁵ Paleotti 1961, vol. 2, p. 140: "... l'arte del formare le imagini, che, vedute, subito si riconoscono indifferentemente e servono per favella commune a tutte le nazioni." As for Paleotti and the importance of his work in the late sixteenth-century European artistic discourse, refer to Boschloo 1974, pp. 121–155; Jones 1995, pp. 127–139.

⁵⁶ Delumeau 1977.

key purpose of the *Zaowuzhu chuixiang* is to explain the meaning of Heaven and the Lord, the Incarnation, and the moral teachings revealed by the concepts of Heaven and Hell, thus Good and Bad.⁵⁷ In it, Yang expresses his difficulty in understanding the Incarnation, which was looked upon as essentially incompatible with the majesty of God.⁵⁸ That Christ had to descend from Heaven in human form in order to fulfill the promise of salvation was questioned by the Chinese; and the physical appearance of Christ, as the Incarnation revealed by "form" (*xing* 形), became an important sign to legitimate the Incarnation. The sacred image of Christ, in particular, became a potent tool for European missionaries in dealing with this question with the Chinese. The Chinese poem inscribed below the central *Salvator Mundi* on the title page of the *Chuxiang jingjie*, explains the feature and function of the sacred image of Christ:

立天地之主宰，肇人物之根宗
推之于前無始，引之於後無終
稱六合兮無間，超庶類兮非同
本無形之可擬，乃降生之遺容
顯神化以溥愛，昭勸懲以大公
位至尊而無上，理微妙而無窮

[Jesus is] the Master who establishes Heaven and Earth,
And the root and the first ancestor of all creatures
There is no beginning if we trace him back,
and no ending if we look to the future
[It is said that He is] in every place and everywhere all over the universe,
and different from every kind of creature and transcends them all
No form and shape can be portrayed,
yet [this picture] is his portrait made after he was incarnated in the human world
[He] shows his divinity with universal fraternity,
and encourages and admonishes people with his great impartiality
[His position] is in highest esteem without anyone above him,
And [his] the principle is so subtle and inexhaustible to inquiry.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Sun instead argues that the *Zaowuzhu chuixiang* established an image of "God incarnated as Jesus," an idea different from "God incarnated in Jesus." Therefore, the ignorance of the differentiation of Jesus from God would lead to the almost complete absence of the Incarnation in the text. The dogma of Incarnation is mentioned in the text, though only briefly. See Sun 2003, pp. 471, 475.

⁵⁸ Von Collani 1998, p. 47; Dunne 1962, p. 113.

⁵⁹ Title page of the *Chuxiang jingjie*, see Fig. 2. I had recourse to a translation by Wang Xiaochao, but re-worded and re-wrote it in several places, see Wang 1998, pp. 112–113. In addition, I express my great gratitude to Prof. Bernhard Führer,

This poem was entitled “Yesu xiangzan” 耶穌像贊 (Eulogy on the Image of Jesus) and included in the writing anthology of Xu Guangqi. This attribution is still in dispute, however, as are several other Christian writings under Xu’s name. Moreover, one further interesting source revealed by the recent research of Huang Yi-long shows that, instead, this poem had been collected in another work of a Chinese Christian, Xu Yueshan 許樂善 (1548–1627), dated 1625.⁶⁰ However, a comparison to the above “Yesu xiangzan” shows that the following two sentences disappeared in the 1625 version: “He cannot be portrayed by form and shape, yet the [this] picture is his portrait after he was incarnated in the human world.”⁶¹ It is possible that these two phrases were added to fit in with the central theme of the *Chuxiang jingjie*, because they explain Christ’s incarnation and his human portrait in the picture, which are the very subject of the *Chuxiang jingjie*. According to Huang’s detailed research, these two Xus were, in fact, very close friends. Xu Yueshan was even probably introduced to Catholicism by Xu Guangqi.⁶² Whoever actually wrote the poem is still unknown.

In addition to the above-mentioned Xu personal experiences with the Holy Image, his concern with it can be seen in one more Chinese source: his inscription for a Christian church in Jiangzhou 絳州 of Shanxi. This inscription entitled “Jingjiao tang beiji” 景教堂碑記 (An Inscription for the Stele of the Church of Jingjiao [Nestorian Christianity]) narrates the history of Nestorian Christianity in China and the entry of Catholicism into China. In a laudatory tone, Xu states that the Jesuit missionary worshiped and venerated the sacred image, greatly adorning their church so that the hearers and followers could look upon the sacred image and convert to rely on the faith.⁶³ The poem on the title page of the *Chuxiang jingjie* and this inscription both demonstrate that the devotional function and efficacy of the sacred image was important in the Jesuit mission. The image of Christ was seen as the proof of the Incarnation, so it could corroborate the theological and historical reality and substance of Jesus Christ. The Jesuits justified not only the historical validity of the Incarnation but also the existence and use of the sacred image, and they exhorted non-Christians to venerate the image, as one statement of a Decree from the Council of Trent notes: “the honor with

SOAS of the University of London, who rightly pointed out the errant wordings of my original draft. The quotation favorably presented here in verse format is owed to his insights. He also generously offered advice on the revision of this article.

⁶⁰ Huang 2005, p. 85.

⁶¹ Title page of the *Chuxiang jingjie* (see Fig. 2): 本無形之可擬，乃降生之遺容。

⁶² Huang 2005, pp. 84–87.

⁶³ Xu Guangqi 1986, p. 531: 莊嚴祠宇，崇奉聖像，使聞風企踵者，瞻仰依歸也。

which they [sacred image] are regarded is referred to those who are represented by them; so that we adore Christ, and venerate the saints, whose likenesses these images bear.”⁶⁴ The “likeness” is the same as that brought out in the preface of Aleni for the *Chuxiang jingjie* in the following statement: “... so that people who see images can be attending to Our Lord in person, realizing no any discrepancies in his words and deeds.”⁶⁵

The idea of a likeness to Christ’s image attempted to emphasize both the historical truth of Christ’s figure and the religious significance and power of its image. This kind of statement was often found in Chinese Christian literature. Aleni explained the significance of the true portrait of Christ in the following conversation that took place in Fujian in 1630, which refers to the legend of King Abgar’s *Mandylion* (“handkerchief”):

The Miracle of the Holy Image:

... the Regional Commander Liu [Yingchong] paid a visit to [my home], where at that moment we were worshipping the Holy Image [of Jesus]. He then asked: “Is it life-like?” The Master said: “It is – but there is one that is more authentic. Anciently, when Jesus was dwelling in this world, there was a king who admired his saintly virtue. Since he wanted to see him but was unable to do so, he secretly sent a painter to have his portrait made. However, as soon as the painter saw Jesus, he was blinded by his supernatural light and could not fix his eyes upon him. Jesus knew this, so he took a handkerchief and covered his face with it, and at once his holy countenance was reproduced inside on it. That veil has been persevered till the present day. Before I sailed [to China] I have seen it myself. Every hair of the beard and eyebrows is there, and the resemblance is such that it seems to be alive.”⁶⁶

Aleni later explained the image or physical appearance of Christ and the Incarnation to a Chinese adherent as follows:

⁶⁴ Quoted from Brownlee 1857, p. 94.

⁶⁵ Giulio Aleni, “Tianzhu jiangsheng chuxiang jingjie yin” 天主降生出像經解引 (Preface to *Tianzhu jiangsheng chuxiang jingjie*), in *Tianzhu jiangsheng chuxiang jingjie* 天主降生出像經解 (Biblical Explanations and Illustrations of the Heavenly Lord’s Incarnation; 1637), call no. BAV, R. I. III. 339, BAV, Vatican City: 欲人覽之如親炙吾主，見其所言所行之無二也。

⁶⁶ 述聖像靈蹟：...劉總戎過訪，時瞻拜聖像，因問曰，似乎？先生曰，此似矣，然更有真者，昔耶穌在世時，有國王仰其聖德，欲見無繇，密遣畫工圖其像，畫工一見耶穌神光逼射，不能注目，耶穌知之，因取帕蒙其面，而聖容已宛在帕中矣，此帕至今存，吾未航海時，曾親見之，鬚眉畢具，恍恍如生也。Aleni, in Standaert and Dudink 2002, vol. 7, p. 61. The English translation is quoted from Erik Zürcher’s annotated reprint, Zürcher 2007, vol. 1, pp. 224–225. “The Master” in the quotation is Aleni. For the *Mandylion* and the related story, see Belting 1994, pp. 208–224.

That through the Incarnation [the Lord] Has Become Visible Is the Very Basic of His Worship

The provincial graduate [Zhou Minglu] said: "According to the *Book of Odes* 'The actions of Heaven above / have neither sound nor smell', and Confucius has said: 'Does Heaven speak?' Although there is a Lord of Heaven, [Chinese sages] never have specified what kind of person he is; therefore I doubt whether he has made himself visible through Incarnation." The master said: "What you say is true, but those statements refer to the time of before the Incarnation. The Incarnation has taken place at the end of the Western Han, as you can read in detail in Western books. The [Chinese] saints and sages of high antiquity knew about the existence of a Lord in heaven, but they had not witnessed the Incarnation. Yet even without knowing about the Incarnation they constantly worshipped [the Lord]. They did not forget venerating him with all their hearts in spite of the statement that '[Heaven] has neither sound nor smell', and they did not fail to respect his orders in spite of [Confucius' question] 'Does it speak?' ... But then the Lord has felt pity, and through his Incarnation he has made it possible really to see and really to hear him ... Now in China nobody has seen him, but surely people have heard him – and yet they do not maintain such a 'cautious reserve', but qualify it as 'vain talk' and 'lies.' If there had been no Incarnation, would they not even more tend to qualify it as vain talk and lies, and be even less cautious?"⁶⁷

This conversation occurred in April of 1637, and it reflects to a great extent the historical background of the *Chuxiang jingjie*, printed by a Catholic church (*jingjiaotang* 景教堂) of the County of Jinjiang in Fujian, the hometown of Ding Zhilin, as stated above. The explanation emphasizes that the significance of the Incarnation is first to be seen and heard, then known as a fact and reality. The factual and historical truth, from the Christian perspective of missionaries, is particularly important for the Chinese who are without a Christian cultural background, in order for them to accept Christian doctrine and further, to be converted to it. This may have been one of the critical reasons for Aleni's editing and publishing the *Chuxiang jingjie*. Aleni also implied St. Augustine's idea that God was invisible before his In-

⁶⁷ 答降生有像於昭事為尤切

孝廉曰，詩云，上天之載，無聲無臭，子曰，天何言哉？天雖有主，從未嘗指何者為天之主，故疑天主不必有降生之像也。先生曰，斯言誠然，然此乃天主未降生以前語也，天主降生，在西漢之末，詳在書可覽矣，上古聖賢，皆知天之有主，未及逢主之降生，然亦無假降生而時時對越，不以無聲無臭故忘薦恭，不以何言故不畏其命，天主愍焉，乃爾降生，實實使之睹，使之聞。今中邦雖未有睹者，亦既有聞者，然猶不恐不懼，而指為虛誕也，倘不降生，益謂虛，益謂誕，益不足恐懼矣。Aleni, in: Standaert – Dudink 2002, pp. 495-497; Zürcher 2007, pp. 552-553.

carnation, and then caused a visible human nature to be worshipped as God. St. Augustine compared God to a circle or globe, meaning that God is everywhere, a center but without a circumference.⁶⁸ We might consider this implication in light of the *Salvator Mundi* image on the title page of the *Chuxiang jingjie*. In addition, we might consider further Molanus' remark about the image of *Salvator Mundi*; in other words, a comprehension of the Christian historical concept could be embedded in this iconography.⁶⁹

Concluding Remarks

The sacred meaning of the Christian image continued to be referred to in an account entitled *Da ke wen* 答客問 (Replies to the Questions), composed by a Hangzhou convert Zhu Zongyuan 朱宗元 (ca. 1616–1660). It says that "the images of Christ and the Holy Mother are actually passed down from their sacred countenances."⁷⁰ The concept of "likeness" was expressed with no doubts, or uncertainty. This refers us to the second Chinese treatise on Christian sacred images, *Tianzhu shengxiang laili* 天主聖像來歷. The single-page text repeats that the Heavenly Lord transformed his original formlessness and voicelessness (*wu xing sheng ande you xiang* 無形聲安得有像) to be presented with form and voice so as to have the image via the Incarnation. So this image of the Incarnation, the text continues, should be worshipped day and night, paying our gratitude for Christ's salvation which was realized by means of his descent.⁷¹ It is unknown whether or not this single folio was distributed to the public, and its date is also not known.

Furthermore, the research of Gauvin Bailey reminds us that the Jesuits were conscious of the "style" of art.⁷² However, my preliminary research on sacred images in China told us that iconographical motifs rather than style may have been their first concern in some cases. If art and style are not significant key words to understand the China Jesuit missions, which motifs could be used for any given purposes is the issue that sets up the

⁶⁸ Von Collani 1998, p. 45.

⁶⁹ Molanus 1996, pp. 172-173.

⁷⁰ 天主與聖母之像實係聖容相傳. Zhu Zongyuan 1697, 23v. This edition of BAV has a preface dated 1697, written by a Fujianese. Erik Zürcher dated the first edition of this work to ca. 1631, see Zürcher 1994, p. 46. [On Zhu Zongyuan, see Dominic Sachsenmaier, *Die Aufnahme europäischer Inhalte in die chinesische Kultur durch Zhu Zongyuan (ca. 1616–1660)*, Monumenta Serica Monograph Series XLVII (Sankt Augustin – Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 2001). – Ed.]

⁷¹ *Tianzhu shengxiang laili* 天主聖像來歷 (The Origin of the Holy Image of the Heavenly Lord), BnF, Chinois 7276-XI: 此降生聖像，听夕昭事祝頌而稱謝焉。

⁷² Bailey 2003, pp. 3-22.

framework of investigation. This leads us to the literature of Catholic apologetics, and thus mission art in China might be more associated with the overall background of Early Modern Catholicism, and less with those issues in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century European art.

The third point that I like to make here is a broader question which is worthwhile and requires further investigations. As mentioned above, the text of the *Zaowuzhu chuixiang* looks like that of a missionary preaching to the local masses with an image of Christ alongside, because of the colloquial and vernacular idiom. The tone and written style of this treatise also resemble those in the contemporary texts of Chinese popular religions, which were aimed at the commoners, and were even meant to be transmitted orally to those who could not read. This textual style could be considered as a Sinicized expression in an indigenous sense, comparable with the Sinicized images of the *Nianzhu* and the *Chuxiang jingjie*. Aimed at the ordinary people the nature of this text is akin to the *Nianzhu* and to da Rocha's catechism. These texts may help us build up an evangelical and cultural context, significantly involving mostly voiceless Chinese commoners around the Jiangnan or Shanghai areas. How can we interpret the way by which the Jesuits may have perceived the effect of a Sinicization that included both form and content; and how did the visualization work with or for textual catechism or oral evangelization? Did the missionaries think that a Chinese-looking Christ or Madonna, both found in the illustrations of the *Nianzhu* and the *Chuxiang jingjie*, could be used more effectively to address the Chinese people? If so, by what aspects and in what ways could this Sinicization be conceived? Furthermore, how can we comprehend the Sinicized figurations of Christian images within the Jesuit and European settings of the Counter Reformation?

Actually, Sinicization was comparable with a remarkable feature of Renaissance humanism, elaborated by Francesco Petrarca (Petrarch, 1304–1374), while addressing his method to draw from the great writers of the past: *imitation* or *similitudo non identitas*. This concept concerns a cross-cultural adoption, the expression of which was neither servile nor visible. According to this principle, the humanist was not subordinated to the classical traditions, although antiquity was the chief source of their literary revival. They adopted something from the distant past – they made a cross-cultural attempt, but meanwhile intended to invent something novel. Jesuit education was basically founded on Renaissance humanism. If we can say that this Renaissance cross-cultural method was observed and implemented in a missionary context, the pair of two cultures was extended to include the European and non-European, instead of simply within European traditions. Moreover, two factors that might have been merely implicit in Europe emerged to a prominent level in this case: the audience and Christian evan-

gelization. In other words, as we may deduce, in addition to the fact that the above Renaissance concept may have been transferred to a different audience and culture, the Jesuits simultaneously invented an evangelical method destined for non-European people. Furthermore, the European imagery discourse with regard to the China missions, as is the case with Catholic missions over the world, in recent scholarship has usually been seen as a phenomenon of a global Baroque.⁷³ However, given a possible appropriation of the Renaissance concept in the process of Sinicization, which interplayed with Christian apologetics on images, can the above instance of the China mission be viewed as a reflection of Renaissance humanism or of a global Baroque? Or, is it rather an encompassment of both European cultural indications?

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⁷³ For the term and concept of "global Baroque," refer to the following research: Snodin and Llewellyn (eds.) 2009; Clossey 2008; Davidson 2007; Bailey 1998a.

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Figures



Fig. 1: Hans Leinberger, *Zegenende Christus* (*Salvator Mundi*), ca. 1505–1533, engraving, 204 x 137 mm, call number RP-P-OB-3100, © Collection Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

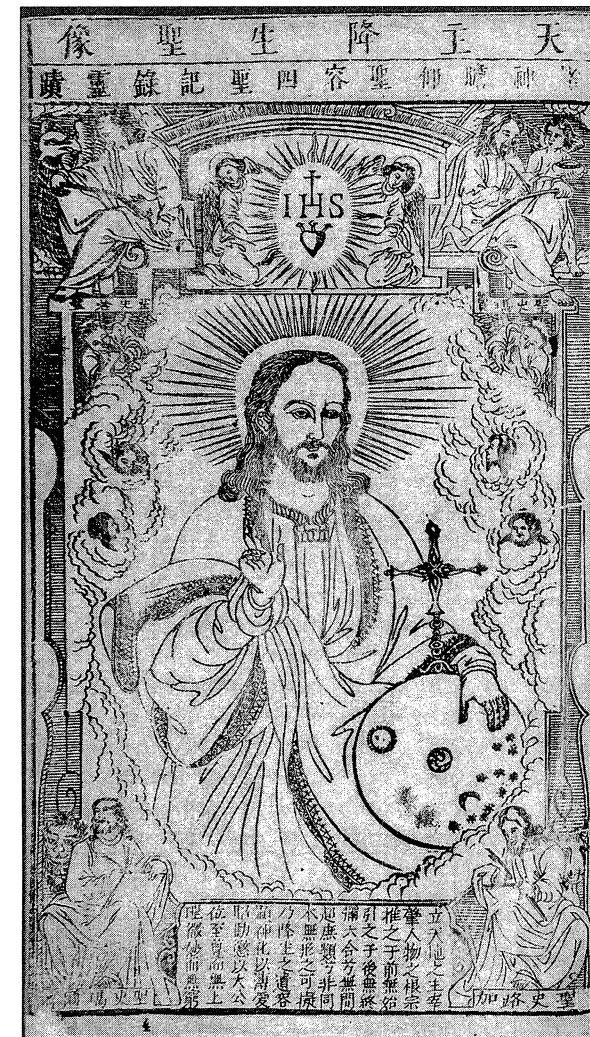


Fig. 2: Title page of the *Tianzhu jiangsheng chuxiang jingjie* 天主降生出像經解 (Biblical Explanations and Illustrations of the Heavenly Lord's Incarnation, 1637), by Giulio Aleni, call number ARSI, Jap. Sin. I 187, © Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, Rome, Italy.