China's First Encounter with the West: Sinocentrism vs. Logocentrism in Translation

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China experienced its first encounter with the West through missionary-convert translation 400 years ago, which turned out to be a historical failure. A textual examination of the failed translation reveals gaps, compromises, and ironies resulting from linguistic and cultural divides. At a deeper level, however, it shows that what caused the failure was Sinocentrism and Logocentrism — two masters the missionaries and the converts found impossible to serve, and two forces that were beyond any mediation. This brief encounter may well serve as a lesson for the current engagement between China and the West, each of which is trying to "translate" the other from similar Sinocentric and Logocentric mentalities.

Background

The contemporary landscape of globalization would look very different had China's first encounter with the West 400 years ago by way of translation — in the narrowest and broadest sense of the word — moved in a different direction. The world might be presently talking about the rise of any nation or civilization other than China, whose ongoing ascendance to global prominence may well be described as a continuation of a failed translation of the West dating back to the end of the 16th century.

For China and the West, the beginning of the 17th century seems to be of particular importance, since it was the time when what is now called globalization began to take shape, and the time when China was on equal, if not "superior," terms with the West in science, technology, and culture. On the one hand, the West had achieved major geographical discoveries (of Dias, Columbus, da Gama, and Magellan) which ultimately led to current globalization. On the other hand, it was China that had helped to equip and arm those discoverers. According to a 1975 statistics report, from the 6th century B.C. to the 16th century A.D., there were 298 major inventions and discoveries in the world. One hundred and seventy-eight or over 53% were contributed by China alone (Hao *et al*., 1996, p.14), including, most notably, the compass that enabled the West to open up world markets and establish colonies, the movable-type printing that became instrumental to the Protestants (Su, 1991), and the gunpowder that made Western global colonization possible.

In retrospect, this crucial period of history saw the starting point of both the interfacing and the departure of the two civilizations which subsequently took two different courses. Toward the end of the 16th century, China experienced a brief meeting with the West through the missionary-convert translation. The meeting, however, ended in China adopting a closed-door policy and shutting itself away from any form of engagement with the modernizing West. Meanwhile the West attempted, through peaceful translation, to convert its civilizational rival, China, into part of its Christian vision of paradise. The effort inevitably failed, only to be replaced in the mid-19th century by use of military means to re-open the door to the Middle Kingdom.

In both China and the West, works abound in analyzing and explaining what caused this historical failure from various macro perspectives. The present paper, however, intends to focus on the micro side — the missionary-convert translation itself in terms of mentality and linguistic and cultural divides — to see where the problems lay. In a sense, some of these same problems still lie behind the current China-West relationship that is shaping the future of the globalizing world. The reflective and analytic framework within which this study is conducted is the pattern of interaction and interplay between Sinocentrism and Logocentrism.

Sinocentrism vs. Logocentrism

By definition, Sinocentrism is an ethnocentric perspective that views China as central or unique relative to any other nation or country. Within this hierarchical system of world outlook, China is the centre and the only civilization under the sun — the Celestial Empire — that is ruled through the Mandate of Heaven by the Emperor who relies on the Confucian codes of morality and propriety (see Wikipedia A). Logocentrism refers to the perceived tendency of Western thought to locate the centre of any text or discourse within the logos, the Greek for "word", "reason", or "spirit" (see Wikipedia B). More than Eurocentrism, this logocentrism, which adhered to the word of God, played a vital part in the failed missionary-convert translation.

At the turn of the 17th century, a drama had to take place when the secular, agriculture-based, and Sinocentric China encountered the market-as-theology-minded, industry-based, trade-oriented, and Logocentric West that was speaking an utterly alien language of humanity as part of divinity. First of all, within its Celestial Empire mentality, China simply rejected the West as "barbarian," nothing more than another vassal somewhere in the distant and nameless margins of Terra Incognita on its China-centred map. In contrast, inspired by Marco Polo, who had brought his "almost fairy tales full of numbers large and marvelous" (Durant, 1954, p.760), the West was eyeing China for market, wealth, and prosperity. In particular, "the horizons of Rome's intellectuals had widened enormously. They now included not only Rome, Greece, and Egypt but a Far Eastern culture that westerners had hardly known since the days of Marco Polo — China" (van Hoesel, online).

The maritime powers of Portugal, Holland, Spain and Britain spared no efforts to break open the closed door of the late Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). According to historical records (Shen, 1987; Xin, 1991; Hao *et al*. 1996; Jian,1981), as early as 1517, the Portuguese came to China, but had to stay in Macao (which eventually became a Portuguese colony and only returned to China in 1999). In 1601, the Dutch arrived in Guangdong and requested trade with China. Having been rejected by the Ming government, they turned to advance on the Portuguese stationed in Macao, and later occupied Taiwan. In 1600, Britain's East India Company was founded. It later engaged China in the Opium War (1839-1842). After 1630, the British turned to the Spanish and the Portuguese for help to trade with China. On July 23, 1635, the British landed in Macao. In 1636, a British fleet headed by John Weddell came to Guangdong but was kept offshore. On August 12, 1637, two British warships attacked Humen (the Bogue), and forced their way into the city of Guangzhou.

For more than a century, the trade-minded and ill-behaved European powers could not understand why they could not force their way to inland China, and the Celestial Empire had no idea why the "yellow-haired barbarians" should want to harass its order of peace. Two centuries later, Allan (1870, p.26) reflected on the situation, saying:

It was partly owing to the evil deeds of the Portuguese and Spanish freebooters of the sixteenth

> century, that the Chinese government and people manifested such a distrust of foreigners who came by sea from the West. Violence, pillage and massacre were not likely to recommend peoples of Europe as fit and proper associates for the subjects of the Celestial Empire. Moreover the Chinese have never had a high opinion of merchants and traders, these are placed in an inferior category in their social and national life. It was therefore very natural that the unwelcome visitors to the shores of China should be looked upon as barbarians and be dubbed "Ocean Demons." They represented a type of people evidently skilled in the art of warfare, but ignorant of methods and usages which make for a higher civilization. Without any opportunities of discrimination, the Chinese looked upon all the sea-borne adventurers as rude and uncouth representatives of a state of society much inferior to their own.

As Allan went on to suggest, it was to break down this prejudice and enlighten this ignorance that Valignano secured people like the priests Ruggieri and Ricci, who were well equipped by their education and religious discipline. However, the journey of the missionaries into the heartland of China was equally difficult (see Guo, 2005). After half a century's fruitless efforts, on January 24, 1601, two missionaries, Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) and Didaeus de Pantoja (1571-1616), broke through all the barriers and found their way to Beijing, the heart of China. Their passports and visas were their Confucian scholar-style attire, something they had found most acceptable and appealing to the then Chinese officialdom. They made no mention of their intention to preach the Gospel. Instead, they declared "that they were religious [and] had left their country in the distant West because of the renown of the good government of China, where they desired to remain till their death, serving God, the Lord of Heaven" (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1999, online).

Ricci had had a hard time getting accepted in the nation "who had hitherto fancied that outside of their country only barbarism existed" (Knight, 1999, online). According to Gu (1995, p. 2), in order not to arouse any suspicion or resentment, while in Zhaoqing, Guangdong in the 1590 s, Ricci had clothed himself in kasaya, a patchwork outer vestment worn by Buddhist monks, and called his church *simiao* (Buddhist temple). To draw the local Chinese to his church, he had displayed in his church such interesting Western products as clocks and armillary spheres. Knight (1999, online) offered a vivid account of what happened at that time:

> One of the articles which most aroused their (people in Zhaoqing) curiosity was a map of the world. The Chinese had already had maps, called by their geographers "descriptions of the world," but almost the entire space was filled by the fifteen provinces of China, around which were painted a bit of sea and a few islands on which were inscribed the names of countries of which they had heard — all together was not as large as a small Chinese province. Naturally the learned men of Chao-k'ing (Zhaoqing) immediately protested when Father Ricci pointed out the various parts of the world on the European map and when they saw how small a part China played. But after the missionaries had explained its construction and the care taken by the geographers of the West to assign to each country its actual position and boundaries, the wisest of them surrendered to the evidence, and beginning with the Governor of Chao-k'ing, all urged the missionary to make a copy of his map with the names and inscriptions in Chinese.

In order to cater to the arrogance of the Chinese officials and Confucian scholars, Father Trigault, the historian of the China mission, wrote:

> Father Ricci, being well versed in mathematics which he had learned from Christopher Clavius, the prince of the mathematicians of his century, applied himself to the construction of a map,

> which suited well with his design of preaching the Gospel, knowing that the same means cannot be employed to attract different nations to the faith of Jesus Christ. In truth, by this decoy, many Chinese were drawn to the bosom of the Church. This map was of large dimensions the better to contain the Chinese characters as well as many annotations...I will not either omit to mention a contrivance of his to gain the good graces of the Chinese. They believe that the sky is round, but the earth square, and that their empire is situated in the midst of it...He therefore altered a little our plan for maps of the world, and by placing the first meridian of the Fortunate Islands at the margin, right and left, he brought the empire of China into the centre, to their great satisfaction." (in Allan, 1870, p. 34)

This observation was echoed by Pei Huaxing, who said the Chinese visitors, seeing that the Western European countries were divided by the vast oceans and seas, and so immeasurably far away from China, had no fear of foreign invasion (in Gu, 1995, p. 2). The methods and strategies with which Ricci and others exercised their prudence worked. Ricci was not only accepted but well liked and respected. Although expelled from Zhaoqing in 1589 by a viceroy of Canton "who had found the house of the missionaries suited to his own needs," Ricci could always find "powerful friends to protect him" (Knight, 1999, online). After traveling to some other places in the South, Ricci decided that the *kasaya* caused many inconveniences in his interaction with the Chinese officials and scholars. In 1594, he changed into the Confucian scholar-style attire, wore the Confucian scholar-style hat, and claimed himself a Confucian scholar (see Gu, 1995, p. 3). Well versed in Chinese classics, Ricci would cite numerous Confucian texts and demonstrate to the Chinese that Catholicism was in conformity with Confucianism. For example, during his preaching services, he once told the Emperor Wanli: "*Shangdi* (God) is what you call *tian* (Heaven). He once inspired your Confucius, Mencius and many of your past emperors and kings. We are not here to deny your Confucian tradition but to present to you something complementary" (Fei, 1938, in Gu, 1995, p. 6. Translation mine).

"Through the 'backdoor' of some court eunuchs," Ricci won great favour of Emperor Wanli, who offered him a position at the court (Chen, 1992, p. 58). Inspired and encouraged by Ricci, many other missionaries from Italy, Portugal, Spain etc. followed suit. Catholicism became so popular that toward the end of the Ming Dynasty, as many as 540 at the imperial court alone had been converted to Catholicism (Xu, 1938, p. 202), and Catholic believers in China totaled about 150,000 (Gu, 1995, p. 9).

Meeting of the minds

With Ricci and other Jesuits, early Chinese translation of the West began. Since there were no Chinese who understood European languages, it was in fact Chinese translation of the West by Westerners. Both Ricci and Ruggieri had learned Chinese in Macao. According to Knight:

> Ruggieri reached Macao in July 1579, and, following the given orders applied himself wholly to the study of the Mandarin language, that is, Chinese, as it is spoken throughout the empire by the officials and the educated. His progress, though very slow, permitted him to labour with more fruit than his predecessors in two sojourns at Canton (1580-81) allowed him by an unwonted complacency of the mandarins. (1999, online)

In 1584, dictated by Ruggieri, recorded and polished by a Chinese scholar, the first Chinese translation of a biblical text, *Tianxue sheng lu* (True Record of the Lord of Heaven) was published. In 1595, Ricci

published his *Tianzhu shiyi* (The True Idea of God) in Nanchang, Jiangxi. The book was "the little catechism of Chao-k'ing (Zhaoqing) which had been delivered from day to day, corrected and improved as occasion offered, until it finally contained all the matter suggested by long years of experience in the apostolate" (Knight, 1999, online). It was reprinted in Beijing in 1601 and Hangzhou in 1605. Rather than a textual translation of the Bible, it was an interpretation of Christianity in comparison with Chinese history, with numerous references to and quotations from classical Confucian texts to show the affinity and sameness of Christianity with Confucianism.

In the spring of 1600, on his way to Beijing, Ricci had a historical meeting in Nanjing with the Confucian scholar Xu Guangqi (Paul Hsu, 1562-1633), who had been, three years before, nominated *juren*, a successful candidate in the imperial examinations at the provincial level. Disappointed with the dominant but futile philosophy of Idealism and the then academic, educational, and intellectual practices, Xu looked towards Western learning represented by Ricci for a way out. Having made a preliminary study of Ricci's writings in geography and science, and Catholic doctrines mediated with Confucianism, Xu was baptized on January 15, 1603. The following year, Xu became a *jinshi*, successful candidate in the highest imperial examination. He held high positions at the imperial court (General Inspector of the Salt Gabelle, Grand Secretary of State, Senior Guardian of the Heir Apparent, and Grand Secretary of the Imperial Library), thus able to keep close contact with and patronize Ricci and other missionaries. During one of his early meetings with Ricci in Nanjing, as Xu noted in a postscript in 1604, he said to Ricci (in Chen, 1992, p. 62. Translation mine):

> The (Western) classics you have brought here contain profound knowledge and meanings in simple language about heaven and earth. We could invite a group of scholars to work together translating them (into Chinese). In this way, everybody (in China) could have access to those great classics...It would be helpful to the masses. It would be significant for the generations to come. Would you agree?

Thus began their collaboration of historical importance. Since Xu did not understand Western languages and Ricci was not qualified enough in Chinese, they had to discuss their translation line by line, carefully deciding on Chinese equivalents and refining their literary style in a classical, elegant form. Their greatest achievement was the translation from Latin of the first six of the 16-volumed *Elements* by Euclid. Their cooperation set an example for other missionaries and Chinese scholars.

There were three major converts, the "Three Pillars of the Catholic Church in China." The other two were Xu's close friend, Li Zhizao (Leo Lee, 1565-1630), baptized on March 3, 1610, and Yang Tingyun (Michael Yang, 1557-1627), baptized on Easter, 1613. Other major collaborators include Wang Zheng (1571-1644), Li Tianjing (1579-1659), Feng Yingjing (?-?) and Yang Zhihua (?-?), etc. They worked together with Sabbathinus Ursis (1575-1620), Nicholas Trigault (1577-1628, who brought a huge library of 7,000 Latin books to Beijing from Europe), Joannes Terrenze (1576-1630), John Adam Schall von Bell (1591-1666), Ferdinandus Verbiest (1623-1688). Their translations ranged from Christianity, mathematics, astronomy, physics, mining and metallurgy, hydraulics, to anatomy, biology, metaphysics and logic.

As early as 1629, a year before his death, Li Zhizao, who had collaborated with Ricci and Francisco Furtado, edited and published in Beijing his *Tianxue chuhan* (First Collection of Celestial Science). The series of translation is composed of 54 volumes in two parts (Lin *et al*., 1988, p. 45). The first part, entitled *Lipian* (Ideas), includes *Ten Chapters from a Foreigner* (questions and answers between Chinese scholars and Matteo Ricci), *On Friendship* (maxims narrated by Matteo Ricci), and *Julius Aleni's World Atlas with Explanations*. The second part of the collection is entitled *Qibian* (Instruments), including *Western Irrigation Methods* (by Sabathinus de Ursis, 1612), *Astronomy Illustrated* (Leo Lee), and *Euclidian Geometry*

(by Ricci and Xu) (see Lu, 2000, online; Lin *et al*., 1988; Gu,1995; Chen, 1992).

In fact, as Lu (2000,online) writes, from the arrival of Ricci to the death of the last Jesuit, Father Louis de Poirot, in Beijing in 1814 after the suppression of the Jesuit order, there were 69 Jesuit authors, who published 212 books in Chinese. Of these books, as Lu (ibid.) notes:

> Thirty-five... were of the highest quality in astronomy, science, machinery, agriculture, and technology, by the standards of the Academia of Lincei in Rome, whose members included Galileo, Kepler, Leonardo da Vinci, Christopher Clavius and others. Fifteen books belong to philosophy and theology proper... The remaining 162 books were strictly religious, dealing with selected readings from sacred Scripture, catechisms, maxims, liturgy, hagiographies, prayers, and devotions.

For all these statistical accomplishments, what actually happened to the process, products, and aftermath of the translations and the translators as intercultural mediators?

Linguistic and cultural divides: A textual analysis

From a textual point of view, the missionary-convert translations were characterized by ironies, gaps, and compromises between the missionaries and the converts, between the Chinese and Western languages, and between the two cultures within which the languages were working.

In a sense, the missionaries and the Chinese literate elite were the unconscious bearers of a whole civilization (Gernet, 1985). The two parties wrote a lot about the difficulties they encountered in translation (Chen, 1992, pp. 56-81). Jacques Gernet pointed out that the reason why they so often came up against difficulties of translation is that different languages express, through different logics, different visions of the world and man (Gernet, 1985), and language and thought, according to Benveniste, "are coextensive, interdependent, and indispensable to each other... Linguistic form is not only the condition for transmissibilty, but first of all the condition for the realization of thought" (in Hart, 1999, online). In Chinese thought, suggested Gernet (ibid.), there was a

> ...tendency... to deny any opposition between the self and the world, the mind and the body, the divine and the cosmic....For Chinese thought never had separated the sensible from the rational, never had imagined any 'spiritual substance distinct from the material,' never had conceived of the existence of a world of eternal truths separated from this world of appearances and transitory realities.

Consequently, Gernet (ibid.) asserted, "Chinese conceptions are in every regard the opposite of those taught by the missionaries." How, then, could the two parties cross the cultural divide in the form of language? In particular, what could they do to produce translations that were both in line with Christian knowledge and systems of belief, and understandable and acceptable to their intended audience?

In terms of translation methods, the translators, having studied the long tradition of Buddhist translation that had started 1,800 years before, resorted to Buddhist approaches, especially in translating science and technology. For instance, by adopting the Buddhist method of loan translations (the creation of semantic neologisms by combining characters) in rendering Euclidean geometry, Xu and Ricci were able to establish the basic modern Chinese vocabulary in mathematics — the language of all sciences, including such terms as *dian* (point), *xian* (line), *zhixian* (straight line), *quxian* (curve) (see Lin *et al*. 1988, p. 83), which

even influenced mathematics terminology in countries like Japan and Korea, and are still used today.

However, there were always many more gaps than could be possibly bridged, even in science and technology translation. In *A History of Chinese Mathematics* (1987), Martzloff remarked:

> In addition to the terminology, the even more formidable problem of the difference between the Chinese syntax and that of European languages had to be faced. The main difficulty was the absence of the verb "to be" in classical Chinese. The translators were unable to find better substitutes for it than demonstratives or transitive verbs such as *you*, *wu* and *wei*....But often, the verb "to be" disappeared altogether, as in the following case: [The] circle: [a] shape situated on flat ground (*pingdi*) [sic] within [a] limit. [The] straight strings (*xian*) constructed from [the] limit to [the] centre: all equal (in Hart, 1999, online).

As a result of these and other differences, Martzloff concluded that the Chinese had failed to comprehend the deductive structure of the *Elements*. The failure resulted, Martzloff pointed out, from the absence of the copula in classical Chinese. And the absence of the copula, as suggested by Martzloff, brings up a question inevitably beyond the scope of the present discussion: the Chinese concepts of, or lack of, such Western concepts as, *existence, being* and *becoming, the intelligible* and *the sensible, the spiritual* and *the corporeal*, etc.

In fact, apart from the absence of the copula, the Classical Chinese suffers from other kinds of lack. For example, there were no punctuation marks — one of the first things a student had to learn was how to *duanju* (make pauses in reading unpunctuated writings); there was (is) no article (a/an or the) to denote 'definite' or 'indefinite;' there were even no separate pronouns for "she/her" or "it;" there were no attributive clauses, etc.

The missionary-convert translations of philosophy and logic reflect not only linguistic and cultural incommensurabilities, but also the translators' deliberate manipulation of original texts. Examples are many, but the following paragraph from *Mingli tan* (1623-1630), a translation of Aristotle by Furtado and Li Zhizao, may well serve the purpose here:

> *Xiuxue you fen you san: yi zai keji, xi yun e'dijia. Yi zai zhi jia, xi yun e'geluomijia. Yi zai zhi shi, xi yun bolidijia ye* (in Shi, 1991, pp. 230).

In English it would read like this:

> *Xiuxue* consists of three parts: first is *keji*, called in the West *e'dijia* (ethica). The second is *zhijia*, called in the West *e'geluomijia* (oeconomica). The third is *zhishi*, called in the West *bolidijia* (politica).

The Chinese terms given above deserve special attention. Since Aristotle's original work upon which the translation was based is not available, I have to analyze them through common sense. First the categorical term *xiuxue* is hardly comprehensible to a Chinese reader. Literally it means the study of *xiu*. In the classical Chinese in which the translation was done, the character/word *xiu* means: (a) decorate; (b)readjust; repair; (c) build; (d) write; compile; (e) study; learn; (f) perfect; good; (g) long; high. Which meaning did the translators choose to have *xiu* cover the three disciplines of ethics, economics and politics?

Secondly, *keji* for ethics. *Keji* literally means to restrain one's selfishness or be strict with oneself. It can also mean to be economical and frugal. It is a Confucian concept of "denying self and returning to propriety," a piece of advice Confucius gave to his contemporaries to return, through self-sacrifice, to the

moral, just, orderly and compassionate time of the Zhou Dynasty (11th century BCE-770 BCE). Although the term contains some of the elements that ethics is concerned with, it is hardly equivalent to ethics, which, by definition, is the study of morals in human conduct.

Thirdly, *zhijia* for economics. Literally, *zhijia* means management (*zhi*) of household (*jia*), which, ironically, is also what "economy," etymologically derived from the Greek word *oikonomia*, means. However, *zhijia* refers simply to household management, whereas the original word it wants to translate means the science of production and distribution of wealth, a Western science that was to change the global order of production and distribution.

Fourthly, *zhishi* for politics. Literally, *zhishi* means management (*zhi*) of society/state/secular world according to Confucian doctrines. It is a form of politics, but hardly a science and art of government that the well defined word "politics" stands for.

The inevitable conclusion is that the Chinese equivalents are derived from the traditional Confucian motto of the way of all men: *xiushen, qijia, zhiguo, ping tianxia*. Literally meaning "cultivate one's moral character, put one's family affairs in order, then learn to manage the state affairs, and all the human affairs under the sun," these are the four steps a responsible man of virtue should follow, as stated in the *Great Learning*, the surviving work of the Confucian school, celebrated as the gate through which a person enters into virtue.

This Chinese translation is not, then, "exchanging with what one has for what one does not have," as the Chinese word *yi* (translation) originally means. It does not bring new things to the Chinese horizon or create new meanings in Chinese. As a result, it is simply old wine in new bottles — another way of preaching Confucian doctrines through Aristotle's mouth, or a compromise made by the missionaries and the converts to achieve their respective ends that will be discussed later in this paper.

The strategic translations of the central concept *God*, which gave rise to what is known as the Rites Controversy, and resulted in the pope forbidding the use of the translations in 1704, can be a good case for examination here. *God* is translated by the Jesuits and their converts into *tianzhu* (literally heaven's master), *tiandi* (literally heaven's god), and *shangdi* (literally the supreme god). While *tianzhu* along with *tiandi* is a term found in Buddhist translations and is still the standard name for Catholics (*tianzhu jiao*), *shangdi* is a Chinese mythological concept. It is found in many early Chinese texts, including the *Great Learning*, the *Book of Rites*, the *Book of Odes*, etc. Although representing the ultimate power controlling the fate and destiny of humanity, *shangdi* is simply an unknown force, far removed from humanity, with few accounts of creation available. It does not evoke the kind of feelings in the Chinese as does God to Christian believers. Furthermore, *di* basically means emperor or king.

Consequently, the translation of God into *shangdi* was not only acceptable but pleasing to the China's supreme ruler, the emperor, who believed himself to be the sole representative of and mediator between Heaven, Earth and Man. However, it was in contradiction with the Catholic faith. The translators were caught between the two masters, two" — centrisms," two great, irreconcilable powers that were beyond mediation.

A historical failure

Missionaries vs. converts: Different mentalities and agendas

This historical drama of translation can be described as the first encounter between two self-centred worldviews: the Christian vision of a monotheistic world vs. the Confucian-Taoist-Buddhist vision of a secular world of patriarchal order. Both sides being self-centred, one was trying to assimilate the other into its own 'translation' of the world. The ironies, gaps, and compromises as found in the translations resulted

partly from linguistic and cultural divides, and partly, and perhaps more importantly, from the different purposes and agendas of the missionaries and the converts.

From numerous historical documents left behind by Ricci and other Jesuits, available both in European languages and in Chinese (e.g. Ricci, 1953; Trigault, 1625; Allan, 1870), it is clear the Jesuits did not go to China with an open heart and mind for intercultural understanding or mediation on reciprocal terms. They had a clear, unaltered mission of their own — to spread the word of God to the Chinese. According to Lu (2000, online), the Jesuits embarked on the following four tasks: 1) to unite with Confucianism in whatever was true in it, invoking any Proto-Confucian texts available for interpretation, rediscovery and analysis in comparison with Catholic teachings. In particular, Matteo Ricci attempted to interpret all the key words of Confucian doctrinal classics from a Catholic perspective, including morals, social discipline and ritual practices; 2) to supplement Confucian classics in all truths that were missing, exploring, exploiting and discovering any contact points or points of similarity to familiarize the Chinese with Catholic beliefs; 3) to correct Confucianism in anything that was found incorrect from a Catholic viewpoint; and 4) to transcend Confucianism by showing the superiority of the supernatural over natural truths and virtues.

With these tasks in mind, the missionaries learned the Chinese language to understand the Chinese mind so as to convert it. They befriended the mainstream Confucian scholars as the most effective way both to protect themselves and to reach the ordinary Chinese. They translated scientific and technological writings not only because it was a strategy to attract Chinese audiences, but because the body of Western knowledge was regarded as part of the divine revelation. They intended to recover, through translation, the knowledge that had been supposedly the same as the Christian West but was lost especially since the burning of Confucian classics by the first emperor of the Qin Dynasty in 213 BCE. They made a "complete and deep" survey of the ancient Confucian classics in order to christianize Chinese history, although "their approach was human and friendly," and they "did not lessen their great humanist respect toward the textual integrity of the literary documents and towards the authority of the Confucian teachers of their time" (Lu, 2000, online).

On the other hand, their converts, most of whom being leading Confucian scholars, turned to Christianity more for an opportunity to learn Western sciences and technology from the missionaries than for spiritual salvation. They were more interested in resorting to Western scholarship for the enlightenment of the Confucian mind. From various historical sources and the writings they left behind, it is seen that they were translating to find a way out of the closed framework of the then dominant Celestial Empire mentality. For instance, in the preface to his translation of Euclid's *Elements*, Xu wrote:

> From the macro, one enters the micro. From suspicion, one arrives at belief...To me personally, (the *Elements*) is no less than a recovery of and complement to the ancient learning of mathematics that has been lost for two thousand years...It is of great benefit to our times... (in Chen, 1992, p. 62. Translation mine).

On his conversion, Xu Guangqi wrote:

> I turned to Catholicism not because I rejected Confucianism, but because (many of the) Chinese classics had been lost. Explanations, annotations and commentaries had been divergent, and in particular the Buddhist versions had been most controversial. Belief in Catholicism can help reject Buddhist fallacies and complement Confucianism (in Xin, 1991, p. 109. Translation mine).

In a memorial to Emperor Chongzhen in the spring of 1631, Xu put forward a comprehensive list of European works to be translated. He said that "We, your servants, believe that to surpass (the West), we

must study and master (Western learning); before we can master (it), we must translate (it)" (in Chen, 1992, p. 64. Translation mine). Here it is clear that Xu was translating to transform the consciousness of the Chinese in a secular, cross-cultural sense rather than to convert other Chinese to Christianity as his sense of obligation to Rome might have required.

Xu's friend, Li Zhizao, another leading Confucian scholar holding high positions at the court, "had the most and closest contacts with Ricci among all the imperial officials." He studied "earnestly via Ricci, Western mathematics, astronomy, philosophy and logic," and collaborated with Ricci and other Jesuits in translating some of the most important works in those areas (Chen, 1992, p. 66. Translation mine). Although Li's friendship with Ricci ran deep, he was baptized only a few months before Ricci's death in 1610, when Li himself was seriously ill.

In 1613, on the 51st birthday of Emperor Wanli, Li presented a memorial requesting translation of Western works. Having mentioned the names of Pantoja, Ursis and Trigault, etc. Li said:

> All of them came (to China) with exceptional talents, profound knowledge of mathematics and astronomy, and a great number of foreign books. Gradually they have learned and mastered Chinese. They have discussed and shared their learning with officials and scholars in Beijing, elaborating on some fourteen areas (of learning) that have never been touched upon by Chinese scholars throughout our history (in Chen, 1992, p. 67. Translation mine).

In a sharp tone, Li pointed out to the Emperor why those foreign countries had been able to surpass China in the fourteen fields:

> This is because in those foreign countries, astronomic and calendar studies is not a forbidden area. For over five thousand years, great scholars from all over their countries would gather together to discuss, compare and analyze...Whereas in China, it would take hundreds of years for such a scholar to emerge, who would work alone, without any teacher or colleague... (ibid. Translation mine).

Li then went on to describe the shabby infrastructure and bleak situation in China due to lack of support from the rulers, appealing to the Emperor to invest in such studies, including sending scholars abroad. In addition, Li suggested other works in hydraulics, geography, medicine, physics and so on, should also be translated into Chinese, saying:

> Most of the books mentioned above have not appeared in our Chinese treasury of books. But in other countries, there are many such works written by great scholars which have formed different disciplines of learning. They are of practical importance, useful to our current times. It is profoundly understood that there is no limit to learning, and no division/separation between our and others' knowledge. Art is long, but life is short. These people (the Jesuits) have sailed a long way, braving the elements, from afar, and their energy can be worn out soon. Years ago, Matteo Ricci, the most awakened, enlightened and learned one, passed away like a morning dew, unable to pass his learning on to us. What a pity and shame! Now people like Pantoja and I are already white-haired. Our days in this world are numbered. The classics these people have brought here and the classics by our own sages can mutually inspire, enlighten and illuminate, as far as their meanings and academic principles are concerned. However, the languages (in which the foreign classics are written) are absolutely different (from ours). Who else, except these few people, can interpret and translate them? If we lose this opportunity, I'm afraid, your majesty, there will be

> nobody who can understand them in the future. We will forever regret that these useful books should be lying there useless! Your majesty...if no effort is sponsored to translate the books from afar into Chinese so as to advance our culture and education, then how to celebrate the grand meeting of writings from various countries today? How to advance the limitless cause of learning of Heaven and Man in the future? (Ibid. Translation mine.)

Li wouldn't have taken such a risk of pointing fingers at the Emperor and lecturing him on the importance of pursuing Western scholarship if he had not been filled with deep concerns about the academic situation then and fiery enthusiasm to open China to the West. Li's perspectives on and attitude towards translation were well expressed in a preface to a reprinted version of Ricci's *True Doctrine of the Lord of Heaven*: "Eastern seas or Western seas, (we) share the same heart and reasoning/principles; what is different is the languages" (in Chen, 1992, p. 69. Translation mine). In another preface written in 1623, Li said: "Learning is an infinite land of fertility, which should be limitlessly cultivated. Translation should not be confined to and judged by the standards of translations done by Kumarajiva and Xuanzang (the two major Buddhist translators)" (ibid. p. 70. Translation mine). Here Li was referring to an important work translated by his close friend Yang Tingyun, another major convert and translator.

Nominated in 1592 as a *jinshi*, a successful candidate in the highest imperial examinations, Yang also held high positions at the court. He had been a Buddhist. In 1613, he turned to the Catholic Church, "obviously also for the purpose of gaining an opportunity to learn Western scientific knowledge" (Chen, 1992. P. 70). In the preface, much in the same spirit as Li had presented his memorial to the emperor, Yang first reflected on the long path by which Western learning came to China, and how Ricci had been admired and respected in Beijing for his wide range of knowledge. He then commented that because of the problem of language, among the vast number of books the Jesuits had brought to China, only those with numbers, charts and diagrams could be translated into Chinese. The profound meanings and theories, things that were beyond pictographic, oral or physical expressions in those works were still in the dark. Yang was particularly concerned about bringing up qualified Chinese translators, saying that (in Chen,1992, p. 71. Translation mine):

> Scholars from foreign lands are not equally qualified (as Ricci)...It takes at least twenty years for the extremely talented (missionaries) to become academically prepared (at home), who are then allowed to travel abroad.... It takes years for them to arrive in China, where they have to learn Chinese for many years. When they master Chinese and get to the point where they can interpret and translate meanings and theories, they are already old. On the part of us Chinese, few would like to take the trouble to learn from or with them (missionaries). Consequently, generations of well-learned missionaries have passed away without being able to fully impart their knowledge to us....Now that the classics of the so-called six disciplines, approximately over seven thousand books, have been shipped here, waiting to be translated....To this (great cause of translation), could the translation of the small number of (Buddhist) texts from our neighbouring lands by Cai Yin, Xuanzang and others be comparable?

In an ambitious tone, Yang went on to say (ibid. Translation mine):

> Our Chinese culture and education is as bright as the sky. Our treasury of books, from the most mysterious to the least interesting, is comprehensive and all-inclusive. How can we leave (Western) learning (represented by the above mentioned books) out in the cold so that its splendour will never become brilliant? Give me ten years, and I will unite dozens of comrades to work to-

> gether...so that we will never have to say that the profound works that have come from afar have been deserted and reduced to ashes!

Had China understood and accepted but half of what Yang and the other converts were advocating, had the Chinese begun to learn European languages and, bit by bit and step by step, translate Western learning, the history of Chinese translation, and in fact the history of China in its relationship to the rest of the world, would have gone in a different direction. On the other hand, in their desire for imperial reform and change, the converts failed to take any critical point of view of the West they were translating. In his "*Bian xue zhang shu*," a memorial on distinguishing learning, Xu wrote:

> Thus the learning of serving Heaven transmitted (by the Jesuits) can truly be used to supplement the moral influence of our sovereign, aid Confucianism and correct Buddhism. Thus in the West, there are more than thirty neigbouring kingdoms which implement this doctrine. For over a thousand years up to the present, the large and small help one another; the superior and the inferior live together in peace; borders require no defenses; dynasties exist without change; countries are entirely without cheats or liars; ever since antiquity there has been no lasciviousness or thieving; people do not pick up objects lost on the roads; and doors are not locked at night. And as for disturbances and rebellions — not only are they without such affairs and without such persons — there are not even words or written characters to denote such things (in Gernet, 1985. Cited and modified in Hart, 1999, online).

Without doubt, this picture of a utopian West that Xu and his followers were sincerely painting existed only in their imagination. Such fantasization of a non-existent West left them politically vulnerable to criticism and persecution.

Chinese response

The missionary-convert translations, like a stone, made waves in the stagnant water of the corrupt and collapsing empire, where changes were taking place. For instance, with his map of the world, Ricci brought a better picture of the world, along with the new concepts of the earth as a globe, the continents and the oceans. Many of the geographical terms and names of countries used today were invented by Ricci, including *yaxiya* (Asia), and *ouluoba* (Europe) (Shen, 1987, p. 415). The *Western Irrigation Methods* co-translated by Xu and Ursis in 1612 was applied to improving irrigation in Tianjin, which proved to be economically beneficial. For many years, Xu coordinated the large-scale translation of European science of calendar called *Chongzhen lishu* (130 volumes), which proved to be more accurate than China's own *Datong li* and the *Huihui li* (Mohammedan astronomer's system) imported from Arabia in the 13th century (Lin *et al*. 1988, p. 83). The missionaries and the converts opened up, for the first time, many new areas of studies with their basic vocabulary, principles and application in China, including physics, mechanical engineering, astronomy, philology, biology, medicine, architecture, painting and music (Shen, 1987, pp. 388-438). The beginning of the study of philology in particular was instrumental to later translation and China-West exchange in general.

Except for the few positive ripples of change, however, most of the waves swept back against the translators. For instance, some of the court officials perceived, with reason, the translations to be a heterogeneous system of nature, society and human life that was fundamentally challenging the Chinese system of unquestioned beliefs regarded as self-evident. Headed most notably by Xu Changzhi of the late Ming Dynasty and Yang Guangxian of the early Qing Dynasty, they campaigned against the Jesuits and converts. They were determined to vehemently denigrate and demonize the West. According to Allan (1870, p. 157):

> In 1659, he (Yang) had published a tractate under the title of "Avoid Evil Practices." This was a libel against the missionaries themselves and a denunciation of the erroneous doctrines that they preached. Shortly after, he published another book which was even more scurrilous, and in 1662 Fathers Buglio and Magalhaens, in answer to these publications, issued an apology for the Christian Faith. This was circulated about the time of the emperor's death. Two years afterwards, Yang addressed a long letter to the Chief Censor of the court, reproaching him bitterly for allowing the false teachings of strangers to be disseminated in the empire to the detraction of the great principles of Confucius. In September of the same year he addressed a memorial to the throne, suggesting the suppression of Christianity, and denouncing Schaal as an imposter and a fomenter of rebellion. He based his insinuations on the falsity of Schaal's astronomical calculations and also on the fact that Schaal had interceded on behalf of the Portuguese at Macao.

To discredit the Western theory of the earth as a globe, for instance, Yang, who later sent Schaal and his colleagues to prison and took Schaal's position as Director of the Astronomical Board, said (in Gu, 1995, p. 11. Translation mine):

> Suppose it were true that the four major continents of numerous nations is a giant ball...then it follows that the arches of the feet of the people living on the top of the ball are in direct opposition to those living on the bottom...Have you ever thought it means people on the bottom are inversely suspended?...How ridiculous this is to a rational mind. We know man is standing on earth with heads towards the sky, and no one has ever heard of people standing horizontally or inversely vertically...It can be seen here that the earth is not a round ball.

The above is a most rational comment out of the innocent logic of this dominating group of traditional Confucian official-scholar class. Their purpose, however, was not to prove the falsity of Western science through their "common sense," but to reject a whole West as evil, vicious, heterodox and heretical as opposed to the Confucian legitimacy, righteousness, integrity, justice and uprightness. Two books of collected essays and political commentaries against the West, one from the late Ming and the other from the early Qing dynasties, are titled *Shengchao poxie ji* (Collected Works on Eradicating the Heretical in the Sacred Celestial Empire) and *Budeyi* (No Alternative But Speaking Out). Written by well-educated Confucian scholars in high offices, they were full of arrogance and ignorance, very often pitifully irrational and absurd. Indeed one can feel the fiery but blind hatred and genuine but short-sighted and unfounded fears and worries of those sinocentric scholars.

The Chinese response to Western learning is best seen in the attitude of the editors of the *Siku quanshu* (Imperial Catalogue or Four Partite Library) — the world's longest series of books containing 3,503 titles bound into more than 36,000 books totaling 853,456 pages. Comprising four traditional Chinese divisions of learning — classics, history, philosophy and belles-letters, and finally completed in 1782, the Library attempted to collect all the Chinese valuable works from antiquity according to the Confucian norms and standards. Of the twenty books anthologized in Li Zhizao's *First Collection*, all the ten works in the section of "Instruments" were included in the Library. Except for *Julius Aleni's World Atlas with Explanations*, the works in the section "Idea" were rejected.

From the "Idea," the imperial editor sensed a spirit of "total subversion of the Chinese world order...at amalgamating Catholicism and Confucianism in order to defeat all other religions in China along with the power of the Confucian minded Emperors" (Lu, 2000, online). The editor declared Li guilty of intellectual treason against the Emperor. The specific reasons the editor gave for rejecting the works, as Lu (ibid.) summarized in his own way, were: 1) epistemologically, the arguments in those works were 'not investiga-

ble,' not controllable by human reason based on reality; 2) economically, they did not touch the immediate needs of the daily life of the people, and therefore were useless; 3) politically, by exalting the position of the Pope and of the religious teachers in the name of God, they were downgrading the Emperor and parents, violating the Confucian principles of loyalty to the Emperor as the Son-of-Heaven and of filial piety toward the true father and mother in the human family. They were pernicious because they tended to undermine the public order of the "Heavenly Way of Life" in each household and in the whole Universe under Heaven; 4) religiously, they contained many points repetitious of Buddhism and Zoroastrianism worshipping the Light and Fire in Heaven and Hell, among other similarities. The imperial editor also commented that Catholicism and Buddhism, in refuting each other, seemed like two naked swimmers each putting the other to shame by ridiculing each other's nudity. In fact, both were guilty of the same shameful absurdities. Moreover, their teachings found no evidence in the Confucian classics, although they claimed it by their distorted and forced interpretations.

The ultimate response came from the Chinese emperor Yongzheng, who banned Christianity in 1723 along with maritime intercourse with foreign countries, against the background of strong objections from part of the Confucian scholar-officials, fights among different Western religious groups, and the China-Roman Catholic disputes over the rites — the word of God, from which the Roman Catholic Church would not retreat even one step. The first China-West dialogue through translation thus ended, only to be resumed well over a century later in the form of force, involving opium, fleets and cannons.

In conclusion, the beginning of the 17th century offered a historical opportunity for China and the West to engage each other in an inter-lingual, intercultural and intercivilizational dialogue for a shared, interrelated, and inter-dependent future of peace, reciprocity, wisdom, and prosperity. As it turned out, however, Sinocentrism and Logocentrism, more than linguistic and cultural divides, blocked the way. Now the beginning of the 21st century is witnessing another China-West encounter of global significance through trade.

While the current rise could breed a neo-Sinocentrism in China, the ongoing process of globalization as a Western neo-liberal, market-as-theology-based imaginary (see Smith, 2000) seems to be manifesting itself as a neo-logocentrism. From the translation point of view, the future of such a new engagement between China and the West is far from optimistic — when the two — isms remain the driving force for both sides.

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