

Matteo Ricci and Giulio Aleni in Late Ming China¹

The Life of Master Ricci, Xitai of the Great West (1630, 2010)

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Abstract

Giulio Aleni wrote the biography of Matteo Ricci in Chinese in Fuzhou in 1630, twenty years after the death of the founder of the Jesuit mission in China. Aleni's work is a fundamental document for studying Ricci and Jesuit mission from a Chinese viewpoint. Aleni named 55 Chinese officials and scholars who met Ricci. Aleni informs that Ricci kept a diary containing his spiritual musings, and many other precious information that are not found in other sources. The 1630's edition includes other important documents, such as an after-word by Li Jubiao, a short biography of Ricci by Zhang Weishu, high official Wu Daoan's supplication for a piece of land to bury Ricci, and a tomb inscription in honour of Ricci by Wang Yinglin

要旨

ジュリオ・アレーニは中国でのイエズス会創設者マテオ・リッチの没後20年にあたる1630年に福州にて中国語で彼の伝記を書いた。アレーニの作品は、中国人の視点からリッチとイエズス会宣教師を研究する際の基本的文書となっている。アレーニはリッチが、精神的な憂慮、他の情報源にはない多数の貴重な情報を含む日記をつけていたことを伝える。1630年版には、Li Jubiaoによる後記、Zhang Weishuによるリッチの短い伝記、リッチを埋葬するための土地を請う高官のWu Daoanの嘆願、Wang Yinglinによるリッチを敬う墓碑銘といった重要な文書が含まれる。

Keywords キーワード

Matteo Ricci
Giulio Aleni
Xu Guangqi
Jesuit China Mission
Christianity and Chinese Religions

マテオ・リッチ
ジュリオ・アレーニ
徐光啓
イエズス会中国布教
中国のキリスト教と中国の宗教

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This contribution aims to increase the readership of Matteo Ricci's biography written by Giulio Aleni, and translated into Italian, annotated, and commented by me in 2010. It also aims to awaken interest in this seminal work and encourage its English translation.²

Giulio Aleni, a missionary from Brescia, published the biography of his Jesuit confrere, Matteo Ricci, *The Life of Master Ricci, Xitai of the Great West* (大西西泰利先生行蹟, *Daxi Xitai Li xiansheng xingji*, henceforth *The Life of Master Ricci*), in Chinese in Fuzhou (福州, Fujian) in 1630, twenty years after the death of the founder of the modern Catholic mission in China. Aleni, who had settled down in China in 1613, had been evangelising the southern province of Fujian for the previous five years.

Matteo Ricci and Giulio Aleni, two intertwined lives

In *The Life of Master Ricci*, Aleni says that he had never met Ricci, yet they share a strong connection. There is nobody more similar to Matteo Ricci in personality, education, spirituality, brilliance, eclecticism, erudition, zeal, volume of written work, style, and evangelising method than Aleni. Out of the various missionaries who succeeded Ricci, nobody embraced his heritage as happily as Giulio Aleni. Ultimately, Aleni completed what Ricci had started: opening the door, legitimising, and guaranteeing the presence of Christianity to allow missionaries such as Aleni to carry out their apostolic activity. In August 1599, Ricci wrote to his friend, Gerolamo Costa S.J.

*Our time in China is not yet meant for harvesting, not even for sowing, but to open the proud forests [...]. Others will come blessed by the grace of the Lord, writing about Christian conversions and fervour; but know this, V.R., that what we do now is necessary for what is yet to come.*³

Ricci believed that being allowed to preach would 'convert an infinite multitude of them in a short time'.⁴ Ricci's sermons announced Jesus Christ, however his written work barely mentions him. The missionary focused on preparing the philosophical

² Matteo Ricci's biography was written by Giulio Aleni and translated, annotated, and commented on by Gianni Criveller: *Vita del Maestro Ricci, Xitai del Grande Occidente*. Brescia: Fondazione Civiltà Bresciana-Centro Giulio Aleni, 2010. Number and page references in this paper refer to that edition. This contribution corresponds to the English translation of the introduction to that volume (pp. 11-24).

³ Translated from Matteo Ricci, *Lettere* (1580-1609), edited by Francesco D'Arelli. Macerata: Quodlibet, 2001, pp. 361-362.

⁴ *Lettere*, p. 362.

and religious ground to ensure that preaching about Jesus would be well received, thus overcoming a serious cultural obstacle to evangelisation. Aleni, while writing copiously about science and philosophy just like Ricci, dedicated his work and numerous books to the direct preaching of Christ. *Life of the Lord of Heaven Incarnate* (天主降生言行紀畧, *Tianzhu jiangsheng yanxing jilüe*), 1635, and the *Illustrated Life of the Lord of Heaven Incarnate* (天主降生出像經解, *Tianzhu jiangsheng chuxiang jilüe*), 1637, are just some of his books. He also wrote about 'Christian conversions and fervour'.

In Ricci's biography, Aleni writes he was chosen and sent to China because of Ricci's request for scientist missionaries, especially mathematicians, astronomers, and cartographers. After two failed attempts to settle down in China, Giulio Aleni finally reached Beijing in 1613, heading to Ricci's tomb to pay homage to his great predecessor. The date of birth of the two missionaries somehow seems to intertwine. Aleni was born in 1582, when Ricci had just reached Macau in China at the age of 30 to begin his 'ascent to Beijing'. Ricci was born 30 years before on 6 October 1552 when Francesco Saverio died (3 December) on Shangchuan Island (上川), just off China's mainland. Young Aleni reached Macau 28 years later, around 1610 (or in January 1611): Ricci had died in Beijing earlier in the same 1610.

Ricci's missionary work in China can be interpreted as a long and dramatic 'ascent to Beijing', a journey consisting of various legs from the south to the north towards the capital of the Empire. Ricci stopped in Macau (1582-1583), Zhaoqing (肇慶, 1583-1589), Shaozhou (韶州, today Shaoguan, 韶關, 1589-1595), Nanchang (南昌, 1595-1599), Nanjing (1599-1600), Linqing (臨清, near Tianjin, 天津, 1600); Beijing (1601). Matteo Ricci's project was to establish a Christian presence in the main Chinese cities and ensure the legitimacy of Christian preaching, and its security. To achieve this, he would have had to act carefully around influential functionaries and reach Beijing to receive the Court's implicit, if not explicit, blessing for preaching. Even in Europe, Jesuits established their residences in the heart of the most important cities, founding high-quality scientific schools with the goal of educating the ruling class.

Giulio Aleni's journey was, to some extent, the opposite of Ricci's. He did not choose Beijing, the capital of the north, in 1613 as the centre of his evangelisation activity. For a dozen years, Aleni operated similarly to an itinerant missionary between Shanghai and Hangzhou, between the residences of Paolo Xu Guangqi (徐光啟) and Michele Yang Tingyun (楊廷筠), pushing his way into the provinces of Henan, Shanxi and Shaanxi. The works he published in that first period were mainly scientific.

In 1624, in Hangzhou, Aleni met someone who would change his life: former secretary Ye Xianggao (葉向高), a high-ranking official with strong ties to Matteo Ricci. Ye Xianggao and Ricci met in Nanjing in 1599, and then a couple of times in Beijing when Ye became Great Secretary in 1607. In 1610, he approved the request he had formally received for the Emperor to award Ricci a burial ground. A privilege which would have been very significant for the official recognition of Ricci's work and the legitimacy of a Christian

presence in the Empire. Ye Xianggao was therefore one of the key figures responsible for preserving Ricci's memory in Chinese civilisation.

In August of 1624, Ye was forced to leave Beijing because of the support he had given to members of the Donglin (東林), the Reformist Party. As he returned to his native Fujian, he stopped in Hangzhou where he met Giulio Aleni, and was impressed by the young man. Aleni, at least among his disciples, was already treated by the exceptional and even incredible name of 'Western Confucius' (西來孔子, *Xilai Kongzi*). Ye invited Aleni to follow him to his native province of Fujian. Aleni thus made a further leg to the south, taking Christianity to a province that, due to its maritime and migratory tradition, had been a territory particularly exposed to a plurality of religious denominations for some time.

Before passing away in 1627, Ye Xianggao took part in a public debate on religion. Aleni and Cao Xuequan (曹學佺), a famous scholar, poet, and high-ranking functionary, also attended the event. In 1629, the conversations of the two-day long debate were published in *The Learned Conversations in Fuzhou, Sanshan Lunxueji* (三山論學紀 [*Sanshan* (三山)]), 'The Three Mountains' was an ancient name for the city of Fuzhou]. Ye Xianggao also wrote a poem in honour of Giulio Aleni, which has been published in Chinese and Italian.⁵

Giulio Aleni continued evangelising Fujian until he passed away on 10 July 1649. He was 67 and had spent 37 years in China as a missionary. His work is known mainly because of the accounts of an important collaborator, Christian scholar Li Jiubiao (李九標), collected in *Diary of Oral Exhortations* (口鐸日鈔, *Kouduo richao*), of 1640, which contains Aleni's sermons during the 1630s. This last work is seminal for the information it holds on the Jesuit mission in China; Dutch sinologist Erik Zürcher dedicated the last years of his life to the *Diary*.⁶

The significance of *The Life of Master Ricci*

One of the main traits of Aleni's biography, as noted by Albert Chen,⁷ is the long list of 55 officials and scholars who met Ricci, which also included some high-ranking figures. The list is crucial to understand *On the Entrance of the Society of Jesus and Christianity in China* (henceforth *On the Entrance*), the work written by Ricci in the last two years of his life, where he talks about his missionary activity. *The Life of Master Ricci* allows us

⁵ *Fonti Ricciane, Documenti originali concernenti Matteo Ricci e la storia delle prime relazioni tra l'Europa e la Cina (1579-1615)*, edited by Pasquale M. D'Elia. 3 vols, Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1942-1949, II, p. 42; Alessandra Brezzi, Paolo De Troia, Anna Di Toro and Lin Jinshui (eds), *Al Confucio di Occidente. Poesie in Onore di P. Giulio Aleni S.J.* Brescia: Fondazione Civiltà Bresciana, 2005, p. 73.

⁶ Transcribed, translated, and annotated by Erik Zürcher, *Kouduo richao: Li Jiubiao's Diary of Oral Admonitions. A Late Ming Christian Journal*. Sankt Augustin: Institute Monumenta Serica, 2007.

⁷ Albert Chen, *Chinese Books and Documents in the Jesuit Archives in Rome: A Descriptive Catalogue: Japonica-Sinica I-IV*. New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2002, p. 499.

to identify numerous figures that are not mentioned by name in Ricci's letters and *On the Entrance*, or whose names are referred to in their transcribed form, often causing miscomprehension. The scholar who most took advantage of the information offered by Aleni was the renowned Jesuit sinologist from the twentieth century, Pasquale D'Elia. In *Fonti Ricciane*, a fundamental work for every study on Matteo Ricci, D'Elia quotes Ricci's biography written by Aleni a good 39 times as a source for identifying the Chinese figures that met Ricci during his mission. Aleni's work is thus 'an important document for studying the first Jesuit mission in China.'⁸

Matteo Ricci met and had close ties to some of the then most important figures in China. The career of these persons⁹ suggests that high-ranking mandarins favouring Ricci went down in history as upright men loved by everyone, as recounted in the *Ming-Shilu* (明實錄), the imperial annals of the Ming emperors. Some of the mandarins opposing Jesuits were considered negatively also in Chinese historiography.

A few of Ricci's friends belonging to the prestigious and ancient Hanlin Academy (翰林) stand out from the rest. Membership was a guarantee of unsurpassable excellence, as the prestigious imperial institution founded during the Tang dynasty was also charged with interpreting Confucian classics. Some of his other functionary friends were sympathisers of the Dongling Academy (東林), a cultural and political movement with the aim of reforming a nation on the brink of collapse.

Some of Ricci's good friends were also Buddhist sympathisers, despite his aversion to the religion and Buddhist monks.

The Life of Master Ricci written by Aleni is also valuable for apparently being an exclusive source of information. One interesting account narrates how during his historic meeting between 25 and 27 January 1601 with the Emperor, Ricci was not received personally, but was seen by the Emperor who was sitting *dietro ad una tendina*, 'behind a curtain' (n. 57). Another valuable piece of information is that Ricci kept a personal diary containing his spiritual musings; the whereabouts of the diary are currently unknown, yet Aleni claimed he possessed it (n. 101). This biography is also the source of the dialogue between a eunuch and Ye Xianggao regarding the reasons for Ricci being granted a burial ground (n. 115). Finally, what is surprising is the claim that Qu Rukui's wife had taken some of Ricci's manuscripts after he passed away (n. 116).

The six works from the 1630 edition

There are two first edition copies of the work dated 1630 in Fuzhou. One is kept at the Archivum Romanum of the Jesuit Curia in Rome (*Japonica-Sinica*, III, 23.3b), while the other is kept at the Vatican Apostolic Library (*Borgia cinese*, 350.3). Aleni included six

⁸ Translated from Chen, p. 499.

⁹ A short curriculum of every figure has been edited by Criveller in *The Life of Master Ricci*, pp. 143-160.

writings in the work. The main one is Ricci's biography written by Aleni composed of 12 folios with approximately 8,000 characters. I transcribed, translated, and annotated this work for the Fondazione Civiltà Bresciana.¹⁰

Aleni's writing is preceded by a text titled *Life of Xitai Ricci of the Great West* (大西利西泰字傳, *Daxi Li Xitai Zichuan*), written by Zhang Weishu (張維樞), a scholar who met Ricci in the last years of the Jesuit's life. Ricci's biography written by Zhang (probably the first Chinese author to write about the life of a missionary) is composed of five and a half folios, half the size of Aleni's work. The source for Zhang's writing is Aleni himself, or maybe the two authors complemented each other. What is certain is that Zhang Wenhui helped Aleni tracing the names of the Chinese scholars and their titles. For brevity's sake, according to Alberto Chan (our only contemporary author who analysed Zhang's document), 'the significance of some passages has become unclear and you have to consult Aleni's work to better understand it.'¹¹

The following text is an afterword by Li Jiubiao, editor of the *Diary of Oral Exhortations*, as well as three other annexes. The third and last document is an operetta by Ricci from 1601, *Eight songs for a Western Harpsichord* (西琴曲意八章, *Xiqin zhuyi bazhan*).¹² However, it is not clear why it was included in this collection, even though it was mentioned together with numerous other works by Ricci in *The Life of Master Ricci*.

The 1610 supplication and 1615 inscription

The first document placed by Giulio Aleni immediately after Li Jiubiao's afterword to *The Life of Master Ricci* is the *supplication* to the Court, composed of three folios, from 14 June 1610.¹³ The author of the *supplication*, the interim Minister of the Rites Wu Daonan (王道南), petitioned for a burial ground for Matteo Ricci as well.

The following document is a tomb inscription in honour of Matteo Ricci (three and a half folios) commissioned by the capital's prefect, Wang Yinglin (王應麟), on 29 March 1615.¹⁴ The inscription quotes the imperial concession of a burial site for Ricci and the houses built for its caretakers.

The two texts were published three times in China during the Late Ming dynasty (first half of the seventeenth century). The first 1617 edition, edited by Aleni's Christian scholar collaborator, Michele Yang Tingyun, was published in the *Documenti sui lontani*

¹⁰ See n. 1, above.

¹¹ Translated from Chen, p. 499.

¹² For the Italian translation of the work, see Pasquale D'Elia, "Sonate e canzoni italiane alla corte di Pechino" in *La Civiltà Cattolica*, 1945, III, pp. 158-165.

¹³ *Vita del Maestro Ricci*, pp. 127-133.

¹⁴ *Vita del Maestro Ricci*, pp. 135-141.

straneri (絕徼同文紀, *Juejiao tongwen ji*) collection.¹⁵ The collection includes 56 different prefaces and afterwords to the works of the Jesuits written by foreign missionaries or Chinese scholars. In 1630, Aleni published the two documents as an appendix to *The Life of Master Ricci, Xitai of the Great West*. In 1639, Yang Tingyun included them in a collection of memoirs and decrees of official imperial functionaries who supported, *The Veneration of Orthodoxy of our Glorious [Ming] Dynasty* (熙朝崇正集, *Xichao chongzhengji*).¹⁶ Aleni collaborated on this collection, published in Quanzhou (泉州, Fuzhou), although the collection is sometimes erroneously attributed to him.¹⁷ These are well-known documents and disseminated by Aleni and his collaborators.

The two documents are thus closely connected to *The Life of Master Ricci* and are certainly one of its sources of information, especially regarding the identification of the names held by some of the officials who met Ricci.¹⁸

The Chinese text of the documents, with an Italian facing-page translation and numerous footnotes, was published by Pasquale D'Elia in the third volume of his *Fonti Ricciane* (pp. 3-8 for the first document; 9-19 for the second).¹⁹ In the volume edited in 2010, I maintained D'Elia's punctuation and division, simply adding paragraph numbers. The Italian translation is also the one proposed by D'Elia, with some corrections and stylistic improvements. The most significant change concerns the name of functionaries, transcribed in *pinyin*, and omitting the slightly abstruse method invented by D'Elia.²⁰

The sources

We do not have direct information indicating Aleni's sources when he wrote Ricci's biography. However, it is reasonable to posit that Aleni received direct information over the years from various Jesuit missionaries who had personally met Ricci, including Sabatino De Ursis, Diego de Pantoja, Lazzaro Cattaneo, Gaspar Ferreira, João da Rocha,

¹⁵ A copy is kept at the National Library of France (manuscripts, Chinese, n. 9254). Reproduced in 2009 in vol. VI of Adrian Dudink and Nathalie Monnet (eds), *Chinese Christian texts from the National Library of France* (法國國家圖書館明清天主教文獻), Faguo guojia tushuguan Ming-Qing Tianzhujiao wenxian. Taipei: Taipei Ricci Institute. The Italian title is the one suggested by D'Elia, *Fonti Ricciane* III, p. 3.

¹⁶ D'Elia translated *Collezione di documenti cristiani sotto la presente dinastia*, see *Fonti Ricciane* III, p. 3. See also Nicolas Standaert (ed.), *Handbook of Christianity in China*, I: 635-1800. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2000, p. 132.

¹⁷ As did D'Elia, see *Fonti Ricciane* II, p. 124, and III, p. 3.

¹⁸ The second document was republished in 1904 by 黃斐默 (Huang Feimo) and in 1906 by Séraphin Couvreur in the fourth edition of *Choix de Documents*, Hejian.

¹⁹ In 1894, French sinologist Séraphin Couvreur translated Wang Yingling's document into French and Latin: see Chen, p. 500.

²⁰ D'Elia was a highly esteemed sinologist. I wished to homage his work by reproducing his translation of the two documents, thus increasing its readership.

Zhong Mingren (鍾銘仁) and You Wenhui (游文輝). Other information might have been provided by Nicolò Longobardo and Nicolas Trigault, as they had read Ricci's manuscript *On the Entrance* and both closely followed the events in the wake of Ricci's death. Oral information could have been passed on by Ricci's Christian scholar disciples, collaborators, and other officials who had been associated to Aleni. Members of this group certainly included Ignazio Qu Rukui (瞿汝夔), Leone Li Zhizao (李之藻), Paolo Xu Guangqi, Michele Yang Tingyun, Wang Yinglin (王應麟), and Ye Xianggao. The episode of Michele Zhang Shi's (張識) dream (n. 117) was told by the father of the boy, Matteo Zhang Geng (張賡).

Regarding the written sources, we should discard the idea that Aleni had read the manuscript of *On the Entrance* as Trigault had already taken it back to Rome (1613), unless we admit that it was copied before Trigault's departure. What is more plausible is that Aleni possessed the Latin translation of the manuscript published by Trigault in Augusta in 1615 under the title *De Christiana expeditione apud Sinas suscepta ab Societate Jesu* (*On the Christian Expedition in China Undertaken by the Society of Jesus*). Trigault returned to China with numerous books and valuable gifts, and it may very well be that he also brought some copies of his 'best seller'.

Regarding the names, the title of their office, and the 'courtesy names' of the officials and scholars who met Ricci, it is necessary to consider the three abovementioned documents as sources: Zhang Weishu's work, Wu Daonan's memoir, and Wang Yinglin's engraving. It is likely that Zhang and Aleni were complementary sources: Aleni provided information on Ricci's life, and Zhang could have contributed by verifying the names and positions of the officials. In the biography written by Aleni, 55 names of Chinese functionaries and scholars are mentioned; 17 are also mentioned in the works by Wu and Wang. Those documents also mention ten names that do not appear in the biography written by Aleni. The total name tally is 65, mostly of officials and outstanding scholars who met Ricci and who took an interest in him.

Edifying biographies and moral literature in China

Jesuits valued writing books during their missions, and published scientific, moral, and religious works. The latter attributed an important role to hagiography. Indeed, from the very first years of training, Jesuits highly valued the life of saints. Even Ignatius of Loyola himself converted after having read *The Golden Legend*, the popular hagiography written by Jacobus de Voragine, as well as the *Vita Christi* by Ludolph of Saxony. It included the narration of the life of Saint Dominic and Saint Francis, the two saints who more than anyone else had impressed the founder of the Society of Jesus.

The mission of Jesuit missionaries in their foreign countries was to narrate edifying lives which portrayed the moral and spiritual excellence one could obtain by following Catholicism. In China, among converted Christians, the exemplary stories were

particularly successful thanks to the pervading Chinese moral and religious atmosphere, steeped in ethical practices including self-cultivation, also promoted by writing moral literature.

Shanshu (善書, books on morality/goodness) were an edifying type of literature promoting self-elevation, a genre the three denominations of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism shared. In the Late Ming period, a syncretist and national movement called 'The Three Teachings' (三教, *Sanjiao*) had the aim of revitalising the moral and civil tissue of a nation in crisis. The *Shanshu* illustrated good and evil and their consequences and was supported by tables of merits and demerits (功過格, *gongguoge*), which depicted consequences resulting from individual actions. One of these books, published in Hangzhou during the years in which Ricci's biography appeared, was *Record of Self-Understanding* (自知錄, *Zizhilu*), written by Zhuhong (祿宏), a Buddhist monk who opposed Matteo Ricci. Zhuhong encouraged his readers and disciples to carry out moral actions such as feeding the poor, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the needy, supporting widows and orphans, burying the dead, and supporting the work of the monks. These are moral practices very similar to the Works of Mercy praised by Jesus and Christian doctrine.

Neo-Confucians preached silent meditation (靜坐, *jingzuo*), the practice of self-cultivation for wise men. This practice may have reminded Jesuits of their own meditation and the 'Composition of Place' exercises. The Confucian *jingzuo* is similar to the type of meditation (坐禪, *zuochan*) carried out by the followers of Chan Buddhism (禪, known in the West by its Japanese name, Zen). The religious and cultural Chinese substratum created the right environment for the Christian community to be, as can be expected, sensible to moral and spiritual edification (just like other religious groups) seen in the life of virtuous men. Some Jesuit missionaries, including Nicolò Longobardo, Alfonso Vagnone, Diego de Pantoja and João da Rocha, had already written about the life of some saints and of the Virgin Mary, offering their communities practical examples to follow.²¹ Ricci himself wrote of virtuous men as role models in *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* (天主實義, *Tianzhu Shiyi*) and in *Ten Chapters of an Extraordinary Man* (畸人十篇, *Jiren Shipian*).

Giulio Aleni shared the same thought as can be surmised by his moral and religious writings and missionary activity recounted by Li Jiubiao in *Diary of Oral Exhortations*, which also includes homilies for the feast days of Saint Benedict, Apostles John and Jacob, the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste, John the Baptist, Saints Jovita and Faustinus from Brescia, Saint Ignatius of Loyola and Saint Augustine.

²¹ In 1629, Alfonso Vagnone published *Life of the Saints of the Holy Religion of the Lord of Heaven* (天主聖教聖人行實, *Tianzhu Shengjiao Shengren Xingshi*), Hangzhou, which contains 72 hagiographies. Vagnone published *Life of Mary* (聖母行實, *Shengmu Xingshi*) two years later. Western hagiography is also mentioned in other works from the Late Ming period: Adam Schall Von Bell and Wang Zheng, *Accounts from Chongyi Church* (王徵, 崇一堂日記隨筆 (*Chongyi Tang Riji Suibi*), Xian 1638; Diego de Pantoja, *The Seven Victories* (七克 *Qike*), Pechino 1614.

Aleni's edifying works include three biographies: the one he wrote personally, i.e. *The Life of Master Ricci* analysed in this introduction, and two Aleni dictated to Ding Zhilin: the *Life of Yang Tingyun* (丁志麟), 楊淇園先生超性事蹟 (*Yang Qiyuan xiansheng chaoxing shiji*), in Quanzhou in 1635, and the *Life of Michele Zhang* (張彌格爾遺蹟, *Zhang Mige'er yisiji*).

The life of Michele Yang Tingyun²²

The biography of Michele Yang Tingyun, Aleni's most well-known collaborator and one of the 'pillars' of the Chinese Catholic Church, was drafted by Ding Zhilin after the death of Yang Tingyun in 1627, on the basis of Aleni's account. Among Aleni's numerous works, this is the one which resembles more closely *The Life of Master Ricci*. The 'edifying' goal is the same: the editor declares the book aims to fulfil the wish and hope by Aleni and his disciples for Christians to adopt virtuous Michele Yang as a role model. Yang's biography is apologetic with an anti-Buddhist message: he came from a Buddhist background and in his biography the author highlights the superiority of Christian doctrine when compared to Buddhist doctrine. The anti-Buddhist theme is predominant in Ricci's biography.

In *The Life of Master Ricci*, Aleni illustrated two other outstanding conversions: those of Leone Li Zhizao and Paolo Xu Guangqi, the pillars of the nascent Chinese Church together with Michele Yang.

Yang's conversion occurred in 1613 and highlights some typical difficulties Chinese scholars faced when receiving baptism, obstacles Ricci and Aleni had to face when evangelising the Chinese.

The incarnation and suffering of Jesus were doctrines which at first were judged to be disrespectful of the dignity of the Lord of Heaven. The Sacraments of Holy Communion and Confession were also difficult to be accepted by a Chinese scholar. Dismissing concubines was also an existential, emotional, and moral challenge that proved difficult to overcome.

From the moment of his conversion, Yang proved an exemplary Christian. He founded Christian associations to help the poor (these would have also counterbalanced the influence of similar Buddhist organisations); he founded schools to educate poor children; he built churches; he wrote books defending Christian doctrine and supported the print of books written by missionaries; he also financially supported the initiatives of the Society of Jesus and provided a safe haven to missionaries in danger, including Aleni himself, at his home in Hangzhou between 1616 and 1618. These are moral activities that reminded people both of Zhuhong's sermons and Ricci's activities and teachings.

²² Nicolas Standaert, *Yang Tingyun, Confucian and Christian in Late Ming China. His Life and Thought*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988, p. 51.

Michele Yang and Matteo Ricci lived by the same virtues. Yang prayed, meditated, and fasted with zeal, as did Ricci. Aleni also writes that Yang followed the four cardinal virtues: prudence (愛人, *airen*); temperance (剋己, *keji*); courage (忍辱, *renru*); justice (甘難, *gannan*). These virtues united Confucian and Christian morality and eloquently described the moral excellency of the missionary from Macerata.

The life of Michele Zhang Shi

The *Life of Michele Zhang* was written by Xiong Shiqi (熊士旗) together with Giulio Aleni and Zhang Fu (張浮) after 1630 and contains a preface by Yang Tingyun and Xie Maoming (謝懋明). The case of young Michele Zhang became very well-known in Aleni's circle because of two visions he had on 5 August 1621 and 1623. In the first vision Michele was told the date of his death. The second vision occurred on the same day he died: he saw his final judgement, during which Saint Matthew (or Archangel Michael, according to the account in *Diary of Oral Exhortations*) and Matteo Ricci interceded for him. The story of Michele was registered in his biography, found in *Diary of Oral Exhortations* as well as in *Life of Giulio Aleni* (思及艾先生行蹟, *Siji Ai xiansheng xingji*), written by Li Sixuan (李嗣玄) around 1650, and in Aleni's *The Life of Master Ricci*. There are thus four Chinese sources contemporary to the people who witnessed the facts. This account is part of Aleni's missionary heritage and one of the most used examples to preach about the Four Last Things: death, judgement, hell, and paradise. Jesuits adopted the literary and homiletic narrative depicting miraculous stories and journeys to the underworld and hell precisely for illustrating the Christian doctrine of the after death.

The prodigious stories and journeys to the underworld were well received both in the 'internal mission' in Europe during the seventeenth-century Catholic Reform as well as in popular Buddhism of the Late Ming period. Nicolas Standaert notes that Christian stories of journeys to the underworld were not that dissimilar to Buddhist stories in both aims and content.²³

The start of Chinese Christianity

Aleni stood out from his brothers in writing edifying texts, including *The Life of Master Ricci*. Rather than writing about the saints of the Western Church, Aleni chose to tell stories of Christians set in China. Michele Zhang and Michele Yang are two Chinese Christians; therefore, they were two people readers could easily relate to. Michele Zhang

²³ Nicolas Standaert, "Chinese Christian Visits to the Underworld", in Léonard Blussé and Harriet Thelma Zurndorfer (eds), *Conflict and Accommodation in Early Modern East Asia. Essays in Honor of Erik Zürcher*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993, pp. 54-70.

was a young convert, and could be adopted as role model by young Catholics, similarly to Luigi Gonzaga in Europe. Michele Yang was an important scholar, one of the most prestigious figures of the Chinese Catholic community, and could be a role model to Christian scholars; Ricci and Aleni had great hopes for Yang and his contribution to the success of the Catholic cause.

Aleni attributed and created value and dignity in the experience of the 'first Chinese Christians' and offered a significant contribution to the localisation and inculturation of the Catholic church. Chinese Christianity could start relying on its own stories, traditions, 'fathers', and feature a smaller grade of Westernization to the eyes of readers and converted alike. The memory of those figures who preached the faith and the narration of their experiences were important elements for the transmission of faith to future generations.

Even though Ricci was European, Aleni's biography does not feature a Eurocentric thrust. Ricci was not a canonised saint who lived in the Western world: he was the person who started Chinese Christianity. Its founding father. As such, he entirely belonged to the history of the Chinese Christian community. As he had lived in China for many years and adopted its lifestyle, he was not a distant or exotic role model, rather a national and relatable one.

With his biography, Aleni united his Church of origin, the 'Mother Church' which had sent the missionary, with the community of destination where the missionary worked. To a certain extent, he became a Chinese man among the Chinese. It is an emblematic evangelisation story like no other: the missionary must be foreign, because the Gospel is an unexpected announcement from overseas and not a national cultural element. But the Gospel can be embodied everywhere, it can adopt the words of every language and culture. Ricci achieved precisely that and, in Aleni's biography, the Chinese nature and elements are particularly powerful, so much so the work becomes a 'Chinese biography' of Matteo Ricci.

Ricci's Jesuit brothers

The fourteen Jesuit missionaries mentioned in *The Life of Master Ricci* collaborated with Ricci in China or arrived in the country with Aleni. What is striking is that no other person who had not been to China, other than Nicolò Bencivegni, young Matteo Ricci's teacher, is quoted. Alessandro Valignano's name is conspicuous for its absence, as he had an important role in Ricci's life and was often mentioned in *On the Entrance* and in his letters. Ricci had described Valignano as a 'father', 'first author' of the Chinese mission, qualifiers which have always been, and for good reasons, attributed to Ricci himself.

Also worth highlighting is that Macau and Japan are never mentioned as a destination in Ricci's letters. That is probably not a coincidence. I believe Aleni wanted to avoid creating suspicions or giving his adversaries any pretext to act against him. The suspicion of being spies constantly accompanied the Jesuit mission, to the point that in

1606 the coadjutor brother Zhong Mingren, was tortured to death in Guangzhou because of that accusation. In Ricci's biography, his letters sent to home are also mentioned. However, their addressees are not mentioned, not even the Superior General Francesco Acquaviva. Even in this case, the author had to minimise relations with the capital of a foreign nation. Ricci's relatives do appear in his letters to reassure readers that Matteo abided by the virtue of filial piety.

The Chinese coadjutor brothers also play a significant role: Zhong Mingren, Huang Mingsha (黃明沙), You Wenhui, and João Barradas. While their role and importance were often underestimated in official accounts, Aleni mentions them often and attributes them the same importance as Ricci's companions such as Michele Ruggieri, Lazzaro Cattaneo, Sabatino de Ursis, Diego de Pantoja and other European missionaries.

The 1919 edition and French translation

The invitation to read *The Life of Master Ricci* written by Aleni can be concluded by describing the edition that renowned Catholic literary critic, Ying Lianzhi (英斂之), also known as Ying Hua (英華), cofounder of the Fu Jen Catholic University, published in August 1919 in Beijing. The re-edition of Aleni's work has a slightly different title compared to the original: *The Life of Master Ricci of the Great West* (大西利先生行蹟, *Daxi Li xiansheng xingji*). Ricci's 'courtesy name' Xitai (西泰) is omitted (see *The Life of Master Ricci*, n. 1). Ma Xiangbo (馬相伯), also known as Ma Liang (馬良), and Chen Yuan (陳垣), two among the most important Catholic intellectuals of the first half of the twentieth century, wrote two afterwords. The work was published together with two documents from the Late Ming period. The collection is titled after the first document written by Ricci in 1607, *Testament in defence of the faith* (辯學遺牘, *Bianxue Yidu*), published by Li Zhizao in 1629. In the 1919 volume, the publishing house is not listed and cannot be easily identified. Therefore, the copy at the Monumenta Serica Institute was consulted.²⁴ The same collection was republished in 2000 in Shenyang by the Liaohai publishing house (沈陽市遼海出版社, *Liaohai chubanshe*), Shenyang.

The comparative analysis of the two editions, from 1630 (reproduced in the volume edited in 2010) and 1919, produces the following results. Editor Ying Hua (1919) took the liberty of changing numerous things to ease the reading, remaining faithful to the spirit of the original text. One or more ideograms were changed in around 230 occasions without subverting the meaning of the narration. Some ideograms or short phrases were omitted in around 210 occasions; new ideograms or short phrases were added in 170 occasions. The changes were mostly stylistic: sometimes titles of public roles of functionaries were omitted; sometimes the 'courtesy name' of the mentioned people was omitted; the various terms used by Aleni to call God are often rendered with Lord of Heaven, *Tianzhu*.

²⁴ Sankt Augustin, Germany: catalogue number 001730.

As far as the content is concerned, we note that the editor of the 1919 edition omits all footnotes, which are nearly always short, added by Aleni to his narration. There are around ten omissions of complete sentences, including three substantial ones: nn. 17 and 73 in their entirety, and the second half of n. 72. Curiously, these three omissions, together with an omitted sentence (n. 22) discuss the same topic: Ricci's prayer of intercession to an official (n. 17), so that his friend Ignazio Qu (n. 22), and his disciple and collaborator Paolo Xu (nn. 72 and 73) could obtain their coveted posterity. Why is it that in 1919 they did not want to include the testimony that Ricci had obtained the lineage of his three collaborators by praying? We lack definite answers to address this question. It can be posited that this information was not considered very credible or was judged as superstitious. In 1919, some months before the re-edition of *The Life of Master Ricci*, the May Fourth Movement introduced modern western values to China which included atheist sentiments pervading European science and democratic ideas.

The 1919 edition contains some sentences not included in the 1630 edition. These were clearly added by the editor. I identified four of the most significant in terms of length. They are additional and non-essential information which Aleni could not know. One of them discusses the journey of Bento de Góis and can be found as a footnote at n. 86.

Léon Desbuquois translated the 1919 text five years later into French: 'Mathieu Ricci', in *Revue d' Histoire des Missions*,¹ 1924, pp. 52-70. Desbuquois' translation reproduces the numerous variants of the 1919 edition. The French translator does not reproduce the Chinese text, does not include footnotes nor comments, and does not refer to the co-edited texts nor mention Li Jiubiao's afterword. Our 2010 Italian translation differs from the French version mainly because it is based on the original edition, and because it adheres more strictly to the literal sense of the Chinese text. In 2010, the first translation in a European language of the original edition of *The Life of Master Ricci*, written by Giulio Aleni, was published.

I hope this contribution encourages an English translation of *The Life of Master Ricci, Xitai of the Great West*, published in Chinese by Giulio Aleni in 1630.