

FOREWORD

In December 2010 on the occasion of the fourth centenary of the death of Matteo Ricci, S.J., died in Beijing on 11 May 1610, a workshop, entitled *The Roots of the Mission of China during Matteo Ricci's Time: Science, Technology and Local Networks*, attended by several international scholars, was held at the FCSH NOVA in Lisbon. Co-organized by Angelo Cattaneo, Henrique Leitão and Francisco Roque de Oliveira, this symposium benefited from the financial and logistic support of the following institutions: the CHAM - The Centre for Humanities of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities of the New University of Lisbon (CHAM-FCSH NOVA and University of Azores), the Centro Interuniversitário de História das Ciências e da Tecnologia (CIUHCT, NOVA and ULisboa), the Centre of Geographical Studies (CEG) of the University of Lisbon (ULisboa), the Istituto Italiano di Cultura Lisbona, and the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT).

The collaboration among these institutions, all active in Lisbon, with their different structures but converging interests to promote culture and international collaboration through research and publishing, enabled the favorable constellations of collaborative energies which have allowed us to reconsider Matteo Ricci and to explore the intense cultural and historical tensions that crossed the globe, reinforced the linked between Europe to China, while establishing the first connections with Japan, in the crucial decades between the mid-sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth century. I am deeply grateful to these colleagues, as well as institutions and their directors, to the speakers and finally to the public that attended the workshop.

During the colloquium, some of the participants realized that the curiosity, transdisciplinarity, open-mindedness and intellectual generosity of the colleagues provided the essential ground to engage in the preparation of a collection of essays on the multiple intellectual and historiographical shores associated to Matteo Ricci. Other scholars, who did not or could not attend the colloquium, later accepted the invitation to integrate the publication. For its gestation we all benefited from an international network of scholars and friends who joined their intellectual energies and specialized knowledge in order to update, contribute to, and expand the already vast historiographical shores of Matteo Ricci.

The very idea that supports this collection of essays is that they are united by being connected to, or inspired by, the figure of Matteo Ricci, S.J., the multiple contexts in which he operated, as well as those that were later influenced by his vast and eclectic *oeuvre*, in Europe, China and Japan. From the theoretical point of view, we observe here a remarkable, still embryonic, but fecund circularity of meanings and interpretations between visual and textual sources, between sources drafted in missionary contexts in China or Japan, and their receptions and transformations in Europe, to describe, imagining, idealizing local contexts of interactions in Asia.

At this regard, I am grateful to Alexandra Curvelo, general editor of this issue of the BPJS, for having accepted to publish this collection of essays, sharing and supporting the intuition that the mission of China and its multiple contexts of reception – epitomized by the figure of Matteo Ricci, S.J. –, and that of Japan, could be also studied from integrated perspectives. Moreover, despite current growing divergences and specialisms between the communities of scholars dealing with the Chinese and Japanese contexts, the vicissitudes and experiences occurred over the course of the 16th and 17th century, in particular the exchange and cultural mobility between Europe and East Asia, and *viceversa*, and within East-Asia at the time of the European presence, led to a symbiotic development of concepts and ideas, expressed in both tangible and intangible cultural products. At this respect, many cultural dynamics in China, Japan, and Europe, became very much connected – even when they diverged – as it was the case of the circulation of scientific ideas, material culture, translational, artistic, technological and religious practices.¹ For this distinguished reason we present this collection in the BPJS and to its readers, hoping they might get further inspiration for their specific research trajectories. We also hope that our approach might add new insights to the impressive body of scholarship on both Matteo Ricci, S.J., and his plural contexts of reception, built up over the past decades by several and growing communities of scholars worldwide, recognizing that Japan was one of the places in which the reception of Ricci's *oeuvre* became most influential.

I have accrued numerous debts of gratitude over the many years of working on this special issue of the BPJS, and it is a great pleasure to

¹ See the following, inspiring, recent emblematic and paradigmatic studies: Üçerler, M. Antoni J., S.J. (ed.), *Christianity and Cultures. Japan & China in Comparison 1543-1644*. Rome ARSI (Bibliotheca Instituti Historici S.I. 68), 2009. Paramore, Kiri, "Early Japanese Christian Thought Reexamined. Confucian Ethics, Catholic Authority, and the Issue of Faith in the Scholastic Theories of Habian, Gomez, and Ricci," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 35.2 (2008): 231-262; Paramore, Kiri. *Ideology and Christianity in Japan*. London: Routledge, 2009.

acknowledge the liberal support and help which I have been fortunate enough to enjoy. It is my pleasure to thank everyone who helped to shape the intellectual outlines of the project and to turn it into a publication. I am particularly grateful to the personells of the CHAM - The Center for Humanities and the current director of the BPJS, Ana Fernandes Pinto, for their most professional attitude and for their great indulgence over repeated delays in the delivery of the final manuscript. Finally, to the Board of Directors of the CHAM that believed in and also supported the publication of this collection of essay through financial assistance. To all of them, I am deeply grateful.

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