Li Sher-shiueh [Li Shixue] and Thierry Meynard

Jesuit Chreia in Late Ming China: Two Studies with an Annotated Translation of Alfonso Vagnone's Illustrations of the Grand Dao. Euro-sinica 14. Bern: Peter Lang, 2014. Pp. 373. Pb, \$103.95.

The core of the present volume (183–341) is a punctuated edition (alongside an annotated English translation) of the *Dadao jiyān* [Illustrations of the Grand Dao] (1636), the product of a collaboration between the Jesuit missionary Alfonso Vagnone and the Chinese Christian scholar-official Han Yun. The *Dadao jiyān* is a collection of 355 sayings and *chreiai* (moral stories attributed to famous historical figures), arranged according to the Five Confucian Relationships: rulers and officials (158 entries, pp. 186–252), fathers and sons (twenty-one entries, pp. 253–264), brothers, including the specific interactions of younger and older siblings (thirty-one entries, pp. 264–277), husbands and wives (twenty-three entries, pp. 278–289), and friends, including *chreiai* on flattery, favoritism, and reprimands (122 entries, pp. 289–341). The volume closes (342–344) with two tables: the first classifies the *chreiai* by the figures identified therein, and the second by source, in addition to a bibliography (345–368) and an index of names (369–373).

Annotations supply the (probable) sources of around fifty-six percent of the sayings and *chreiai*, originating in twenty-nine primarily Greco-Roman authors (151). Most quoted, with forty-four appearances, is Plutarch's *Moralia* (101). The relatively large portion remaining unidentified may be attributed to the fact that “the Jesuits were adept at creating *chreiai* or at least anecdotes tinged with features of this genre” (33, 102–103).

Two essays precede the text: Sher-shiueh Li's “Ming Jesuit *chreia* in Chinese: An analysis of its types and functions” (11–96) and Thierry Meynard's “*Illustrations of the Grand Dao*: A book of rhetoric and morality in Late Ming China” (97–182). Li's essay is based primarily on a Chinese edition, published in 2005 (12n4) and reprinted with slight revisions in 2010. The first half of the present essay is largely a reprint of the English translation version print in 2005 (354). The second section (50–96), not included in previous translations, seeks “to study the Jesuit use of chriic characters through Diogenes, Socrates and Alexander” (52). Li stresses the interplay between history and rhetoric (39): exercises in rhetoric being a key feature of European classrooms (42), “encourag[ing] students to expand, or to elaborate upon, a given *chreia* (44), so “that different *chreiai* authors would ‘create’ different *chreiai* with almost the same plot” (48).

In his amplification of *chreiai*, Vagnone derived more from Chinese ethical principles than from the European tradition, so that “what Diogenes utters in

Vagnone's version will necessarily differ from what he has said in the Western tradition" (28). Li's essay does not confine itself to the *Dadao jiyān* (ten examples cited), drawing further evidence from Vagnone's *Qijia xixue* and Diego de Pantoja's *Qike* (eight examples from each). In the 2005 Chinese version, Li also quoted another Chinese-language *chreia* collection, Vagnone's *Lixue guyān* (16), but for unexplained reasons this text has all but disappeared, mentioned only in footnotes.

While Li focuses on the literary-historical aspects of the *chreia* as a genre, Meynard deals specifically with the *Dadao jiyān*. Though ostensibly a book of rhetorical (98–116) and moral instruction (117–131), the *Dadao jiyān* became part of the political project of a new Christian-Confucian 'community compact,' aimed at revitalizing the Ming dynasty, especially in the Shanxi area (131–147). Like Li, Meynard stresses that the *chreiai* of the *Dadao jiyān*, although rooted in the Western rhetorical tradition, have been substantially transformed. Vagnone probably used multiple commonplace books (116), themselves creative works in their own right (104, 107).

As a tool, rhetoric was crucial to the Jesuit missions (109); in Vagnone's attempts to render Western thought into Chinese, the *chreia* was nothing less than providential (111). The *Dadao jiyān* is a hybrid between a Western commonplace book and a Chinese morality book (145), the result of a complex interaction between the literary, moral, and political traditions of both societies (147). The immediate inspiration for the *Dadao jiyān* was the Stoic tradition (117–118), but the prominence of Stoicism in the section on friendship gives a distorted view of Western ethics (182). The intricacy of the dialogue between the two traditions is confirmed by the fact that no single work reproduces the sayings and *chreiai* of the *Dadao jiyān* in their entirety (151).

The real foci of the *Dadao jiyān* (143) are the relationships between rulers and officials (152–166) and between friends (176–182). The selection of *chreiai* is generally intended to appeal to the ruler, so as to maximize the potential impact of Western ethics in the country (181). Such political considerations permeated the other relationships, as Meynard observes: "The *Dadao jiyān* seems to endorse the position held by the followers of Wang Yangming on the importance of friendship. But while they looked at it as a relation between equals, the *Dadao jiyān* stressed the hierarchical dimension of this relation. This emphasis on hierarchy, making the friend-friend relation more like the ruler-official relation, may have been a conscious attempt to fit into the Chinese socio-political moral order" (180).

A few bibliographical errors mar Meynard's essay. While he rightly remarks that until recently the *Dadao jiyān* had gone unstudied, the assertion (made without any explanation or indication of a source) that it "was re-edited in the

late nineteenth century by the Catholic press of Shanghai" (148) is incorrect. He is likely referring to another text by Vagnone, re-edited in the 1887 collection *Daoyuan jingcui*. Furthermore, Meynard virtually opens his essay with a description of the *Dadao jiyān* taken from the *Catalogus patrum* (1681) of Philippe Couplet. The description, however, pertains to Vagnone's *Pixue* (115, 244, 303). The *Dadao jiyān* does not appear in the *Catalogus patrum*, although it is mentioned in the list of books Couplet donated to the pope in 1685, as "Documenta moralia" (perhaps a better translation of the title than "Illustrations of the Grand Dao"). For further details, see the CCT database, <http://www.arts.kuleuven.be/sinologie/english/sinologie/english/cct> (title: Da dao ji yan, sub: Notes on text hist., especially nos. 3–4).

In his 1667 *China illustrata* (120), Athanasius Kircher wrote (it is unclear to me on the basis of which source) that Vagnone's book, "because of the force of its very grave reasoning, was treasured by all without distinction" [Liber uti magno rationum pondere viget, ita in pretio passim habetur ab omnibus]. In light of such an endorsement, the present annotated edition and first translation of this rare text cannot but be welcome.

Ad Dudink

KU Leuven

Ad.Dudink@arts.kuleuven.be

DOI 10.1163/22141332-00202007-09