Book Reviews

Vito Avarello

L'Œuvre italienne de Matteo Ricci. Anatomie d'une rencontre chinoise. Perspectives comparatistes sous la direction de Véronique Gély et Bernard Franco, 28. Paris: Classiques Garnier 2014. Pp. 738. 105 euros.

Yan Wang

進呈書像 *Jincheng shu xiang* (1640). *Ein Leben Jesu in Bildern für den chinesischen Kaiser verfasst von Johann Adam Schall von Bell S.J. (1592–1666).* Mainzer Studien zur Neueren Geschichte, 31. Frankfurt; Main: Peter Lang, 2014. Pp. 305. Hb, \$72.95, 45 euros.

Although it may not be immediately apparent, these two new books on the Jesuit mission in China are closely connected. They not only follow one another chronologically but are directly linked through the person of the Jesuit procurator Nicolas Trigault (1577–1628). They also have a common topic: the presentation of pictures and images as a means of intercultural exchange. Matteo Ricci constructed an image of China for Europe using the written word, while Adam Schall von Bell presented the main topics of the Christian religion to China through illustrations. Avarello examines the former, and Wang the latter.

The Italian Jesuit Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) is easily the most famous member of the Society's China mission. Several biographies have recently been written about him and his method of accommodating Christianity to Chinese culture, examining the missionary and his work through missiological and sinological lenses. However, one can also consider him from humanist and linguistic perspectives. Vito Avarello's book, which is the doctoral dissertation he submitted to the Marseille École Doctorale Espaces, Cultures, Sociétés (Aix-en-Provence) in 2011, does just that through an engagement with Ricci's Italian writings.

Avarello began his research by looking at the original version of Matteo Ricci's famous *De christiana expeditione apud Sinas suscepta ab Societate Jesu* (Augsburg, 1615). The volume quickly became one of seventeenth-century

Europe's most famous and best-selling books on China, going through several editions and receiving translations into a variety of European languages. Initially, the Western perception of China was overwhelmingly positive. But Europe's sentiments changed from sinophilia to sinophobia during the eighteenth century, as other books on China became better known.

Avarello then branched out to consider additional works by Ricci. Hidden behind the Jesuit's best-seller was the original Italian manuscript "*Dell'entrata della Compagnia di Gesù e Christianità nella Cina*," which was only discovered in the Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu in the twentieth century. The Jesuit Pietro Tacchi Venturi published a first edition of Ricci's manuscript in *Opere storiche del P. Matteo Ricci* (Macerata, 1913). Tacchi Venturi also edited Ricci's *Le lettere dalla Cina (1580–1610)* (Macerata, 1913). The renowned Jesuit sinologist Pasquale D'Elia prepared a new edition for his *Fonti Ricciane: Storia dell'introduzione del cristianesimo in Cina*. Avarello used the original Italian texts of the history and the letters, new editions of which were published in Ricci's hometown: Maddalena Del Gatto (ed.), *Matteo Ricci, Della entrata della Compagnia di Gesù e christianità nella Cina* (Macerata, 2000) and Francesco D'Arelli (ed.), *Matteo Ricci, Lettere (1580–1609)* (Macerata, 2001).

The story of the manuscript of *Dell'entrata* is particularly interesting. After Ricci's death in 1610, the Jesuit Niccolò Longobardo succeeded him as mission superior. Longobardo wished to set the China mission on a more solid base and therefore sent a Jesuit back to Europe as procurator in 1613, namely Nicolas Trigault. Trigault had several tasks: he was to recruit new missionaries (especially some with scientific education); collect financial support, gifts, and especially books for China; and, further, obtain the separation of China from the Jesuit province of Japan. With these goals in mind, Trigault travelled to different courts throughout Europe. He collected money, liturgical equipment, and precious gifts. He also collected Jesuit missionaries, including Johannes Schreck and Johann Adam Schall von Bell. In addition, he promoted books on the Far Eastern missions in order to raise awareness of the Jesuit enterprise in Japan and China. Ricci's manuscript was particularly useful in this regard, as it described the Chinese empire, its religions and culture, and the origins of the Christian mission. To increase the circulation of this text among nobles and elites outside of Italy, Trigault translated the Italian manuscript during his travels to Europe into Latin. He also made some stylistic changes. The result was Ricci's *De christiana expeditione*, which initially appeared under Trigault's name (securing his unfortunate subsequent reputation as a plagiarist). Pope Paul V was honored with the dedication. The book published in Augsburg in 1615 was such a tremendous success that different editions and translations into German, French, and Italian soon followed. The initial enthusiasm for

Matteo Ricci's work makes it all the more odd that by the nineteenth century, it had fallen into oblivion and would be rediscovered only in the twentieth.

Avarello's book sheds new light on the Sino-European encounter through an engagement with Matteo Ricci's Italian works, starting with a biographical reading of *Lettere* and *Della entrata della Compagnia di Giesù e christianità nella Cina*. Avarello considers Ricci significant not only in the fields of sinology and missiology but also in the areas of cultural and literary studies, as his writing was strongly influenced by European humanism. He reads Ricci's works as an anatomy of his encounter with China and a biography of his literary travels. According to Avarello's interpretation, Ricci rejected the depiction of the Chinese "Other" and constructed a new hermeneutic which considered this "Other" from a humanist and Christian perspective. Ultimately, Ricci's efforts transcended pure accommodation to arrive at inculturation.

The author of the second book, Yan Wang (from the Shandong province in China), studied German and Catholic theology at the University of Mainz and did research for the Institute of Overseas Sinology in Beijing. Her dissertation, "進呈書像 Jincheng shu xiang (1640): Ein Leben Jesu in Bildern für den chinesischen Kaiser verfasst von Johann Adam Schall von Bell, S.J. (1592–1666)," investigates images—in this case, specific images used in Western works "translated" and published in China to illustrate Christianity. The volume under review is a critical German edition of Johann Adam Schall von Bell's *Jincheng shu xiang*. One can and should consider this as a supplement to Nicolas Standaert's English monograph on the same subject, *An Illustrated Life of Christ Presented to the Chinese Emperor. The History of Jincheng shuxiang (1640)* (Sankt Augustin, Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 2007).

Images played an important role in the sensual and visual culture of the Society of Jesus. The intention was to attract the observer's attention and feelings by engaging his or her senses. The Jesuit practice of creating pictures in the imagination originated with the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola, and it was in this tradition that the Jesuit Jerónimo Nadal published *Evangelicae historiae imagines* (Antwerp, 1593, 1596), a posthumous collection of 153 gospel scenes. It ranks among the most beautiful sixteenth-century illustrated books, with contributions from brothers Wierix and Maarten de Vos. Jesuits in China soon sought copies of this volume for the mission, where it provided inspiration and material for subsequent works.

Nadal's images would reappear at least three times in religious and meditative books printed in China. They served as models for João da Rocha's *Song nianzhu guizheng* 誦念珠規程 (Recitation of the rosary, published in 1619), which included fifteen illustrations from the lives of Jesus and the Virgin Mary. A prayer accompanied each picture (see Qu Yi, "Song nianzhu guicheng [Die

Anweisung zur Rezitation des Rosenkranzes]: Ein illustriertes christliches Buch aus China vom Anfang des 17. Jahrhunderts,” *Monumenta serica* 60 [2012]: 195–290). Giulio Aleni’s treatise on the life of Jesus Christ (*Tianzhu jiangsheng chuxiang jingjie* 天主降生出像經解 [Fuzhou, 1637]) also recycled the images, to a varying degree. One surviving edition has fifty-six pictures, including a map of Jerusalem as “sacred space” and a picture of Jesus Christ as savior of the universe. Other editions (such as *Tian zhu jiang sheng yan xing ji xiang* 天主降生言行紀像, published not long after 1637) have only thirty-four illustrations and do not include the map (Joseph Dehergne, “Une vie illustrée de Notre-Seigneur du temps des Ming,” *Neue Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft* 14 [1958]: 103–15; Sun Yuming, “Cultural Translatability and the Presentation of Jesus as Portrayed in Visual Images from Ricci to Aleni,” in Roman Malek [ed.], *The Chinese Face of Jesus Christ* [Sankt Augustin: Nettetal, 2003], 2:477). Another work incorporating Nadal’s pictures was Johann Adam Schall von Bell’s shorter life of Jesus Christ, which appeared in 1640. Yan Wang’s dissertation and Nicolas Standaert’s monograph provide the story behind this book as well.

As already noted, Trigault was sent to Europe after Ricci’s death. While there, he collected gifts for presentation to Chinese high officials or even to the emperor himself. Duke Maximilian I of Bavaria gave a small, beautiful parchment book with colored miniatures of the life of Jesus Christ, compiled from a wide variety of prints by well-known European engravers and bound in silver. The duke proposed that the little tome, compiled in Munich in 1617, be presented to the emperor as an example of high European culture. Elisabeth, duchess of Bavaria, contributed a similar gift on the life of Mary, which was intended for the empress. Another important gift, the so-called Pommern-Schrank, was a finely crafted closet containing many beautiful things in miniature (i.e. not pictures) concerning different aspects of European life. Yan Wang suggests that this closet contained a parchment booklet as well as three-dimensional figures of the adoration of the three kings, or magi. The set was made of wax, colored, and covered with glass. Wang’s monograph includes a translation of a description of these gifts by an unknown Jesuit. Two cover letters written by the duke and duchess to the emperor and empress accompanied the gifts.

The fate of the Pommern-Schrank remains unknown, but we do know what happened to the other two gifts. The letters to the emperor and empress were never delivered because they would have been construed as letters of tribute from a foreign ruler. The delivery of the presents was merely postponed until the appropriate moment; Schall presented the parchment booklet and the set of adoration figures to the Chongzhen emperor when he was summoned to court to repair the clavicembalo given to the Wanli emperor by Matteo Ricci. Schall also printed a small book with woodcut illustrations and Chinese

descriptions of the images. Wang believes that it explained both gifts: she interprets the last two characters of the book title 進呈書像 *Jincheng shu xiang* as independent words, with “shu 書” meaning book and “xiang 像” meaning figure or picture. In her opinion, the two characters represent the two presents from the Bavarian duke. In addition, Schall’s booklet (or at least the copy held in Vienna and used by both Wang and Standaert) has as its very first illustration an image of the adoration of the three kings, spread over two pages and accompanied by a long description. The scene appears again in its proper place in the life of Jesus Christ (after the adoration of the shepherds), this time with a shorter explanation. All of this is evidence confirming Wang’s thesis.

Regarding the style of the images, Rocha’s treatise adapted its illustrations to Chinese conventions vis-à-vis human figures, landscapes, and trees. The illustrations in Aleni’s book are characterized by small pictures within pictures showing additional and helpful details. Schall’s illustrations are not as finely cut (perhaps because of a lack of time), but they depict the main narrative in clear lines. Schall also introduced an image from another book (B. Ricci, *Vita D.N. Jesu Christi* [Rome 1607]): the tree of Jesse, i.e. the line of descent from Abraham and David to Jesus.

Why did Schall did not use Aleni’s book on the same subject? There are a variety of possible explanations. First, Giulio Aleni was in the south and Schall was in the north, in Beijing. Schall may not even have been aware of Aleni’s book. Or he may have known about it but been prevented from accessing it due to temporal restraints. What seems most probable, however, is that Schall wanted to follow the arrangement and number of pictures presented in the duke’s gift. While Schall’s book is also less elaborate, with fewer details, the biggest difference lies in its presentation of the Epiphany (the adoration scene) at the beginning.

Also of interest are the Jesuit missionaries’ European accounts of the presentation of these items to the Chinese emperor: Schall’s *Historica relatio de ortu et progressu fidei orthodoxae in Regno Chinensi per missionarios Societatis Jesu...* (Regensburg, 1672), 35–37; Michael Boym’s manuscript “Relatio R.P. Michaelis Boym, ex Sina ad pontificem sedem legati” (BHSTA, München, Jesuitica 589, fols. 55^{r-v}), and *Systema del estado del imperio de la China...* (1649) [see Albert Chan, “A European Document on the Fall of the Ming Dynasty (1644–1649),” *Monumenta Serica* 35 [1981–83]: 75–109]]. When Schall presented the gifts, along with their description, the monarch is said to have been filled with admiration. Before approaching the wax figures of the three kings, he washed his hands (out of veneration, because we may be sure that the emperor of China did not have dirty hands) and then knelt down together with his empress (or perhaps empresses) as they adored the king of kings, Jesus Christ.

In the three kings he recognized the reference to himself, namely to worldly rulers. In his eyes, Jesus was greater than both “Foe” (Buddha) and Yuhuang, the Jade Emperor of Daoism (as Wang convincingly interprets Yu/Yao in the texts). The meaning was that Christianity was greater than Buddhism and Daoism and thus could replace them in China. Chongzhen was so impressed that he was even late for lunch. He continued to show his veneration and banned idols from the palace, but in the end he did not take the last, crucial step, despite being convinced (at least in the eyes of the Jesuits): he did not embrace Christianity. This story of a missed opportunity subsequently circulated throughout Europe. Salvation was offered by the missionaries in the right way, it was recognized in the right way, but ultimately the talented emperor missed his chance—and his destiny. When a rebel force approached Beijing in 1644, the emperor committed suicide, bringing an end to the Ming dynasty. The story of the sad fate of the Chongzhen emperor was frequently depicted on the stages of the Jesuit schools of the Holy Roman Empire.

The books under review present us with two types of images: those created in the imagination and those directly rendered upon the page. Ricci sought to portray another culture to Europe through his words, while Schall attempted to represent a new religion to China through his illustrations. Both were moderately successful. Ricci’s book presented, for the first time, a relatively systematic picture of China and its encounter with the Christian mission. Schall’s book made such a great impression on the Chongzhen emperor that the Jesuits believed he was close to converting to Christianity. But in the end, Ricci’s positive portrayal gave way to sinophobia, and efforts to convert the last emperor of the Ming dynasty bore little fruit.

Claudia von Collani

Universität Würzburg

claudia.von.collani@t-online.de

DOI 10.1163/22141332-00302006-01