CHAPTER TWELVE


(来华耶稣会士与欧洲早期汉学的兴起—简论卜弥格与基歇尔《中国图说》的关系)

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Abstract
This chapter examines Athanasius Kircher’s China Illustrata, one of the most influential works in early European Sinology, and reveals the academic interaction between Kircher and Michał Piotr Boym, a Polish missionary who went to China in the late Ming Dynasty. It attempts to explain the significance for the emergence of early European Sinology of the Chinese works which the Jesuits introduced to Europe, and to elucidate the important role played by the Jesuits in the history of Sino-Western cultural exchange.

Keywords: Athanasius Kircher; Michał Piotr Boym; China Illustrata; Society of Jesus

This chapter aims to provide an introduction to Athanasius Kircher (1602–1680), a German Jesuit and noted Orientalist. It investigates the epistemic origin of Kircher’s most famous work, China Illustrata, and reveals the links between Kircher and other missionaries in China. In addition, through a textual study of China Illustrata, it brings to light some characteristics of early European Sinology.

Athanasius Kircher and His China Illustrata

Athanasius Kircher was a celebrated seventeenth-century Jesuit and scholar. He was born on May 2, 1602, in Fulda, Germany. In 1618, when he was sixteen, he joined the Society of Jesus. Later, he became a professor of mathematics and philosophy, and taught at the Jesuit college at Würzburg.
On the outbreak of the Thirty Years War in Germany, he moved to Rome, where he taught mathematics and Dutch at the Collegium Romanum. A man with many interests, he had a wide range of knowledge, and authored more than forty books in Latin alone. He has been described as a natural scientist, physical scientist, astronomer, mechanician, philosopher, architect, mathematician, historian, geographer, Orientalist, musicologist, composer and poet, and is sometimes referred to as the last "Renaissance man."2

Kircher was a prolific author, but *China Illustrata* (published in Amsterdam in 1667) was probably the most influential book he ever produced.3 Its original Latin title was *China monumentis, qua sacris qua profanis, nec non variis naturae & artis spectaculis, aliarmque rerum memorabilium argumentis illustrata*, which can be translated literally as "A corpus of Chinese religions, secularities, natural and technical spectacles and valuable substantial materials." The abbreviated form of the title is *China Illustrata*.

The book is in six parts. Part One is an "Explanation of the Sino-Syrian Monument" (Daqin jingjiao bei 大秦景教碑).4 It consists of six chapters and explains the pronunciation, meaning and interpretation of the inscription on this stele, which was excavated in Xi’an. It also includes a handwritten facsimile of the words inscribed on the monument. This was the first time that so many Chinese characters had appeared in a single publication in seventeenth-century Europe. The inscription, and

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2 Ibid.

3 In his Zhongguo zhexue dui Ouzhou de yingxiang 中国哲学对欧洲的影响 (The influence of Chinese philosophy on Europe), Zhu Qianzhi 朱谦之 provides a brief introduction to this book, but erroneously gives the date of its first publication as 1664.


4 Translator’s note: The full name of this Monument is Daqin jingjiao liuxing Zhongguo bei 大秦景教流行中国碑 (Stele of the diffusion of the Jing Teaching [the Nestorian Church] of Daqin [the Roman Empire] in the Middle Kingdom). It is now commonly known as the Nestorian Stele.