

From 'Hua-Yi' to 'center-west': Change of 'West' Concept during Ming and Qing Dynasty among the Conservative Confucian Scholar-officials against the Missionaries

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The communication between The Society of Jesus missionaries and Confucian scholars since late Ming dynasty is always among the top focus of culture exchange history, science and technology history as well as early modern period history studies. Chinese Confucian scholar-officials separated to very different opinions towards the unprecedented Western implements, science and religious brought by missionaries. Some of them opened their mind, learning curiously from the Western culture and knowledge, while others rejecting to accept their settle down and preach, considering them as a potential threat to the royal empire as well as the Chinese society. This research focuses on the latter group of people, the cultural conservative scholar-officials, especially on their word-choosing while talking about the missionaries and the Western culture through a social linguistic and sociology of knowledge perspective. We understand that during that period of time, the category 'Western' found a chance to be independent from the 'Yi' concept in the traditional Chinese ethnocentrism language. However, this new concept was not yet able to relativize the 'center' idea in the traditional Confucian scholars' self-image, and lose its energy within the stabilize of the authority of the Qing conquerors and the transfer of preach strategy. The 'Hua - Yi' (civil and barbarian) kind of thought had failed to turn into 'east - west' antithesis, but stopped at the compromising 'center (Sino) - west' kind of view.

In order to show the formation and exchange of the 'Western' conception during the period, I'll give a brief description of the Jesuits' preach policy in China and its result in the first section. In the latter part, I'll deal with the politic action and the various anti-Catholic ideology of the conservative Confucian scholar-officials.

1 The 'center empire' and missionaries as barbarians

1.1 Westerners' god and Chinese's world

Similar to the other ancient civilization core area, the classic Chinese imagine of the themselves was based on a self-centralized structure of the universe. As Benedict Anderson had pointed out, 'All the great classical communities conceived of themselves as cosmically central, through the medium of a sacred language linked to a superterrestrial order of power'(Anderson, 1983). What is different in the ancient China type of ethnocentrism world image from others (from for example, Genesis or Buddhist cosmology) is the this-worldliness feature, mostly exposed by its self-regarding word 'Zhongguo' (the 'center empire'). It clearly located itself on the center of a continent surrounded by the ocean and assert to own the legitimate of ruling this world. From 800 B.C. to 200 A.D. while such kind of world view gradually formed, war and division didn't lead to the culture division among separated kingdoms. Quite the converse, all of those kingdoms claimed to follow the ancient dynasties tradition, belittling the remote nation or ethic group as four types of 'Yi' (barbarians), considering that they are not the legitimate political and cultural dominator of Chinese central

territory. When reunified accomplished by Qin Shi Huang, standardization and unification of culture system took place (Hu, 2010). During Han dynasty, Confucianism social rule was supported by the governor to become the orthodox legitimization ideology of dominance (Wang, 2008). After Tang and Song dynasty, 'Barbarian' nation political powers in Northern territory including Liao, Western Xia were increasingly activating in invading southern 'orthodox' empire. This greatly harmed the classical all-inclusive world image and the traditional imagine of ruling the world in the center place. Meanwhile the spread of Buddhism turned out to be a challenge to the Confucianism (Jing, 2011). The world view of the dominant group (the royal family and the scholar-official bureaucracy system) thus changed in two major aspects as follows. First, a nation country consciousness including an unequal international relationship gradually formed. Although the governors find themselves no longer the ruler of the world (Ge, 2000), they still had the self-consciousness of a center and enormous country, which was continuously reproduced through the tributary system. Second, the legitimacy announcement of dominant turned from a (geography or racial) essentialism type to a culturalism type, which means an emphasize on whether the governor can follow Confucianism ritual ceremonies and sacrifices will justify its rightness of ruling. This belief was strengthened after the Mongolian Conquers' ruling between 1270s and 1360s (Ge, 2004). In short, although clear distinction exists, ancient Chinese dynasties before Ming shared a general world view, in which itself was the center and the most civilized, and the level of civilization gradually drop down in the periphery towards the remote barbarian areas. This belief structured the interaction of China and its neighbors around, causing troubles to the missionaries ever since they started to spread the god belief in the Far East since the mid-1600s.

The obstacle was perceived even before the missionaries formally entered China. When San Francis Xavier preached in Japan, he was asked by the local, 'If the god you said really existed, why Chinese people - the only source of wisdom - hadn't hear from him?' (Rowbothan, 1942) Later he found that the national university in Japan (Ashikaga Gakko) applied a copy of Chinese knowledge and education system. All these experience remind Francis that the god won't prevail more followers if they couldn't success in the motherland of Confucius and Mencius. In order to enter China, the only way they can choose was to strategically defined themselves as an equivalent of 'Yi'. Consequently, Francis sought to enter China as a member of Siam diplomatic tribute group in 1552. However, he failed to accomplished the mission and finally died on the Shangchuan Island, Guangdong Province (Matteo & Trigault, 1953).

When Michele Ruggieri, the successor of Francis, finally entered China in 1580, he was arranged to live at the hostel for Siam diplomats. Matteo Ricci was arranged in the similar residence for the tribute diplomats while he entered Beijing the capital city in 1600. Based on his description of the place, we may better image it as a detention center of the barbarians, rather than a wonderland for the distinguished guests: 'this foreign hostel was...surrounded by high walls and shut doors. Foreigners are not allowed to leave the building unless they finished their mission and return to homeland, or when they are required to be presented in front of the Emperor.' 'The rooms are narrow, just like sheepfolds, rather than for living. There is no door and any furniture in the room, not even a chair, a bench or a bed' (Matteo & Trigault, 1953). Only with the efforts of their Confucian official friend (Cao Yubian, vice chancellor of Ministry of Personnel at the time), had they finally won the right to leave the building and live somewhere as they wish. This event symbolized the missionaries,

with their continuous effort, had escape the barbarian definition by Chinese towards them to some extent. How was it achieved?

1.2 The strategy and effect of the Missionaries

Before Ricci entered China, Michele designed the preach plan, self-identifying as religious group like the Buddhist monks. They called themselves 'foreign monks' and named their church as 'Xianhua temple' (Matteo & Trigault, 1953). This strategy succeeded in Japan, but didn't go well in China. After Ricci came and had an extensive dialogue with southern area Confucian scholars, especially Qu Taisu, head minister of Chaozhou, he redefined missionaries as a similar identity group like Confucian scholars by wearing the scholar-like clothes and communicating frequently with the local Confucian scholars. Ricci published several books to spread Catholic doctrine and at the same time to reconcile it with the Confucian discipline, so as to strive for the support of the Confucius scholars (Sun, 1996).

In *De Christiana expeditione apud Sinas*, Ricci states that Confucianism ethic doctrines owns various similarities with Catholicism. He held that, 'the Philosophy of Confucius, basing on the natural law, seldom or never violate Catholic doctrines. ...Confucianism is not a formal religious but a school of knowledge for managing the family and the state', while the veneration ceremony of the dead is 'not to pray for something given by the deified ancestors. It shares no similarity with idolatry, so we might say that it is not superstition' (Matteo & Trigault, 1953). Meanwhile, Ricci severely denounced the Buddhism monks, showing a similar principle with the orthodox Confucian officials who was then running a confrontation against the ideological trend under the influence of Yangmingism (Xu, 2011). The latter advocated for a through suspicion toward Confucianism, and promote more positively assimilating the other-worldly thinking in Buddhism and Taoism. Ricci regarded Buddhism monks as 'idol worshippers', or even demons, the enemy of human, and spent a long length in the book to describe the dissolute lifestyle of monks in late Ming dynasty.

The strategy proved to be a great success. With a 5-year diligent work, the 'Western Confucian scholar' image of Ricci was well-known among the south China scholar-officials. They supported the preach in many ways, so that the followers gradually increased. Besides zhaoqing, missionaries were able to establish their branch in Shaozhou, Nanchang and Nanking. Finally, through the Confucian scholar friends' acquaintance, Ricci got the chance to enter Beijing. While explaining these great achievements, some formal researches emphasized the philosophy of Wang Yangming, the open-minded Neo-Confucianism of the time advocating 'the sameness of knowledge of east and west', as the crucial context of the phenomenon (Zhu, 1987). Others in the opposite, find that his anti-Buddhism standpoint helped Ricci to ingratiate the orthodox Confucianism officials' proposition against Yangmingism (Zhang, 2006). Nevertheless, in another aspect, by the method of reconciling it with Catholic, Ricci partly confirmed the core idea of Confucian. This fostered nation respect of Chinese threatened ever since Song dynasty. A happening can be quoted here as an illustration. While in Nanking in 1599, Ricci had a fierce debate with the local Buddhism believer official Li Ruzhen. Liu Douxu, the Ministry of Construction, was also present. After both side stated their viewpoint, Liu furiously said 'We are all Chinese people, studying the classics composed by ancient wise man. It's such a shame to know that people among us oppose to Confucius' dogma and appreciate the imported Buddhism.' He then continued, 'At the contrary, Mr. Ricci as a foreign

scholar, praises highly Confucianism, and openly regard Buddhism as heterodoxy.'(Sun, 1996) The creatively assimilation of Chinese traditional thought was the exact stimulation for some open-minded Confucianism scholars to smoothly read and accept the Western thought.

However, the opposite voice existed all the time. Basing on a Chinese ethnocentrism standpoint, the conservative Confucian scholars and officials ran a sustained resistance against missionaries and their theory. The detailed investigation of them comes follow.

2 Anti-Catholic: from Nanking to Peking

2.1 The anti-Catholic activities and opinions of late Ming Scholar-officials.

Anti-Catholic activity accompanied ever since the missionaries entered China and established the first base in Zhaoqing. Those threatens however, are of different extent and nature. Generally speaking they can be divided into pure violence performed by the masses and the organized persecution carried out by the Confucianism scholars. Coping with the former type of assault is a much easier task. According to the record in Ricci's work, although these fierce robberies usually cause great losses, they did nothing with the existence of missionary group at local society. Instead, missionaries might win the local officials' compassion and respect, especially since missionaries always showed lenient to the offenders in the afterward judgment on those ruffians. Thus these occurrences may eventually have added the protection from local officials. In his book, Ricci had mentioned Wangpan the prime minister of Zhaoqing to had helped them to get rid of this kind of troubles and provide guardianship (Matteo & Trigault, 1953).

The second type of the occurrence however, would really spoil their status. Throughout the history of late Ming, similar persecution had occurred at least in Nanchang, Guangdong and Nanking, while the Nanking persecution was the most serious one, directly result to the exile of missionary Alfonso Vagnoni back to Macao (Wu, 2016). Usually the persecutions occur in the time and places while the conservative Confucian scholars and officials lead the political and ideological authority in the local society, causing crucial conflict with the Catholic doctrine and preach. The intent here in this research is not to thoroughly review the story of these persecution, but to focus on their anti-Catholic thought and word-choosing. Their characteristic can be best understood while juxtaposed with the scholar-official missionary supporters' attitude about the missionary and the Western culture.

The latter group to some degree treated the missionary group as the equal counterpart of themselves. They use honorifics to call Ricci like calling other Confucian fellows. They were also aware of the fact that the Western civilization, which they call 'west country (Xiguo)' or 'west sea (Xihai)' are somehow different from China in nature. The degree of this consciousness was not the same between different members of them. For example, among the so-called '3 foundation pier of China Catholicism', Xu Guangqi had a thoroughly comprehension of the uniqueness of western knowledge and science. He appraised them as great treasure did by wise man in other places of the world. In his own word, 'I learned Ricci and his colleagues' astronomy, which is based on their exquisite mathematic. They are hundred times advanced than our knowledge in classic times of Han and Tang' (Xu & Ursis, 1612). Recognizing these merits of Western knowledge, Xu modestly learned from Ricci to combine the two knowledge tradition. Comparing to Xu, Li Zhizao was not able to abandon

Chinese ethnocentrism understanding of western in his early life. He regarded the Western astronomy as having the correspondence with the classical Confucianism thought, so that learning from Westerners is like the saying, 'to seek for principle in the folk while it erodes in the imperial court.'(Li, 1936) Only by continuing communication with missionaries, had he realized that 'the land is just like a little grain in the sea, while our homeland is again a dust in that grain.' This self-relativization allowed him to gradually abandoned the ethnocentrism idea.

Many of these intellectuals showed tendency to relativize the Chinese doctrine due to their contact with new Western thoughts. For instance, Mi Jiahui from Qiaochuan wrote in the preface of *Xifang dawen*, 'Although scholars often quote the word of Lu Jiuyuan, "The eastern and the western share the same kind of mind", they still can't avoid judging by their prejudice of those they had never experience or heard. However, China is only a little place in the world, and we are just one tiny member of this country. Why dare we stick on those limited knowledges inherited from the ancestors, and not to open our mind to all the others?'(Aleni, 2011) while the most prominent statement was from Kong Zheng, student of Xu Guangqi, in the preface of *Tianwenlve*, 'I was amazed when I first read Ricci's books. After I further my study on them, I started to understand that they are priori principles existed at first. Western scholars first find them. Then eastern scholars saw them. It's not because westerners are better, just for that we eastern scholars had not yet turned our focus on them.' (Hobson, 1849) Due to the acceptance of knowledge brought by the missionaries, Kong's statement had totally relativized his own knowledge tradition, calling Chinese Confucian scholars as 'eastern scholars'. It can be said that the thoroughness of this relativization of the tradition was rare even in the whole intellectual history.

On the other hand, among the anti-Catholic Scholar-officials, the appellation of missionaries also reflects clearly their attitude. Their attack on the preach activity focused on 3 major themes. Yu Chunxi, Xu Dashou called the Western knowledge as 'knowledge of last things', which failed to grab the crucial philosophy of personality cultivation promoted by Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism. Accordingly, they claimed that although the Western equipment was delicate, it could do nothing with the self-cultivation, so that these 'Yi' skills worth no acknowledgement. Through this way they protected the self-respect and belief on the Confucianism by degrading the Western knowledge into an inferior type of knowledge. This practice was the origin of the 'Chinese substance, Western implements' idea popular in late Qing period. Ling Qilu, Huang Zheng called Ricci devil Ricci' or 'barbarian devil', regarding him as a total enemy. They claimed that Ricci's intrigue was to use the advanced astronomy knowledge to encroach the legitimation of the royal court. Since in ancient times, the forecasting and interpretation of nature phenomenon was considered to have direct relationship with the fate of the dynasty, missionaries are considered to be using this approach to gradually spoil and disintegrate the authority of Ming royal court. So they abused, 'How dare these barbarian devils to harass our mighty law and regulation with their uncivilized traditions?' Shen Que and Shi Bangyao however, pointed out that these 'Yi' or 'barbarian devils' live according to a very different moral understanding with Chinese. Thought of the Catholicism were considered to be offending the moral principles, because the thinking that all believers of God are like brothers may greatly destroy the hierarchy idea of China formed from the ancient times (Xia, 1996).

What becomes apparent through the examples mentioned above is that though they had their own

strengthen point of criticize, the conservative Scholar-officials shared the same attitude to regard Ricci and the Western thought as a barbaric culture system like other 'Yi'. Basing on the idea, they tended to refuse it from a Sino ethnocentrism points of view. However, when it came to early Qing period, considering missionary would mean a quite another thing, which to a great scale admit their cultural independency, not only to their supporters, but even to the conservative intellectuals and officials.

2.2 Kangxi calendar persecution: the sound 'Western' calendar

After the Manchu conquerors entered and dominated China, they hired Johann Adam Schall von Bell and then Ferdinand Verbiest as the administrator of the supreme observatory to take charge of the empire calendar enactment. The conservative Confucian scholars and officials didn't stop the persecution of Westerners. As their representative, Yang Guangxian repeatedly presented memorials to the throne to protest its over-dependent on the missionaries. He even stated the famous declaration 'China can bear the lack of sound calendar but can't bear the consequence of accepting the Westerners'. Some analyses on this Kangxi calendar persecution thought that Yang Guangxian's accuse of missionaries didn't exceed the heritage carried in the statement made by Shen Que and other late Ming Nanking period conservativists. In *Budeyi*, collected works of his memorials and writings, Yang also censured the major accusation mentioned about, including that the missionary had no aid on the moral training, their astronomy knowledge may harm the political legitimacy by the Western knowledge, and the Catholic followers' brotherhood relationship may harm the traditional Chinese hierarchy social order. However, these previous researchers didn't underline a major diversification. While Yang mentioned missionaries, he no longer used the Chinese ethnocentrism word 'Yi' or barbarians, and adopt the appellation of 'Xiyang' (Western) and 'Xiyangren' (Westerner). Yang called Schall von Bell a 'Xiyangren' from his first accusation *Qingzhu Xiejiao Zhuang*, and continually used it, while didn't applied the usage of ethnocentrism concepts (Yang, 2000). Although they held the same opinion upon the missionaries, they applied a different word-choosing, reflecting the changing in situation and cognition of conservative Scholar-officials in Qing dynasty compared with late Ming period.

Many factors are related with this transformation in thinking pattern (Xie, 2002; Han, 2011; Tan, 2013). First, although Manchu was not the first nation politic power to conquer China, they still face task of proofing its legitimacy to the Sino scholar-official personality group. The advanced astronomy knowledge and technology was a great tool to both grasp the legitimation proof and at the same time to dampen Sino Confucian scholars and officials. This helped them to hold an official position never owned by any other foreigner groups. Second, while Yang Guangxian was supported by Aobai the assist chancellor who in the young Kangxi's period practically control the royal court. But the emperor rapidly grown and successfully defeated Aobai in his fifteen. The missionaries were in his side to fight against Yang Guangxian and other conservative scholar-officials in the ideology war. As a result, the relation with the dominant was conversed in the early Qing period. Not only the emperor had realized the peculiar value of these westerners, Yang Guangxian was also not in the place to belittle them. This is not only because he served Mancho conquerors who was not long before a remoted ethnic group regarded as barbarians, but also for that when Yang was appointed to work in the national observatory, he also relied on the Arab astronomers' knowledge, which kept a better accuracy then the traditional Chinese calendar followers. All this helped to form a further

more independent image of missionaries and the western culture and religious they represented for. To some extent, the forming of this word-choosing symbolized that the Western culture and religious thought had at the time got rid of the constraint from the Chinese ethnocentrism order and won its own unique characteristic as a civilization in the mind of Confucian intellectuals, even in the conservative part of them.

However, this situation didn't maintain for a long time. When Qing entered the prosperous Kangxi period, the emperor Kangxi had succeeded to help both Manchu and himself to stabilize the regime, he gradually felt the existence of the missionaries is a hindrance. So Kangxi started to exclude the missionaries, establishing the authority by his own learning. Just in time, Pope instructed Jesuits in China to severely revise their preach strategy. Missionaries are required to forbidden the ancestor veneration ceremony. The rule established by Ricci and followed by Schall von Bell was overruled. When Kangxi realized this change, he forbidden the preaching of Catholicism in the mainland China. All churches were closed, and the activity of missionaries was greatly restricted (Ma & Guan, 2013).

The situation continued until the warships crashed China's coast defense in Opium War. However, the small amount of understanding of Western society formed during late Ming and early Qing period had returned to the conservative and self-protecting ones. Even in the eyes of progressive Wei Yuan's *Haiguo Tuzhi*, Western was back to the status of 'Yi', while the strategy of China towards Western returned to the old backward scheme.

Conclusion: The changed and unchanged in Ming and Qing conservative Scholars' thought

As is known, the China image described by Ricci played a particular role in the occurrence of Enlightenment. The atheism China society with an orderly moral life amazed Leibniz and the Encyclopédiste, causing their suspicious towards the necessity of god for Westerners themselves (Sun, 1996). Although the successors of them, from Hegel to Marx and Weber, had formed a stagnate image of east world and China, they always regarded it as a crucial 'other', or to say as a contrast while considering the Western society. It's fair to say that in the Western world, the self-regarding word 'Western' is in most times a concept under the compare perspective with the 'eastern', which may regard to a wide arrange of places from little Asia, mid-east to China and Japan. While in China, however, regarding 'Western' as a different type of existence from themselves is a relatively recent and reluctant idea. The major aiming of this research is to show that along with the influence of the social-political background and missionary activity, 'Western' had once get rid of the 'Yi' or barbarian definition and became an independent object in the image of Confucianism scholars and officials.. However the situation vanished before it had ever been deep enough to become institutionalized. The reflection and relativization of Chinese culture tradition had seldom been an easy work. Even until these days after the thoroughly reflection of traditional Chinese culture in the May Fourth Movement and the Culture Revolution, this lacking of self-relativization still affects. While they appeal for an end of the ancient 'Hua-Yi' hierarchy image of international relationship, applying a progressive idea within the dual opposition of tradition and modern, they didn't ever reach a real opposition image of 'east - west', and stopped on the compromise idea of 'Center (Sino) - west'.

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