

PREFACE

The Matteo Ricci commemoration year 2010 provided both the incentive and occasion to focus attention on the manifold aspects of the emergence of a thorough and unique intellectual and scientific exchange between Europe and China from the 16th to 18th centuries. The *Bodensee-Institut für Interkulturelle Zusammenarbeit und Bildung (BIIB)*, in partnership with the *East Asian Seminar* of Zurich University, mounted an exhibition in the Lichthof at Zurich University with the title *Europa trifft China – China trifft Europa*. Simultaneously, an accompanying international symposium was held at the same venue on June 14th and 15th 2010, under the title: *Europe in China – China in Europe: Science and Technology as a vehicle to inter-cultural dialogue*. Using an interdisciplinary approach, history and sinology scholars from America, China and Europe focused on the relationship between the Jesuit mission led by Matteo Ricci and the outset of the reception of Western scientific disciplines in China (Geography, Geometry, Astronomy and Mechanics), as well as, conversely, on the spreading of knowledge about China in Europe.

That the Jesuits, following the milestones set by the lifelong engagement of Matteo Ricci, were able to make a breach on the universal level of scientific and artistic exchange, and thanks to the apparent particularity of their missionary commitment over the period of two centuries, arouses astonishment and provokes further reflection. Matteo Ricci's appreciative attitude towards the roots of Chinese intellectual traditions and his philosophically and humanly credible testimony for a culture of friendship and understanding stem directly from the mature character and balanced personality of Matteo Ricci himself. Nonetheless these merits are also based on the wider intellectual horizon of the Italian Renaissance philosophy in which he grew up and which, in continuation of Marsilio Ficino and Agostino Steuco, matured under the concept of *Philosophia Perennis* and *Prisca Theologia* an intellectual attitude of highest regard toward different major ancient cultures of the world. This attitude, following a universally open concept of divine manifestation in history, was bent on finding and salvaging surprising vestiges and treasures of the original Revelation of God in the roots of alien cultures.¹

Notwithstanding some deficiencies the specific quality of the Jesuits' self-conscious but respectful approach towards Chinese cultural roots appears more clearly if compared with the disdainful attitude of European colonialism especially in the 19th century. This fact was elucidated during the Zurich Symposium by Prof. Benjamin Elman in a keynote address on the Macartney Mission and its later interpretation.

1 Cf. Charles Bernhard Schmitt: "Prisca Theologia e Philosophia Perennis: due temi del Rinascimento italiano e la loro fortuna", in: Giovannangiola Tarugi (ed.), *Il pensiero italiano del Rinascimento e il tempo nostro*, atti del V convegno internazionale del centro di studi umanistici Montepulciano, palazzo Tarugi, 8–13 agosto 1968, Firenze 1970, S. 211–236.

The following proceedings of the symposium *Europe in China – China in Europe* gather together contributions which deepen the understanding of the scientific and missionary engagement of Matteo Ricci and his followers. Supplementary contributions illuminating the historical and technical environment and the forms of reception of the China Mission in Europe are also presented. While Michela *Fontana* and Artur K. *Wardega* focus their attention on the deeds and accomplishments of Matteo Ricci, *Xu Wenmin* and *Yu Sanle* bring almost unknown Jesuits and China missionaries from Switzerland to our notice: Nikolaus *Fiva* from Fribourg and Franz *Stadlin* from Zug. In her profound article, Claudia *von Collani* gives an insight into the role of women in the China Mission and the special reception of that role in Europe through the instance of Lady Candida *Xu*. Erich *Zettl* in an article on the Jesuit painter Ignaz *Sichelbarth*, is illustrating in a fascinating and exemplary way the artistic side of the Jesuits' commitment at the court of the emperor in the 18th century. In a comparative and well-documented article, Peter F. *Tschudin* expounds the history of paper production, which was eminently significant for the Christian mission and the success of scientific exchange. Two succinct articles by Jean-Pierre *Voiret* follow. In the first he takes position on the decisive question of the scientific and cultural development of China before the Jesuits' arrival and in the second he highlights the problems of the reception of Chinese thought in the West through examples of missionary interpretations of the Daodejing. In a short appendix Jean-Pierre *Voiret* reveals the existence of a remarkable collection in Zurich of western books and maps about China printed in early modern times.

I wish to express deep gratitude to Dr. Jean-Pierre *Voiret* (president of the BIIB until 2010) for his remarkable zeal; and also to his successor Prof. Dr. Erich *Zettl* who, with extraordinary diligence, planned the completion of the exhibition as well as the splendid catalogue.² Prof. Dr. Robert *Gassmann* and Prof. Dr. Wolfgang *Beer* from the Institute of East Asian Studies of Zurich University, who generously provided broad support for the symposium, both merit very special thanks. For the same reason I am also very grateful to the Swiss Jesuit Province. Moreover, I am particularly thankful to Priv.-Doz. Dr. Ulrich *van der Heyden* for his decision to include this publication in the series "Missionsgeschichtliches Archiv". I am sincerely grateful to Prof. Dr. Jackie *Pocklington* and Mr. Charles *Gallo* B.A. for the careful correction of several English texts. Finally I wish to express particular gratitude to the coordinator of the symposium Mr. Alois *Osterwalder*; without whose open-minded initiative and indefatigable support, exhibition and symposium would never have been successfully brought to fruition.

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Paul Widmer

2 Europa trifft China – China trifft Europa. Eine Ausstellung zum 400. Todestag von Matteo Ricci, Lichthof der Universität Zürich 24. Mai bis 3. Juli 2010, Ausstellungsführer, Texte und Bildauswahl von Erich *Zettl* und Jean-Pierre *Voiret*, hg. vom Bodensee-Institut für Interkulturelle Bildung und Zusammenarbeit, Goldach 2010.