

Mutual encounters and linguistic exchanges

— A comparative approach to Ricci and Ruggieri's *Dicionário*

Yu Yating

Abstract:

The exploration of the Chinese language by missionaries is recognised as an important foundation of European Sinology. Previous studies on the history of Chinese missionary linguistics have focused on the early missionaries' contribution to the analysis of Chinese grammar, such as Martino Martini's (Wei Kuanguo 衛匡國, 1614–1661) *Grammatica Sinica* (漢語語法), Francisco Varo's (Wan Jiguo 萬濟國, 1627–1687) *Arte de la lengua Mandarina* (官話文典) and Joseph Henri Marie de Prémare's (Ma Ruose 馬若瑟, 1666–1736) *Notitia Linguae Sinicae* (漢語割記). This notwithstanding, much less attention has been devoted to early missionaries' research of dialects, to determine the concept of "standard" Chinese. In this paper, I analyse some lexical features of the *Dicionário Português-Chinês* (Portuguese–Chinese Dictionary, 1583–1588), composed by Michele Ruggieri (Luo Mingjian 羅明堅, 1543–1607) and Matteo Ricci (Li Madou 利瑪竇, 1552–1610). I argue that both authors creatively and intelligently adapted Western rhetoric to their Chinese writings, to make Christianity more accessible to their different audiences in China. To conclude, I discuss some linguistic features of the Chinese style adopted by Ricci and Ruggieri in their *Dicionário*; as the first European–Chinese dictionary written, it can be considered the main instrument to show that rhetoric played a major role in the shaping of Jesuits' language and readers from late Ming to Qing China.

Keywords: Ricci and Ruggieri's *Dicionário*; linguistic exchanges; Chinese;

1. Introduction

Many studies have focused on how the Chinese language by missionaries is recognised as an important foundation of European Sinology, and Uchida Keiichi has made many outstanding contributions in this area.¹⁾ Existing research, however, does not put much focus on how rhetoric played a major role in the shaping of Jesuits' language and readers from late Ming to Qing China.²⁾

Cicero (Marcus Tullius Cicero, 106 BC–43 BC), the pioneer of rhetoric in ancient Rome, used rhetoric to convince his audience. Later on, Saint Augustine (Augustine of Hippo, 354–430) in the *De Doctrina Christiana* (The Christian Doctrine), extended the concept of Ciceronian rhetoric to religious speeches, proposing high, middle and low levels, also known as “majestic” (high), “mild” (temperate) and “low” (subdued) styles. The ultimate purpose of Saint Augustine's theory is explaining the true meaning of God's faith. The simplest truth can be “majestic”; on the other hand, the most complex truth can also be explained in “low” style rhetoric, namely, by applying the subdued style. The most telling document where the marriage of casuistry with classical rhetorical tradition can be traced is the codification of Jesuit pedagogy, the *Ratio Studiorum* (1599).³⁾ It is in the *Ratio Studiorum*'s study plan that we can see the educational background of the Society of Jesus can be traced back to Ciceronian classical rhetorical roots. Moreover, in the period when Ruggieri and Ricci sailed eastbound, rhetoric had already become part of Jesuit curricula,⁴⁾ as evidenced in some texts composed by Jesuit

missionaries in China, which mention the concept of *rhetoric*.

Interestingly, the “colloquial” nature of Cicero’s rhetoric is translated as *wen* 文 in the texts of Alfonso Vagnone (Gao Yizhi 高一志, 1566-1640), Giulio Aleni (Ai Rulüe 艾儒略, 1582-1649) and Francisco Furtado (Fu Fanji 傅汎際, 1589-1653).⁵⁾ We can, therefore, assume that they all knew that the core concept of rhetoric should be changed from colloquial, that is, spoken Chinese, to written Chinese. With this, their focus shifted from spoken to written language; this repositioning can still be traced in their Chinese writings and translations. Specifically, Aleni, Vagnone, and Furtado tend to adopt in their translations a transliteration of the term *rhetoric*. As for Louis Antoine de Poirot (He Qingtai 賀清泰, 1735-1813),⁶⁾ he was the first missionary to apply the concept of rhetoric, rooted in the Ciceronian tradition, to the Bible; Poirot mentioned that he deliberately used “plain language” to translate the Bible. From *Xixue* 西學 (Western Learning) to *Guxin shengjing* 古新聖經 (The Old and New Testament), we can understand how Jesuits perceived the importance of “text”, that is, the written language, in China. Poirot here forms an exception, as he insisted that the “word of God” should be spread to the general public by intentionally using vernacular language, to convey Christianity from the Bible directly to his Chinese readership.

The earliest presence of such a phenomenon can be traced back to Matteo Ricci.⁷⁾ Ricci noticed how eloquence, in Chinese, is found in written rather than in spoken form. Furthermore, he mentioned Isocrates, who had a reputation among the Greeks for the eloquence of his writings. Ricci’s words show how he embodies both the European and Chinese experiences.

百步之遠，聲不相聞，而寓書以通，即兩人者睽居幾萬里之外，且相問答談論如對坐焉；百世之後人未生，吾未能知其何人，而以此文也令萬世之後可達己意，如同世而在百世之前。⁸⁾

People separated by two places can also communicate in words. People after a hundred years can also know my opinions through my writings, just like in the same period.

In agreement with the statement above, Jesuits realised that the core concept of rhetoric — to use the power of speech to convince and to persuade — should be transferred from the spoken to the written word. They figured out that books in China were not islands isolated from each other; rather, they knew how to use texts as “mute preachers”⁹⁾ to spread their message among the Chinese cultured elite.

2. Ricci and Ruggieri’s *Dicionário*

As D’Elia pointed out,¹⁰⁾ Ruggieri and Ricci’s manuscript comprises 189 folio entries on Chinese paper, 26 x 16.5 cm, of which ff. 32r to 156v are the glossary proper, in three columns. The first column shows a ca. 6,600-entry Portuguese alphabetical headword list, with some phrases and short sentences, and occasional explicatory synonyms in Latin or Italian, from *aba de vestidura* to *zunir a orelha*. The second column comprises romanisations, supposedly written by Ricci.¹¹⁾ The third column lists Chinese character translation. The fourth column appears but only on a few folio pages, with on ff. 32r–34r, equivalents in Italian, also supposedly written by Ruggieri.¹²⁾

Through an analysis of the romanisation system, it has been suggested¹³⁾ that Ruggieri and Ricci’s dictionary was based on spoken

Chinese. In this respect, I will focus on the grammar introduced in their dictionary on the one hand, and on the other hand, on the Southern dialect terms that provide information on the cultural and linguistic background of Ricci and Ruggieri.

3. Chinese grammatical peculiarities in the *Dicionário*

3.1 Entries including *de* 的

I have noticed several peculiar Chinese uses of the grammatical marker *de* 的 in Ruggieri and Ricci's dictionary. If a lemma is representing an action, then, when this action is nominalised, there are two ways Ruggieri and Ricci translated it from Portuguese to Chinese. One is (1) Verb+, such as in (32r) *abanar* (to fan) 打扇 / (32r) *abanador* (fanner, winnower) 打扇的, and in (35v) *adivinhar* (to guess, to decipher) 估 / (35v) *adivinha* (fortune teller) 會估 會估卜的. Other similar examples can be read below:

(127r) *passar* (to pass) 过 / (127r) *passageiro* (passenger) 渡主 搭船的

(129v) *peregrinar* (to wander) 進香 / (129v) *peregrino* (pilgrim) 進香的

(138r) *reformatar* (to reform) 修整 / (138r) *reformador* (reformer) 修整的

(148r) *telhar* (to tile a roof) 盖瓦 / (148r) *telheiro* (roofer) 做瓦的

(148v) *testemunhar* (to testify) 証見 / (148v) *testemunho* (testimony) 証見的

The other is (2) Verb+Noun+, as in (81r) *despensa* (larder, pantry / a room or cupboard where food is stored in a house) 庫房¹⁴⁾ / (81r)

despenseiro (pantryman) 庫子 管庫房的 or (126v), *Paō* (bread) 麵包¹⁵⁾ / (126r) *padeiro* (baker) 賣麵包的。

Analogous examples are:

(132v) *portal* (portal) 門樓 / (132v) *porteiro* (porter, doorkeeper) 把門的

(153v) *vender* (to sell, to trade, barter, hawk) 賣換貿易 / *vendedor* (seller) 商家 賣貨的

(154v) *velar* (to watch, to keep an eye upon) 守 / *vela, vigia* (candle, lookout) 守更的 知更的

Ruggieri and Ricci tend to use the form Verb+的 to indicate the main subject of the action. In addition to this, an expansion of their use of this construction can be observed in their *Dicionário*, such as the replacement of the Verb+的 structure with the term 商家 to define *vendedor* (153v). This could be evidence of the improvement of their Chinese language proficiency as time went by.

Consider the lemma *despensa* (81r) 庫房; terms of the *Dicionário* only appeared in *Baike xunshi* 拜客訓示 (*Instruction Pour les Visites de Mandarins*, 1610),¹⁶⁾ a text that contains questions and answers, explaining the methods and details of the daily work of Christianity to Chinese servants, including dialogues between Jesuit priests and their Chinese servants and friends. In the work, it is possible to see how Jesuits introduced European habits to Chinese people and how they learnt foreign traditions in China. In *Baike xunshi*, 庫房 also means pantry; this and analogous terms from the *Dicionário* were not included in any other publication by Ricci.

3.2 The standard representation of “了”

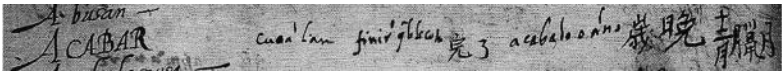
Another remarkable peculiarity is the use of “了”. Ruggieri and Ricci expressed Portuguese verbs and Portuguese adjectives in Chinese in the form Verb+了, to convey the meaning of completion, with the lemma still retaining the meaning of the verb; this is the so-called “Real Verb-Resultative Complement”.¹⁷⁾ About the use of 了, in the *Dicionário* the transcription provided is usually “liau”, except for the entry *olhar* (124r) 望見了, annotated as “unge. ua”.

Examples of Portuguese verbs in Chinese in the form Verb+了 are numerous, such as (32v) *abituado*¹⁸⁾ (to accustom oneself) 慣了, (33v) *acabar* (to end) 完了, (124r) *olhar* (to look, to view) 看見 望見了, and (129v) *perder* (to lose) 打失 不見了. In the latter, in particular, the romanisation is not provided for 不見了.

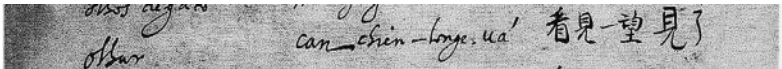
(32v)



(33v)



(124r)



(129v)



Portuguese adjectives rendered in Chinese in the form Verb+了 are also numerous: (32r) *abalado* (moved) 動了, (110v) *ladrilhada* (tiled) 砌了, (135v) *quebrado* (broken) 破了 斷了 壞了 不好了, and (136r) *queimado* (burnt) 燒了 焚了 燒毀 焚燒.

3.3 Religious entries¹⁹⁾

On the other hand, when interpreting religious entries, we see that Ruggieri and Ricci chose terms already in use in China, although some entries had no corresponding Chinese terms; in such instances, I use an “X” mark, as with (48r) *Ave Maria* (Hail Mary) X and (52r) *Bispo* (Bishop) X.

(32v) *Abismo* (abyss) 地獄 Inferno liberamente della prigione²⁰⁾

(40v) *altar* (altar) 神臺

(48r) *Ave Maria* (Hail Mary) X

(50v) *barete* (cap, a cleric’s biretta) 帽子

(51v) *bemafortunado* (blessed, happy, fortunate) 神仙

(51v) *bemaventurança* (bliss, supreme, blessedness, exalted happiness) 好造化 好命

(52r) *Bispo* (Bishop) X

(63v) *criador* (creator) 天主生萬物

(64r) *Crux Cruxuficio* (Crucifix) 十字

(104v) *Freyra* (Nun) 尼姑

(108r) *igresia* (church) 寺

(124v) *orar* (to pray) 念經 誦經

(124v) *oração* (prayer, sermon) 經

(124v) *oratorio* (oratory / a place for private worship) 神臺 神龕

(124v) *ordinação* (ordering, ordinance ordination) 法度 禁令

- (126v) *Padre* (Priest) 僧, 野僧
 (127r) *Paraiso* (Paradise) 天霆
 (127r) *Paraiso terreal* (Terrestrial paradise) 佛國
 (131r) *polo de ceo* (a pole in heaven) 天之樞
 (142v) *Santo* (Holy) 仙
 (143v) *Seita* (Sect) 教門

In particular, in the entry of the Portuguese word (32v) *Abismo* (abyss) 地獄, an explanation in Italian is added in the fourth column: *Inferno liberamente della prigione*, meaning “released from prison hell”. One can also note that some Chinese characters differ from their original meaning; this is the case of (51v) *bemafortunado* (blessed, happy, fortunate) 神仙, and (51v) *bemaventurança* (bliss, blessedness, exalted happiness) 好造化好命. At times, Chinese characters are not provided; this is the case of (48r) *Ave maria* (Hail Mary) and of (52r) *Bispo* (bishop). In addition, it is evident that Ruggieri and Ricci employed numerous Buddhist and Taoist words to illustrate relevant concepts of Christianity. There are two reasons for their choice. The first is that they could not find a corresponding term to define referents of Christianity; the second is that they explained new meanings by adopting old terms, trying progressively to convince Chinese people to accept Christianity.

3.4 The *Dicionário* and the Ming dynasty background

In the *Dicionário* we can see entries that are consistent with the background of the Ming dynasty that reflect the influence of Southern dialects. For example, (39r) *alcoveitar* (to procure) 忘八 烏龜, and (137v) *refiáo* (pimp) 忘八 烏龜. From the Ming to late Qing dynasty, 忘

八 烏龜 meant procure. The term can be also found in *Ershi nian mudu zhi guai xianzhuang* 二十年目睹之怪現狀 (Bizarre happenings eyewitnessed over two decades), chapter 11: “述農道:『這沒有甚麼蹊蹺, 不過他出身微賤, 聽說還是個王八, 所以沒有甚人去理他』”. Moreover, there are two different graphical versions of the character “龜”, showing that Ricci and Ruggeri considered it as two different words, or suggesting the presence of both at the same time in Chinese written texts.

On the other hand, in (41v) *amigo de vinho* (wine friend/drinking friend), the Chinese characters provided are “要食酒²¹ 好飲”. In the Fuzhou dialect, the verb 喝 corresponds to 食, for example, we have “食茶”, “食開水” and so on (食酒 in the dictionary meaning 喝酒). The lemma (55v) *cadeira do Rei* (chair of the King) 金交椅²² can also be found in *Shui hu zhuan* 水滸傳 (Water Margin), chapter 119: “方臘領著內侍近臣, 在幫源洞頂上, 看見殺了方傑, 三軍潰亂, 情知事急, 一腳踢翻了金交椅, 便望深山中奔走”. As for (137v) *refalsado* (falso) 光棍, we all know that the contemporary meaning of 光棍 is a single man. Of course, in the past the term had a different meaning, namely a liar, a connotation also used very frequently in contemporary Cantonese dialect. See for example *Chuke pai'an jingqi* 初刻拍案驚奇 (Striking the table at the wondrous stories, first series), chapter 27: “元來臨安的光棍, 欺王公遠方人”, or also *Rulin waishi* 儒林外史 (The scholars), chapter 46: “恐怕是外方的甚麼光棍, 打著太尊的旗號, 到處來騙人的錢”.

3.5 Other entries

Other entries in the dictionary are also interesting:

(39r) *alcovetera* (procurer, pimp) 鴇母 妓女 女淫媒 嫖子

(52r) *bicho* (any unspecified animal, esp. bugs, insects or worms) 龍

(52r) *bichinho* (little bug, insect, worm) 虫

(52v) *bofe* (lung) 羊牯

Studies have suggested that Portuguese entries such as (39r) *alcovetera* and (52b) *bofe* are Arabic loanwords,²³⁾ showing that words of the *Dicionário* are not only limited to Portuguese and Chinese.

Particularly interesting is the term (52b) *bicho*, meaning bug, insect or worm; however, Ruggieri and Ricci translated it into “龍”. An analogous example can also be found in Emmanuel Diaz (Yang Manuo 陽瑪諾, 1574-1659)’s *Shengjing zhijie* 聖經直解 (Direct explanation of the Bible), who uses the term to describe the serpent in a biblical context:

Gospel of John’s Chapter 3

經 聖若翰第三篇: 且若每瑟舉銅龍於曠野, 予然當被舉。

3:14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of man be lifted up.

However, the reasons why Ruggieri and Ricci translated the term into “dragon” need to be further studied.

4. Concluding remarks

The missionaries who arrived in China at the end of the sixteenth century realised very early on that to embark on the enterprise of spreading the Christian faith through the Celestial Empire, they would need to learn the Chinese language, both in its spoken and written forms. Ruggieri and Ricci’s dictionary was the first example of inventories of collected terms; entries in the dictionary are lists of words arranged in

columns and accompanied by an approximate indication of their pronunciation and meaning.

After analysing some terms from Ruggieri and Ricci's dictionary, I compared the Chinese characters and studied the relevant constructions, such as Verb+的, Verb+Noun+的 and Verb+了, and other spoken terms appearing in the dictionary, with the terminology adopted by Ricci in other works. I found that the terms of the Portuguese-Chinese dictionary only appeared in *Baike xunshi* 拜客訓示, a text explaining the methods and details of the daily work of Christianity to Chinese servants; these terms were not included in any other publication by Ricci. The question I posed is: are the terms from the dictionary evidence of a change in Ricci's writing style? In fact, 的 and the Real Verb-Resultative Complement of 了, in the high-level writing style should be represented by 之 and 也. Such a circumstance reflects the "cultural imperative" put forward by Erik Zürcher.²⁴⁾ the work of the Jesuits indeed demonstrated a method of evangelisation starting from the administrative centre and the highly-educated level of literati. We can, therefore, conclude that Ricci knew how to face different readers, and consequently chose different ways of writing to meet their, and his, needs.

Notes

- 1) I would like to thank the editors for giving me an opportunity to contribute to this special volume honouring Professor Uchida Keiichi. This article is my way of thanking him for guiding me from the very beginning of my academic life.
- 2) Special thanks to the Ricci Institute for Chinese-Western Culture History at the University of San Francisco, which provided a scholarship and primary resources for my research.
- 3) Robert Aleksander Maryks, *Saint Cicero and the Jesuits: The Influence of the*

- Liberal Arts on the Adoption of Moral Probabilism* (Routledge: London, 2008), p. 83.
- 4) Li Sher-Shiueh 李爽學, “Rhetorica and Exemplum: The Genesis of Christian Literature in Late Imperial China”, *Religion*, vol. 10, no. 8, 2019, p. 465.
 - 5) Li Sher-Shiueh, *Zhongguo wan Ming yu Ouzhou wenxue — Ming mo Yesuhui gudian xing zhengdao gushi kaoquan* 中國晚明與歐洲文學——明末耶穌會古典型證道故事考詮 (Sanlian shudian: Beijing, revised edition, 2010), pp. 25-42.
 - 6) Jesuit painter and missionary who worked for the emperor Qianlong at the beginning of the nineteenth century. *Guxin Shengjing* is a translation of the Bible composed in the second half of the eighteenth century. It adopted the *Vulgate* as source text, translating this Latin version of the Bible into vernacular Chinese (*baihua*); the text, though, was never published.
 - 7) Nicolas Trigault, Matteo Ricci, Louis J. Gallagher S. J. (trans.), *China in the Sixteenth Century: The Journals of Matthew Ricci: 1583-1610*. (New York: Random House, 1953), pp. 27-28.
 - 8) Li Madou 利瑪竇, “Shu wen zeng you bo cheng zi 述文贈幼博程子”, in *Li Madou zhongwen zhuyi ji* 利瑪竇中文著譯集, ed. Zhu Weizheng 朱維錚 (Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong Press, 2001), p. 314.
 - 9) Wu Hsin-Fang 吳欣芳, *Wu sheng de shuofazhe: Li Madou de zhushu guocheng yu duzhe lijie* 無聲的說法者：利瑪竇的著書過程與讀者理解. Ph.D. dissertation, National Taiwan University, 2009.
 - 10) Pasquale Maria D’Elia, S.J., “Il primo dizionario europeo-cinese e la fonetizzazione italiana del cinese”, in *Atti del XIX Congresso Internazionale degli Orientalisti* (Rome: Tipografia del Senato, G. Bardi, 1938), pp. 173.
 - 11) *Ibidem*.
 - 12) *Ibidem*.
 - 13) Yang Fu-mian 楊福綿, “Li Madou dui Zhongguo yuyanxue de gongxian 利瑪竇對中國語言學的貢獻”, *Kung Kao Po* 公教報, 1983, January 7, p. 24; January 14, p. 20.
 - 14) According to the Modern Chinese Scientific Terminologies database, the term can be also found in Kwong Ki-chiu (Kuang Qizhao), *Hua Ying zidian jicheng: English and Chinese Dictionary*, 7ed. Hong Kong 1923 (first edition 1882): “庫房 ku-fang: treasury”. The term is also found in *The Journey to The West* (Chapter 23): 「這都是倉房、庫房、碾房各房，還不會到那廚房邊哩」 ku-fang (庫房): the

- house where the items are stored.
- 15) According to the Modern Chinese Scientific Terminologies database, the term can be also found in Kwong Ki-chiu, *Hua Ying zidian jicheng: English and Chinese Dictionary*, 7ed. Hong Kong 1923 (first edition 1882): “麵包爐 mian-bao-lu: oven” and in Dai Hongci, Duan Fang, *Lieguo zhengyao* (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan 1907): “麵包 mian-bao: bread”.
 - 16) *Instruction Pour les Visites de Mandarins*, Caja 101, China (II), N. 33 (Lg. 1042.14) (stored in Archivo Histórico de la Provincia de Toledo de la Compañía de Jesús). Kindly provided by Prof. Yuchung Lee 李毓中.
 - 17) See Wang Li 王力, *Hanyu shi gao* 漢語史稿 (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1958 [revised edition: 1980]); Mei Zulin 梅祖麟, “Xiandai hanyu wanchengmao jushi he ciwei de lai yuan 現代漢語完成貌句式和詞尾的來源”, *Yuyan yanjiu* 語言研究, 1981, vol. 1, pp. 65-77; Cao Guangshun 曹廣順, “Shi lun hanyu dongtai zhuci de xingcheng guocheng 試論漢語動態助詞的形成過程”, *Hanyu shi yanjiu jikan* 漢語史研究集刊, 2000, vol. 2, pp. 74-89; Wu Fuxiang 吳福祥, “Chongtan ‘dong+le+bin’ geshi de lai yuan he wanchengti zhuci ‘liao’ de chansheng 重談「動+了+賓」格式的來源和完成體助詞「了」的產生”, *Zhongguo yuwen* 中國語文, 1998, vol. 6, pp. 452-462; Ota Tazuo 太田辰夫, *Chugokugo rekishi bunpo* 中國語歷史文法 (Tokyo: Hoyu shoten, 2013).
 - 18) Also spelled as *habituado*=*habituarse*.
 - 19) For other religious terms, refer to Zhang Xiping 張西平, “Jianlun Luo Mingjian he Li Madou dui jindai hanyu shuyu de gongxian - Yi hanyu shenxue yu zhexue wailaici yanjiu wei zhongxin 簡論羅明堅和利瑪竇對近代漢語術語的貢獻 —— 以漢語神學與哲學外來詞研究為中心”, *Guizhou Social Sciences* 2013, vol. 283, no. 7, pp. 121-130.
 - 20) The entry is in Italian.
 - 21) According to Wenzhi gaige chubanshe 文字改革出版社, *Fangyan yu putonghua jikan* 方言與普通話集刊 (Beijing: Dir. Office Galler, 1958, vol. 4, p. 4) 柳子厚《序飲》: “吾病瘡不能食酒, 至是醉焉”;《漢書·卷七一·于定國傳》: “定國食酒至數石不亂”.
 - 22) Golden Chair: in the *Water Margin*, it metaphorically indicates a powerful position or a very high status. After Songjiang came to Liangshan, Yu Gai insisted Songjiang should be the master of the cottage, sitting on the Golden Chair as a return to his life-saving grace.

- 23) For other Arabic loanwords refer to Joseph Abraham Levi, “The Ricci-Ruggieri Dicionário Europeu-Chinês: Linguistic and Philological Notes on Some Portuguese and Italian Entries”, in *Studies in Chinese and Sino-Tibetan Linguistics: Dialect, Phonology, Transcription and Text* 漢語與漢藏語研究：方言、音韻與文獻, ed. Richard VanNess Simmons and Newell Ann Van Auken (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 2014), pp. 343-366.
- 24) Erik Zürcher, “Jesuit Accommodation and the Chinese Cultural Imperative”, in David E. Mungello (ed.), *The Chinese Rites Controversy: Its History and Meaning*, Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1994, pp. 31-64.

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