In a famous late Ming collection of Chinese calligraphy and graphics entitled *The Cheng's Ink Garden* (1606), compiled by the publisher and ink stone connoisseur Cheng Dayue, we find a set of pictures drawn from biblical stories, each accompanied by a commentary printed in vertical lines in both Chinese characters and their corresponding romanization. The first of these pictures depicts St. Peter walking on the waves (ill. 1), and its commentary reads:

Believing, he walks on the sea;—doubting, he sinks forthwith.

After the Lord of Heaven was born on earth and had taken human form to spread his teaching to the world, he first shared his teachings with twelve holy followers. The first of these was called Bo-do-lo. One day, Bo-do-lo was on a boat when he saw the distant outline of the Lord of Heaven standing on the seashore, so he said to him, "If you are the Lord, bid me walk on the water and not sink." The Lord so instructed him. But as he began to walk he saw the wild wind lashing up the waves, and his heart filled with doubt, and he began to sink. The Lord reached out his hand to him, saying: "Your faith is small, why did you doubt?"

A man who has strong faith in the Way can walk on the yielding water as if on solid rock, but if he goes back to doubting, then the water will go back to its true nature, and how can he stay brave? When the wise man follows heaven's decrees, fire does not burn him, a sword does not cut him, water does not drown him. Why should wind or waves worry him? This first follower doubted so that we might believe; one man's moment of doubt can serve to end the doubts of all those millions who come after him. If he had not been

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*This paper is drawn from my larger project, *Making a Difference: The Cultural Politics of Miracles and Learned Discourse in the Early Jesuit Mission to China* (forthcoming). Part of my research for the paper was completed at Harvard University under the supervision of my dissertation advisors Professors John E. Murdoch and Wei-ming Tu, while another part was developed during my postdoctoral work at the Center for Chinese Studies, University of California at Berkeley. Hence my deepest gratitude is to my dissertation advisors and professors Wen-hsin Yeh, Frederick Wakeman, Lydia Liu, and a few other colleagues at Berkeley whose expertise and critical insights helped me shape my project in extremely fruitful ways.

1 St. Matthew 14, 25-33; St. John 21, 4-7.
Right and above: Matteo Ricci, S.J., and the illustration of St. Peter's flagging faith (1606). Reprint from Tao Xiang (ed.): Sheyung mocui (Beijing, 1929)
made to doubt, our faith would have been without foundation. Therefore we
give thanks for his faith as we give thanks for his doubt.  

At the time of writing, the author of these lines, Matteo Ricci (Li Madou, 1552-1610), founder of the Jesuit Chinese mission, had been in China for some twenty-three years, and, since his successful entry into the capital city of the Ming Empire Beijing in 1600, had been comfortably ensconced in an elite circle of court officials, aspiring scholars awaiting imperial appointments, and other learned celebrities like Cheng Dayue, whose “extraordinary love of antiquity and knowledge of refined things” Ricci applauded in his epilogue. The vocabulary of both his commentaries and the epilogue leaves no room for doubt that he was addressing a sophisticated, primarily Confucian, readership.

In theory, there is of course nothing surprising about a Catholic missionary explaining miracles to the heathens and extolling before them God’s supernatural powers. But to find this kind of proselytizing occurring in the context of the Chinese élite must needs come to us as a surprise. For according to the traditional understanding of the matter, the Jesuits posed not as priests but as “Scholars from the West.” The available scholarship seems to agree that their strategy consisted in employing mathematics, cartography, astronomy, and other parts of Western learning as the chief missionary instruments, and in presenting these as a kind of “Heavenly Studies,” into which their basic religious doctrines concerning the Heavenly Lord could, as it were, conveniently be smuggled in. Conversely, when it comes to their preaching proper, we often read about how they set the rare example of cultural accommodation within the larger context of the “brutal ethnocentrism of the European expansion over the earth”:3 on the level

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of doctrines, so we read, they tried to indigenize Christianity through appropriating classical Confucian terms and ideas; and in logistics, they concentrated on the Christian doctrines which could be demonstrated by rational arguments, while refraining from speaking about mysteries and the revealed truths of Christianity, for fear that they might disturb the Confucian aversion for things supernatural.\(^4\)

The recent flowering of studies on the Jesuit mission from the Chinese perspective, notably the splendid works by Jacques Gernet on the anti-Jesuit polemics and by Erik Zürcher on the Chinese Christian community in the late Ming Fujian province,\(^5\) brings out the prominent role played by faith—faith in the Lord of Heaven’s superior power to exorcise demons, foretell the future, and inflict or heal diseases, among other things—in defining the religious identity of early Chinese Christians. However, such developments have been interpreted as unintentional consequences due either to misunderstandings on the part of the Chinese converts (Gernet) or to the Christian hybridization with Chinese popular heterodox cults and rituals initiated by the converts themselves, a process of which the Jesuits had at best marginal control, if any (Zürcher).

Though appreciative of these studies, I am nevertheless convinced that, first of all, the major types of miraculous tales circulated among the Chinese converts can be traced to the Jesuits’ own examples and to their “calculated advertisements.” Second, it can be shown that the discourse about God, demons, and miracles had never been peripheral to the Jesuit scheme of conversion but instead occupied a central role both in their daily encounters with the Chinese and in their scholarly publications. Such an emphasis

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\(^4\) The *locus classicus* of this Confucian distaste is a statement in the Confucian Analects: “The Master did not talk about marvels, feats of strength, irregularities, and spirits” (Analects 7/21). It is worth noting that Confucius consistently discouraged his disciples from pursuing topics regarding ghosts and spirits, afterlife, and supernatural phenomena in general. See, for example, Analects 3/12; 11/12; and 6/22.

on the supernatural, while rendered possible by the intellectual and spiritual sentiments of the Chinese the Jesuits encountered, was in fact directly dictated by the desire to compete with the Daoist and Buddhist rivals and to demonstrate the superior efficacy of the Christian religion and of its omnipotent God.

But as shall be shown in the following, this program not only motivated the Jesuits’ campaign against rivalling Chinese religions and practices and their introduction of Western science and scholarship, but it also limited it at the same time, by forcing the missionaries to introduce double standards and contradictions into their scientific writings. Indeed, rather than simply cultivating science and a rational spirit in China, they seem to have been primarily preoccupied with fashioning a new religious cult(ure) which, though often coated with scientific or scholastic formulae, would often not constitute any real break with the Chinese religious beliefs and practices they alleged to supplant. In what follows I will try to argue these points using primarily the sources from the onset of the Jesuit mission to the fall of the Ming Empire (1583 to 1644).6

1. Chinese Demonology and Jesuit Exorcism

Both by their own choice and by sheer historical necessity, the Jesuits had to cope with the Confucians, who were running the gigan-

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tic Chinese bureaucracy at all levels. Wherever they went, the missionaries were at the mercy of the local magistrates, who could expel them with the smallest excuse. The late Ming was certainly not a propitious time for any foreign visitors, as they were easy targets of suspicion and malicious rumors due to the many maritime crises China was experiencing, such as the constant piracy on its eastern coast and Japan’s military expeditions into Korea. For the officials concerned with their own career prospects, associations with the Jesuits were at best inconvenient, at worst dangerous. Above all, in front of their foreign visitors, they seemed to be impossibly proud and content, both intellectually and culturally. And yet, as if by dint of a divine miracle, they were not without their Achilles’ heels: some of them, for example, were afraid of ghosts and demons.

It is true that the discourse of the supernatural had been censored by Confucius (551-479 BCE), who urged his disciples to concentrate on socially more constructive projects: “To work at doing right for the people and to be reverent to the ghosts and spirits but keep them at a distance may be called wisdom” (Analects 6/22). However, while his censorship might have curbed active pursuits of such topics among his followers, it certainly did not curb their fear and awe for the unknown world of spiritual beings. The robust Confucian rationalism also had its inherent antidote, because one of its core proposals for maintaining social order, from the state to the family, was the rigid observance of various sacrificial rituals to honor Heaven and Earth, the natural spirits, and ancestors. Although the philosophers, Yin Yang cosmologists, and medical authors of the Warring States period (480-221 BCE) had already begun to naturalize the spiritual realm in terms of the subtle working of qi, the cosmic energy, the archaic animism which had been inscribed in the Confucian rites not only continued to thrive in the imaginary space of the common folk, but also found its way into Confucian cosmological and moral discourses.

Thus, Zhu Xi (1130-1200), the foremost proponent of Song Neo-Confucianism, dismissed the existence of the thunder-god, only to embrace a modified version of it: arguing that thunder is caused by the yin and yang qi clashing against each other, he nevertheless added that in the course of thunder-strike a large amount of qi was condensed to form a hatchet. What is more, he also hinted at the possibility that the hatchet possesses a certain
degree of consciousness, thereby building a bridge to the folkloristic world view of his time. Zhu’s exposition of the meaning of ancestral rites offers another classical example of the inherent ambiguity in Confucian thought. Like the Neo-Confucian philosophers before him, Zhu believed that the human spirit is an aggregate of yin and yang qi, which ceases to exist after death as its yin component descends to the earth and its yang component ascends to Heaven to join once more the cycle of cosmic transformation. However, he argued that when a sacrifice is being offered, the dispersed qi of the ancestral spirits is reconvened through the mutual attraction and response between the qi of the ancestors and of the descendants, since they are qualitatively the same qi. Based on this principle of mutual correspondence, Zhu’s disciple Chen Chun (1159-1223) defended the ancient teaching that “spiritual beings will not accept the sacrifice of people not their kin, and people should not sacrifice to spiritual beings not belonging to their clan.”

To highlight the importance of “kindred spirits,” he cited as evidence a ghost story recorded in the Han dynasty, in which the master of an élite family reported that when he was making offerings to his ancestors, he saw a government official dressed in an ornate official robe standing outside the door and not daring to come in, whereas a ghost with disheveled hair and stripped to the waist, a butcher knife in hand, confidently strode in to accept the sacrifice. Chen commented that the master of the family did not know that he was the son of the butcher and had been merely adopted into a scholarly family in early childhood.

Indeed, the deeper we delve into the rich texture of the Confucian tradition, the more we are compelled to recognize the discord between its philosophical doctrines and its ritual practices, and the pervasiveness of a popular-religious culture in the lived experiences and mental working of the Confucian practitioners. Talk about what constituted the Confucian attitude towards the super-

7 “Although thunder is merely qi, when qi is condensed, it must take on a concrete form. For example, the rainbow (didong) is nothing but a shadow formed by sunlight falling upon layers of light rain. However, since it has a physical form, it is therefore capable of sucking up water and wine. If it happens to fall in someone’s house, it may do good or evil things.” Zhu Xi, Zhuzi yulei (Assorted Sayings of Master Zhu) (Beijing, 1986), II: 24.

8 Zuo Zhuan, Duke Xi, 10th year, section 3. Translation cited from Wing-tsit Chan (tr.), Neo-Confucian Terms Explained (The Pei-hsi tz-u-i) by Ch’en Ch’ün, 1159-1223 (New York, 1986), 150.

9 Wing-tsit Chan (tr.), Neo-Confucian Terms Explained, 151.
natural becomes thereby ever less clear. Speaking of late Ming Confucians, we need to take into account yet another major cultural dynamic of the time—the vogue of *exotica* running rampant within the Confucian scholar-élite, which generated an unprecedented interest in objects of, and stories about, rarities, anomalies, and divine or demonic marvels, and inspired an ever more intense fear of, and curiosity about, the supernatural.

It is no mere coincidence, therefore, that one of the earliest Jesuit observations about China was that the Chinese officials were very much terrified by demons. Ricci's elder colleague Michele Ruggieri (Luo Mingjian, 1543-1607), who was the first Jesuit to have reached inland China, was appreciably excited as he reported to the Jesuit General in Rome about this discovery:

One day when we were visiting the Governor, he asked us: "Are you afraid of demons? Can you get rid of them?" We answered: "With the help of our Lord of Heaven, we are not afraid of demons. We can also invoke the power of our Lord to drive them away from the bodies of humans or from people's homes." I surmise that the reason he asked us about this is because his own residence, not very far from his office building, had been haunted by demons; this nice old man, already over seventy, was so scared by them that he dared not stay in his home. So he hoped that we would be able to get the demons out of his home (for good).10

The conversation recorded here serves as a vivid reminder of how the Jesuits charted their course upon their *début* in China. Given that the Portuguese merchants in Macao were treated with much suspicion and contempt by the Chinese officials, the missionaries lost no time proclaiming their religious identity and their lofty ideals: "We belong to an order of religious men who adore the King of Heaven as the one true God. We come from the very utmost reaches of the west and it has taken us some three or four years to reach the Kingdom of China, to which we were attracted by the renown and glory of its name."11 They begged the Chinese local official to allow them to stay and build a small house for divine worship, somewhere away from the noisy traffic of the merchants and profane distractions in Macao.

On the part of the Chinese officials, religious men had certain functions to perform in society, and handling demons and the like would be one of them. Though Ruggieri's response to the Gover-

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nor was a promise calculated to invite greater opportunities, in this negotiation process he did not overstretch his own principles, for exorcism was a familiar and comfortable task to perform for Catholic priests. Had not his fellow Jesuits in England been called upon to do just that so as to defend the exclusive legitimacy of Catholicism?\(^\text{12}\)

Soon it became evident that the Jesuits took on demons in far more dimensions than the Chinese had known. In their first Chinese catechism, *Tianzhu shilu* (The Veritable Record of the Lord of Heaven, 1584), composed by Ruggieri in collaboration with Ricci, the Jesuits introduced the basic Christian doctrines, mysteries, and moral precepts, centering upon the binary opposition of God vs. demons, good vs. evil, Christianity vs. idolatries and superstitions, and Heaven vs. Hell. They told the story about how demons came to be: in the beginning, God created three realms of being—the angels (*tianren*, literally, “Heavenly Men”), human beings, and the corporeal substances. As for the angels, they were purely spiritual, invisible, and extraordinarily intelligent, their caliber far exceeding that of the humans. Because of their un failing perseverance, once they set their minds on doing good, they never fell short of accomplishing it. Therefore, God commanded them to guide human beings to do good, and made it known that people who succeeded in following the angels’ examples would be rewarded with eternal happiness in some heavenly afterlife. However, Lucifer, the most brilliant and handsome angel to whom God entrusted the authority over all the other angels, had been coveting the exclusive authority of God. One day, he asked the angels: “I am practically the commander of Heaven, Earth, humans, and the myriad things, should not I be treated the same as the Lord of Heaven?” Some of the angels responded: “Yes.” Enraged by such arrogance, God expelled Lucifer and his followers from Heaven and condemned them to be demons (*mogui*, literally “demons and ghosts”). One third of all the angels were banished: those who sinned most severely were imprisoned in Hell, and the rest were placed half-way from Heaven, to a place to which sunshine never penetrates. Holding a deep grudge against God, the demons were

\(^{12}\) For the (in)famous incident of Jesuit exorcism in Elizabethan England, see S. Harsnett, *A Declaration of egregious Popish Imposters, to withdraw the harts of her Majesties Subjects from their allegiance, and from the truth of Christian religion professed in England, under the pretence of casting out deuils* (London, 1603).
determined to take revenge by luring human beings to evil; and
in so doing they also fulfilled their wish to get more slaves for
themselves, for eternal suffering in Hell was God's punishment for
the souls of sinners.\textsuperscript{13}

To be sure, these were not exactly the demons that the Chinese
were talking about. In traditional Chinese folklore, the demons
dwelt down here at the margin of human communities. Like Luci-
fer and his gang, they possessed supernatural powers—transcend-
ing spatial boundaries or physical forms, capable of metamor-
phoses, of reading people's thoughts, remote-sensing, entering
human bodies, and producing wonders, but they acquired these
powers not by dint of divine creation but as a result of natural
transformation. Except for the vagabond souls of persons who had
died of injustice or other unnatural causes, which were presumed
not to have dissipated immediately but continued to cohere for a
short period of time, all the other categories of demons were natu-
ral spirits (jing, literally, "essence") populating the imaginary world
that had evolved from Chinese archaic animism and was subse-
quently elaborated through Daoist alchemy. They were everywhere
in nature: those formed of the essences of the five elemental forces
(metal, wood, water, fire, and earth); of the breath of mountains
and rivers; of the essences of animals, plants, grasses, and stones.\textsuperscript{14}
One might say that they constituted nature's counterpart of the
Daoist immortals, for just as the latter rose above their human
conditions through purification and alchemical procedures, by
which they completely transformed the yin or coarse element in
their physical constitution into a refined essence, animals and
plants of extraordinary age or even lasting inanimate objects could
also acquire spiritual powers of varying degrees through naturally
accumulating the refined essences in nature, a mechanism in full
accord with qihua, the transformation of qi, in traditional Chinese
cosmology. Furthermore, these demons were not necessarily asso-

\textsuperscript{13} M. Ruggieri and M. Ricci, T\textit{ianzhu shilu} (The True Record of the Lord of
Heaven, 1584) (Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, Jap.Sin. 1, 189), 16a-17b.

\textsuperscript{14} A Ming manual of practical advice for daily living offers the following in-
struction: "Travelling through the mountains, you may often be harassed by moun-
tain spirits and ghosts. Some of them can transform themselves and appear as
humans. Therefore, you should hang a clear, nine-inch-long mirror on your back,
so as to avoid all evil spirits. For, although these spirits can change their forms,
they cannot do so in the mirror; therefore, when they see their real form in the
mirror, they will disappear, not daring to harm you." Cited from \textit{Chinese Civiliza-
ciated with evil: some were more mischievous than harmful; some
frequently transformed into human forms in order to steal human
esses to aid their own alchemical process, but not necessarily
with fatal consequences for their victims; still others used their
powers of producing wonders to harm or reward human beings in
order to maintain control over them. Demons, therefore, were a
great source of fear for the Chinese because of their destructive
potentials, not because they were eternal agents of evil and immo-
rality. 15

The Jesuits were not unaware of such differences, but they were
ready to account for the whole realm of fearful demonic phenom-
ena in the Chinese imagination simply by saying that although
demons were spiritual, invisible beings, "they can take on certain
images to render themselves visible in order to frighten people." 16
For the Chinese who read the Jesuits' catechism, not only did their
original fears remain as real as ever, but they also acquired new
sources of fear, for they were told that even the gods they had so
far worshipped as auspicious were equally demonic. In the chap-
ter on "Why People Mistake Other Things for the Lord of
Heaven," the authors confuted the Confucian worship of Heaven
and Earth, Buddhist idolatry, and popular cults. They argued that
the Confucians were mistaken because they did not pursue truth
deeply enough—not knowing that the Lord of Heaven was the real
author of rain, they directed their gratitude to Heaven itself; in
comparison, all the others who worshipped idols had sinned by a
much greater measure, because they had been deluded by de-
mons, whose sole happiness lay in estranging human beings from
God:

Some may ask, if Buddha Amitabha is not the possessor of the Dao, how is it
that when people make a wish to his statue it often comes true? I should say
that this is because a demon is hiding inside Buddha's statue. In order to

15 The traditional Chinese belief in natural spirits is an understudied area in
the history of Chinese religions or sciences; most of the studies related to it have
been done by historians of Chinese literature in connection with the literary
genre called zhiguai, "Writings about the Strange." The observations in this pas-
sage are drawn from my paper, "Myths, Reality, and Myths Again: The Nature of
Nature in Xie Zhaozhe's Wuzazu" (forthcoming), and a few other sources, espe-
cially R. Ford Campany, Strange Writing: Anomaly Accounts in Early Medieval China
(Albany, 1996); J. Zeitlin, Historians of the Strange: Pu Song-ling and the Chinese Clas-
sical Tale (Stanford, 1993); and D. Johnson (ed.), Ritual and Scripture in Chinese

16 Ruggieri and Ricci, Tianzhu shilu, 17b.
dupe and lure people, demons make things happen as if Buddha himself has responded to their wishes. Why does the Lord of Heaven condone them instead of exterminating them? The reason is that when people commit wrong-doing, the Lord of Heaven will not help them, and so the demons are able to encroach on them. In high antiquity, human beings were very naive and did not recognize the Lord of Heaven. Some people, seeing that there were others who had greater power and fame than themselves, carved, after those people had died, their statues and put them in temples as tokens of commemoration. As time passed by, people started to go to the temples to burn incense and paper, as if those temples were the proper places for making wishes. Demons have always been seeking opportunities to seduce people to sin; therefore, they simply stay in the temples in order to fulfill people’s wishes. The souls of people who adore these evil gods, will be condemned to Hell after they die, to be enslaved by the demons, which is what makes the demons happy.¹⁷

That the Jesuits should devote so much of their preaching to discussing demons is not surprising given the tremendous spell that demons had held over the minds of the Chinese populace. In fact, in the contest between Daoism and Buddhism which lasted over one and a half millennia, both parties sought to win over the common folk by demonstrating their superior powers of subduing demons. None of them, however, seemed to have developed a doctrine of demonizing the other.¹⁸ As newcomers, the Jesuits were forced to compete with them, but instead of simply entering an already ongoing battle, they redefined the battlefield.

Certainly, they did not ignore the conventional task of expelling demons. Whether or not Ruggieri delivered what he promised to the Governor remains a mystery to us; what we do know, however, is that very early in the mission the Jesuits already earned for themselves a big name as demon-subduers among scholars and commoners alike. In fact, their fame helped them greatly in 1599, when Ricci came to the Ming southern capital Nanjing and was looking for a permanent mission residence in the city. He found himself in a doubly frustrating situation: not only was he disappointed by the houses available for sale, but even in the case that

¹⁷ Ibid., 12a-b.
¹⁸ The Jesuit interpretation of the relationship between demons and the founders of Buddhism and Daoism seemed too complicated and confusing to some Chinese. For example, one author in the anti-Jesuit polemic collection, Shengchao puxieji (Collected Documents on Countering Heterodoxy in the Sacred Dynasty, 1639), said that he was told by the missionary Giulio Aleni on one occasion that Lucifer was Buddha, the King of Hell, and on another, that Buddha was a mere human being, an ascetic who lived in Asia Minor; upon which the author raises the question: “How could a human being be a devil?” Xu Changzhi (ed.), Shengchao puxieji (Japanese reprint, 1855), the fourth fascicle, 28a.
a suitable object should have been found, it looked unlikely that any official would have taken the personal responsibility of issuing a residential permit. At this critical juncture, an official of the Bureau of Public Works, Liu Douxu, who had publicly commended Ricci's writings at a scholars' gathering, came and introduced himself to Ricci. He told Ricci that a few years ago he had built a palace at public expense for the staff of his tribunal. But no sooner had they moved in that demons had taken possession of it, so that no one could live there unscathed; nor had he been able to find a buyer, however low the price he demanded. Having heard that Ricci had come to the city and was looking for a house to stay permanently, he saw the perfect opportunity to settle both Ricci's and his own problems and offered to sell his house to Ricci at only half of the construction cost. The house was located in the highest part of the city, far away from flood areas, and was also large enough to accommodate ten missionaries. It was wonderful in all respects except for the cuts and scratches left on the walls and pillars by the Daoist exorcists in their many rounds of exorcism. Thanks to the influence of the seller, Ricci also obtained a residential permit almost instantly. The second half of the story as recorded in Ricci's journals is about how they expelled the demons—this time as a service strictly to themselves:

The first night they occupied the house, the Fathers recited appropriate prayers at an altar erected in the main parlor and went through the whole building, carrying a crucifix and sprinkling holy water, and from that time on, with God's grace favoring the spread of the faith in China, the evil spirits made no further appearance. He to whom all beings are subject had permitted the evil spirits to inhabit this house in order to prepare it for the coming of His servants, and when they came the spirits were driven out of it. This story spread through the whole city and afterwards throughout the whole kingdom, with the result that respect for the faith was greatly increased.\(^\text{19}\)

The exorcising procedure was completed in a rather quiet manner, in sharp contrast to the highly dramatized Catholic exorcist routines of contemporary Europe and the equally theatrical Daoist exorcist rituals in China. As for the latter, Ricci made the following observation in his journals:

The special duty of the ministers of this group (the Daoists) is to drive demons from homes by means of incantations. This is done in two different ways; by covering the walls of the house with pictures of horrid monsters drawn in ink on yellow paper and by filling the house with a bedlam of un-

\(^{19}\) Gallagher, *China in the 16th Century*, 347.
canny yelling and screaming and in this manner making demons of themselves.\textsuperscript{20}

Had the Jesuits followed the elaborate Catholic exorcist rituals which often included sessions of intimidating and interrogating the demons and hence yelling and screaming, they would not have appeared very much different to Chinese observers than the Daoists.\textsuperscript{21} This may explain why nearly all the cases of exorcism performed by the missionaries were conducted in a calm, though no less mysterious, manner. They included reciting prayers, drawing the holy names and hanging sacred pictures and relics on the wall of the house or on the body of the demoniac, and sprinkling holy water. In the early years of the mission, these low-key procedures were perhaps not considered “exorcism” proper by the Jesuits themselves, for in one instance recorded for the period before or during 1589, one of Ricci’s colleagues in the Shaozhou missionary residence (Guangdong province) was called upon to treat a demoniac, only to conclude that it was not a real case of demonic possession, and so he decided not to perform an exorcism. But what he did for the patient was not much different from the later cases where the involvement of demons was accepted, for he “ordered [the family] to take down all the horrible pictures of monsters which had been attached to the walls [by a Daoist exorcist] and toburn them. Then he recited some prayers and suspended a little reliquary, containing a holy relic, about the neck of the afflicted and went away.” \textsuperscript{22}

As the mission progressed, exorcising demons became a prominent theme of the evolving Chinese Catholic community life. The converts who performed exorcism added much dramatic detail such as interrogating and scolding demons to the more quiet Chinese routine of the Jesuits. One of the cases reported by the Jesuits involved five converts acting collectively in front of a large crowd of unbelievers, and it was said that the demoniac, a boy, began to bang his head onto the wall even before the exorcist band made their way onto the stage and that at the end of the session everybody in the audience joined in the chiding and scold-

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 103.
\textsuperscript{21} For an excellent treatment of the exorcist rituals performed by Catholic priests against the background of Protestant Reformation, see D. P. Walker, \textit{Unclean Spirits}: Possession and exorcism in France and England in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries (Philadelphia, 1981).
\textsuperscript{22} Gallagher, \textit{China in the 16th Century}, 203; Ricci, \textit{Fonti Ricciane}, N. 314.
ing of the possessing demon. One interesting development in this nascent exorcist culture is the assimilation of traditional Chinese demon lore into the narratives of these tales. A story which appeared in both Ricci’s letter to the Jesuit General of 1607 and in Nicolas Trigault’s (Jin Nige, 1577-1628) supplement to Ricci’s journals described how a mischievous demon was persistently seducing a young woman to sin: he appeared as a merchant, as a temple minister, as an old man, and then as a youth. He constantly harassed her, even set fire to the surroundings of her house and then looked on as her neighbors busily put out the fire. When a monk was summoned to exorcise the demon, a small altar was set up on the rooftop of her house, on which were placed a candle light and some Buddhist scriptures. The demon jumped up and smashed all the objects onto the ground. When the woman’s family finally decided to convert to Christianity and had her baptized, the demon was forced to leave the house, though still yelling in the courtyard. Rather than concluding that such developments of hybridization were the “last thing the missionaries themselves wanted to take place,” I would suggest that Ricci and his colleagues celebrated their victory through recounting such a development, for the more terrible the demons appeared, the more effectively they testified to the power of their subduer, the Christian God. Nor was this development too much of a surprise for the missionaries themselves. For had not Ruggieri and Ricci clearly stated, in their first Chinese catechism, that demons, though invisible, were able to take on various forms in order to intimidate people?

A much more dramatic measure taken by the Jesuits in their campaign against demons was directed at their religious embodiments—Buddhism, Daoism, and other Chinese popular cults and practices. It consisted, first of all, of iconoclasm in the literal sense—the smashing of idols and burning of Buddhist scriptures, Daoist texts, and manuals of divinatory arts, among other things. As Ricci related in a letter to F. De Fabj in 1605, conversion to

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24 Ibid., 319-20; Gallagher, China in the 16th Century, 544-5. This story seems to incorporate certain features of a popular immoral cult of wutung, a mountain demon whose favors could be bought by offering to his desires the wife or daughter of the house.
Christianity was ritualistically accompanied by the smashing and burning of idols, which at times implied great financial losses on the part of the converts, because religious icons, manuscripts, and other objects were a major category of collectibles in China, and many (especially rich) families had spent substantial fortunes over several generations to procure them. “Knowing that some who plan to convert give away their idols and books, and some others whose new faith was still wavering hesitated to abandon their idols, from the start, we warned them that they should not give the idols away as gifts or sell their metal icons, that these objects should not be kept, and that they must either destroy these things personally or bring them over and let us destroy them.” Ricci counted among his hardest-won converts a well-reputed Confucian scholar, Li Yingshi, “the greatest or second-greatest mathematician of Beijing,” who was equally famous for his divinatory skills. Ricci said that it was not easy to convince him that all his predictions were a fraud, because things often went exactly the way he predicted. However, after correcting “many of his mistakes in mathematics and other sciences and showing him many truths he had never heard before,” Ricci was able to persuade him that whenever his fortune-telling came true, it was always due to demons’ trickery; “thereupon he was awakened, as it were, from profound slumber.” Following his baptism, Li with the help of the missionaries purged his library of all the books and manuscripts on divination and other forbidden subjects, the burning of which lasted three full days.

The story about Li’s conversion is very instructive as to how smoothly the Jesuits were able to steer conversations across areas which lay disjoined within the Chinese intellectual landscape—“mathematics and the sciences” and the discussion on demons. It was precisely their ability to create an integrated Christian discourse and push it through the diverse sectors of Chinese society, thought, and culture—elitist and popular, ideas and practices, and religious sensibilities and rational inquiries—that allowed the Jesuits to deliver fatal blows to their religious rivals. Most alarmed by the sweeping impact of their iconoclastic campaigns were the Buddhists who, at the same time when the Jesuits converted village after village of their former patrons and thereby threatened the

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27 Ricci, Fonti Ricciane, N. 693; Gallagher, China in the 16th Century, 434.
livelihoods of some of their mendicants and icon vendors, they found themselves frequently challenged in scholarly salons and published forums by the Jesuits to defend their faith on rational and scientific grounds. One of the episodes Ricci recorded in his journals tells how, in a debate with a Buddhist erudite at a scholars' banquet in 1599, he invalidated the latter's demonstrative method which was based on Buddhist scriptures, declaring the following rule to be valid in disputation:

Our arguments must be drawn from reason, not from authority. Since we disagree in doctrine and neither of us admits the validity of the books of the other, and since I could quote any number of examples from my books, our argument is now to be settled by reason which is common to us both.

Not surprisingly, what Ricci understood to be the "reason which is common to us both" was inseparable from the contemporary Western, particularly the scholastic, repertoire of knowledge. His second catechism and most representative Chinese work, *Tianzhu shiyi* (The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven, 1603), made an all-round assault on Buddhism, mocking its merely human founder, the "lowly and mean" culture of its origin, and the unscientificity of its canonical writings. The Chinese Buddhist doctrine of reincarnation teaches that human beings accumulate "credits" in this life through their daily thought and conduct, which will then be carried on to their next life and determine the destination of their reincarnation in one of the six realms of being—hell, hungry ghosts, animals, malevolent spirits, human beings, or gods. Arguing from Aristotelian psychology, Ricci pointed out that this doctrine profoundly confused the qualitative differences between categories of being. He recapitulated the theory of the three souls—the vegetative, sentient, and intellectual souls—according to which each of the three souls possesses distinctive functions manifested through the appearance and behavior of plants, animals, and human beings, respectively. He said that it was the soul to determine the nature of a living being as it defined the optimal structure and the functions for each body; it was therefore impossible for a human soul to fit into the body of an animal or

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even that of another human being. "These truths are so obvious," Ricci concluded, "yet Buddhists perversely assert that the souls of birds and beasts are intelligent just as men’s are—an assertion which is too irrational for words."\textsuperscript{31} Likewise, Ricci found the details of Buddhist canons completely indefensible:

In the canonical writings of the Lord of Heaven not even half a sentence can be false. How could the Lord of Heaven cheat men by transmitting false doctrines? The false canonical writings of the heterodox are filled with fantasies too numerous to count and thus could not have come from the Lord of Heaven. For example, they say that at night the sun is hidden behind Mount Sumeru; that there are four continents in the world which are floating on the ocean, half rising above sea level and half submerged. They also state that Arhan covered the sun and moon with his left and right hands, and that this caused an eclipse of the sun and the moon. These are all matters to do with astronomy and geography of which \[the people of\] India have in fact no understanding. Our learned men of the West ridicule them and disdain to argue these matters with them.\textsuperscript{32}

This line of attack was also adopted by some Chinese Christians who were formerly lay Buddhists or Buddhist enthusiasts. In his essay, "Pi shishi zhuwang" (Refutation of Various Buddhist Fallacies, 1615?), Xu Guangqi (1562-1633), the highest officeholder among the Jesuit converts, brought forth one more interesting point. According to one Chinese Buddhist sect, Pure Land Buddhism, a person only needs to keep reciting the name of Buddha Amitabha in order to be reborn in the paradise of the West, the Pure Land, through the transformation of a lotus flower. Xu criticizes:

It is said (in the \textit{Lù’s Spring and Autumn Annals}) that Yiying was born inside the hollow of a mulberry tree \textit{(kongsang)}. The Confucians found this incredible and interpreted \textit{kongsang} as the name of a place. How would they be able to believe that a lotus flower can give birth to human beings? Even when the Lord on High was born into this world, he had to be born by the most virtuous and kind human being, the Holy Virgin Ma-li-ya, and not of some propitious clouds or lucky stars, so how much less possible is it (for anyone to be born) of a lotus flower? Besides, what do the Buddhists value more, lotus or human beings? If they hold lotus to be more valuable, why not just let lotus beget lotus? If they think human beings are still more precious, then why not have human beings reborn from immaculate humans, rather than from some lotus which has no senses?\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 251.  
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 395, translation modified.  
Besides, Xu said, "there are only two places, Heaven and Hell, awaiting human beings in the afterlife. The earth is a globe on which there is no 'Western Pure Land.'" 34 Xu's refutation of Buddhism is ruthlessly naturalistic; for him, there is no supernatural truth which can be exempted from the razor of his newly acquired Western science, in this case, the sciences concerning the vegetative and intellectual souls and the globe. The Jesuits had introduced the mystery of Jesus' parthenogenesis by the Virgin Mary 35 as well as the Christianized model of a cosmos made up of concentric, crystalline spheres, with Heaven lying on the outermost layer of the universe and Hell buried in the depths of the earth; for their converts, these, too, became scientific rather than supernatural truths. Seen from this point of view, the fantastic Pure Land of the Buddhists compared indeed poorly to Christianity.

The Jesuits' introduction of a scholastic metaphysics of being and of an Aristotelian psychology proved to be fruitful in the campaign against the animistic world view that hid behind many popular religious beliefs. The Jesuits themselves, however, did not pursue this topic in any substantial way; rather, preoccupied with the opposite problem—the disbelief in a God separable from Heaven and Earth, in the immortality of the soul, and in the existence of spirits and ghosts that had been so strongly denied in the texts of some Neo-Confucian philosophers—they primarily employed these Western theories to demonstrate the insurmountable gaps between God and his creation, and between human beings, whose soul was created by God and was immortal, and animals, whose soul was educed from the matter of their body and died with their body. Some of their converts used the teleological conception of a

34 Ibid., I: 63.
35 When Ruggieri and Ricci wrote Tianzhu shilu (The Veritable Record of the Lord of Heaven, 1584), they felt the need to render this mystery intelligible to the Chinese by means of an analogy: "This is much like what happens when the sunlight enters a glass bottle: the sunlight gets in, but the bottle is not broken." However, when Ricci wrote the Tianzhu shiyi (The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven, 1603), he no longer dwelled on the mechanism of parthenogenesis but simply took it for granted. See Tianzhu shilu, 32a; The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven, 449. Later, the Jesuit missionary Giulio Aleni (Ai Rulue 1582-1649) offered another metaphor to shed light on this mystery: "Take for example the grafting of pear onto a peach tree: although the pear makes use of the peach tree in order to grow, the peach does not contribute its own essence to the pear." See his "Sanshan lunxue ji" (Learned Conversations in Sanshan) (1628), in Wu Xiangxiang (ed.), Tianzhujiao dongchuan wenxian xubian (Documents concerning the Spread of Catholicism to the East) (Taipei, 1966), I: 483-4.
created world order, in which each category of being possesses its distinct nature and fulfills a distinct cosmic role, to reorganize the porous boundaries among the myriad things in the traditional Chinese view of nature. Yang Tingyun (1562-1627), for example, in his treatise *Tian shi mingbian* (On the clear distinction between Catholicism and Buddhism), emphasized that only human beings were endowed with intelligence and that the behavior of animals (for example, the apparent social order among bees and ants), which had traditionally been taken as a sign of their intellect and moral judgment, did not come from their free will but from their basic instincts and natures, just as flowing downward and not upward is part of the nature of water. He therefore dismissed the so-called "four spiritual animals"—unicorn, phoenix, tortoise, and dragon—as a myth rather than reality. In fact, he added, "today, not even a single unicorn, phoenix, and dragon can be found. As for the tortoises, if they really are intelligent and able to divine, why don't they escape their own fate of being trapped in the net and undergoing the pain of having seventy-two holes drilled into their shells?"

The Jesuit critique of Chinese divination and other "superstitions" was directed mainly at the underlying philosophy of life—fatalism. In their Chinese writings addressing this matter, the Jesuits emphasized that nothing in the created order—neither spiritual beings nor stars and other natural objects—had the power to determine human destiny. Fortune or misfortune was God's retribution for our good or bad deeds; therefore, it is what we inflicted upon ourselves. The Jesuits emphasized that nothing in the created order—neither spiritual beings nor stars and other natural objects—had the power to determine human destiny. Fortune or misfortune was God's retribution for our good or bad deeds; therefore, it is what we inflicted upon ourselves.

In the ninth chapter of his treatise on Christian morals published in Beijing in 1608, *Jiren shipian* (Ten Chapters by the Stranger), Ricci utilized the soundest reasoning possible to demystify the seemingly miraculous correspondences between divination and actual events. In addition to sheer coincidence, divin-

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37 Ibid., I: 291.
38 The major Jesuit writings to have tackled the theme of Chinese divination and superstitions are Ricci's *Jiren shipian* (Ten Chapters by the Stranger) (1608, reprinted in 1883) and Alfonso Vagnoni's (Wang Fengsu; Gao Yizhi, 1566-1640) "Zizhou oubian" (Cursory Remarks on Consultations with Diviners) (n.d.). The latter is included in Zhong Mingdan et al. (eds.), *Xujiahui rangshulou ming qing tianzhujiao wenxian* (Documents concerning Ming and Qing Catholicism at the Xujiahui Library), I: 475-490.
ers' trickery, and demonic assistance, he also highlighted the effects of human psychology, the power of self-suggestion and emotions, in bringing about the events predicted. Ricci recounted a conversation he had had with a Chinese friend while he was still residing in the south. He said that one day the friend came to bid him good-bye, his eyes full of tears. Ricci asked where he was going, and the friend told him that he was going to die, because five years before he had consulted an astrologer of extraordinary skills, who predicted that he would die in April of this year. Now the time had come, and he felt miserable about having to leave his young child behind. Ricci was both sorry and alarmed as he witnessed the tremendous distress the astrologer had inflicted on his friend, who was still young and strong. To correct his friend's mistaken trust in fortune-telling and to warn him of its evil consequences, Ricci went into the physiological mechanism of emotions, explaining that "the whole body's well-being is hinged upon the heart...When a person is caught by worry and fear, regardless of whether or not there is any real situation calling for such worry and fear, the blood and vital breath will rush from the limbs to the heart to provide protection." "Therefore," he said, "when a person is in fear, his face turns green and white and his limbs tremble, because all the blood has gone to the heart. If the fear is too intense, the blood will flow to the heart too rapidly, blocking the entry of vital breath into the heart, which may cause fatal consequences." Ricci cited as evidence an experiment done by a doctor in medieval Europe, in which the doctor selected a subject from a group of criminals sentenced to death, blindfolded him and made him believe, by means of suggestions and sound effects, that his blood was being drawn through a small needle that caused no pain. By the time the doctor reported that his blood was filling up the eighth cup, the criminal had already died, even though the doctor had hardly touched his skin.

We have seen how the Jesuits' campaign against demons took them from the homes of demoniacs to the scholarly salons and printing houses. What needs to be stressed here is that the discourse on demons played a crucial role in the Jesuits' scheme of redirecting the devotional energies and religious sensibilities of the Chinese away from their traditional foci of attachment and

39 Ricci's Jiren shipian, II: 27a.
40 Ibid., II: 28a-b.
toward the Christian God. As a result of their redefinition, demons emerged as the ultimate source of fear in every department of life; they were everywhere—in nature, in the mind, in the display of traditional customs, and in the idols that the Chinese used to cherish. Indeed, the road down to Hell was wide open. As Ricci's junior colleague Diego de Pantoja (Pang Diwo, 1571-1618) wrote in his moral tract, qike (Seven Victories), "the world is full of webs and traps deployed by the demons to capture human beings." There is only one virtue that can save us all—the virtue of humility and unconditional submission to the almighty God.

2. God and Miracles

The thrill produced by Jesuit exorcism among Chinese scholars and villagers alike tells much about late Ming Chinese spiritual life. Despite its deep-rooted Sinocentrism, China was pulsating with vigor, curiosity, and utilitarian drives. As fine cultural interpreters, the Jesuits quickly grasped in which direction their future success would lie, namely in the fashioning of marvels and miracles. In fact, producing marvels could begin in the act of self-mythologizing. The Jesuits arrived barely ten years after the publication of the tremendously popular fiction, Xiyou ji (The Journey to the West), which revived the legend about Xuanzang's (602-664) perilous encounters with demons on his pilgrimage to India in search of Buddhist scriptures. And as if this history had come true in reverse order, the Jesuits emerged on the scene, with gilded, embroidered scriptures in their hands. The Jesuits were not totally unaware of what was being staged for them. In fact, to make themselves better fit into the legendary aura, they narrated their journey to China as nothing short of a miracle. Thus, Ruggieri, eager to join the ranks of his Chinese literati friends, presented the following poem to them:


42 In his Yilin (The Forest of the Strange), Zhi Yunjian described Matteo Ricci's arrival in a vocabulary characteristic of the late Ming exotica: "Li Madou came to China from the Great Western Sea.... He brought with him numerous items of rare treasures, among which the most remarkable was a golden square, about one chi in length. It can be unfolded and read leaf after leaf. This is their Scripture of the Lord of Heaven." Cited in Sun Shangyang, jidujiao yu mingmo ruxue (Christianity and late Ming Confucianism) (Beijing, 1994), 141.
I travel from the Far West to India.
A trip of over three years I valiantly began.
Time and again I study the works of the great past,
And communicate the sacred religion to the laity.  

Ever since these exaggerated representations made at their Chinese début, the Jesuits continued to spread the myth that they had been at sea for three or four years, crossing a distance of over eighty thousand li, whereas in reality it had taken Ruggieri and his fellow Jesuits merely six months to sail from Lisbon to Goa, India, and a short while afterwards to Macao. Meanwhile, the details of their voyages also became more elaborate and dramatic. Diego de Pantoja, for one, described his trip as “like dying nine times in one life,” Giulio Aleni, for another, said that he had “endured numerous ordeals and hardships, passed through lands populated by cannibalists and kidnappers, and sustained the greatest peril and suffering” just to bring the Gospel to China. By 1661, when a group of high-ranking officials of the Qing court and renowned scholars convened to celebrate Adam Schall’s (Tang Ruowang, 1592-1666) seventieth birthday, one of them presented an essay in commemoration of Schall’s heroic journey. For several years in a row, he wrote, the Master had been sailing through soaring waves, menacing fish and dragons, piercing cliffs, and the neighborhood of demons and ghosts, and yet he had remained safe and sound as if he had been walking on level grounds. “Evidently,” the author concludes, “the Master is he whom water does not drown and fire does not burn.”

Between Xuanzang’s miraculous journey and St. Peter’s walking on the waves, there was perhaps a qualitative gap in terms of faith, but for the Chinese, whose interest in religion was primarily pragmatic, the fascination with the one could be easily transposed onto the other. What also contributed to the success of the Jesuit myth-making is that as much as the late Ming social energy was channelled towards the wondrous, the potency of the Daoist priests, who had been traditionally filling the roles of wonder-workers, was

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44 One li equals to half of a kilometer.
45 Pantoja, qike, “Author’s preface,” 713.
46 Aleni, “Sanshan lunxue ji” (Learned Conversations in Sanshan), 438.
47 Hewen (Congratulatory Essays) (1662), in Zhong Mingdan et al. (eds.), Xujiahui cangshulou ming qing tianzhujiao wenxian (Documents concerning Ming and Qing Catholicism at the Xujiahui Library), II: 960-61.
increasingly falling behind their promises. Anecdotes and satires about their fiascoes and failings filled up the pages of a popular late Ming literary genre known as biji (notebooks or random jottings). Ricci registered the unflattering social image of the Daoists in his journals and noted that, according to a convert, the magical power of the present Daoist tianshi (“Celestial Master”) was so degenerated that he could not even competently perform the major sacrilegious rites that he had inherited from his own ancestors.

As with their exorcist campaign, the Jesuits’ endeavor to fashion a Christian charisma was directed at all segments of Chinese society. To the religiously inclined, they displayed sacred images, ornate scriptures, and holy relics, which were accompanied by highlights of holy and saintly miracles in the history of Christianity. Writing from Nanjing in 1599, Ricci told his fellow Jesuit in Rome about how receptive his Chinese audience were to these stories: “More than once have I told the Chinese that Jesus Christ moved the house in which he and his mother used to live (from the Holy Land) to the vicinity of my hometown. Whenever I told them about the various kinds of miracles God produced in the West, they were simply stupified.”

To the curious intellectuals and collectors, they produced unique samples of Western culture, ranging from odd objects such as triangular prisms, clocks, hour-glasses, the globe, and world maps to the wonders of Western mnemonics. The overwhelming impact of this shower of exotica on the Chinese made Ricci marvel at the ingenious net God had designed to capture the Chinese souls. Thus a good part of his waking hours was devoted to the creation of various stunning effects: at one moment, he was demonstrating his superb memory to a hallful of aspiring scholars, reciting forwards and backwards a concatenation of random characters, produced on the spot by the audience, right after a mere

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48 Two major Biji from this period are particularly relevant: Xie Zhaozhe, Wuzazu (Five Miscellanies), and Shen Defu, Wanli yehuo bian (Gleanings from the Reign of Wanli).
51 Gallagher, China in the 16th Century, 325.
glance; and at another, he was making sundials with stones as his tokens of friendship, on which he carved the maxim: "Because of the mechanism of the sundial, it stops showing the time of day when there is no sunlight; likewise, no matter how well we follow the law and good morals, unless the Lord of Heaven blesses us with peace and order, we cannot achieve them." It was in this context that Western learning was introduced—mathematics, astronomy, and geography at first, and scholastic natural philosophy and logic later. As the Jesuits observed, "the Chinese possess the ingenious trait of preferring that which comes from without to that which they possess themselves, once they realize the superiority of the foreign product," and they were never in doubt, of course, that the sciences they introduced, however rudimentary and out-of-date by contemporary European standards, were far superior to their Chinese counterparts.

To the serious, reform-minded Confucians, the Jesuits talked about European mores, political systems, charity organizations, and spiritual life, portraying Europe as a paradise on earth. Their convert Xu Guangqi, himself deeply fascinated by such a picture, presented it to the emperor in a memorial as a living example of what his new faith held in store for China:


53 Ricci, "Letter to Clavius, December 25, 1597," in Opere storie, II: 241. Ricci was happy to tell his former mathematics professor that "this way, we are making stone a mouthpiece for the truths of God." Ibid.

54 Gallagher, China in the 16th Century, 22-23.

55 For Ricci's evaluations of Chinese science, see Gallagher, China in the 16th Century, 26-41, and his various personal letters in Opere storie, II. I have discussed this issue as the background of the Jesuit criticism of the traditional Chinese cosmological and medical concepts of qi (primordial energy, vital breath) in my paper, "Demystifying Qi: The Politics of Cultural Translation and Reinterpretation in the Early Jesuit Mission to China," in L. Liu (ed.), Tokens of Exchange: The Problem of Translation in Global Circulation (Durham, NC, forthcoming).

56 Ricci, Fonti Ricciane, N. 570, N. 618; João Monteiro, SJ. (Meng Ruwang 1603-1648), Tianxue sijing (The Four Standards of the Heavenly Learning,1643), in Zhong Mingdan et al. (eds.), Xujiahui cangshulou mingqing tianzhujiao wenxian, II: 909-910. The major Jesuit works systematically introducing the culture and learning of Europe to China were authored by Giulio Aleni. One of these has been translated in J.L. Mish, "Creating an image of Europe for China: Aleni's Hsi-fang ta-wen," Monumenta Serica 23 (1964), 1-87. B. Hung-Luk observed that Aleni's representation of Europe was deliberately incorrect. See his "A Study of Giulio Aleni's Chih-Fang Wai Chi," Bulletin of Oriental and African Studies 40 (1977), 58-84.
The over thirty neighboring countries in the West all adopted and practiced this faith. For over a thousand and several hundred years, the mighty states have harmonized with their weak neighbors, and the rulers and their subjects are at peace; there are no troops jealously guarding territories, no single clan dictating a state, and no swindlers and liars among the common people. The evils of adultery and theft have never encroached on them; things dropped on the roads are never taken by others; and at night the doors are never locked.57

In one way or another, all these marvels and miracles about the West were propagated as testimonies to Christianity’s superior efficacy. Before long, they began to replicate themselves in the Chinese communities surrounding the missionaries and their converts. One of the first miracles, reported by Ruggieri in 1586, involved a child which had failed to respond to all medical treatments but recovered soon after a Father had baptized it.58 Ricci’s historical accounts of Christianity in China and of the establishment of the four missionary bases in Shaozhou (Guangdong province), Nanchang (Jiangxi province), Nanjing, and Beijing, all teem with miracle stories which seem to have circulated among the converts and their pagan associates.59 A major theme of these stories is about how God confirmed the faith of the new converts through instant rewards, such as protecting them from harm, appearing in their dreams to suggest cures, fulfilling their wish for a male offspring, or enabling them to pass civil examinations and getting desired appointments. Conversely, there were fantastic episodes about how God inflicted punishments on their enemies. According to a report by Gaspard Ferreira (1571-1649), a man who had defiled God and the Church had suddenly lost his normal vision. He could no longer perceive anything in his surroundings or on the ground, but whenever he raised his head, he could see clearly into the sky. This problem remained with him until he finally realized that God was punishing him and decided to join the Church.60

Once again, we find that the motifs of these miracle stories and the logic operating behind them were directly traceable to the

57 Xu Guangqi, Bianxue shugao (Memorial to the throne in defense of the Heavenly learning), in tianzhujiao dongchuan wenxian xubian, I: 25.
59 Gallagher, China in the 16th Century. See also Ricci’s letters, particularly his “Letter to Acquaviva, October 18, 1607,” in Opere storie, II: 306-329.
60 An excerpt of his report appeared in Ricci’s “Letter to Acquaviva, October 18, 1607,” Opere storie, II: 326.
Jesuits themselves. Although the idea of just retribution in this life—that the consequences of one’s good or bad deeds will come back to oneself during one’s life time or else to one’s offspring—had a thorough grounding in all Chinese religions, it also constituted an important theme of biblical Christianity and continued to nurture the abundant culture of miracles within the Catholic Church. Given the particularly hostile political atmosphere of the late Ming, the Jesuits found themselves in a situation not very much unlike that of the Apostles, who had been facing huge obstacles when deciding to preach the Gospel in the pagan world. Such analogies heightened the Jesuits’ consciousness of signs of divine intervention, and “miracle” became a key term, to be used metaphorically and realistically throughout their internal communications and letters to Europe. In his journals, Ricci spoke of nearly every progress of the mission, however small, as a miracle, and Trigault, who supplemented and translated these journals into Latin, added in his conclusion that the entire story of the “Christian Expedition into China” was one great miracle wrought of so many small miracles.61

Naturally, the Jesuits did not hesitate to impart their way of thinking to their converts. Ruggieri, in one of his Chinese poems entitled “Congratulatory Message to a Provincial Surveillance Commissioner Who Begot a Son,” instructed his new convert that it was the mercy of God that brought him a son, for “all blessings come with the receiving of the holy baptism.”62 In 1604, when Xu Guangqi, who had failed twice in the highest civil examination for the jinshi degree, finally succeeded soon after his baptism, Ricci also attributed it to Xu’s conversion.63

With the same state of mind, the missionaries also often perceived the wrath of God in the adversities befalling their enemies. One of the most astounding examples is Ricci’s narrative about the final suffering of a viceroy who had expelled the Jesuits from their first residence in Zhaoqing. The viceroy had finally obtained a desired promotion by means of bribes and gifts, but before he could even reach Beijing to receive his new title, his crimes were discovered, and he was stripped of all authority and fined forty

61 Gallagher, (tr.), China in the 16th Century, 593.
62 See the translation of the poem in Albert Chan, S.J., “Michele Ruggieri, S.J. (1543-1607) and His Chinese Poems,” 168.
thousand gold pieces. All of a sudden, he and his family found themselves reduced to sheer poverty. "Even here," Ricci wrote,

retribution did not cease. It seemed as though the hand of Heaven were upon him. He fell victim to an ulcerous condition which his advancing age could not resist and in his last illness, struggling with death, he could not get even a drink of water from his children or his servants, who were busy carrying off the domestic furniture. He died, crying out in a loud voice and repeating the words: sorrow, labor, and toil. By this kind of death Heaven seemed to punish, even in this life, the injuries he inflicted upon others, among whom the Mission Fathers could be counted.64

The basic pattern of this story repeated itself many decades later in the tales circulating among the Chinese Christians and narrating how the Lord of Heaven punished the chief enemy of the Church, Yang Guangxian, whose accusations against the missionaries resulted in the imprisonment and death sentence of Adam Schall in 1665.65

If the above instances make us wonder whether there was in fact any sizeable difference between the Jesuits and their Chinese converts, or, for that matter, from the Chinese at large whose superstitious practices the Jesuits were busy condemning, other instances suggest that some missionaries consciously explored the advantages of these fluid boundaries between Christian faith and local beliefs. One of these borderline areas was divine prophecy and soothsaying. We have seen that Ricci, in criticizing the divinatory arts, claimed that what some Chinese took to be the fulfillment of soothsayings was nothing more than sheer coincidence. But in his concrete dealings with the Chinese, he seemed more than ready to transfer such "superstitious" beliefs into a Christian context under favorable circumstances. For example, when Ricci was working in the Shaozhou residence, the magistrate of Inde district enthusiastically invited him over to meet his father. At the magistrate's house, the father told Ricci that when he was still young, a soothsayer had predicted that he would remarry at the age of sixty, and at seventy two, he would meet a stranger upon whom all his happiness would depend. As it so happened, he had remarried at

64 Gallagher (tr.), China in the 16th Century, 243; Ricci, Fonti Ricciane, NN. 394-5.

65 B.H. Willeke noted in his biographical entry that Adam Schall and other missionaries implicated in the incident were set free because right after the sentence was issued, there occurred an earthquake followed by a fire in the imperial palace. See L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang (eds.), Dictionary of Ming Biography, 1368-1644 (New York and London, 1976), 1155.
the age of sixty, and now, at the age of seventy-two, upon arriving at Inde to join his son, he heard so much about Ricci that he had no doubt that this was the stranger meant by the soothsayer. This time, Ricci refrained from speaking of superstitions, but reassured the old gentleman that "if what was foretold really happened as he [the soothsayer] predicted it, one could readily believe that reference was made, by divine inspiration, to the Christian religion, which he himself had come from the other side of the world to explain," adding that if the old gentleman was to adopt his religion, he would provide him with a source of extreme happiness.

The Chinese belief in dream revelations was another such superstition easily amenable to Christianization. In China as in the West, there had been a tenacious tradition of oneiromancy alongside the development of medical, physiological, and psychological theories of dreams. During the late Ming, the practice of divination through dreams was widespread both among the educated elite and the common folk. The three major dream books from traditional China that have come down to us in relatively complete form were all published during that period and were all authored or edited by Confucian degree-holders.66 Already in their first Chinese catechism, Ruggieri and Ricci displayed their acquaintance with this fashion, denouncing it as one of the four sins that violated the first commandment.67 In his treatise Jiren shipian (Ten Chapters by the Stranger), Ricci also sought to demystify dreams by accentuating the physiological aspect of sleeping and dreaming.68 Interestingly, however, in a letter to F. Costa, Ricci revealed that in one of his conversations with Xu Guangqi, he had told Xu that sometimes God appears in dreams to reveal certain secrets. Upon hearing this, Xu immediately reported that, in the night after he had met Ricci for the first time, he had dreamed of a grand temple in which there were three adjacent chambers: the first chamber had an image of an old man, and he was told that

66 These are: Mengzhan yizhi (Grand Guide to Dream Divination, prefaced 1562), by Chen Shiyuan (jinshi degree-holder); Menglin xuanjie (Secret Explanations of the Dream World), attributed to Chen Shiyuan and compiled by He Dongru (jinshi degree-holder); and Mengzhan leikao (Inquiries into the Varieties of Dream Divination, prefaced 1585), by Zhang Fengyi (juren degree-holder).

67 The other three were: the worship of Heaven and Earth, the sun and the moon, and spirits and ghosts; the planning of affairs according to diviners' advice; and believing in various divinatory arts. See Ruggieri and Ricci, Tianzhu shilu (The True Record of the Lord of Heaven), 35a-b.

68 Ricci, Jiren shipian (Ten Chapters by a Stranger), II: ch. 9, 24a-26a.
this was the Lord of Heaven Holy Father; the second chamber also had an image, and he was told that this was the Lord of Heaven Holy Son, and the third chamber had no images. It was only after he joined the Church and heard the doctrine of the Trinity that he realized what the dream was about. Xu told Ricci that he had been keeping this dream to himself, because he understood that Christian converts should not believe in dreams.69 This episode vividly illustrates how smoothly a pagan superstition could flow into the one true religion called Christianity.

In the 1620's, when the Jesuits began systematically to introduce late Renaissance versions of Aristotelian and Galenic theories of sleeping and dreaming into China, the conflict between the two perspectives on this matter presented by Ricci became even more acute. In his Chinese adaptation of the Conimbricenses editions of De anima (Coimbra, 1598) and Parva naturalia (Lisbon, 1593 and Lyon, 1594), entitled Xingxue cushu (A Brief Outline of the Study on Human Nature, 1623), Aleni placed the natural and supernatural accounts of dreams side by side in the same section, “On Dreams.” He first explained that dreams were formed of the residual sense-images acquired during the waking hours and stored in the common sense. While a person is asleep and his moral discernment is no longer in control, these images, like the eddies in flowing water, idly shift from one place to another, banging into each other, splitting and merging, and presenting themselves in innumerable grotesque forms to our vision. Therefore, “all dreams are illusions.”70 But already in the following passage, Aleni changes over to the opposite position, arguing that dreams sometimes do have meaning, because some of them may come from without—the God-sent dreams and demonic dreams. As for God-sent dreams, he states:

The Creator not only creates but also conserves and nurtures human beings, so that they eventually will be able to share with him the true happiness. Therefore, even though he revealed all his teachings in the Scriptures, which have been transmitted through the ages by the sages and worthies to remind all of us, occasionally he also makes revelations in our dreams. He does this either to correct our mistakes, entrust us a mission, encourage us to further cultivate our virtue, or foretell future events for us to confirm his presence. Sometimes he himself appears, sometimes through the angels. These are the rightful dreams, for their sole purpose is to lead us to doing good.71

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70 Aleni, Xingxue cushu (woodblock edition, Shanghai Cimutang, 1873), VIIth fascicle, 17a-18b.

71 Ibid., 18b-19b.
The same two theories of dreams appear once more together in Aleni's preface to his *Shengmeng ge* (Song of the Holy Dream, 1637), a translation of an apocryphal text attributed to Bernard of Clairvaux.

The Jesuits also employed the Chinese sensitivity to natural anomalies and portents to demonstrate the absolute power of God over the world and human affairs. The belief in portents had been an integral part of Chinese political culture, institutionalized and perpetuated through the system of reporting and meticulously recording any unusual natural occurrences at the level of imperial and local administrations. The belief that nature responds to human events and that natural calamities or propitious happenings carry a message of admonishment or award persisted throughout traditional China despite repeated criticism by some philosophers and in fact gained momentum in the context of the late Ming love of *exotica*. Even a serious Confucian scholar and cultural critic like Xie Zhaozhe (1567-1624) still found himself struggling with the puzzle:

> If Heaven is totally mute and makes calamities or propitious things happen without an intent, why then do I rarely find any prosperous periods which suffered much from natural calamities, or chaotic ages in which many propitious events took place? But if Heaven is purposeful, then, why sometimes good fortunes follow bad omens and misfortunes follow auspicious signs, and why sometimes the same signs are followed by events of opposite nature?

In his effort to find an answer, he approached the issue empirically, making a list of the "strangest events" documented in the "Records on the Five Elemental Forces" (*wuxing zhi*) of each dynastic history, starting with the Chronicles of the Han: "During the second year of Emperor Hui (195 BCE), the north-eastern sky showed a crack of about ten zhang in width and twenty zhang in length; during the fifth year of Emperor Wen (175 BCE), a dog with horns showed up outside the gate of Qiyong City...,"—and in this tone he carried on for eleven more pages.\(^{72}\)

How did the Jesuits fit into this ongoing discourse over the nature of portents? Clearly, they would not tolerate the philosophical or religious understanding of portents, such as the Daoist and Confucian cosmological views regarding the mutual correspondence between human and natural spheres through the mecha-

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\(^{72}\) Xie Zhaozhe, *Wuzazu* (Five Miscellanies, 1618) (Taipei, 1977), the first fascicle. *These two quotes appear on pages 6 & 7 respectively.*
nisms of *qi*, or the popular belief that Heaven itself had a degree of consciousness. In fact, Matteo Ricci and his younger colleagues took great pains to refute the Chinese psychophysical notion of *qi* and sought to reduce its various usages either to an equivalent of prime matter, or to one of the four elements, Air, or to *spiritus* in late Galenic medicine. Meanwhile, they pitted against the Confucian worship of Heaven and Earth their own de-animated model of a universe created to serve human beings and replete with natures each following their own course and performing distinctive functions. However, their project to de-animate the world was driven by a higher purpose: since all things in nature were dumb and yet so wonderfully fitting their purposes, there had to be a divine Artificer who had designed and created them all. Adam Schall made this the central theme of his long treatise, *Zhuzhi qunzheng* (The Various Proves that God Rules). But here, the salient point is that natural entities did not simply owe their initial existence and natures to God, but they remained in fact in need of God’s continuous assistance. According to this interventionist view of nature, however, nothing exists without a purpose, and nothing happens without a meaning. This, in turn, allowed Aleni to state that even a poisonous insect was “an agent of God, inflicting punishment on those who sinned and sending warning to those who have not.”

Thus the Jesuits rejected the Chinese “superstition” of portents, only to reconstruct it on a new ontological basis. Translated into practice, this meant that the Jesuits were able to communicate very

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73 I discussed this in detail in my paper, “Demystifying Qi.”
74 See for example the relevant chapters in Ricci, *The True Meaning*.
75 This work is a translation of the first part of Léonard Lessius, S.J. (1554-1623), *De Providentia numinis et animi immortalitate, libri duo adversus Atheos et Politicos* (Antwerp, 1613; Venice, 1617).
76 Ricci, *The True Meaning*, ch. 1, “A Discussion on the creation of Heaven, earth, and all things by the Lord of Heaven, and on the way He exercises authority [over them] and sustains them.” Other major Jesuit works expounding the relationship between God and nature include D. de Pantoja, *Tianzhu shiye xupian* (Sequel to the True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven, 1617) and G. Aleni, *Sanshan lunxue ji* (Learned Conversations at Sanshan).
well even with some of the most superstitious Chinese they encountered. When, in 1626, an earthquake shook the suburb of Beijing, Nicolo Longobardi (1565-1655) took the occasion to compose a treatise, *dizhen jie* (Explanation of Earthquakes). In his preface, he stated that this treatise was a recapitulation of what he had told a scholar, Li Songyu, two years earlier. He recounted that he had been called upon to discuss the matter because Li had been greatly impressed by the Jesuits' accurate prediction of a lunar eclipse and was convinced that the learning on which their prediction was based had to contain some of the subtlest principles of things. Longobardi did meet Li's expectations, for he went into some details about the causes, grades, scales, noises, sites, times, and durations of earthquakes as well as the various signs that appeared prior to and during their occurrence. But, in addition to providing "the subtlest principles of things," he also delivered something else. At the end of their dialogue, he commented:

> Earthquakes are controlled by the Creator of all things. And so are draughts, military insurrections, the outbreaks of fire, and diseases. Although all of these have their human or natural causes, they belong to the omnipotent governance of the Creator. Therefore, it is beyond our ability to fathom and hypothesize why they happen. All we should do is to criticize and repent our [wrong doings], and pray, with piety and sincerity, for His mercy and protection, so that we may turn disaster into good fortune and ward off calamities and sufferings. 79

As if this script had been destined to be performed, fifteen years later, when a terrible draught hit the Ningbo area (Zhejiang province), and invocations to all the traditional gods and idols had been made in vain, Longobardo's counsel was taken to heart by another Jesuit, João Monteiro (Meng Ruwang, 1603-1648), who proposed to the magistrate of Ningbo that only by repenting and praying to the true Lord of Heaven and Earth could the draught be stopped. So he prayed on behalf of the people. This time the miracle did happen: soon after the ceremony, a heavy rain fall set in. Immensely grateful and moved by the result, many local residents adopted Christianity. 80

79 My translation is based on the excerpts in Xu Zongze, *Ming qing jian yesuhuishi yizhu tiyao* (Synopses of the Works by the Jesuits during the Ming and Qing) (Taipei, 1957), 280.
80 See Xu Zongze's biographical note on J. Monteiro in his *Ming qing jian yesuhuishi yizhu tiyao*, 384. Two years after the incident and one year before the Ming Empire finally collapsed, Monteiro wrote a treatise, *Tianxue sijing* (Four Standards of Heavenly Learning, 1643), in which he stated with authority and
In constructing the foregoing story I have drawn extensively on the Jesuit writings not intended for the Chinese readership. This process of immersion into the missionaries' own (more or less honest) memories and reflections offers us a unique vantage point from which imaginatively and sympathetically to relive the full scope of their daily lives in China, reexperiencing their excitement and frustrations, their love and hatred, ambitions and dilemmas, strength and vulnerability. By mining their "psychic energies" in this manner we have dissolved the myth that the Jesuits, like the Confucians, did not speak about the supernatural. Our study shows not only that the Jesuits had explored the supernatural realm together with the Chinese, Confucians included, but from the very beginning it seemed to have been their foremost engagement to create a devotional Chinese Christian cult(ure). Cross-cultural misunderstandings or the converts' unbridled desire to indigenize turn out to be less significant in this devotional turn of Chinese Christianity, since we also witness that the influx of relevant Chinese religious energies, ideas, symbols, and practices into the nascent Christian devotional cult(ure) was in fact rooted in the Jesuits' own religious experiences and was well moderated by their strategies of manipulation—the manipulation of fears, anxieties, and yearnings.

Where does this leave the traditional discourse concerning Jesuit rationalism and science? If it is indeed the case, as we claim, that the Jesuits were centrally concerned with the supernatural just like all other religious missionaries, the basic truth, that they were there to convert, should allow us to understand their various seemingly disparate or irrelevant activities as cultural mongers or science promulgators as part of their scheme of fashioning Christian devotion. In this regard, it is instructive to compare the Jesuit campaign against Chinese superstitions with the movement initiated by the Chinese cultural iconoclasts earlier in our century: whereas the latter took science as the weapon against superstitions (mixin, literally, misguided beliefs), in which all religions were included, the Jesuits employed science as God's weapon against superstitions, which they defined as misguided (that is, unorthodox) beliefs.

assurance that Christianity was the only hope for China for overcoming its natural calamities, social upheavals, and moral degradation. In Xujiahui changshulou mingqing tianzhujiao wenxian (Documents on Catholicism of the Ming and Qing hosted at the Xujiahui Library), II: 909-910.
Their campaign was continued and extended by the Chinese Christians well into the eighteenth century with considerable success. In a text by an anonymous Chinese Christian, *Xingli canzheng* (Examining the Evidence of Nature and the Principle), we find a vigorous and systematic attempt to drive natural spirits out of nature. And yet, when it comes to the traditional Problematik surrounding thunder, we are told that it “is neither a spirit nor a ghost; it is just an instrument with which the Creator demonstrates his dignity and power.” Given the Jesuits’ scientific legacy, it is not surprising that many of their faithful Chinese followers did not progress much farther than where Zhu Xi had left them over half a millennium earlier.

**Abstract**

This paper proposes an alternative to the conventional paradigm of “cultural accommodation” as a key to the understanding of the Jesuit scheme of conversion in late Ming China. It challenges one of the corollaries of that paradigm, which holds that because of the paramount rationalist sensibilities of the Confucian elite, the Jesuit missionaries refrained from speaking about the mysteries and supernatural truths of Christianity. In this paper, it is instead argued that the Jesuits, rather than trying to cultivate a rational spirit in China, were primarily engaged in fashioning a new religious cult(ure) which centered upon the supreme efficacy of the Christian faith in exorcising demons and performing miracles and was of central importance to the religious conquest of territories formerly held by their indigenous rivals. It is further shown that it is this preoccupation at the same time motivated and delimited the Jesuits’ campaign against Chinese religions and the introduction of Western science and learning and resulted in the application of double standards and in ambiguities and contradictions in their scientific writings.

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81 Xingli canzheng (Anon. 1756 or 1696), in Zhong Mingdan et al. (eds.), *Xujiahui cangshulou ming qing tianzhujiao wenxian* (Documents concerning Catholicism of the Ming and Qing Hosted at the Xujiahui Library), III: 1545.