

Fig. 1: Cantino planisphere (1502). Biblioteca Estense, Modena, Italy.



The Conflict and Merging Between Eastern and Western Cultures from the Perspective of the Christian Art in Macao

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INTRODUCTION

Macao—a place with an area of less than three square kilometers, located on the coast of the South China Sea, is part of Xiangshan County, Guangdong province (now Zhongshan City). Although Macao is a tiny place, it plays an extremely important role in ‘The Influence of Western Paintings on Chinese Paintings’ as well as Sino-western cultural exchanges in the modern history of China.

Since the ‘Age of Discovery’ of the 16th century, more and more westerners, driven by great economic interests, came to Macao. Macao thus became a platform for east-west exchanges. Meanwhile, Christianity was introduced into Macao as well. Actually at the very beginning, western art was introduced into China

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through the Christian art, which has its special form of expression and language. The process from input to localisation to output of Macao's art can also be considered the process of contact, conflict, and merging between Eastern and Western Art. (Fig. 1)

THE JESUITS' JOURNEY TO THE EAST

The first missionary setting foot in China was one of the founders of the Jesuits—Franciscus Xavier (1506-1552). Unfortunately, Xavier was not able to enter the mainland of China because of his poor physical and spiritual condition after such a long journey to China. He died in 1552 on the Shangchuan Island, only 30 kilometers away from Guangzhou. (Fig. 2) Only one year later the Portuguese began to trade and settle in Macao. On 23 January 1576, the Diocese of Macao was established according to the order of Pope Gregory XIII. Macao thus became the missionary base for Christianity in the Far East.

Fig. 2: The Miracles of St. Francis Xavier by Peter Paul Rubens, c. 1617-1618. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria.



THE FIRST PERSON INITIATING ART EDUCATION IN MACAO—GIOVANNI NICOLAO

Giovanni Nicolao (1560-1626), a Jesuit Italian painter, was born in 1560 in Nola—a small town in Naples of Italy. On 7 August 1582, Nicolao, together with Matteo Ricci, Francesco Pasio, and a total of eight people arrived in Macao.

Nicolao's coming to Macao is a milestone for the development of western art in Macao. He changed the situation where the Christian art in Macao had been dependent upon importation from foreigners. The first oil painting work that Nicolao created for the church after he came to Macao is the 'Portrait of Jesus Christ'. This was also the first oil painting created by a westerner in China. Moreover, in February 1583, Nicolao established an art studio in Macao, which can be considered the beginning of western art education in Macao. Lots of Macao local artists were educated there. Although soon he went to Nagasaki in Japan to teach western painting there, he brought the students back to Macao, after the Persecution of Christians in Japan in 1614, to continue to live and paint.

Nicolao was a pioneer and played an important role in spreading western paintings in Asia. He copied and created lots of religious paintings after coming to Macao, thus propelling the prosperity of Macao's art as well as the introduction of 'The Influence of Western Paintings on Chinese Paintings' into China. Some of his students became very well-known, such as Jacques Niva, Emanuel Pereira, François de Lagoa, Mancio Taichiku, Pedro Chicuan, Tadeu, etc. (Wu, 2009).

THE FIRST OIL PAINTING BY A CHINESE: PORTRAIT OF MATTEO RICCI

Emmanuele Yu Wen-Hui, also known as 'Emanuel Pereira' is a Macao Chinese painter. He was born in Macao in 1575. He studied painting with Giovanni Nicolao and showed great interest and talent.

The 'Portrait of Matteo Ricci' (Fig. 3) was as far as we know the first oil painting by a Chinese. It was finished by Emmanuele Yu Wen-Hui on Matteo Ricci's deathbed in Beijing in May, 1610 (Ricci, 2010).

This painting had a great significance in the trend of 'the influence of western paintings on Chinese paintings.' It vividly depicted the costumes, the manner,



Fig. 3: Portrait of Matteo Ricci by Emmanuele Yu Wen-Hui, 1610. Chiesa del Gesu, Rome, Italy.

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and the expression of Matteo Ricci—a Jesuit pioneer in China. Above all, it also reflected Ricci's confusion, longing for change, adaptation, finally developing his particular missionary ideas of 'acculturation' after he came to China in the late Ming Dynasty at the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries. Meanwhile, the application of western painting techniques on Chinese paintings shows that the Chinese painter was both influenced by the western painting style of the late Renaissance and the Chinese portrait painting of the Ming Dynasty.

THE RUINS OF ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL: A COMBINATION OF EAST AND WEST

The next case of Christian art in Macao can be demonstrated by the most famous landmark of Macao—the Ruins of St. Paul's cathedral, also known as 'Da San Ba'. Since it has a special historic and cultural background, it attracts both tourists and scholars from all over the world to visit and study it.

It was firstly built in 1580 and was destroyed by fire three times. Today's Ruins of St. Paul was designed and rebuilt in 1602 by an Italian Jesuit priest, Spinola, together with some Japanese craftsmen, and finally completed in 1637.

The Ruins of St. Paul is 23.46 meters in height and 23 meters in width. It adopted both the early baroque style of mannerism as well as the Renaissance symmetrical style (Xing, 2006). The Ruins of St. Paul consists of five levels. Each level with different statues and contents has its different symbolic meanings. The five levels show respectively from the top to the bottom: the Trinity, the Crucifix, the Immaculate Conception, the saints, and the mortal world.

The richness of contents and diversity of architectural style of the Ruins of St. Paul are unique among all baroque churches. Moreover, it is not difficult for us to find out different ways of expressing the theme between the East and the West. For instance, the decoration of western churches focuses on people from the Bible. However in the Ruins of St. Paul, we actually can figure out lots of narrative plots from the Bible which demonstrate its symbolic meanings. For instance, on the fourth level of the Crucifixion of Jesus, each instrument of torture represents a crucial moment from the arrest till the Crucifixion of Jesus. Furthermore, the traditional Christian symbolic icons have been adjusted to be more easily understood and

accepted by Chinese people. Lots of Chinese elements have been added. The Christian saints have eastern-like faces. Some floral patterns as well as the appearance of Chinese characters on the Ruins of St. Paul all demonstrate such a great merging between the East and the West. The Ruins of St. Paul reveals the stories of the Bible through the icons, each of which contains rich symbolic meanings.

THE FRESCO IN THE GUIA CHAPEL OF MACAO

The Guia chapel, also known as the Our Lady of the Snow Palace, is an old chapel built in the 17th century. It is so far the only completely preserved old chapel in Macao (Dai 2009). The unique fresco style inside the chapel is also a magnificent example of the perfect integration between the western Christian art and traditional Chinese art. (Fig. 4)

The Guia chapel was built around 1622. It was originally named after the legend of 'Our Lady of the Snow' who is regarded as the god of navigation, that is, to protect the Portuguese maritime trade (Chen, 2006).

The content of the fresco is still based on the images and stories of the Bible, such as: angels playing the trumpet, the Virgin Mary and her Child, John the Baptist, the Jesuits' logo, pigeons, lion column bases, star aniseed, eight concentric ellipses with flame, Cherubim, the sun and the moon patterns, two-headed eagles, Chinese flowers, geometrical figures, auspicious clouds, rocks and so on. Both Chinese and western images can be found on the frescos. For instance, the pigeon symbolising the Holy Spirit is definitely a western image. The various potted plants and rocks are images from traditional Chinese landscape paintings. Angels and two-headed eagles are the products of western cultures, while the Chinese unicorn which looks like a Chinese lion is a typical Chinese image.

In addition to the content of the fresco, the painting techniques can also be one of the highlights of the integration between two cultures. The mural of the Guia chapel was originally a fresco, but the secco techniques were also adopted in some parts. Therefore it is a combination of fresco and secco paintings (Dai 2009). In addition to the special materials it has adopted, the use of colors is also special. The main colors of the fresco are red, brown, black, and green. Some parts use blue and white. The red pigments used

actually come from the Chinese cinnabar and red lead. Other pigments are from Europe. Besides the use of Western painting techniques, the fresco mostly adopts traditional Chinese line drawing techniques. The Western composition with brush stroke outlines makes all lines calm, soft, and interesting so as to be accepted and loved by the Chinese people. All the lines, the techniques, and the images form a very typical style by adopting different cultural elements.

CONCLUSION

Four-hundred-and-fifty years ago, due to Macao's unique geographical position and historical background, it became the frontier of the conflict and

merging between Eastern and Western cultures and arts, and thus reached its first climax of 'The Influence of Western Paintings on Chinese Paintings'—the introduction of Christian art into China. The exchange of different civilisations is essential for human cultural development. Travel and communication were two of the main ways to fulfill such a purpose at that time.

First, the Western art works which were introduced into Macao in the 16th century were mostly based on the theme of Christianity. Whether regarding the theme and the characters of painting, they were either Christian icons or Bible stories. Therefore, Chinese modern art was influenced by the West through religious paintings at the beginning. The Christian art in Macao carries symbolic features

Fig. 4: Fresco in the Guia chapel, detail. Early 17th century.



of the Western Christian art, which can be seen in the interpretation of Macao art works. Second, Macao’s Christian art is not a simple copy. It has integrated its unique Chinese cultural elements into it. The merging and conflict of two cultures form Macao’s unique culture—coexistence of different cultures. Furthermore, the Christian art in Macao has a diverse cultural characteristic. It is not only influenced by Western Christian art, but also influenced by other Asian cultures, such as Japan and India. All in all,

Macao’s early fine arts are a unique work of art with the integration of Chinese culture and painting features on the basis of Christian art as the main themes and forms and symbolic style of the Western Christian art. Macao’s early fine arts play an important role in the communication and integration between Chinese and Western cultures through the absorption and creation of Christian works of art. This phenomenon plays a positive role in establishing the city image as well as the cultural orientation of Macao today. **RC**

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The French as Architectural Trendsetters in Canton, 1767-1820

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From fashion to philosophy, the French influence in the 18th century was widespread. Paris was the cultural capital of Europe; French painting and architecture exerted an influence well beyond France’s borders; and French was the language of the upper class in such diverse locations as Sweden and Russia.

It is therefore not surprising to discover that from the late 1760s to the 1830s, this influence also extended to the international trading community at Canton. Here, in what was already a thriving commercial district situated on the riverfront just southwest of the Canton city walls, Europeans and (after 1784) Americans, as well as Armenians and Parsees, were housed in buildings known as hong 行. These hong are also sometimes referred to as ‘factories’ or ‘foreign factories’; the word derives from a former usage of the word ‘factor,’ meaning ‘business agent’.

Plans dating from the first half of the 19th century show that the hong were built on a north-south axis and were rectangular in shape.¹ The length was several times the width; a French resident described the French hong as being 130-150 *pieds* (41.6-48

metres) long and about 50-60 *pieds* (16-19.2 metres) wide.² The short sides of the buildings faced north and south, while the long sides faced east and west. The Chinese considered the front of the building to be the north side, which faced Thirteen Hong Street, while the international community considered the south side, which faced the river, to be the front.

The hong were not unique to the international community; they were an already extant building type that served as business premises for the Chinese merchants who owned them. A number of the hong, however, were rented out to (and later, sometimes owned by) the various nations coming to Canton to trade.³

The owners of the hong belonged to that select group of Chinese traders known as hong merchants. According to 19th-century American merchant William Wood, it was the buildings themselves that gave this group their name.

The hong merchants derive their title from their warehouses, which are long ranges of buildings, with a wide avenue, or passage, from one extremity to the other; these in Chinese are called *Hung*, and by corruption *Hong*.⁴

As the volume of international trade with China increased during the 18th century, so did the number of merchants and ship’s officers involved in that trade. The hong provided accommodations as well as office space and warehouse space, thereby fulfilling a triple function for members of the international community. While some of the hong remained in use wholly by

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