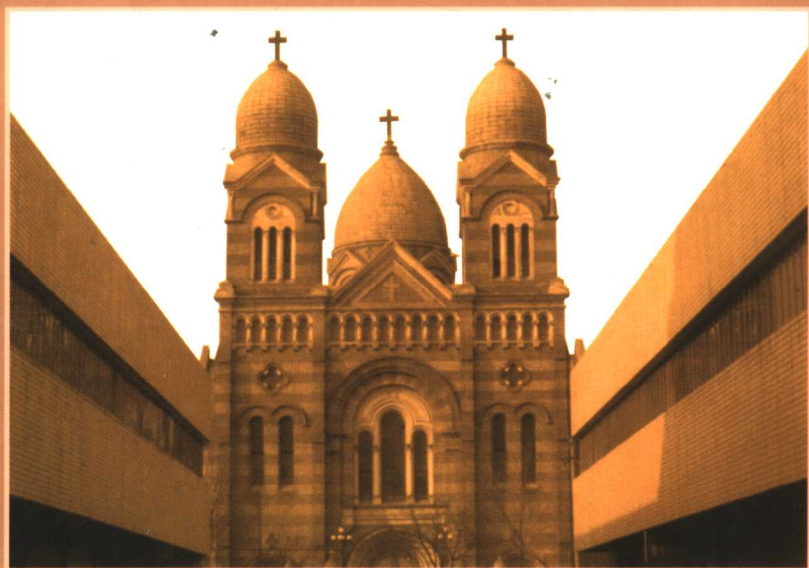


Catholic Church in China

Written by Yan kejia

Translated by Chen shujie



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图书在版编目 (CIP) 数据

中国天主教/晏可佳著;陈书杰译. —北京:五洲传播出版社, 2004.10
(中国宗教基本情况丛书)

ISBN 7-5085-0599-9

I. 中... II. ①晏... ②陈... III. 罗马公教—基督教史—中国—
英文 IV. B979.2

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (2004) 第 101789 号

《中国天主教》

责任编辑:荆孝敏

编辑助理:蔡程

图片提供:晏可佳 新华社摄影部等

设计承制:北京紫航文化艺术有限公司

翻 译:陈书杰

《中国天主教》

五洲传播出版社

地址:中国北京北三环中路 31 号 邮编:100088

电话:82008174 网址:www.cicc.org.cn

开本:140 × 210 1/32 印张:5.5

2004 年 1 月第一版 印数 1-7000

ISBN 7-5085-0599-9/B · 45

定价:48.00 元

PREFACE

Catholicism is foreign to China. There are many different opinions on when Catholicism was first introduced into China in the world of academia. According to Da Qin Jing Jiao Liu Xing Zhong Guo Bei (the Memorial of the Propagation in China of the Luminous Religion from Daqin), which was unearthed in 1626 in Xian, the majority of the scholars agreed that Christianity was first introduced into China was in Tang Dynasty in the 7th Century. But Jing Jiao, which was first introduced into China, was one denomination of Christianity, not the Catholic Church which this book talks about.

In 1293, it was still Yuan Dynasty in China, Pope officially sent an Italian missionary whose name was John of Montecorvino to China. This was the first attempt of the Catholic Church to send missionaries to China. Unfortunately, following the overturn of the Yuan Dynasty, the Catholic Church was almost dis-

appeared. In the 16th and 17th centuries, the Catholic Church made great progress in China and adapted Chinese culture accordingly because of the efforts that the Jesuits, such as Matteo Ricci, made when they came to China. Moreover, these Jesuit missionaries helped to promote the cultural and scientific exchanges between East and West. Because of this, the Catholic Church in China developed quite well. When the Rite Controversy broke out and intensified as time went on, the Catholic Church was suppressed for one hundred years. When the Opium War started, the Catholic missionaries reentered into China to evangelize the Chinese. Though the Church developed under the protection of the unequal treaties between China and other countries, it was rather unsteady and had numerous conflicts with the Chinese society. This affected the Church's localization terribly.

In 1949, the New China was founded which indicated that the Chinese Catholic Church entered into a new phase. The Catholics started an Anti-Imperialists and Pro-Patriotic Campaign and decided to self-manage the church affairs and to be more independent. This helped the Catholic Church to change its semi-colonial and semi-feudalist nature and eventually helped the

Church to continue its existence and development in the socialist China.

After half a century, especially, in the last 20 some years post the Chinese reform, since the Catholic Church insisted on the principle of the Three Self's (self administration, self-support, self propagation), it had its opportunity to continue its evangelization in China. The result was indeed tremendous. Up to the end of the last century, the Catholic population increased to 5,000,000; the reopened and newly built churches were more than 5600; there were 36 minor and major seminaries and 60 or so convents. The rights of religious freedom have been protected and the normal religious activities were resumed. The Chinese Catholic Church and the faithful have contributed greatly to the modernization of China and the world peace, as well as the mutual friendship among the peoples. The Chinese Catholic Church has earned its respect and honor from both China and abroad.

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CHAPTER ONE

CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE MING AND QING DYNASTIES

I. From Envoy to Missionary

Ever since the 13th century, Rome began to send envoys to the Yuan Emperor on numerous occasions. Few recorded materials on this missionary work have been found until the time of John of Monte Corvino (1247-1328), a Franciscan who was sent to China in 1291 by Pope Nicholas IV.

As the first Roman Catholic missionary to China, John came to China in 1294 from Quanzhou, traveling to Dadu to meet the Emperor and hand over a letter from the Pope. He obtained permission from the emperor to perform religious activities in Dadu, and was able to convert the Nestorian leader Kuo Li Ji Si of



© Remains of a typical Roman Catholic style church discovered in the old A Lun Si City located in Damao Prairie in Inner Mongolia. This was the oldest Catholic Church in Asia which had 700 years of history

Wang Gu Bu, and built a church in that place. In 1302, he built another church with a capacity of 200 not far from the palace. He translated the New Testament, the Psalms and various Latin rituals and prayers into the Mongolian dialect. John adopted about 40 children who were aged between 7 and 11 and taught them Greek and Latin. He taught them how to sing psalms and explained Bible stories to them. Eventually, he baptized all of them. In 1307, Rome named him as the archbishop of Han Ba Li (Beijing) and also sent another seven missionaries to China as his assistants. Unfortunately, four died in India en route, but the remaining three all became bishops of Quanzhou in due course.



A letter written by one of the three missionaries, whose name was Andrew, to a priest from his hometown who was teaching in the seminary, stated that he assisted John of Monte Corvino for five years in dealing with church affairs. The Yuan Emperor provided all the daily expenditures, also called *alpha*, while he was in Beijing. After he became the bishop of Quanzhou, he used the salaries provided by the Emperor to build a 'luxurious and comfortable church with all kinds of offices which were enough for 20 colleagues. There are also four other rooms that can be used for high-ranking priests^①'. He died of illness in 1326 and the Diocese of Quanzhou was dissolved.

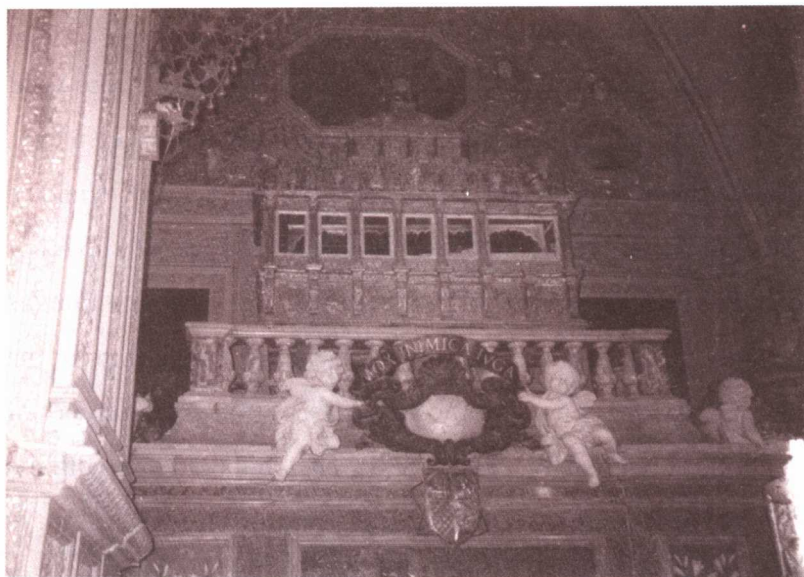
Archbishop John managed the Diocese of Beijing for over 30 years and claimed to have baptized more than 6,000 people. He died in 1328 at the age of 81. Upon hearing of his death five years later, Pope John XXII (1316-1334) sent Nicholas to Beijing to be the bishop, but he unfortunately died on the journey. Ten years later, in 1338, Pope Pius XII sent Giovanni de Marignoli to China. Because of the unstable political situation of the Yuan Empire, however, he quickly returned to Rome. After the founding of Ming Dynasty, the Catholic Church in central China passed from the scene simply because most of the Catholics were Mongols.

① Ake Mull. (translated by He Zhen Hua) 1550 Nian Qian de Ji Du Jiao Shi, Shangwu Press, 1984, p220

2. Jesuits at the end of the Ming dynasty and their policies



From 1368 to 1644, the Catholic Church in China was somewhat moribund. This phenomenon lasted until the end of the Ming Dynasty. At the same time, Europe was going through many dramatic social changes: Feudalism was dissolved, and new countries were created based on races; the capitalistic system was developing in some European cities and modern technologies were assuming greater importance. Meanwhile, there were also changes occurring within the Catholic Church leading to religious reformation and the eventual emergence of the Protestant Church. Facing the rapid social progress and the influence of the religious reformation, the Catholic Church began to undergo internal changes by reorganizing the religious orders both old and new. They sent many missionaries abroad to proselytize in order to counteract the Reformation influence. Borrowing its own saying, the church was 'trying to gain what they had lost in Europe'. Under such circumstances, the Society of Jesus founded by



© Francis Xavier's Coffin in Guo A Ben Ji Tu Church, India

Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) came onto the scene in China and eventually exercised great influence.

Meanwhile, Spain and Portugal were trying to expand their colonies abroad. The Roman Curia also had the intention of promoting the Catholic faith abroad. Pope Alexander VI (1492-1503), in his Encyclical , *Inter Caetera* decided to give Africa and the East to the Portuguese as missionary territory. Portugal had the right to send out missionaries, build churches and seminaries, all at its own expense in this vast territory. The King of Portugal had the right to name bishops as well. This right is called

Patronatus Missionum in Latin.

Francis Xavier (1506-1552) was the first Jesuit who tried to enter China to preach the Gospel. Since it was forbidden for a non-Chinese to go inland, he arrived at Shangchuan Island in Taishan County in Guangdong Province in August of 1552, but died there on December 3rd in the same year. Although Francis never actually stepped inland, his enthusiasm for the China missionary work touched the hearts of a great number of Catholics both in China and abroad. They honored him with the title of Yuandong Kaijiao Zhi Yuan Xun, meaning Missionary Pioneer of the Far East.

Portugal made Macao a permanent transit location for them to penetrate China in 1554. Merchants flooded into Macao, and the church followed. Eventually, Macao became a center of Catholic missionary work in the Far East. Melchior Barreto arrived in Macao in 1555 and built a regular house as the first Catholic church^①. Later, the Augustinians, Dominicans and Franciscans, Jesuits and others found their respective places in Macao, but the Jesuits were the most dominant and influential. The Jesuits established St. Paul's Seminary, the first Catholic university in China, offering courses in philosophy, theology and Latin. It had a library, observatory and medical supplies' depot.



◎ Da San Ba Wall is a famous historical site. It was the front wall of Da San Ba Church which was also called Saint Paul's Church. The construction was started in 1602 and was completed in 1637. It was the biggest Catholic church in the Far East. A fire broke out in 1835 and destroyed the whole church but the front wall which was built with stones

The Diocese of Macao was officially created on January 23rd, 1576 to administer China, Amman, Japan and nearby islands. D. Leonard De Sa was appointed the first bishop of Macao in 1578. There were eight Catholics churches in Macao. St. Paul's Cathedral, which was constructed in 1602, was the most magnificent church in the Far East. Its construction took 35 years to complete. Macao's unique geographical location made it the ideal transit point for Catholic missionaries to enter China. Those mis-



sionaries wanting to work in China had first to go to the seminary in Macao to learn the language and Chinese culture before they could move on. At the end, most of those missionaries who were expelled from China went to Macao after the founding of the New China. Some of them stayed there to wait for fresh opportunities to occur, but others returned to Europe. Many of them who died are certainly buried in Macao.

Initially, the missionaries in Macao thought Western culture was superior to Chinese culture, and the small number of Chinese Catholics in Macao were forced to learn the Portuguese



© Matteo Ricci

language and to take Portuguese names in order to isolate them from Chinese culture. The Jesuit priest Alessandro Valignani, Inspector of the Far East, realized the importance of changing the missionary mentality of despising things Chinese. He insisted that China was a civilized country with a long and glorious history, therefore, the missionaries wanting to work in China should mas-