

*Li Zhiyuan*

# VOLTAIRE AND *THE* 伏尔泰与《中国孤儿》 *ORPHAN OF CHINA*

李志远 著

ROADS TO THE WORLD



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主 编：荆孝敏 邓锦辉

编 著 者：李志远

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*Translated by Ego*



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## FOREWORD

It has been a long and exciting history of tremendous cultural exchange between China and other countries. In terms of culture, economy, ideology, and personnel, these exchanges between China and other countries can be dated back to the times of Qin and Han dynasties—directly or indirectly, by land or sea. The long-term and multi-faceted cultural exchange helps the world to understand more about China and the rest of the world, enriching the common wealth of mankind—both materially and spiritually.

The book series entitled *Roads to the World* offers the most splendid stories in the entire history of Sino-foreign cultural exchange. We hereby offer them to foreign students learning the Chinese language, and to foreign readers who have a keen interest in Chinese culture. These stories depict important personalities, events, and phenomena in various fields of cultural exchange between China and other nations, and among different peoples. By reading the books, you may understand China and Chinese civilization profoundly,



and the close link between Chinese civilization and other civilizations of the world. The books highlight the efforts and contributions of Chinese people and Chinese civilization in the world's cultural interchange. They reflect mankind's common spiritual pursuit and the orientation of values.

This book is a historical record of how *The Orphan of Zhao* written by Ji Junxiang, a playwright of the Yuan Dynasty of China, was adapted into *The Orphan of China* by Voltaire. Since then, this Chinese tragedy had been repeatedly translated, reviewed and adapted by different countries, creating the "craze for *The Orphan of Zhao*" across Europe in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. The "China fever," which emerged in Europe at the end of 17<sup>th</sup> century, also reached its climax at that time.

## 前 言

中国与其他国家、民族之间的文化交流具有悠久而曲折的历史。在中国与外国之间，通过间接的和直接的、陆路的和海路的、有形的和无形的多种渠道，各种文化、经济、思想、人员方面的交流，可以上溯至秦汉时代，下及于当今社会。长期的、多方面的交流，增进了中国与其他国家、民族之间的了解，使人类的共同财富（物质的和精神的）更加丰富。

中外文化交流故事丛书（Roads to the World）的宗旨，是从中外文化交流的历史长河中，选择那些最璀璨的明珠，通过讲故事的方式，介绍给学习汉语的外国学生和对中国文化感兴趣的外国读者。这些故事描述中国与其他国家、民族在各个领域文化交流中的重要人物、事件和现象，以使外国读者能够更深入地理解中国，理解中国文明，理解中国文明与其他各文明之间的密切关系，以及中国人和中国文明在这种交流

过程中所作出的努力和贡献，并尽力彰显人类共同的精神追求与价值取向。

本书讲述的是中国元代剧作家纪君祥的《赵氏孤儿》西传欧洲、被法国文豪伏尔泰改编为《中国孤儿》的历史故事，这一部中国悲剧不断地被各国翻译、评论和改编，使欧洲在18世纪中期风行起了强大的“赵氏孤儿”热，也把欧洲在17世纪末兴起的“中国热”逐步推向了顶峰。

# I

## “The Orphan” Taken to Europe

**I**n February 1734, an anonymous letter was carried by *Mercury*, an open publication in Paris. In this letter, snippets from the French translation of a Chinese drama were included. The letter said: “Sir, this is the new and unique present I promised to give you. Please tell me what you and your friends think after reading the Chinese tragedy. Furthermore, please also tell me the reason why I’m so interested in this drama. Is it because anything ancient or from far away can always stir our admiration?”

Who was the writer of this letter? How did he get to know this Chinese drama? Why was he so keen to introduce and recommend this “Chinese tragedy” to his French friends? Which “Chinese tragedy” was it referring to in this letter?

Although this letter was anonymous, people, through various channels, came to know that the writer of this letter was Joseph Henry Marie de Premar (1666–1736), a priest of the Society of Jesus in France.

# 1

## “孤儿”被带到欧洲

1734年2月，在法国巴黎公开发行的《水星杂志》上，刊载了一篇没有署名的信。此信中有数处摘录了一部译成法文的中国戏剧的片断，信中说：“先生，这就是我答应给你的一件新鲜别致的东西。请你告诉我，你和你的朋友们看了这部中国悲剧觉得怎样。此外，还请你告诉我，我之所以对这部戏发生兴趣，是不是由于这样的一种心情，即凡是时代较古或地区较远的东西总能够引起我们的仰慕。”

这封信的作者是谁？他是从何得知这部中国的戏剧的？又为什么如此热切地要把这部“中国悲剧”推荐给他的法国朋友？信中所提到的究竟是哪一部“中国悲剧”？

虽然这封公开发表的信件没有署名，人们还是通过各种途径，得知这封信的作者就是法国耶稣会

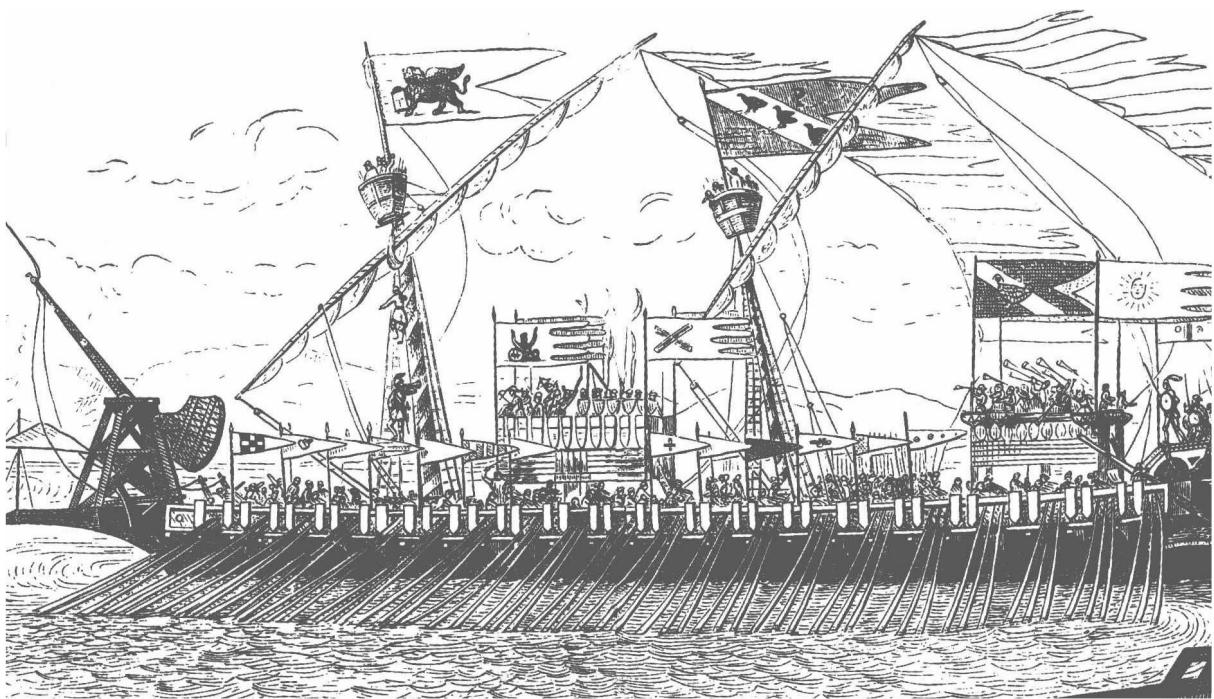
Joseph Henrg Marie de Premar was born in Cherbourg in northwestern France on July 17, 1666. This was a town and seaport on the northern tip of Cotentin peninsula in Normandy. In 1683, he joined the Society of Jesus of the French diocese at the age of 18.

After joining the Christian Church, he was fully devoted to the study of theology and performed well. In 1698, he was sent to China as a missionary to disseminate Christianity. After his arrival in China, he was profoundly immersed in the Chinese culture and had never left China ever since, till his death in 1736. Furthermore, he also got a Chinese name—Ma Yuese.

Why did Ma Yuese write that letter? Why did he make

13世纪的欧洲舰船

The European ship in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.





耶稣会士利玛窦和汤若望，他们正展开一幅中国地图。在他们的上方，是两位耶稣会的创始人。  
Matteo Ricci and Johann Adam Schall von Bell opened a map of China. Above them there were two founders of Jesuits.

传教士约瑟夫·普雷马雷（1666—1736）。

1666年7月17日，约瑟夫·普雷马雷出生在法国西北部的瑟堡，这是诺曼底科唐坦半岛最北端的一个城镇和海港。在他18岁的时候，也就是1683年，他加入了法国教区的耶稣会。

加入耶稣会后，他一直非常努力地学习神学知识，表现非常优异。1698年，他被派往中国传播基督教。到中国后，他深深地被中国文化吸引，从此

就再也没有离开过中国，直到1736年去世。此外，他还给自己起了个中国名字——马约瑟。

马约瑟为什么会写上面那封信呢？为什么又特别提到那部中国悲剧呢？以及耶稣会为什么要派他到中国进行传教呢？要想弄清这些问题，我们还需要先弄

a special mention of that Chinese tragedy? And why did the Society of Jesus send him to China as a missionary? In order to understand these questions, we should, first of all, know something about the age in which Ma Yuese lived.

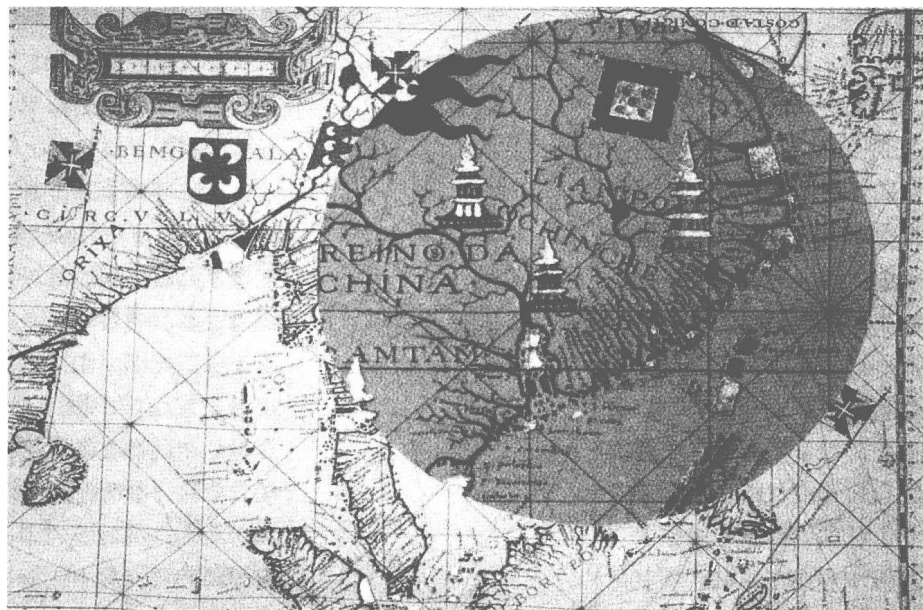
In the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, some European merchants shipped some “made-in-China” commodities back to Europe, such as silk, porcelain, tea, lacquer and jade. When these commodities were available on the European market, they were sold out quickly. For the Europeans then, these made-in-China commodities were very exotic and attractive. They had never seen such fine and light silk products before, or imagined that the leaf-like stuff called “tea” could be drunk and could produce such a fresh scent and aroma. Neither had they seen a piece of furniture made of wood that could be so artistically made and so beautifully decorated.

Not only these “made-in-China” commodities were passionately pursued and cherished by the Europeans, the Chinese living habits were also imitated by some Europeans. In ancient China, sedan chair was a common and widely-used means of transport. In the eyes of Europeans, however, it was fun and interesting to use sedan chair as a means of transport. When French King Louis XIV was organizing a family party, he, after all guests had arrived, appeared at the party, sitting in a



楚马约瑟所处时代的一些状况。

17世纪末，一些欧洲的商人把丝绸、瓷器、茶叶、漆器、玉器等中国制造的物品贩运回欧洲，这些商品一投放到欧洲市场，就被疯狂抢购。这些“中国制造”，对于当时的欧洲人，是那么的稀奇，那么的具有吸引力。他们从没有见过如此轻盈的丝织品；也从未想到如草叶般的叫做“茶”的东西竟然能泡着喝，并且散发出淡淡的清香；也没有见过木头制作的



葡萄牙人1571年绘制的东方地图

A map of the East drawn by Portuguese in 1571.