

Presentation

There has been an ongoing dialogue between the two extremes of the Old World for three thousand years. Great has been the mutual influence between them, though quite distinct the cultures they have produced. Today we have good reasons to think that the world's problems will never be resolved as long as they are pondered only from the European perspective. It is necessary to see Europe from without, to see European history, not only Europe's successes but also its failures, through the eyes of most of humanity, the peoples of Asia (and, of course, also Africa).

—Joseph Needham (1955), *The Dialogue of Europe and Asia*.

Today, China has approximately 1.4 billion inhabitants, and when India (849 million) and the rest of Asia are added, those nations constitute over 60% of the population of the planet. If we consider Africa as well, then the figure increases by 634 million people, which means that these “non-western” populations constitute, without question, a numerical majority in the world, though we leave Africa out because this issue of *Relaciones* is not concerned with that continent, but focuses on Asia, our honored guest on this occasion. But even so, Asia's population is vastly greater than that of the West, just as it was in 1955 when Needham wrote, and may well have been in the 16th or 18th centuries. We do not yet have reliable comparative demographic histories on this question, though advances in this direction—like Newman's book on demography in the Philippines that is reviewed in this issue—may be an invitation to produce one. It is important to note that those Asian lands are not vast territories with a carrying capacity for more people. The population of Japan (1,279,600) in the 21st century easily surpasses that of Mexico

(1,123,220), but of much greater import than this difference of 15 million people or so is the ratio of inhabitants to unit of land: the population density of the Japanese archipelago with its 378,000 km² is 337.1 inhabitants/km², while that of Mexico –with almost 2 million km², counting its continental and contiguous territories– is just 57 people/km². Clearly, this redounds in distinct lifestyles, cultures, worldviews, and many other elements.

My apologies for citing so many numbers in presenting an issue that takes up cultural and political themes (Aristotelian commentaries in Chinese, the linguistic labors of missionaries, foreign policy, the Japanese reaction against Christianity, and the material culture of the people of the state of Colima who acquired Oriental articles as necessities for survival and permanence in a particular social status), but these data are vitally important if we are to obtain a clear idea of the weight of those societies in this context. It seems that even before the 16th century and well into the 19th the West strove to comprehend the East, but with little success for, in Needham's words, it looks at itself from within, not from without.

For centuries, the grand argument that the West has constructed to justify its expansionism has been based on a kind of imaginary excess –we may use the rhetorical figure of “immoderacy” (*démésure*) from Gruzinski's¹ recent book– that includes as one of its foci the evangelization of the planet: a plan as it was. Of course, this went hand-in-hand with a second great imaginary: that of a non-Western world bountiful in riches. If the interpretation of the Nestorian stele of X'ian is accurate, then as early as the 8th century groups of Nestorian Assyrians arrived in China to preach the gospel and promote an ascetic lifestyle. But Nestorianism soon mixed with other religions and failed to proliferate widely. We also know of a venture in evangelization undertaken by the Franciscans in China in the 13th century, though it prospered only during the Mongol period and declined with the onset of the Ming dynasty and its ‘closed-door’ policy to outside influences. But the West did not give up. Early in the 1500s,

¹ Serge Gruzinski, *L'Aigle et le Dragon. Démésure européenne et mondialisation au XVI^e siècle*, Paris, Fayard, 2012, 429 pp.

1517 to be exact, eight Portuguese ships set sail for China from Malay—the crossroads of Asia *par excellence* at that time—captained by Tomé Pires. By spring 1520, they had settled in Canton, confident, after a few conversations with the Chinese emperor in Nanjing, that their dominion was assured. But that emperor died in April 1521, before any agreement could be reached, and the Portuguese soon found themselves jailed in Canton accused of banditry, then summarily tried and executed in 1523. With that, China briefly closed its doors to the “thieves” from the West. Returning for a moment to the aforementioned volume by Gruzinski, we find that he discusses the idea of connected histories by examining, for example, the European experience in Asia *vis-a-vis* the conquest of Mexico-Tenochtitlan by Hernán Cortés, in August 1521. That discussion allows him to underscore his idea of European immoderacy while simultaneously analyzing the first globalization process—that of the 16th century—when no continent escaped the effects of European dynamics. In hindsight it is clear that dialogues between East and West during this process have been but intermittent; a key concept to grasp, for it is taken up by some of the authors in this issue.

But let us return to China. One aspect that stands out is westerners’ tenacity and zeal in their attempts to penetrate the Far East. In 1582, 60 years after the events in Canton, Jesuit missionaries obtained permission to enter China and settle there. The key figures in that venture were Matteo Ricci and Michele Rugieri, who soon devoted themselves to the task of composing a vocabulary of equivalences between the Chinese and Portuguese languages in the hopes of facilitating the evangelization project in the Orient. But no less significant was Francesco Sambiassi, whose book *Lingyan lishao* (1624), leads us to the first article in the *Thematic* section.²

The *Lingyan lishao* (which can be translated as “A Humble Discussion on Questions of the Soul”), also known as *Aristoteles Sinicus*, is one of many commentaries penned by Christian theologians—and other authors before them—inspired in the treatise *De Anima*, a philosophical reflection attributed to Aristotle that dates to classical

² Section coordinated by Thomas Calvo, the journal’s Director.

Greece. A series of particularities in this commentary written in Chinese by Sambiasi allows Isabelle Duceux to elucidate not only the richness of Jesuit thought in theological matters, but also the levels or degrees of adaptation of western discourses to other realities. Through a comparative analysis of this text with others by members of the Company of Jesus, Duceux demonstrates both the broad margins of discursive malleability and freedom that those authors enjoyed as they explored difficult theology topics, and their interest in engaging in dialogue with cultures distinct from their own. In one important case, the author compares the Jesuits' apparent lack of concern with adapting the system of Nahuatl thought in some of their texts—in the sense that their translations into Nahuatl obeyed Latin syntax—with their titanic effort to assimilate Chinese thought and translate not only words but the system of thought itself. While Duceux shows that Sambiasi failed in his attempts to express difficult metaphysical questions—such as those concerning the soul and the concept of God—within the structures of a Chinese philosophical thinking plagued by materialist elements, what draws our attention most strongly is that those efforts grew out of an admiration for a culture that, while so clearly distinct from that of the West, shared a similar tradition of written texts and books.³

But one may ask: how well did those westerners really come to understand the culture, thought and language of the Far East? Clearly, their emphasis on purely linguistic aspects emerged from the need to learn, and become proficient in, a strange language as a means of achieving success in their evangelization project. But while this was a basic tenet shared by all missionaries, its nature differed from one missionary order to another. In this vein, Pascale Girard's article delves into the experience of two missionaries in China in the late 16th and early 17th centuries: the aforementioned Jesuit, Mateo Ricci, and a Franciscan, Pedro de la Piñuela. The problematic examined in this essay becomes more complex when the author introduces reflec-

³ For a complete translation of *Lingyan lishao* with a deeper analysis of the entry of western thinking into China, see Isabelle Duceux, *La introducción del aristotelismo en China a través del De Anima, siglos XVI-XVII*, Mexico, Centro de Estudios de Asia y África, El Colegio de México, 2009, 656 pp.

tions based on contemporary 20th-century linguistics. Were those missionaries really learning and describing (two distinct endeavors) the languages of those far-off lands, or did they just imagine that that they were learning and understanding, based on their conception of the nature of language? Here, contemporary discussions on perceptions of Chinese ideographic writing compared to western phonetic script, pursued by such diverse figures as Father Joseph de Acosta and Leibniz, are enlightening. What Girard clarifies is that for hundreds of years missionary practice and the lucubrations of language scholars in their ivory towers followed totally different paths. Also, it is evident that the missionaries' experiences in some regions of the East were, in linguistic terms, arduous indeed. Piñuela did not become fluent in Chinese until he had lived there for nine years; and wrote that it was one thing to learn the Tagalog language of the Philippines that, he argued, any missionary could pick up after five or six months of study, but quite another to understand continental Chinese, which he still found largely inaccessible even after two years. At one point he lamented that "these nominatives are not concerted as in the Tagalog language." In conclusion, Girard leads us to reflect not only on the linguistic practices of the missionary orders, but also on how contact with those distinct cultural realities impacted and modified their evangelization policies due to the problematics of language.

Having introduced the Philippines into the discussion through reference to Friar Piñuela's comment on the apparent simplicity of the Tagalog language, we can now turn to the essay by Paulina Machuca, which touches upon a distinct dimension of the intermittent dialogues of East with West: that of the material culture that traversed Spain's far-flung territories from the Philippines, for example, to New Spain; more specifically, the case of Colima and the Galleon of Manila. Here, the classic route explored in the series of texts by Jean-Pierre Berthe (*De Sevilla a Manila*) is analyzed and used to focus attention on one of many intriguing aspects of that trans-Pacific route. Taking the Braudelian idea of material culture as her starting point, Machuca examines a set of sumptuary elements produced in the East that were present in the everyday life of a certain social strata

in what is now the Mexican state of Colima. Using documental sources such as fragments of wills, letters on bridewealth, and estate inventories, among others, makes it possible to study what were surely considered luxury items by the well-off residents of Colima, a villa far removed from the central hub of New Spain. Indeed, though Colima was distant from the nerve center of New Spain, it was located close to the axis of commerce with the East, within easy viewing distance of the Galleon of Manila as it passed (e.g. through Bahía de Banderas, Cabo Corrientes). Not surprisingly, this resulted in an accumulation of sumptuary goods, at times through formal trade, at others by contraband. Machuca invites us on a tour through those records of material culture produced overseas: dresses and finely-finished fabrics, objects of carved ivory that portrayed religious and secular themes, and finely-, even divinely-crafted furniture. But she also examines the signs of cultural mixing in productive practices, such as the complex of coconut palm exploitation, from its use in architecture to the production of the juice of the coconut palm (known locally as *tuba*) that could be fermented to produce wine. Machuca's text thus examines an intense process of exchange and cultural miscegenation that began in the late 16th century.

The next article in the *Thematic* section leaps ahead several centuries, but situates us once again in the problematic of intermittent, often abruptly cut-off, dialogues; in this case, between Mexico and the group of Southeast Asian nations. Juan José Ramírez Bonilla sets out to analyze why the foreign policy implemented by recent Mexican administrations has impeded better relations with societies of international cooperation like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), created in 1967. Although the federal government has shown a keen interest in having Mexico form part of that select group of countries that dialogue as partners in the ASEAN's Regional Forum (ARF), set up in 1993, the governments of Southeast Asian countries do not consider Mexico a significant member of the international community known as the 'Asia-Pacific zone'. Making things worse were the strained personal relationship between then President Zedillo and Mohammad Mahathir (Prime Minister of Malaysia) in international forums and, during the Fox government, an emerging

contradiction between the guidelines of Mexico's foreign policy and the principles of international law expressed in the Charter of the United Nations. Due to factors such as these, Asian leaders came to perceive Mexico as an interventionist country in matters of democracy and human rights; it should come as no surprise that they have not been especially eager to intensify relations with a potential partner that shows such inclinations. Ramírez Bonilla's analysis argues that this contradiction is the result of a kind of schizophrenia in Mexican politics in which documents like the National Development Plan flagrantly contradict the country's own Political Constitution in such areas as national sovereignty and the right to self-determination.

But let us go back in time and return to the topic of evangelization as the West's beachhead into the Far East. Unlike the Jesuit experience in China, which the Company sustained until it was definitively suppressed in 1773, and despite the widespread persecution of Catholics that began in the decade of 1740, proselytizing in Japan developed along a distinct path. Its duration was much shorter, much more violent, and produced several dozen martyrs to the cause and saints that swelled the Catholic Church's processes of canonization. The first Jesuits arrived in Japan in 1549, before the process of colonizing and settling the Philippines had begun (1565). They encountered a difficult situation, given the convulsive state of warfare among the Japanese *daimyō*, that worsened with the (partial) unification achieved with the ascent of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, from 1582 to 1586. The somewhat fortuitous arrival of Franciscans from Manila in 1596 complicated matters even more as they did not recognize Hideyoshi's authority. This gave rise to the first wave of persecutions, which culminated with the deaths of the Nagasaki martyrs in February 1597; while under the first two Tokugawa shoguns –Ieyasu and Hidetada (1603-1623)– something of a tug-of-war took place between the Japanese and the Catholic missionaries, with some *daimyō* tolerating the clergy, and others persecuting them. In that context, one of the leaders who sympathized with the Christian missions, Date Masamune, the *daimyō* of Ōshū (a seigneurie in northeast Japan with its capital at Sendai), organized the first Japanese entourage sent to Europe. He ordered the construc-

tion of a ship that would sail with some 180 Japanese, the remainder of the Sebastián Vizcaíno expedition and the Franciscan friar Luis Sotelo, in October 1613, under the command of a samurai named Hasekura Tsunenaga Rokuyemon, whose rostrum adorns the cover of this issue.⁴

Hasekura had orders from his *daimyō* to speak with Philip III in Madrid and Pope Paul V in Rome with two clear goals in mind: to obtain support for additional Franciscan missionaries in Japan; and to negotiate a trade agreement. The expedition arrived first in New Spain in January 1614. Some of the Japanese passengers remained on the coast, while Hasekura continued on to Mexico City before setting sail for Madrid. Although there are other possibilities, it is intriguing to think that the origins of the Japanese who integrated into Guadalajara society in the 17th century might trace back to those who stayed behind in New Spain (see the review of Falck's book on this topic in this issue). Hasekura finally met with Philip III in January 1615 and, just a few days later, converted to Christianity when he was baptized as Felipe Francisco Hasekura by the Archbishop of Toledo. In late 1615, he left for Rome, where he was received by the Roman Curia in November and was named a citizen by the Senate of the city of Rome. We do not know where the portrait—by an anonymous artist—of him praying before a crucifix was painted, but clearly it was done after his conversion in Madrid in February 1615, perhaps by an Italian painter. Though the samurai had adopted the severe black attire typical of 17th-century Spain, with its white lace cuffs and collars—neither ruffles nor frills—he conserved his long hair tied back in Japanese style and carried his Japanese sword (a *tachi*, no doubt, judging by its position); reflections of his high rank among the samurai and the ceremonial setting. His hands folded in prayer and his gaze fixed upon the cross contrast with the air of severity and coldness so characteristic of the bearing of Japanese warriors. In a rather simple way, this painting condenses the

⁴ For permission to publish this image we are deeply grateful to Ambassador Eikichi Hayashiya (connoisseur of all things Mexican and translator, with Octavio Paz, of Bashō's works), and to Dr. Melba Falck. Their negotiation with the authorities of the Museum of the City of Sendai, Japan (仙台市博物館), holder of the collection, cleared it.

cultural mixtures present in the interconnected histories of Hasekura's time. Interestingly, this portrait contrasts starkly with one painted by the French artist Claude Deruet at the Court of Rome in 1615, which shows Hasekura bedecked in a style more representative of ambassadors; *i.e.*, a traditional *kimono* with *hakama*, bearing a *katanana* with his *tachi*. Also visible through a window in the background is the ship he commanded on his voyage from Japan to New Spain (the *San Sebastián*).⁵

Though Philip III and Paul V received the Japanese envoy with full honors, their attempts to negotiate trade agreements or other requests for support accomplished little. His European hosts were well aware that Hasekura was a secondary figure keen on establishing closer ties with the West, and that his politics opposed those of the Tokugawa shoguns who, with the tacit acquiescence of a weak emperor, Go-Mizunoo Tenno, had attacked Catholic missionaries and published an edict calling for their expulsion in 1613. Burdened with the failure of his diplomatic mission, Hasekura returned to Japan in 1620, precisely when, in Sendai, Masamune announced the ban on Christianity in his domains for fear of the shogun. Hasekura died two years later without, apparently, renouncing his Christian faith, but his relatives, widow and servants were persecuted for years, before finally being detained in 1640, when the authorities confiscated some Catholic religious objects that Hasekura had carried from Europe and that had remained in the possession of his family.

The history of Hasekura and his family's fidelity to the Christian faith serves as an effective lead-in to the marvelous document presented by Agustín Jacinto and Tamiko Kambe O.: the *Yaso kunjin kitô genbun*, or "Original Text of the Prayers of the Christian Catechist." Despite the persecutions that began in 1597, and the harsh prohibitions of the Catholic faith in Japan after the decade of 1610, missionaries continued to enter the archipelago clandestinely while many of their converts practiced their faith in secret. After the peasant revolts of the 1630s, the third Tokugawa shogun, Iemitsu, decided to stiffen the bans on the Christian religion, on contact and

⁵ The original painting is held at the Borghes Gallery in Rome.

trade with Europeans, and on the entry of foreigners into, and the departure of Japanese from, the islands. This isolationist policy began with the *Sakoku* decree and characterized the entire Edo period up to the Meiji restoration of 1866. In a move designed to do away, once and for all, with the –if I may– crypto-Christians, an organization was created in 1640 under the euphemistic name “Office of Religious Change” (*shūmon aratame-yaku*). Its objective was to induce apostasy through violent means. In the style of the inquisitors of the Holy Office in the West in the same period, it became obligatory to report any external manifestation of Christian religiosity to the authorities of the *shūmon aratame-yaku*, including, of course, the words and concepts uttered by believers’ in their prayers. That campaign generated extensive documentation that was used in interrogations of Christians during those stormy years. The text presented here is a fragment from that series. One particularly important point discussed by Jacinto and Kambe in their text that accompanies the document is that the shoguns’ response arose not so much out of a fear of Christianity as a religious doctrine, but because the Japanese perceived the dynamics of evangelization as a violent politics of penetration that concealed expansionist goals; one more reflection of the ‘immoderate’ character of the imaginary –and attitude– of the West.

Despite Japan’s closure to trade and evangelization, the Spanish remained in Manila –with many Japanese who had fled from the ban on Christianity– because it was their principle trading port for commerce with the East. China and other regions in Southeast Asia continued shipping merchandise to the Philippines, some of which was exchanged, reshipped by Spain across the Pacific to New Spain, and then sent on to Seville. By the early 18th century, Spain dominated a well-established commercial system that extended over both oceans through a series of trade consulates on both sides of the Atlantic. Those political and commercial intricacies are explored in Escamilla’s book (also reviewed in this issue).

Now that these texts that have taken us from one side of the planet to the other, providing knowledge and a macro-perspective of the world from the 16th to 21st centuries through hundreds, perhaps

thousands, of on again-off again dialogues among peoples and cultures, we now focus on some finer, fixed points by turning to the micro, or local, level.

First, the study by Ramón Goyas presents a microhistory of a rural latifundio that spans three centuries: the *Hacienda de la Ciénega*, located in the Chapala depression in Nueva Galicia, in the *alcaldía mayor* of La Barca, close to the boundary with the district of the *Audiencia* of Mexico. This essay traces the activities of the hacienda's owners as they deployed strategies to accumulate deeds to extensions of land (*caballerías*) and pastures for livestock, both large and small. It details their relations with the magistrates (*oidores*) of the *Audiencia* of Guadalajara, changes in cattle production strategies, and relations with their peons, most of whom were "free" Indians (*i.e.*, *indios laboríos* who had abandoned their communities, often to avoid paying tribute). In the late 18th century, the hacienda passed into the hands of the *Fondo Piadoso de las Californias* (Pious Fund of the Californias), which implemented a policy of renting fields as a means of generating income. But those arrangements resulted in an increase in land invasions and conflicts that continued until the government finally appropriated the estate in 1842.

In a second contribution, Arturo Argueta and Aída Castilleja's work explores the complex workings and intersections of social, religious and cultural life in a P'urhépecha town in the Meseta Tarasca: Cherán, with its *uauapu*, or honey-producing wasps. Clearly, the activities of those involved—gathering hives, extracting honey and harvesting the larvae of the *uauapu*—are secondary tasks in the sense that they provide little economic return; however, Argueta and Castilleja demonstrate the profound articulation of these wild products collected in the surrounding forests with several aspects of community life, including reciprocity, kinship relations, the local knowledge system, and the intricate conception of a cosmos in which the P'urhépecha people and their *uauapu* play integral roles. Through a complex process of deconstruction, the authors reveal the symbolic relations that Cherán's inhabitants establish between the world of men and the world of the *uauapu*: *i.e.*, the hive as a world, collective work, man's relation to nature, and its exploitation.

There is no need to recount the recent history of the town of Cherán, for it is well known. But the possibility of reconstructing the ways in which such a peasant community subsists by exploiting, above all, its forest resources, leads us to reflect on the quotation from Needham that introduced this Presentation: the world's problems will never be resolved as long as we see them exclusively from the perspective of the West. Indeed, the problems of the West must be seen from without, through the vision of the majority of humankind. At times, this vision will not be found in the Far East but, rather, right at home, in the mountains and jungles of our own world, one so often imagined as Western.

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