

Article

The Translation of Physics Texts by Western Missionaries During the Late Ming and Early Qing Dynasties and Its Enlightenment of Modern Chinese Physics

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Abstract: Christian culture is viewed as a translated cultural practice that has become intricately intertwined with the local culture over the course of historical development in China. Currently, many research findings focus on the translation of missionary religious texts during the late Ming and early Qing dynasties. However, the translation of non-religious texts by Western missionaries from the same period also plays a pivotal role in the development of Chinese society and culture. In order to verify the above point of view, this paper focuses on the translation of physics texts by Western missionaries during the late Ming and early Qing Dynasties. Examining the choice of physics texts translated by missionaries reveals the missionary motivations in evangelization. On the basis of analyzing the translation motivation, this study classifies the overall translation practice of Western missionaries in translating physical texts during that period, presenting the physical scientific knowledge brought to China at the time. Additionally, it explores how the translation of Western physical science enlightened the transformation and development of Chinese physics in modern times. Furthermore, the paper argues that the translations by Western missionaries played a crucial role in introducing new ideas and knowledge, contributing to the enlightenment of modern scientific knowledge in China, so as to underscore the value of the non-religious texts translated by Western missionaries to the society and culture in China.



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1. Introduction

Christian culture was introduced to China by Jingjiao 景教 (Nestorian/the Church of the East)¹ during the Tang Dynasty, marking the beginning of its integration with Chinese traditional culture and profoundly impacting the society² (Fu 2009; Wang 2007; Zhu 1997). At present, many findings by religious scholars have been conducted on Christian culture, with particular emphasis on the aspects outlined as: Chinese Jingjiao (Li 2021; Lin 2003; Yu 2023; Zieme 2021; Zhu 1997), Catholicism in China (Gorokhov and Dmitriev 2022; Ren 2000; Xiao 2015, 2024; Xiong 2024; Xu 2010b; Yan 2011), Chinese translation of the Bible (Fu 2009; Ma 2024; Ren 2007; Synn 2024; Wang 2017; Zhao 2017), Protestantism in China (Chen 2013; Li 2007; Li et al. 2024a; Luo 2014), Christian culture and Confucian culture (Chungsoon 2022; Lee 2024; Lefebure 2023; Liang 2013; Tian 2022; Xiao 2019), Chinese Translation of God (Cheng 2013; Hung 2023; Li 2008; Li et al. 2024c), Rites Controversy

(Giovannetti-Singh 2022; Hu 2024; Li 2019; Wang 2022; Zhang 2003a), and so on. Accordingly, this study examines the representative cases from numerous findings to reveal a systematic and detailed exploration of the historical development of Christian culture in China, the role of Western missionaries in evangelization, the translation of the *Bible*, and the sinicization of Christian culture. These accomplishments significantly contribute to enhancing the understanding and ongoing advancement of the comprehensive studies on Christian culture, which provide a systemic perspective for the spread of Christian culture about world Christianity (Daugherty 2021). However, careful examinations of these findings indicate that these studies belong to the ontological study of Christian culture, which is the category of theological research, addressing the internal history of theological research of Christian culture.

In addition, the studies of religion are intrinsically connected to society (Py and Pedlowski 2018; Yinger 2006), as religion is a fundamental element in societal structures. Hence, studies on the dissemination of Christian culture in Chinese history have consistently entailed engagement with society and culture, rendering it a crucial focal point for historical studies. Current studies on the historical context of Christian culture and Chinese social culture predominantly focus on the following aspects: Western missionaries and the spread of Western Scientific Knowledge (Fan 1992; Shang 2003, 2012; Truong 2020; Zou 2007, 2011), the interaction between Christian culture and Chinese traditional culture (Dong 1992; Pa 2009), the relationship between Western missionaries during the Ming and Qing Dynasties and Chinese science, culture and society (Li 1992; Shen 2007), Christianity and Chinese education in modern times (Xu 1990, 2010a), and so on. The analysis of these researches indicates that in historical research, the expansion of Christian culture in China is regarded as a significant social phenomenon, fostering a vibrant interaction with Chinese scientific expertise, traditional customs, ideological beliefs, educational practices, and other aspects. This highlights the positive influence of Western missionaries, the translations facilitated by missionaries, church universities, and other organizations on the societal and cultural evolution and progress of contemporary China, representing the external history studies of religion. However, the research conducted focuses primarily on investigating the relationship between Christian culture and Chinese social culture during the late Ming and early Qing. Because a unique feature of cultural exchange emerged between traditional Chinese and Western civilization during that period, particularly from the viewpoint of the political equivalent from a macro perspective³. Despite the economic and scientific lag in China, reciprocal exchanges unfolded as the eastward spread of Western civilization and the westward spread of Chinese culture (Zhang 2003b). This era marks the “initial substantial encounter between China and the West in the dissemination of Christian culture” (Gernet 2003, p. 3), representing a pivotal moment in their independent cultural evolutions. The intricate interplay between the two distinct cultures during that period stands as “a captivating chapter in the history of Christian cultural diffusion in China” (Wang 1996, p. 114). Hence, the findings and their respective research background offer valuable insights for this paper.

Furthermore, translation is a social activity or social fact, which highlights the interconnectivity between translation and society, where societal norms can influence translation practice, and translation practice can also shape social norms (Fu and Li 2023; Gutt 2000; Hermans 1999; Toury 1995; Tyulenev 2014; Venuti 1992). So, the interaction exemplified is the translation of Christian culture in China, which has profoundly influenced Chinese society and culture. Current research focus on translation studies involves analyzing how Western missionaries translated scientific and cultural knowledge into Chinese and the subsequent impact on the development of modern Chinese scientific knowledge: translation and the generation and development of disciplinary knowledge in mod-

ern China (Fu and Sun 2024; Peng 2011), translation by Western missionaries and the transformation of mathematics knowledge in China (Zhang 2021, 2022), translations and the transformation of geography knowledge in China (He and Hou 2024), translation by Western missionaries and the transformation and development of Chinese philosophical knowledge (Gao 2008), translation and the knowledge of international law in modern China (Qu and Gong 2024), and so on. These studies show that translation studies mainly center on the translation of languages, integrating the historical background of translating Western scientific knowledge during the Ming and Qing Dynasties. This illustrates the correlation between translation practices in Ming and Qing and the advancement of academic knowledge and discourse in modern China. Although language translation holds a significant position in translation studies, the analysis of historical materials mainly focuses on missionary translation in the framework of the dissemination of Christian culture in China. As a result, this innovative approach in translation studies presents novel viewpoints and insights for exploring the historical development of Christian culture in China. However, the research on the development of physics in China mainly includes: the spread of modern Chinese physics during the Ming Dynasty (Shen 2021; Shu 2013; Wang 2001), cases studies of the spread of western physics (Chu and Zhu 2019; Liu 2020; Ren 2021), the spread history of the branches of Western physics (Elman 2005; Needham 1956, 1991a, 1991b, 1991c). So, the current research on the spread of Western physics in China predominantly focuses on the historical development of the branches of physics and case studies. Notably, the spread of Western physics knowledge in China underwent the enlightenment during the late Ming and early Qing, the knowledge production of physics knowledge during the late Qing Dynasty, as well as the establishment of a physics discourse through the introduction of physics knowledge from Japan during the late Qing and the early Republic of China. Consequently, existing Chinese and foreign studies on the translation and spread of Western physics knowledge in China are deemed insufficiently thorough and comprehensive. Given this context, this paper aims to comprehensively investigate the translation and spread of Western physics knowledge during the late Ming and early Qing, which is the period of the enlightenment. By elucidating the significance of translating texts on physics by Western missionaries and the contributions to Chinese society and culture at that time, this study seeks to offer valuable insights for the study of the subsequent transformation and advancement of Chinese physics.

In summary, inspired by history studies and translation studies, this paper investigates the translation of physics texts by Western missionaries during the late Ming and early Qing. It explores the differences between Chinese and Western social and cultural contexts at that time, the reasons behind translating Western physics knowledge by missionaries, the specific Western physics texts that were translated, and the impact of these translations on modern China. By emphasizing the research design, this study underscores the important role of translation practice by Western missionaries during the late Ming and early Qing periods, acknowledging their historical influence on societal changes and enhancing research in religious studies.

2. The Social and Cultural Fields of China and the West During the Late Ming and Early Qing Dynasties

Religious practices in society are closely linked with social customs, representing a fundamental reality (Durkheim 1995; Simmel 2017). Consequently, a comprehensive analysis of the physics texts translated by Western missionaries during the late Ming and early Qing requires a detailed exploration of the social and cultural contexts between China and the West during that time.

2.1. The Social and Cultural Field in the Late Ming and Early Qing Dynasties

During the late Ming and early Qing, related researches (Tao and Wickeri 2024) referred to this era as “Tianbengdijie 天崩地解” (upheaval in society and culture). It marked a shift from traditional feudal structures in politics, ideology, culture, and economy that hindered societal progress. Consequently, Chinese society embarked on a transformative journey, prompting enlightened Confucian intellectuals to contemplate and address the social changes. Notably, the period witnessed the rise of capitalist commerce and industry as well as shifts within Chengzhulixue 程朱理學⁴.

Since the Song Dynasty, commerce experienced rapid growth in China, contributing to the growing importance of merchants in both economic and social roles. Moreover, the offspring of merchants began participating in the Kejue kaoshi 科舉考試 (imperial examinations), consequently elevating the social role of businessmen (Shang 2012). This participation also contributed to the gradual dismantling of the traditional class hierarchy consisting of Confucian scholars, peasants, workers, and merchants in Chinese society. Simultaneously, the expanding presence of commerce in Chinese society, along with the rise of capitalism in the Jiangnan area, attracted the talented toward commercial pursuits. As a result of the substantial wealth, merchants started to take on more responsibilities for social welfare initiatives, transitioning away from the traditional role held by Confucian scholars. By the 16th century, a noticeable shift had occurred in the social structure of Chinese society, marking a digression from the previous arrangement of Confucian scholars, merchants, peasants, and workers (Yu 2014). This transformation underscored the evolving nature of the traditional social class system, influenced by the progression of the commercial economy since the late Ming.

Since the Ming Dynasty, a stringent policy of controlling free opinion was enforced by the rulers who ascended to power through uprisings, aiming to uphold political dominance. Simultaneously, in efforts to strengthen their authority, the rulers embraced cultural autocracy and centralized governance. Under the policy of cultural autocracy during the Ming Dynasty, “Chengzhulixue 程朱理學 was upheld as the orthodox ideological framework” (Fu 2009, p. 101). The rulers implemented stringent measures such as Baguwen 八股文 (Stereotyped Writing or Eight-Legged Essay)⁵ in the imperial examination to maintain ideological conformity, hindering innovation and contributing to a rigidification of thoughts. Moreover, during the late Ming Dynasty, the entrenched dogmatism resulting from centralized rule led to a cultural stagnation marked by a lack of vibrancy and societal crises. This environment gave rise to peasant uprisings and a decline in feudal structures. Chengzhulixue 程朱理學, emphasizing adherence to Tianli 天理⁶ as an absolute guide for personal practice, became inadequate for social development and economic development. This paved the way for Wang Yangming’s philosophy 王陽明哲學⁷, which prioritized conscience over Tianli 天理, “creating a more adaptable ideological environment conducive to the spread of Catholicism” (Jiang 2004, p. 398). Therefore, During the late Ming Dynasty, the enlightened Confucian intellectuals engaged in a period of self-reflection driven by the developments in commerce and changes in societal norms. Their attention shifted towards personal betterment and efforts to support the feudal system, as well as maintaining economic and social stability through the incorporation of Western scientific knowledge.

2.2. The Social and Cultural Field of the West During the Late Ming and Early Qing Dynasties

During the 16th century, the opening of a new sea route enabled the West to establish connections with China through two main pathways: One route involved navigating around the Cape of Good Hope in Africa to access China via the Indian Ocean, while the other route traversed the Atlantic to bypass the Americas and reach China (Shang 2012;

[Xu 2010b](#)). These developments in marine technology contributed to the cultural exchanges between China and the West. During the late Ming and early Qing, certain European countries initiated primitive capital accumulation, leading to the onset of capitalist ventures and global colonial expansion. China became a focal goal for European interests. That period witnessed significant transformations in the social structures of Western countries due to economic growth, with overseas colonial expansion intensifying this historical progression. Despite these developments, China, under the feudal rulers of the Ming Dynasty, enforced a policy of isolation to consolidate centralized governance and tightly regulate domestic and foreign affairs. In 1511, the Portuguese and Spanish attempted to access the Chinese market by intruding into the southeast seas of China, with the Portuguese resorting to bribery of Chinese officials, deceitfully securing Macao, and initiating trade and missionary endeavors in China. So, the inevitable interaction between Chinese and Western cultures was evidently against the backdrop of this historical progression.

From the perspective of the developmental history of European religion, the European Reformation, led by Martin Luther, was vigorously unfolding. Various Christian religious sects emerged as they separated from the authority of the Holy Father ([Fu 2009](#); [Shen 2007](#)). As different denominations of Christian religious sects evolved, the competition for religious power and authority intensified among religious sects. Despite this, a relatively balanced struggle persisted among Christian religious sects. Seeking more believers and support, these Christian religious sects started vying for power and expanding overseas. Against the backdrop of the European Reformation, in 1540, the Jesuit Society, founded by nobleman Ignatius Loyola, gained recognition from the Holy Father. Operating under a distinct missionary doctrine, the Jesuits pursued a path divergent from other Christian sects, leveraging political influence to consolidate power. The goal of the Jesuits was to uphold the legacy of the medieval feudal church and counter the religious reform movement in Europe, aiming to rejuvenate the Roman church, restore the religious authority of the Holy Father, and reclaim followers and religious influence lost during the European Reformation. However, faced with challenges in the missionary gospel and competition for new believers, the Jesuits adjusted their missionary strategies, seeking to gain their believers and religious influence eastward for evangelization ([Wang 2007](#)).

In short, the social structure underwent significant transformations due to the growth of commerce, challenging traditional societal and cultural norms during the late Ming and early Qing. This shift prompted Confucian scholars to seek Western scientific knowledge in efforts to reform and uphold feudal governance. Concurrently in Europe, the progression of medieval Christianity provided a strong basis for the dissemination of Christian culture, particularly in religious practice, reforms, and societal impact. The European Reformation directly led the Jesuits to China, who were known for their scholarly prowess, emphasis on intellectual discourse with Confucian scholars, and propagation of the gospel through written knowledge. Additionally, advancements in geography and early globalization set the groundwork for cultural exchanges between China and the West, whereas analyses of the social and cultural fields of China and the West during the late Ming and early Qing reveal that the interactions between Chinese and Western cultures were not only a continuation of historical trends but also a product of new times. Driven by global changes and societal demands, cultural exchanges between China and the West entered a phase characterized by extensive, direct, and substantial engagements. Therefore, China and the West were at similar developmental stages in production, science, and technology during the late Ming and early Qing Dynasties, which allowed for the potential and requirements for Chinese and Western cultures to mutually enhance and advance each other through exchanges in comparable fields.

3. The Translation Motivation of Physic Texts by Western Missionaries During the Late Ming and Early Qing Dynasties

The research on the missionary methods employed during the late Ming and early Qing predominantly emphasizes the diverse approaches of cultural adaptation adopted by Western missionaries, such as the acculturation strategies and the fusion between Christian culture and Confucian cultures (Ricci 2014; Xu 2000; Xu 2010b; Yao 2005; Zhang 2003a). While these findings provide valuable insights from a broad perspective on the dissemination of religious teachings by missionary strategies, this paper aims to shift the focus towards the translation of physical texts by Western missionaries based on the findings. It will analyze the motivation for translation and missionary tactics employed in the dissemination of physical texts from a more detailed standpoint in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of missionary practice.

3.1. *Demonstration of the Legitimacy of Christian Culture from Western Civilization*

Since the Tang Dynasty, the civilization of China has stood at the forefront of technological and cultural advancements in the world. This, coupled with the geographical isolation, had led to the formation of a cultural mentality that viewed China as the sole educated nation while considering others as barbaric in the traditional thinking of Chinese. Throughout past dynasties, feudal rulers maintained this viewpoint, viewing interactions with other nations as a privilege. During the late Ming Dynasty, restrictions were placed on economic and trade exchanges with the overseas, with Western arrivals seen as a threat. As a result, during the late Ming and early Qing Dynasties, Chinese society continued to perceive Western culture and people as alien (Pang 2006). Hence, as a result of adhering to Chinese traditional cultural norms, Chinese society and its people may not readily embrace Christian culture.

It is well known that the Jesuits are widely acknowledged for their dedication to spreading the gospel globally and are esteemed for their pioneering spirit within Christian denominations. Consequently, Western missionaries encountered a significant obstacle in the late Ming and early Qing: the task of transforming the Chinese perspective of Western civilization and values in order to establish a conducive environment for spreading Christianity in China. It has been observed that upon their arrival in China, Catholic missionaries translated books covering a wide range of subjects, including “natural science and technology, humanities and social sciences, and religions” (Li et al. 2024b, p. 905). It has been evident that Western missionaries endeavored to demonstrate to Chinese society and its people that the West had civilization and humanism, which was achieved through the translation and introduction of Western religion, culture, and natural science. Notably, the translation of physics texts by Western missionaries was specifically focused on natural science and technology, separate from religious and social science texts. It aimed to emphasize the superiority of Western scientific and technological progress by comparing it to ancient China in order to validate Christian culture within Western civilization.

Through the examination of related historical research findings (Li 2007; Shang 2003; Shen 2007; Tao and Wickeri 2024; Xiao 2019; Xu 2000; Zou 2007), it has been found that Western missionaries recognized the superiority of specific Western technological advancements compared to traditional Chinese science and technology by translating Western scientific and technological texts, especially in the field of Western physics. This recognition impacted the views of certain enlightened Confucian intellectuals in China towards Western society and culture, resulting in a discernible increase in the pursuit of Western scientific knowledge. Additionally, some Western missionaries had been appointed as officials in the feudal governing system, evidencing the impact of Western missionaries’ endeavors to promote Christian culture from advanced European civilizations.

3.2. Construction of the Figures of Western Missionaries as Xiru 西儒

Since the era of the Han Dynasty, the feudal leaders of China had consistently embraced Confucianism as the dominant ideology. Through the following dynasties, Confucianism evolved into the prevailing intellectual and cultural force, notably flourishing during the late Ming and early Qing Dynasties. The imperial examinations (mainly Kejue kaoshi 科舉考試) primarily focused on assessing the knowledge of candidates by Confucian texts, leading to the elevation of Confucian scholars in the social hierarchy and granting them significant cultural influence. This elevated status earned them the title of knowledgeable people and positioned them as authoritative figures in Chinese society. Consequently, related literature often concluded that “Confucian intellectuals held the true power in Chinese society, with influence extending even over military leaders and soldiers” (Ricci 2014, p. 38). Therefore, the comprehension of Chinese society and Confucian scholars by Western missionaries played a significant role in shaping their approach to missionary work and enhancing the efficiency of gospel dissemination during the late Ming and early Qing Dynasties.

The Jesuits sought to wield influence over secular society through top-down methods. Early Catholic missionaries in China adopted a comparable strategy. Nonetheless, during the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, not all missionaries had the privilege of direct interaction with the emperor for evangelistic purposes. Despite the limitations on Western missionaries preaching to the Chinese emperor, the overarching objective remained to secure imperial backing for Catholic missions. Matteo Ricci and other Western missionaries, drawing on their experiences in China and their insights into Chinese society, developed a strategic missionary approach in China: Matteo Ricci’s Missionary Approach⁸ (Ricci 2018). Following this strategic approach, Western missionaries employed a strategic method by concentrating on involving Confucian scholars in Chinese missionary work and leveraging conducive circumstances to establish a network of prominent Confucian intellectuals in China. This approach aimed at converting more Confucian scholars into followers of Christianity.

Hence, Western missionaries in China recognized the importance of fostering positive relationships with Chinese Confucian intellectuals. To achieve this, they expanded their translation efforts beyond religious texts to include a wide range of subjects such as natural science, technology, humanities, and social sciences. Physics texts played a significant role in this endeavor. As advancements in astronomy and the calendar lagged behind modern scientific knowledge during the late Ming Dynasty, there was a growing need for science and technology in China. By translating Western physics texts, missionaries provided traditional Confucian scholars with a platform to reconsider Western civilization and scientific progress. This shift in perception towards Western missionaries led to them being viewed as knowledgeable individuals, known as Xiru 西儒. The proficient translation of natural science knowledge, specifically in physics, by Western missionaries captured the attention of enlightened Chinese intellectuals, establishing a positive social connection and paving the way for evangelization efforts in China.

3.3. Making Use of Physics Texts for Indirect Missionary

The primary aim of Western missionaries upon entering China was not to translate non-religious texts. Rather, the translated and written texts they produced served as a means to indirect missionary. Upon integrating into China, Catholic missionaries realized that the majority of Chinese people, “including those from civilian class such as peasants and fishermen, possessed printed legends and story texts” (Loureiro 1997, p. 134). Western missionaries recognized the opportunity to utilize books as a means of disseminating the gospel in China by tapping into the Chinese population’s fondness for reading. Faced with

obstacles in directly converting religious texts for missionary objectives due to the complexities of integrating foreign Christian traditions into Chinese culture, the missionaries astutely harnessed the Chinese people's love for literature. Through the use of visually appealing cover designs on Western publications and engaging illustrations in non-religious materials, Western missionaries successfully achieved their desired goals by capturing the interest of the Chinese audience (Ricci 2018).

In addition, utilizing physical texts as a method of disseminating religious teachings can be particularly impactful, given the profound respect that the Chinese culture has for books. Throughout Chinese society, paper is esteemed, and books are revered as sacred items that are not to be treated casually. Written materials hold significant symbolic value for readers. Western missionaries skillfully harnessed the psychological tendencies of the Chinese people to clandestinely convey religious messages by capitalizing on the revered status of books in China. Despite obstacles like the array of dialects in ancient China and the limited language proficiency of Western missionaries, written texts proved to be an effective medium for communication with the Chinese population, aiding in the precise dissemination of Christian doctrines (Li et al. 2024b; Ricci 2018). During the late Ming and early Qing Dynasties, Western missionaries faced restrictions and limited numbers, prompting a greater reliance on books as a primary tool for evangelization. Chinese characters, serving as a vital medium for cultural and intellectual exchange, have not only influenced China but also neighboring countries in history (Xiao 2011). Hence, through the spread of books, the concepts advocated by Western missionaries or the Gospel of God can reach a wide extent in China.

Hence, to effectively advance the aim of indirect missionary by Western missionaries, non-religious texts like physics texts emerged as a significant component in missionary translation practice. By choosing to translate physical science materials, Western missionaries effectively engaged the curiosity of the Chinese people by presenting them with Western natural science concepts that deviated from their traditional culture. This strategy aligned well with Chinese society's attraction to novelty at that time. Moreover, by translating and disseminating Western physics literature, the missionaries skillfully avoided the potential alienation that direct missionary efforts could have caused among the Chinese people. This approach served as a valuable intermediary step in helping the Chinese people assimilate Christian beliefs and culture.

To sum up, the motivation for the translation of physical texts by Western missionaries into Chinese was influenced by the social facts of the time. It demonstrated the Catholic missionaries' profound grasp of Chinese society and culture, leading to an indirect missionary approach in translating non-religious texts. This strategic translation of non-religious texts, particularly the physical texts by Western missionaries, enhanced the missionaries' social standing and fostered connections with Chinese Confucian intellectuals, which facilitated the spread of Christian culture by establishing a positive environment in China.

4. Translation of Texts on Physics by Western Missionaries During the Late Ming and Early Qing Dynasties

The current findings on religion and history have witnessed notable investigations into the translation compilations of Western missionaries' texts during the Ming and Qing Dynasties (Bennett 1968; Fang 2007; Liang 2019; Xu 2006; Zhang 2012). However, the existing research primarily offers broad perspectives on the list of names of translations by Western missionaries. Therefore, this study aims to meticulously examine the translation texts on Western physics knowledge produced by Western missionaries during the transitional period from the late Ming to early Qing Dynasties. By leveraging existing research findings and addressing specific research designs, this study endeavors to construct a well-

defined framework for the analysis of translation texts on Western physics knowledge. The research findings on the historical development of Chinese physics reveal that the discipline of physics encompasses various branches covering mechanics, acoustics, optics, electricity, and so on (Dai 2001a; Shen 2021). Consequently, this study will be categorized and examined based on the overall context of the integration of Western physics knowledge in China.

4.1. Translated Texts on Mechanics

Since the late Ming Dynasty, Catholic missionaries have introduced telescopes and other Western tools into Chinese society with the intention of captivating the interest of the Chinese people with exotic marvels, ultimately facilitating more effective communication of the gospel. It is true that Western missionaries effectively piqued the curiosity of enlightened Chinese Confucian intellectuals and ignited their interest in Western science and technology through the introduction of advanced Western tools. To cultivate a positive rapport with Confucian scholars, Western missionaries undertook the translation texts on Western mechanics knowledge: *yuanxi qiqi tushuo* 遠西奇器圖說 (*Introduction of Western Mechanical Knowledge*, narrated by Johann Schreck and written by Wang Zheng 王徵, 1626), *zhongxue qianshuo* 重學淺說 (*Introduction of Mechanics*, narrated by Alexander Wylie and written by Wang Tao 王韜, 1858), *tantian* 談天 (*Basic Knowledge of Mechanics*, narrated by Joseph Edkins and written by Li Shanlan 李善蘭, 1859), *zhongxue* 重學 (*An Elementary Treatise on Mechanics*, narrated by Joseph Edkins and translated by Li Shanlan 李善蘭, 1859), *xinzhì lingtaiyì xiàngzhì* 新製靈臺儀象誌 (*Introduction of Astronomical Instruments and Applied Method*, narrated by Ferdinand Verbiest and written by Liu Yunde 劉蘊德, Sun Youben 孫有本, Xu Hu 徐瑚 et al., 1674), and so on.

Among these mechanics texts, *yuanxi qiqi tushuo* 遠西奇器圖說 is recognized as “the pioneering work of mechanical engineering in China” (Dai 2001b, p. 500), marking the inception of physical studies in China. It presents Western mechanical knowledge, including fundamental concepts of mechanics such as gravity, Archimedes’ principle, and leverage. In Addition, *zhongxue* 重學 is viewed as the first mechanical work introduced to China by Western missionaries. This publication, divided into three sections: statics, dynamics, and hydromechanics, encompasses significant topics such as Archimedes’ principle, Boyle’s law, and Torricelli’s experiment. By presenting the latest Western mechanical knowledge, *zhongxue* 重學 played a vital role in acquainting the Chinese society of that era with advancements in the field. Notably, the mechanical tools and scientific expertise introduced by Western missionaries during the late Ming and early Qing dynasties significantly met the practical needs of Chinese society. These advancements played a crucial role in the creation of astronomical observatories, the improvement of farmland water systems, and the progress of agricultural machinery (Dai 2001b).

4.2. Translated Texts on Astrophysics

To promote Western religious ideologies and attract a wider following, Western missionaries prioritized altering the conventional Chinese perspective on the cosmos. Shaped by long-standing Chinese societal norms, the Chinese approach to celestial observation maintained an enigmatic aura, leading to disinterest in God, which was introduced by Western missionaries. To address this, Western missionaries undertook the translation and dissemination of astrophysics texts pertaining to chronometer phenomenon: *tianwen lue* 天文略 (*Introduction of Astronomical Knowledge*, edited by Emmanuel Diaz, 1615), *cetian yueshuo* 測天約說 (*Introduction to Western Astrometry*, narrated by Johann Schreck and written by Xu Guangqi 徐光啟, 1629), *celiang quanyi* 測量全義 (*Whole Method of Surveying*, translated and edited by Giacomo Rho, 1631), *jiaoshi lizhi* 交食歷指 (*Observation*

and *Measurement of Solar and Lunar Eclipses*, translated and edited by Johann Adam Schall von Bell 1632/1634), *jiaoshi mengqiu* 交食蒙求 (translated and edited by Johann Adam Schall von Bell 1635), *wuwei lizhi* 五緯歷指 (*Observation and Measurement of Eclipses*, translated and edited by Giacomo Rho, 1637), *xiyang xinfa lishu* 西洋新法歷書 and *lifa xichuan* 歷法西傳 (*European Classical and Modern Astronomy Knowledge, Introduction of Gregorian Calendar*, translated and edited by Johann Adam Schall von Bell 1645, 1640/1656), *xinzhì ling-taiyi xiangzhi* 新製靈臺儀象誌 (*Introduction of Astronomical Instruments and Applied Method*, narrated by Ferdinand Verbiest and written by Liu Yunde 劉蘊德, Sun Youben 孫有本, Xu Hu 徐瑚 et al., 1674).

Tianwen lue 天文略 stands out as the pioneering book that brought celestial observation to China, incorporating insights from Western telescopes. Subsequently, Western missionaries sequentially translated and introduced Western astrophysical concepts such as light, solar eclipse, and the Gregorian calendar. These Western scientific contributions played a significant role in enlightening the Chinese people with ideological and theoretical knowledge, allowing for a more objective comprehension of celestial laws and universal phenomena. Concurrently, the spread of astrophysics information in traditional Chinese society concurrently influenced a shift in the worldview, fostering an environment conducive to embracing Christian beliefs. Throughout that era, Western missionaries introduced fragmented scientific knowledge to China, including principles from ancient Greek and Roman civilizations like the geocentric model, Archimedes' mechanics, and Euclidean geometry, among others. Notable omissions were the comprehensive physical systems and methodologies of the scientific revolution. Nevertheless, the introduction of varied scientific knowledge to China, divergent from traditional Chinese cosmological perspectives, captured the attention of Chinese intellectuals (Dai 2000), leading to inadvertent shifts in the established societal and cultural paradigms.

4.3. Translated Texts on Thermology

In addition to the relatively concentrated introduction of the above-mentioned mechanics and astronomy texts, thermology, as an important branch of physics, had also been introduced to China by Western missionaries, but there were relatively few translated works. The main translated text is *yanqi tushuo* 驗氣圖說 (*Introduction of Air Thermometer*, translated and edited by Ferdinand Verbiest, 1629), which describes the development and application of air thermometers, featuring a set of thermometer designs crafted, and it stands as the pioneering book to introduce quantitative thermometers from the West to China. The text as a chapter inclusion in *xinzhì ling-taiyi xiangzhi* 新製靈臺儀象誌 was attributed to the limited number of texts discussing the introduction of Western thermal knowledge during that period, along with the practical application aspects of thermal knowledge emphasized in this work. Hence, it is evident that the purposeful translation choices made by Western missionaries regarding Western physics knowledge during this era were centered on specific items. Consequently, the translation and spread of western physics knowledge during that period was neither systematic nor exhaustive.

In summary, Western missionaries played a key role in translating and introducing Western physics knowledge encompassing mechanics, astronomy, and thermology to Chinese society during that period. This indirect approach served to further their missionary goals while catering to the scientific interests of the time. Notably, during the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, Western missionaries recognized the Chinese people's appreciation for fields such as astronomy, optics, statics, gravitology, and mathematics. By bringing these subjects into the spotlight, the missionaries aimed to enhance the Chinese people's interactions with the influential figures of their society, including emperors and Confucian scholars. This deliberate selection of subjects for translation reflected the missionaries' nu-

anced understanding of Chinese culture and societal dynamics. Therefore, the analysis of texts by Western missionaries involved in the translation of Western physics knowledge in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties reveals two significant aspects. Initially, Western missionaries introduced physical knowledge that was distinct from Chinese traditional culture, emphasizing mechanics and astronomy. The translated materials primarily focused on academic and practical content, excluding physics textbook information. Notably, the translation and incorporation of Western thermology knowledge were limited and lacked systematic organization. Secondly, the translation and integration of Western physics knowledge in China commenced during the late Ming Dynasty and extended into the early Republican era, signifying the evolution of the modern physics knowledge system. The translation methods employed by Western missionaries for physics texts during the late Ming and early Qing periods were disjointed, contrasting with the systematic translation and integration of Western physics knowledge during the late Qing and early Republican periods in China. Thus, while the translation of physics knowledge during the late Qing Dynasty and early Republic periods in China facilitated the development and transformation of modern Chinese physics knowledge, the translation practices during the late Ming and early Qing dynasties can be seen as a prerequisite enlightening stage in the evolution of Chinese physics knowledge.

5. The Enlightenment of Modern Chinese Physics by Western Missionaries During the Late Ming and Early Qing Dynasties

This paper examines the differences between Chinese and Western social and cultural fields during the late Ming and early Qing dynasties in conjunction with the historical stage of Chinese society and cultural development (Xiao and Xu 1995; Xu 2000; Zhang 2003b; Zou 2007). It also delves into the rationale behind Western missionaries opting to translate physics texts, thoroughly scrutinizes the translation motivations employed by Western missionaries during that period and establishes a comprehensive framework. By considering the nature of cultural interactions between China and the West during the late Ming and early Qing, the study views the translation practice of Western missionaries as a social fact in the transformation and advancement of Chinese social culture (Fu and Li 2023; Xiao and Huang 2022). Furthermore, it evaluates the translated texts on Western physics knowledge by Western missionaries on Chinese social culture and assesses their overall contribution to the societal development in China during that era.

5.1. Contribution to the Transformation of Perspectives on the World in China

The translation of Western physics by missionaries during the late Ming and early Qing Dynasties had a significant impact on the scientific perception and worldview of Chinese society at that time. The traditional Chinese cultural mindset, rooted in concepts such as *tianrenheyi* 天人合一 (harmony between the heaven and humans) or *tianrenganying* 天人感應 (interactions between heaven and mankind), placed great emphasis on a holistic view of the world and nature. This mindset was reflected in ancient texts like *Zhuangzi* 莊子, which suggested a perspective that “*guzhi ming dadaozhe, xian mingtian er dadao-cizhi* 古之名大道者, 先明天而大道次之 (The ancient times that first grasped the profound truth were also adept at discerning the path of the heavens, with moral principles guiding their understanding.)”, which expressed a way of thinking from heaven to humanity (Zhuang 1978, p. 471). Furthermore, the teachings of *sishu zhangju jizhu* 四書章句集註 by Zhu Xi 朱熹 also discussed in detail the relationship between heaven, humanity, the natural world, and society (Zhu 2011, pp. 19–35). The traditional Chinese Confucian culture had shaped the worldview of the Chinese people to prioritize the belief that celestial principles govern all aspects of life, instilling a sense of wonder and reverence for the universe.

So, the translation and dissemination of astrophysics knowledge by Western missionaries during the late Qing Dynasty played a crucial role in enhancing the understanding of the correlation between the cosmos and humanity. This, in turn, facilitated the acceptance of Western perspectives regarding the objectivity of the universe. A significant aspect of modern science was its role in combatting feudal superstitions, embodying a fundamental component of scientific culture. By promoting scientific culture and opposing feudal beliefs, Western missionaries played a pivotal role in shaping the scientific worldview in China. This influence also became evident in the dissemination of physics literature during the late Ming and early Qing dynasties. Through the translations provided by Western missionaries, Chinese individuals were able to delve into scientific principles in the exploration of the natural world, challenging prevailing feudal superstitions. Consequently, this contributed to the advancement of scientific and cultural awareness among the Chinese people.

5.2. Alteration of the Social Structure of Chinese Traditional Society

From the perspective of cultural genesis, the introduction of Western scientific culture to China during the late Ming Dynasty significantly impacted Chinese traditional culture, triggering an ideological crisis involving cultural values, identity, and beliefs. This interaction also played a key role in transforming traditional scientific practices into modern scientific culture. The integration of Chinese and Western knowledge within culture depended on the strategic involvement of key cultural stakeholders. While external influences were present in Chinese society, the primary drivers behind this decision-making process were specific groups within the social structure. Historically, intellectual classes, such as Confucian scholars before the Qing Dynasty and the post-imperial examination era, have played a pivotal role in shaping the course of Chinese cultural evolution.

Specifically, before the modern era, the Chinese social structure functioned as a centralized monarchy that relied on a small-scale agricultural economy. The rulers of the Chinese dynasties held the highest political and cultural authority, while the people were segmented into bureaucratic, gentry, and peasant classes under the emperor's rule. Within the feudal system of China, the bureaucratic class gained influence and prestigious positions through the imperial examination system, thereby bolstering the supremacy of Confucian traditional values. The gentry class, as a knowledgeable segment of society, not only possessed intellectual prowess and adhered to Confucian ethics but also held a prominent social status with accompanying privileges. This elite group played a key role "in societal transformations by swiftly embracing new ideas and adapting their social functions accordingly" (Zhang 1991, pp. 48–52). The dissemination of Western knowledge, particularly through the translation of physics texts by Western missionaries during the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, played a crucial role in shaping Chinese social progress. This led to a growing awareness among the gentry class about the importance of natural science, prompting them to reevaluate and even confront certain traditional Confucian beliefs. As a result, the gentry class started recognizing the value of natural science and began to question and challenge the traditional beliefs of Confucianism to some extent. Meanwhile, with the influence of western scientific knowledge, it led to the emergence of translators like Li Shanlan 李善蘭, Li Zubai 李祖白, Li Zhizao 李之藻, Liu Yunde 劉蘊德, Sun Youben 孫有本, Wang Zheng 王徵, and so on. The Chinese translators collaborated with missionaries to translate western knowledge and later played a crucial role in spreading Western knowledge in China. The translation of Western natural science books by Chinese translators during that period was focused on practicality due to the influence of Western missionaries. It is important to highlight that the translation process lacked personal autonomy, contrasting with the active selection and translation of physical books by Chinese transla-

tors during the late Qing and the early Republic of China. Meanwhile, the rise of various factions intrigued by Western scientific principles in China, stimulated by Western scientific advancements, had significantly altered the demographic of enlightened intellectuals within the conventional Chinese societal structure. This transformation also established a solid groundwork for the extensive translation practices aimed at incorporating Western physics knowledge during the late Qing and the early Republic of China.

5.3. Creation of the Early Terminology of Physics

“Terminology symbolizes the essence of a professional discipline, with innovative terms frequently serving as a manifestation of the concept of innovation within that field” (Fang 2023, p. 3). The translation and the progress of modern Chinese physics have been significantly shaped by the translation and introduction of physical terms carried out by Western missionaries. Although ancient China possessed its own physics knowledge, it was mainly rooted in conventional experiential terms. The roots of modern physics knowledge can be traced back to the West, a notion widely accepted in current physics research. The evolution of modern Chinese physics heavily depended on the translation efforts of Western missionaries, which began during the late Ming Dynasty. Through translating Western physics literature and formulating new Chinese physical terminology, Western missionaries laid a strong groundwork for the advancement of the field during the late Qing and Republican eras in China. The invaluable role played by Western missionaries during this time period should not be underestimated.

The knowledge in the physics texts translated by Western missionaries during the late Ming and early Qing dynasties seems to be common sense today, but at that time, it deeply shocked the Chinese people who had just come into contact with natural science, subverted their understanding in the Four Books and Five Classics, and formed their ideas and thoughts, which promoted the modern transformation of Chinese people’s thoughts and promoted the formation of new social thoughts. Therefore, the new terminology of these physical texts translated by Western missionaries had given Chinese people a new understanding, which not only had a great influence on the field of natural science but also had a far-reaching influence on the field of social science. Through the analysis of the physical texts of Western missionaries during the late Ming and early Qing Dynasties, this study finds that the terminologies created by missionaries are still widely used in the current society. For example, wenduji 溫度計(thermometer), introduced in *yanqi tushuo* 驗氣圖說, is a frequently employed instrument in modern society and a common tool in physics research. Historically, ancient China did not possess thermometers, so the introduction of this Western physical tool by missionaries marked a significant shift in experimental practices. This innovative terminology and experimental tool were first introduced to China by Western missionaries during the late Ming and early Qing Dynasties. In addition, the concept of mechanics was initially referred to as Zhongxue 重學 by the Chinese during the late Ming and early Qing dynasties. Over time, the term evolved, and by the late Qing Dynasty, it became commonly known as Lixue 力學. However, the translation of physics terminology by Western missionaries during the late Ming and early Qing dynasties remains unfamiliar to the Chinese people. This can be attributed to both the missionaries’ inadequate grasp of Chinese characters and the evolution of the Chinese characters over time. Consequently, many physics terms from that era were not effectively used at present.

5.4. Enlightenment on the Modern Physics Education

Confucian traditional culture prioritized ethical and moral education, emphasizing the importance of personal character development while limiting individual freedom. This approach sharply contrasted with the Western Renaissance’s encouragement of en-

trepreneurial spirit and personal independence. Wang Yangming's philosophy 王陽明哲學 during the late Ming Dynasty challenged the dominant of Chengzhulixue 程朱理學, emphasizing feudal ethics in educational objectives to align with feudal rule, which began to pay attention to the view of human freedom. However, the specified perspective, nonetheless, failed to adequately confront the societal conflicts and challenges prevalent at that time. Originating from Confucian traditional values, the primary goal of feudal education was to cultivate individuals who embraced the rulers' doctrines and supported the ruling elite. This educational structure gave rise to a group of feudal officials who played a crucial role in maintaining the feudal hierarchy during various dynastic reigns. In the later years of the Ming and early Qing Dynasties, progressive-minded individuals within the feudal bureaucracy played a significant role in integrating Western scientific and technological advancements, leading to transformations in the traditional Chinese educational system.

Since the late Ming Dynasty, a group of enlightened intellectuals had engaged in critical reflection on various social issues, leading to a movement aimed at social change and ideological liberation with a focus on practical learning. Influenced by practical learning principles, these intellectuals shifted their emphasis to knowledge rooted in reality and practical application. They stressed the significance of practical experience in knowledge acquisition and promoted the incorporation of Western science and technology to revamp economic and cultural systems. The translated Western scientific texts by missionaries greatly impacted the ideological views of the intellectuals and set the foundation for practical learning. Building on the Confucian governance tradition, Xu Guangqi 徐光啟 emphasized the importance of science and technology in enhancing national prosperity and strength, advocating for the adoption of Western advancements. Translations of Western scientific texts by missionaries inspired intellectuals to promote the spread of Western knowledge, leading to a shift towards practical education. In 1904, the Qing government introduced *zouding xuetang zhangcheng* 奏定學堂章程 (Presented School Regulation), expanding the curriculum to include physics, symbolizing the transition from traditional Chinese education to a more modern era. Consequently, the translation and propagation of physics knowledge by Western missionaries, along with the support of enlightened intellectuals during the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, were key outcomes of this significant social and cultural evolution (Sun 2012; Xu 1990).

6. Conclusions

The spread of Christian culture in China has undergone a long-term historical development, exhibiting distinct characteristics in tandem with shifts in Chinese societal and cultural frameworks (Li 2019; Ren 2000; Wang 1996; Wang 2007; Xu 2000; Yan 2011; Zhang 2003b). During the transitional period from the late Ming to early Qing Dynasty, there was a notable convergence of Chinese traditional beliefs and Western ideas, distinguishing it from other historical eras. Particularly, the Western missionaries of this time are recognized for their role in spreading Christian influences in China. Their endeavors involved introducing Western scientific, technological, and societal principles to improve the spread of the gospel. While seemingly unrelated to religious items, the non-religious translation practices incorporated novel perspectives into Chinese literature, culture, scientific advancements, and technological innovations (Li 2007; Fan 1992; Fu 2009; Peng 2011; Shang 2003; Zhang 2003b), fostering the evolution and enrichment of Chinese tradition norms.

However, the study of Christian culture should not be confined solely to religious aspects. The emergence of Christian culture in China is a well-documented social phenomenon intricately intertwined with various social and cultural aspects. As a result, the analysis of translated texts by Western missionaries has become a focal point in academic

research. But, present research on translations by Western missionaries is primarily a quantitative study (Liang 2019; Xu 2006; Zou 2011), lacking in-depth analysis of the impact of various translations. Drawing upon current findings in translation studies regarding the correlation between missionary translations and the formation and evolution of modern Chinese knowledge systems (Fu and Sun 2024; He and Hou 2024; Qu and Gong 2024; Zhang 2021, 2022), this study takes the late Ming and early Qing Dynasties as a historical backdrop based on insights from Chinese physics history (Dai 2000, 2001a, 2001b; Shen 2021; Wang 2001; Xiao and Xu 1995; Zhang 2003b). Examining the social contexts, motivations for physics translations, and broader physics translation environment by Western missionaries underscores the significant impact of translated physics knowledge on the development of modern Chinese physics. Consequently, analyzing non-religious texts translated by Western missionaries plays a pivotal role in exploring the spread of Christian culture in China. This method facilitates an unbiased evaluation of the historical significance of Western missionaries, thereby enriching the scope and thoroughness of Christian culture research (Peng 2011; Sun 2012; Shang 2012).

Indeed, the evolution and advancement of modern physics in China have been significantly shaped by the non-religious translation practice by Western missionaries. This progression encompasses the enlightenment era of physics knowledge during the late Ming and early Qing Dynasties, the localization stage of physics knowledge by missionaries and Chinese intellectuals during the late Qing Dynasty, and the establishment stage of the comprehensive modern physics system brought from Japan during the late Ming and early Republic of China by Chinese translators. Such a historical evolution underscores a lengthy developmental trajectory. So, the translated physics texts by Western missionaries during the late Ming and early Qing dynasties embodied a complex process involving collaboration between missionaries and Chinese intellectuals, encompassing various branches of physics dissemination. Nevertheless, the study also has some limitations: What is the nature of cooperation between missionaries and Chinese intellectuals? How is the academic influence of the different versions of translated physics texts by Western missionaries? How is the publishing and distribution situation of the translated physics texts by Western missionaries? In which religions did physics texts translated by Western missionaries spread? What kind of attitude do Chinese people have towards these physics texts? What changes have taken place in the physical terms translated and created by Western missionaries in the process of social and cultural development in China? These aspects require careful consideration and scrutinization in future research. However, situating the translation endeavors of Western missionaries against the backdrop of Chinese societal and cultural evolution at the time provides a novel outlook to grasp the historical importance of Western missionaries and can greatly enrich the study of Christian culture.

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Notes

- ¹ For the expression of Jingjiao (Nestorian/the Church of the East), this paper tends to use pinyin 拼音. For the relationship between Jingjiao and Nestorianism, see the related study (Wang and Fu 2022).
- ² For the integration of Christian culture with Chinese traditional culture, it could be viewed as bensehua 本色化 (sinicization) and Zhongguohua 中國化 (Chinalization). See more information in related literature (Zhu 1997; Tang 2018).
- ³ The examination of the cultural exchange between China and the West can be categorized into three main historical periods: The first phase, known as the classical period, extends up to the voyage era of Zheng He 鄭和, before the 15th century. During that time, China played a significant role in cultural exchanges due to its advancements in economy, science, and culture. The second phase, occurring between 1500 and 1800, the late Ming and early Qing Dynasties, is commonly referred to as the Enlightenment period. The third phase, considered the modern period, spans from the Opium War to the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. In that era, China found itself in a passive historical position due to its relative backwardness. However, during the second phase, China and the West maintained a politically equivalent relationship. Despite China falling behind in economic and scientific developments, the exchange of Western civilization to the east and Chinese culture to the west remained mutually beneficial and equitable (Xiao and Xu 1995; Zhang 2003b).
- ⁴ Chengzhulixue 程朱理學 emerged as a prominent school of thought during the Song and Ming dynasties, often distinguished from other branches of Neo-Confucianism by its departure from the philosophy of mind. The philosophical tradition, as developed by Cheng Hao 程顥, Cheng Yi 程頤, Zhu Xi 朱熹, and others post-Song Dynasty, posits reason as the fundamental source of all phenomena in the universe. Chengzhulixue 程朱理學, functioning as a political ideology, was primarily intended for the guidance of rulers and scholar-bureaucrats in governing the common people.
- ⁵ Baguwen 八股文 (Stereotyped Writing or Eight-Legged Essay) had been a traditional format of Kejue kaoshi 科舉考試 (imperial examinations) during the Ming and Qing Dynasties. It is structured within the confines of the Four Books 四書 and the Five Classics 五經, with adherence to the interpretive principles of Chengzhulixue 程朱理學. The rigid requirements of Baguwen 八股文 demand strict alignment with Chengzhulixue 程朱理學, thereby imposing significant limitations on intellectual expression. This standardized writing mode disconnects the content and structure of the paper from the practical, failing to address the diverse demands of economic and social development.
- ⁶ Tianli 天理 is the foundational doctrine of Chengzhulixue 程朱理學, pertaining to the ethical and moral standards prevalent in feudal society. This encompasses the natural laws governing the universe, moral ethics, the harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature, and the personal development of individuals. In the viewpoint of Zhu Xi 朱熹 posits that heaven serves as the fundamental force guiding the existence, growth, and functioning of all entities in the cosmos, surpassing individual volition to represent an objective reality. The concept of Tianli 天理 embodies the ethical and moral guidelines of feudal society, contrasting with human desires rooted in personal ambitions or material pursuits. Zhu Xi stresses the importance of adhering to Tianli 天理 to ensure enduring social stability.
- ⁷ Wang Yangming's philosophy 王陽明哲學 gained prominence during the middle and late Ming Dynasty. It introduced the concepts of "conscience" and "harmony between knowledge and practice", highlighting the cultivation of personal identity, the honoring of individual volition, and the encouragement of individual innovation.
- ⁸ Matteo Ricci's Missionary Approach involved a strategic focus on reconciliation by embracing Chinese culture and societal norms. Central to this method was his endeavor to assimilate into Chinese society through building relationships with Chinese Confucian intellectuals and officials, aiming to facilitate the acceptance of missionary efforts while minimizing opposition. The core idea of Matteo Ricci's Missionary Approach is furu 附儒, buru 補儒, chaoru 超儒.

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