

Plots and Rhetorical Patterns in Religious Narratives

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Editor

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About the Editor

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Benoît Vermander is a professor of religious anthropology at Fudan University (Shanghai), where he also teaches the hermeneutics of Chinese Classics. He heads the Xu-Ricci Dialogue Institute in the same university. His publications include the following: *Corporate Social Responsibility in China* (World Scientific, 2014), *Shanghai Sacred* (with Liz Hingley and Liang Zhang, University of Washington Press, 2018), *The Hermeneutic Triangle* (Fudan University Press, 2022, in Chinese), *The Power of Ritual* (Zhongxi Publishing House, 2023, in Chinese), and *The Encounter of Chinese and Western Philosophies*. *A Critique* (De Gruyter, 2023). For the Oxford U.P. Handbook series, he has authored contributions on Jesuits in China, on Jesuits in the 20th century, and on rituals and social structures.

Preface

The introduction to this volume summarizes its topics and contributions. This preface aims to specify the background of the research published here.

Except for the Editor of the volume and another contributor, all the authors are scholars of a younger generation. Many of them are affiliated or have been affiliated with Fudan University. Several are now teaching or researching at Shanghai-based academic institutions (Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, Department of Foreign Studies, Shanghai Maritime University, East China Theological Seminary), and another is at Zhejiang University. They testify to the vitality of religious studies in Greater Shanghai and the Jiangnan region. Such a vitality is not a new phenomenon. In Jiangnan, religious networks used to associate a cluster of temples and other locations through fluvial and commercial circuits, a model that differs from the village-based religiosity found in northern China, and which asks for innovative conceptual representations of the religious fabric of the area. In addition, Jiangnan is a region in which religious interactions have been deep and numerous; these have fostered reflexive accounts of the changes in practices and social configurations taking place. Furthermore, scholars were versed in jingxue, Chinese hermeneutics of the Classics, and this well-maintained tradition has nurtured strong expertise in the comparative study of Classics. This has led to the development of tools that allow one to decipher a text's patterning, and also to sensitivity to the religious undertones of different classical corpora. After all, Xu Guangqi (1562-1633), Li Zhizhao (1571-1630) and Yang Tingyun (1557-1627) were all Jiangnan scholars who realized, through their practices and writings, a lived encounter between Confucianism and Christianity.

These tools are here mobilized in order study Islamic place-based ritual events, stories of parables, fables and conversions in various texts and contexts, or yet the Japanese rhetoric of state religion. They ultimately coalesce into a multifaceted approach to religious phenomena that describes the development of religious experiences and "knowledge" through their narrative patterning. The study of various forms of "religious emplotment" faciliates the understanding of religious creeds, artefacts and practices within their cultural and existential settings.

Benoît Vermander

Editor





Editorial

Introduction to the Special Issue "Plots and Rhetorical Patterns in Religious Narratives"

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1. The Issues at Stake

This Special Issue crisscrosses three theoretical questions that the ten contributions gathered here integrate into a unified subject of investigation. Let me begin by first specifying each of these questions.

The first question pertains to *emplotment*. Do religious narratives follow models of emplotment (the ones identified by Northrop Frye in *The Great Code* (1982) and Hayden White in *Metahistory* (1973), for instance), which are identical to the ones found in novels or historical accounts, do they rather tend to privilege some modes of emplotment over others, or do they sometimes craft specific plots that defy current categorizations?

The second question pertains to *rhetoric*, specifically *structural rhetoric*. Do these narratives preferentially follow rhetorical patterns such as the ring composition discussed by Mary Douglas in *Thinking in Circles* (2007) and by the School of Semitic Rhetoric (Roland Meynet's *Treatise on Biblical Rhetoric* (2012))? Further, how do modes of emplotment and rhetorical patterns interact in the crafting of narratives loaded with religious and/or theological content? Do specific traditions privilege some patterns over others, or are rhetorical patterns evenly distributed among the various religious traditions?

The third question pertains to the *scope* taken by religious narratives, and the *channels* through which they are shaped and transmitted. Can rituals, architectural designs, or exhibits held in museums obey the same compositional models as the ones followed in the production of written or oral religious narratives?

Taken as a whole, these questions delineate a specific field of research, which could be dubbed "religious narratology". The latter endeavors to spell out the rules governing the composition of religious narratives in their dynamics, organization, and ornamentation. It does so within a given religious corpus, but it also attempts to look for similar patterns from one tradition to another. It investigates whether or not these rules significantly differ from other types of narratives (such as historical or fictional ones). Finally, it seeks to apply a consistent set of rules to texts, oral accounts, and artefacts.

2. Scope and Channels

In which ways do the ten contributions gathered in this Special Issue answer this array of questions? Reversing the order just followed, I will first consider the contributions dealing with the third set of issues.

Valérie Gonzalez shows that any discourse that has to do with religious expressions is spontaneously wrapped into a specific plot. At the same time, by working on exhibits centered on Islamic art and artefacts, she raises the issue of what could be dubbed "the ethics of exhibition emplotment": in the West, a number of concerns drove curators to engage in the suppression of the "religious plot" in the exhibits' narrative, substituting it with a distinction between the religious and the secular that relegates the faith to a theme among others in the museum displays, forcing a storyline upon objects that is different from (or even the opposite of) the one in which they were originally inserted.

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Also focused on Islamic practices and artefacts, Shunhua Jin similarly enlarges our understanding of what "emplotment" is about by describing how the meeting between spatial designs and ritual guidelines results in a narrative that gives meaning and depth to the actions being performed in a specific spacetime. Borrowing the concept of the "ritual-architectural event" from Lindsay Jones, Jin surveys the correlations that link the Islamic dome, cosmological patterns, and the ritual practice of circumambulation into a whole. A complex of interactions between geometrical patterns applies to texts, images, spaces, and ritualized behaviors.

Still enlarging the meanings attached to the term "religious emplotment", Liang Zhang extends it to the way believers apprehend the whole of their existence (in both their personal and communitarian dimensions), as rhythmed by a succession of sacramental practices. In the example she develops, Chinese Catholics living in the Jiangnan area progressively appropriated the doctrine and practices of the Church, and, by doing so, organized the sacraments of baptism, marriage, and extreme unction into a "lived narrative" that unified both their faith communities and the course of their lives. Said otherwise, the sacramental topoi enabled communities and individuals to endow their existence with accrued meaning and blessings.

3. From Rhetorical Devices to Structural Rhetoric

"Rhetoric" refers to a number of techniques that, most of the time, are anchored into a given cultural context, though one may wonder whether some devices are not endowed with a quasi-universal efficacy when it comes to winning over interlocutors. This is what suggests the contribution by Sha Liu, focused upon the use of the a fortiori argument in a pedagogical treatise (published c. 1632) written by the Italian Jesuit Alfonso Vagnone: the use of animal simile that bear on the love for one's offspring paving the way to the models to be followed by Sages and Saints. Vagnone's ascensional construction associates Confucian and Catholic references. Here, the a fortiori rhetorical device extends into an overall narrative that spells out the continuity existing between Nature and Grace.

With Wei Mo's contribution, we continue to investigate Jesuit rhetoric in China, this time in the context of the Christian Missions of the 19th and 20th centuries. A traditional focus on Ciceronian rhetoric combined with a new focus on the discursive techniques of Chinese Classics operated a kind of "rhetorical hybrid", which a growing interest for local dialects and conversational styles further enriched. The quest for "le mot juste" (in a missionary context, the words that would touch hearts and minds) was determined by contextual considerations that triggered rhetorical inventiveness.

Zimin Wang investigates the transposition (and sometimes misappropriation) of rhetorical tropes from another perspective: originally borrowed from the *Huainanzi* (a Western Han Chinese classic with strong Daoist undertones), the Japanese wartime propaganda slogan *Hakkō Ichiu* 八紘一字 ("unify the whole world under one roof") fostered a specific interpretation of the Shinto myth of how Jimmu, the first emperor, founded the nation. The reworking of the slogan in imagery, ritual occurrences, and architectural designs shows again how (quasi)religious metaphors, storylines, cultural artefacts, and ritual practices can become linked into a rhetorical continuum.

Reflecting upon the status of metaphorical language in spiritual and mystical Christian literature, Cécile Xie locates her contribution at the frontier between our second and third cluster of issues. Are metaphors to be merely considered as a rhetorical device, which we may substitute for more rigorous formulations? Starting with insights provided by Lakoff and Johnson in *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), C. Xie shows that a cognitive content bearing on things divine needs to be channeled through a language that gives to realities located beyond sensory perception a communicable configuration. Additionally, metaphors construct a spacetime where a narrative can be developed: they naturally develop into storylines conveying a form of knowledge. Metaphor-based mystical narratives allow, on the one hand, to give new dimensions to everyday experiences, and, on the other hand, to translate transcendental experiences into resources for discernment and action.

4. Models of Emplotment

In a perspective similar to the one explored by C. Xie, Benoît Vermander's article circulates between transcendental realities and the world fashioned by human action through the study of a specific metaphorical discourse, namely the one typical of the Gospels' parables. It selects four parables representative of the four modes of emplotment. These four models are determined by a specific complex of actions and counter-actions, the narratives they determine culminating in strikingly dissimilar results. The strength of the parabolic language is that it applies to the relationships occurring between humans and the natural world, within the social world, and between humans and the supranatural world. "Images" loaded with rhetorical efficiency trigger narratives, and narratives connect one order of reality to another, while encouraging listeners to take a stance in the world they live in as the parables decipher its hidden workings.

The distance between the Gospels' parables and the metaphors and narratives told by Mencius about Water (the subject of Boxi Fu's investigation) is not as wide as one may think. Besides the *Mencius*, other texts from Early China have given a quasi-sacred status to the aquatic element. This status is highlighted by a narrative model that follows the cycle of Water. This cycle unveils both earthly and celestial realities: being attentive to the characteristics of Water (humility, ductility, strength hidden behind apparent weakness) allows the observer to better understand their heart and mind, as well as the intimate connection between the latter and Heaven. Additionally, as is the case with the Gospels' narratives, these metaphors are *transformative*: they are meant to trigger changes in the subject's consciousness; these changes will impact the way one discerns, decides on, and engages in action or non-action (*wu-wei*).

The text of the *Mencius* is also at the center of the research conducted by Min Jung You. The Joseon Korea scholars (whose commentarial works she introduces to us) were sensitive to the religious dimension of this classic, and they did not separate its content from its rhetorical elements. Selecting various rhetorical features (and, notably, patterns close to the ones of the ring composition) was akin to receiving and assimilating the *dao* 道 of the *Mencius*. In other words, textual patterns were revelatory of the workings of the *dao* present in all realities. The "rhetorical commentaries" crafted by the Joseon Korea scholars were already an investigation into the rules governing "structural rhetoric".

5. Results and Openings

Even if the extent of material they cover remains relatively modest, one may want to draw some propositions from the contributions I have just summarized.

- (1) Firstly, it is difficult to draw a clear demarcation between religious images/metaphors and religious narratives. Indeed, when taken in its widest extension, an image (such as those of fire, the abyss, or water) is polymorphous: it can give rise to a number of narrative patterns and directions. However, further associations very quickly load an image with a potential storyline; the imagery associated with the Islamic dome, or with the Spanish castle as perceived and narrated by Teresa of Avila, possesses a dynamic of its own that determines how a story relying on it will be patterned and narrated.
- (2) Religious narratives seem to privilege rhetorical patterns similar to the ones found in "ring compositions". In other words, models of textual, ritual and/or architectural structuration that give the subject a sense of completion—of "repleteness" as Mary Douglas put it—rather than a feeling of opening and unfinishedness. This may distinguish religious narratives from the "historical imagination" described by Hayden White, the latter often struck by the provisional character attached to any historical sequence. It may even be said that the historical imagination becomes religious when it endeavors to erase history's essential unfinishedness. Such patterning is formal and not content-focused: both the myth of the eternal return and the story of a world going in a linear way from the time of divine creation to the day of the Last Judgment can be narrated through organizational patterns that will make the story "replete", fostering a sense of consummation.

- (3) The mechanisms highlighted by narratology and rhetorical studies apply not only to oral or text-based stories, but also to rituals, artistic and architectural manifestations, or even to the way people apprehend their existence and reverberate the meaning they attach to it in their everyday conduct. For sure, the way tropes and storylines circulate from one form of expression to another is not limited to the religious domain. Still, the fact that religious narratives and rhetorical patterns naturally extend to texts, practices, and a whole range of artefacts is revealing: their force pervades the whole of existence, and shapes the way both individual and communal destiny is understood. One may object that this also applies to the way national myths translate into ceremonies, music, and paintings, for instance. However, this process of translation testifies to the quasi-religious nature of the Nation (as already noticed by Durkheim), and to the state-sponsored crafting of a "civil religion".
- (4) What oral, textual, artistic, or ritual religious "narratives" share in common is not merely a "storyline", but also infra-textual patterns modelled on geometrical shapes—the circle, the square and the triangle, first and foremost. Nikolay Koposov, in *De l'imagination historique* (2009), suggests that the shapes that our mind conceives function as an autonomous mode of thought, just as the linguistic model does. In particular, they enable us to represent ourselves within the "whole". Here, metaphors work like concepts (for example, for Cardin Le Bret (1558–1655), "sovereignty is no more divisible *than the point in geometry*"). The way the imagery of the circle and the square, of the octagon, or even of the crystal is inscribed into texts, monuments, and associated rituals illustrates how religious rhetoric spontaneously makes use of shapes and figures for connecting all manifestations into a unified complex of meanings.
- (5) Finally, what may distinguish religious narratives and rhetoric from the use of stories, images, and rhetorical devices in other domains is the fact that the metaphors, and the patterned storylines with which they combine, are indispensable when it comes to the crafting of a specific form of knowledge, namely religious knowledge. Sensory perceptions necessarily mediate an inner experience that is not reducible to the impact it receives from them. At the same time, inner experience needs to be expressed through metaphors, patterns, and stories, in order to become conscious of itself. The language of religious knowledge needs to be metaphorical and storied, because the nature of the knowledge being transmitted is never fully contained in factual statements and linear reasoning (though facts and reasoning serve to check the limits that separate experiences from hallucinations). At least five of our contributions hint towards this last thesis. Xie's study on mysticism clearly presents religious metaphors as knowledge. Vermander's essay on parables shows how the Kingdom of God is necessarily approached through the observation of natural realities and human patterns of action. Similarly, Liu's contribution on Vagnone's treatise shows how the continuum between the world of Nature and the realm of divine Grace appears through the micro-stories that testify to the love that animals feel for their offspring. Finally, Fu's and You's articles on the *Mencius* highlight the fact that the workings of the *dao* are revealed both by the nature of Water and the patterns through which the text organizes its narratives.

These five theses do not conclude our investigation. Rather, they are provisional propositions, partly substantiated by the findings of the contributions gathered here, partly in need of critical and comparative examination. By combining detailed case-studies and theoretical overtures, this Special Issue hopes to draw the lineaments of a fruitful research program.

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Article

Representing and Experiencing Islamic Domes: Images, Cosmology, and Circumambulation

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Abstract: Lindsay Jones developed the concept of "ritual-architectural event", according to which the meaning of a sacred building depends upon the participant's experience of it in the course of the rituals they perform. Starting from such approach, and taking the Islamic dome as my subjectmatter, I examine the correlations that link architectural forms, ritual performance, and participants' experience into a whole. I first survey a corpus of images related to domes in two types of manuscripts (poetry, and pilgrimage narratives), showing how these images suggest cosmological patterns. The second part unfolds these representations, proceeding from cosmology to ritual. The third and last part focuses on circumambulation as the ritual experience that best embodies the previously identified cosmological patterns. The connection between the three dimensions discussed here is ascertained by the fact that the combination of circle and square structures relates both to Islamic graphic representations and ritual practices. An aesthetic/spiritual experience is awakened both in the mind and in the bodily senses of the viewer/practitioner: When Muslims stand under a dome, in front of the mihrab, thus facing Mecca, and when they behold the dome under which they stand, the view of this circular space possibly translates into a kind of mental and spiritual circumambulation. The conclusion suggests that the meaning attached to sacred architecture places is triggered by a complex of interactions between patterns referred respectively to the mind, bodily actions, and cultural settings.

Keywords: architectural experience; circumambulation; Islamic cosmology; Islamic dome; pilgrimage; sacred architecture

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1. Introduction and Theoretical Framework

Sacred architecture obeys ritual stipulations. For instance, the qibla wall in mosques must be oriented towards Mecca, thus asserting the direction towards which to pray. Reciprocal rituals regulate believers' behavior in sacred places. In the last two decades or so, the various ways ritual and architecture have been correlated has drawn the attention of many scholars (Miller 2007; Wescoat and Ousterhout 2014; Ragavan 2013; Jones 1993a, 1993b, 2000a, 2000b). Lindsay Jones, one of the earliest theorists on ritual and architecture, has propounded the concept of the "ritual-architectural event" in order to explore the meanings attached to religious buildings (Jones 2000a, 2000b). From the perspective Jones developed, the meaning of a building depends upon the situation of the building, with the participant and rituals involved. In other words, as participants perform rituals within the building, they actualize the meaning attached to the latter. In the word of Jones, the meaning of the building must always be a meaning for someone, at some specific time, and in some particular place (Jones 2000a, p. 41).

Based on Gadamer's hermeneutics of art, Jones' perspective not only brings participants and rituals into our understanding of what sacred architecture is about, but also directs our attention to the flux into which the meaning of a building is necessarily inserted: the meaning of a building "not occasionally, but always" surpasses the intentions that presided its construction (Jones 1993a, p. 212). However, Jones' promising hermeneutical approach, which emphasizes "the human experience of buildings", also brings out new challenges, among which the following ones are of particular concern for this article.

How are we going to distinguish, as Jones wants us to do, between the "familiarity" induced by the rituals ordained by the building and the "unfamiliarity" whose surge is allowed by the latent presence of an "otherness" in the same building? (See notably Jones 1993a, 1993b). Is it possible that the unfamiliar be felt without the participants reaching full consciousness of an underlying "otherness"? On the one hand, Jones describes a ritualarchitectural event as necessarily including (1) the actual built form; (2) human beings bringing in expectations, traditions, and religious opinions; and (3) the ceremonial occasion that brings buildings and people into to-and-fro involvement with one another. On the other hand, Jones uses the concept of "play" (borrowed from Gadamer), a play that relates people with buildings in order to underline the dynamism and flexibility of the response emanating from the people experiencing the building (Jones 1993a, pp. 214-15). Jones' mentions of the built-in form and of human expectations clearly show that the meaning of a building is inserted into a given cultural context. The last point is the ceremonial occasion, the ritual introduces an additional dimension: Following Gadamer and Jones, one may describe the ritual occasion as providing participants with "the rules of the game" rules that could not master the mere visitor of a given sacred building if (s)he is an outsider to the "game" played within it. Religious rituals are normally performed according to a set of regulations. For example, Muslims should face the Ka ba to worship. Meanwhile, as Jones points out, religious buildings are built upon conventional forms that may predate these ritual stipulations, and architecture has its own constraints, which may trigger specific experiences. I want to argue in this paper that when a viewer/participant inhabits a building on a ceremonial occasion, the unfamiliar experience rises partly from the fact that familiar forms are mobilized for ritual purposes loaded with "rules". And the "rules" speak to the subconscious of the viewer/participant, awaken in her/him an "otherness", and is conducive to a flux of meaning that somehow "overwhelms" the participant.

The question is made more acute by the fact that ritual is an essential expression of religious and cultural structures. According to Catherine Bell: "Ritual is a cultural and historical construction that has been heavily used to help differentiate various styles and degrees of religiosity, rationality and cultural phenomenon" (Bell 2009, p. ix). Ritual patterns are confirmed and reinforced by the fact that religious buildings have a relatively stable form: mosques, although they do not have a fixed format, do have conventional features. In a sacred space, believers receive perceptions, messages, and imagery anchored into a cultural system. This is why I focus on the significance of the participants' engagement with architecture in "a continuity of tradition", as Gadamer and Jones would have it. Both rituals and architecture obey rigorous patterns, even if, once in a while, they take some distance from their observance. At the same time, and while I agree that the meaning of a building goes beyond the structures provided by the builder, and that "the surplus of meaning" is produced in dialogue and play between humans and buildings, I suggest that the same "surplus of meaning" has actually to do with the inscription of situational behavior into pre-existing patterns. "Novelty" or "otherness" in some cases, are connected to the way the "tradition" is enacted and experienced, through ritual observances.

In other words, while working in the framework provided by the concept of "ritual-architectural event", I qualify the latter by stating the following points: (1) the participant to a ritual event does not let her/his imagination float freely: ritual patterns both trigger and direct the interpretation given to the space-time in which (s)he is inserted. (2) This leads us to draw a sharp boundary between a "participant" and an "onlooker" to a "ritual-architectural event". (3) At the same time, the feeling of "otherness" is not experienced only by onlookers: putting into motion hidden, collective patterns, the ritual structure awakens in the participant's associations that complexify the sense of tradition and continuity.

Taking the Islamic dome as our subject-matter, I will examine the correlation that links architectural forms, ritual performance, and participants' experiences into a whole. Domes emerged early in Islamic architecture and are regularly construed as an element in front of the mihrab in a mosque. The earliest remaining Islamic monument, The Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, also the first domed building in Islamic architecture, was completed in 691 A.D.

(Ettinghausen et al. 2001, pp. 15–20). And the dome set in front of the mihrab in mosques appeared in the 9th century. For example, the dome of the great mosque of Kairouan was made in 862 (Bayati 1985). In the 11th century Seljuk Iran, the introduction of a maqsūra (enclosure) in front of the mihrab of the hypostyle mosque helped to transform the skyline of Persian towns, characteristically punctuated with domes (O'Kane 2020; also see Creswell 1914, 1915; Hillenbrand 1976). In the Ottoman empire, after the imperial architect Mimar Sinan created major domed mosques, the dome became a common architectural form in the Ottoman territory (Neçipoğlu 2005). Two 16th century Ottoman scholars, Sai Mustafa Çelebi (d. 1595) and Mustafa ibn Celal, state that the Süleymaniye's four minarets and its dome represent the Prophet who is the "Dome of Islam" (Necipoğlu-Kafadar 1985, p. 106). The large territory of the Ottoman empire spread the Ottoman domed architecture to North Africa, Europe, and Arabian Peninsula. This introduction cannot cover the complex development of domes throughout the different regions of the Islamic world, but the usage of the dome in Islamic architecture (including in the mosque, palace, mausoleum, madrasa, and so on) is remarkable. The dome is loaded with significance in Islamic societies. If we ask a child to draw a mosque nowadays, even though a dome is not a religiously required element of this sacred building, (s)he will probably draw a dome on the top of it.

Representations of the dome appear abundantly in Islamic manuscripts, and these representations will mediate and direct the inquiry conducted here. The reason for which this article will study the images of the dome rather than proper buildings can be stated as follows: as elucidated by the "ritual-architectural event" approach, the meaning of the building depends upon the participants, and it takes shape in the way they experience the building. Jones' suggestion of a hermeneutical dialogue/play involving building, human, and ritual brings the possibility to associate or evoke architectural form in other patterns of images, which leads to shifts in meaning and personal transformation. In our case, the Muslim world offers an abundance of manuscripts that contain images holding stable symbolic and cultural patterns. Within this comprehensive iconographic system, representations of the dome reveal the religious and cultural associations that may have surged in the mind of the participants during the course of sightseeing and worshipping.

The material discussed below is taken from medieval Persian and early modern Ottoman manuscripts, on the one hand, and from contemporary visual art inscribed into the Islamic tradition, on the other. This already points towards the fact that our discussion will suggest that the experience of architecture crisscrosses time and space. I will first survey a corpus of images related to domes in two types of manuscripts (poetry, and pilgrimage narratives), showing how these images suggest cosmological patterns. In the two following parts, I will further unfold and interpret these representations: I will proceed from cosmology to ritual, and I will make circumambulation the ritual experience that best embodies the previously identified cosmological patterns. My conclusion will associate these various elements, suggesting a way to depict structures of meaning associated with the fact of experiencing one's setting into sacred architectural places.

2. Image of Domes in Manuscripts

2.1. Poetry Manuscripts

The Persian poem *Haft Paykar (Seven Portraits)* authored by the 12th-century poet Nizami Ganjavi, develops the imagery of the dome, and the manuscripts of this work unfold such imagery. In the story, seeing the portraits of seven princesses who later become his brides, King Bahrām Gūr, fascinated by them, asks Shīda to build a palace with seven domes for hosting the princesses. Shīda is a great master skilled in painting, sculpture, architecture, calligraphy, and in sciences as well; the poem says: "Physics, geometry, astronomy—all in his hand, was like a ball of wax" (Nizami 1924, p. 110). With all these skills and knowledge, "he made the dome so heavenly that no one could distinguish it from heaven" (Nizami 1924, p. 112). Oleg Grabar inscribes the meaning of the domes in this poem into an "ideology of pleasure" (Grabar 1990, p. 18). Yet, as we will now see from the analysis of some features of this poem, the aesthetic experiences and context in

Nizami's narrative associated with the domes considerably beyond pleasure, and happens to be extremely rich in cosmological symbolism.

Seven princesses come from different parts of the earth, and each receives a dome of a particular color. The seven domes represent the 7 days of the week and are governed by seven planets, which leads to the following associations:

1st. Hindu. Saturn. Black dome. Saturday.

2nd. Chīn (China, Turkestan). Sun. Yellow dome. Sunday.

3rd. Khwārazm. Moon. Green dome. Monday.

4th. Siglab (Slavonia). Mars. Red dome. Tuesday.

5th. Maghreb (North Africa). Mercury. Turquoise dome. Wednesday.

6th. Rüm (Byzantium). Jupiter. Sandal dome. Thursday.

7th. Persia. Venus. white. Friday.

(Ganvaji 2015, pp. xvi–xix)¹

Bahrām visits one princess, in the dome assigned to her, each day of the week, and each princess hosts a feast and tells stories to the king. In a 15th-century Persian painting, the king is standing in a room where he sees portraits of the seven princesses. The painter depicted the domes with suggestive colors above each princess' portrait. The room is in a curved shape to enhance the decorative factor of the illustration (Figure 1).

The number seven, constantly used by Nizami in his poetry, has evolved as a symbolic number since ancient Persia and has continued to be loaded with symbolic meanings in the Islamic tradition (Schimmel 1994, pp. 142–50)²: Allah created seven heavens in layers (Qur'an 65:12, 71:15), and the Prophet saw seven heavens during Mi'rāj. In one of the most comprehensive medieval encyclopedias, the Epistles of the Brethren of Purity (Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'), the number seven is presented as the first perfect number (Nasr 1978, p. 97) and also refers to the seven planets. Moreover, both in pre-Islamic and Quranic sources, nearly all authors of geography treatises accepted that there are seven seas and seven climates in the world (Nasr 1978, pp. 87–88).³

Several scholars have focused upon the features of the number seven and its association with the textual structure of *Haft Paykar*. Peter Chelkowski comments: "Combined of three and four, seven is geometrically expressed as a triangle and a square." (Chelkowski 1975, p. 113). Likewise, Julie Meisaimi sees the poem as structured in three parts: the body; the soul; and the union of body and soul. Bahman's spiritual journey, divided into four phases, begins when seeing the portrait of the Seven Princesses in the room, and ends when walking towards the cave, the whole process constructing a circle from the beginning to the end (Meisaimi 1997).

Slightly earlier than Nizami, the 10th-century Persian astronomer and philosopher al-Bīrunī (973–1048), in *The Book of instruction on the elements of the art of astrology*, indicated the colors, tastes, and smells of the seven planets. For instance, "Saturn is extremely cold and dry. The greater malefic. Male. Diurnal. Disagreeable and astringent, offensively acid, stinking. Jet-black, also black mixed with yellow, lead color, pitch-dark"; "Sun is hot and dry, the heat predominant. Maleficent, when near, is beneficent at a distance. Male. Diurnal. Penetrating. Pungent, shining reddish-yellow. Its color is said to be that of the lord of the hour" (Biruni 1934, pp. 396–401).

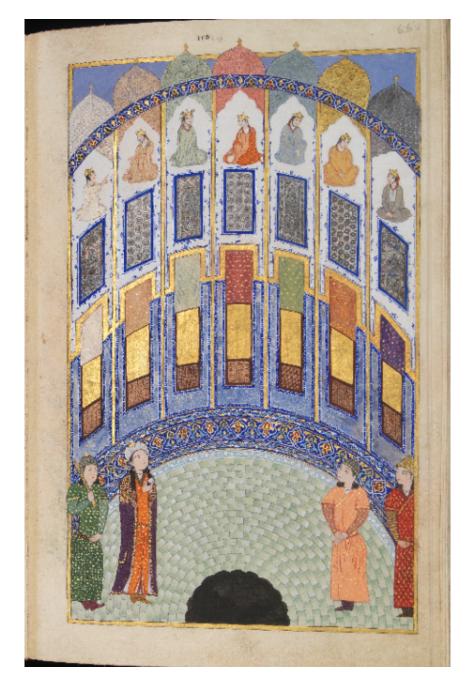


Figure 1. Miniature from the Anthology of Sultan Iskandar, Shiraz, Persia, Timurid period, 1410–11. © Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. 2022.

al-Bīrunī's descriptions of the planets' color are more intricate than the way Nizami's poem associates the color of the domes related to the planets, and the associations extend to soils, buildings, countries, jewels, foods, animals, drugs, etc. Interestingly, al-Bīrunī also associated the planets with architectural types, such as:

"Saturn: Underground canals and vaults, wells, old buildings, desolate roads, lairs of wild beasts [...] Jupiter: Royal palaces, mansions of the nobility, mosques, pulpits, Christian churches and synagogues [...] Sun: Kings' and sultan's palaces [...]", and so on. (Biruni 1934, pp. 407–8)

Although al-Bīrunī does not single out the dome in the architectural—planet relation, his text hints at the metaphorical manner in which Nezami was associating the seven domed palaces with the planets. At the same time, al-Bīrunī's astronomy book and Nizami's poetry

are two different types of text. Hence, the fact that the planets awaken different suggestions from the one to the other. However, the correlation between architectural forms (the dome), astronomy (the planets), the calendar (the days of the week), and geography (the princesses of different regions) does not accidentally appear in Nizami's text. A consistent system of Islamic cosmology lies behind it. Cross also made a comparison between al-Bīrūnī schematic map of the seven climates and the world of the *Haft paykar* (Cross 2016, p. 60).

Cosmology is the science of the cosmos—its origin, structure, components, order, and governing laws (Akkach 2005, p. 1; Nasr 1978). Cosmology also includes the discussion of ecology and society, of human and nonhuman beings and forces, both perceptible and imperceptible, as they all constitute parts of that universe of commonly shared representation (El-Sayed 2002, p. 2). Nizami consciously made the dome a combination of astrology and geography located in cosmology. Reciporocally, in his poetry, he endows the architect Shīda with the ability to combine the knowledge of cosmology with architecture (Shīda is also skilled in painting, sculpture, and calligraphy).

In classical Islamic thought, arts as the skills mastered by human hands lie within the category of 'ilm (plural form: 'ulūm), a category that refers to science or knowledge, and was first applied to certain religious sciences. It came to designate, generally in the plural ('ulūm), the new areas of knowledge that were developing in Islamic society as well as many arts and crafts, with almost no specificity (Vilchez 2017, p. 101). Therefore, in poetry, only a master like Shīda whose knowledge ('ilm) includes cosmology can build the seven palaces. The concept of 'ilm includes epistemological, moral, and socio-religious dimensions (Akkach 2019, p. VI; Rosenthal 2007). Going one step further, in pre-modern Islam, 'ilm is invested with a comprehensive meaning that combines art, science, and religion (Akkach 2019). The references associated to the seven-domed palace in *Haft Pakyar* constitute an additional example of the extension of the concept. Seen from this perspective, the construction of the domes and the experience that the king acquires from them synthesize astronomical, arithmetical, architectural, and decorative knowledge. Remarkably, Nizami adopted the dome as an architectural form so as to synthesize such knowledge with cosmology in his background.

2.2. Pilgrimage Texts

In addition to illustrations found in poetry, domes frequently appear in some pilgrimage manuscripts of the Ottoman period, mainly in reference to monumental buildings such as holy tombs and shrines. Two notable pilgrimage and prayer manuscripts have been transcribed for hundreds of years. One of them is Futūḥ al-Ḥaramayn (The Revelation of the Holy City), and the other is Dalʾil al-khayrāt (The Way to Happiness) (Roxburgh 2011, pp. 37–38). A 16th-century writer Muḥyī al-Din Lārī (d. 1526 or 1527) completed the writing of Futūḥ al-Ḥaramayn in 1506, and he dedicated the book to Muzaffar ibn Mahmud Shah, the ruler of Gujarat in India. It is a Persian-language Hajj guide about the holy places to be visited, with virtual instructions added, usually with illustrations of Mecca and Medina. Although Jerusalem is not included in the original text, the Haram al-Sharif appears in some later copies, making for a total of 19 sites of pilgrimage (Milstein 2006, pp. 167–94; Roxburgh 2011, p. 38). The primary pilgrimage site is al-Masjid al-Haram (the Great Mosque of Mecca), the Kaʿba, which is the centre of Islam.

The image of al-Masjid al-Haram represents a rectangle seen from the top, joining two enclosures with arched gates around, which corresponds to the mosque's wall and corridor. This setting transforms the image into a diagram. However, the illustrator drew the picture according to the layout of the building and its surrounding. As Rachel Milsten pointed out, a copy of Futūḥ al-Ḥaramayn made in 1568–69 A.D. (Israel Museum, IM 838.69) depicts the seventh minaret built in 1565–66 by order of Suleiman the Magnificent. Moreover, the arched gate around the rectangle has a flat roof without domes in this illustration, while in another manuscript made in 1573 (L. A. Mayer Museum, no. Ms. 34–69), the roof of the wall holds domes on the top (Milstein 2006, p. 173). Two illustrations of al-Masjid al-Haram were collected in Met (Metropolitan Museum of Art), one that was made in the

mid-16th century without domes on the enclosures (Figure 2a), while the other, copied in the late 16th century, has domes (Figure 2b). The details of the description of the building became the reference for determining the period of the manuscript. Taking into account the difference in details, it can be said that the diagrams made of *Futūḥ al-Ḥaramayn* lie between convention and factuality. The transcription of pilgrimage guides, as well as pilgrimage certificates with Meccan iconography, testifies to the fact that, in later periods, such representations became schematic drawings, which enables us to identify a similar structure among this array of images.

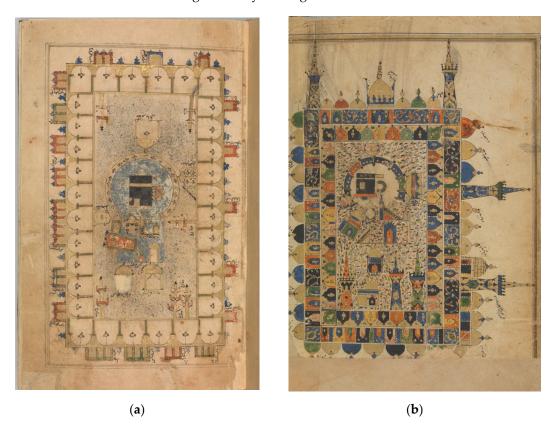


Figure 2. (a) Illustration of al-Majid al-Haram, Futūḥ al-Ḥaramayn, mid-16th century. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 32.131, 10r. photo in public domain. (b) Illustration of al-Majid al-Haram, Futūḥ al-Ḥaramayn, late-16th century. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2009.343, p. 40. photo in public domain.

These illustrations of Futūḥ al-Ḥaramayn contain a series of signifiers: the Kaʿba is a black square, the minbar is a staircase by its side. And the domes seem to refer to monumental buildings. Moreover, the names of the monument being represented are frequently written next to their diagrams. These names make use of diverse words referred to domed buildings (Figure 3b), such as "qubba" (Arabic: قبة), "gonbad" (Persian: گنبد) or "Mashhad" (Persian: هنه). The birthplaces of Muhammad, Ali, Abu Bakar, Fatima, and other saints are also characterized by domes (Figure 3a); as we discussed above, the images of Futūḥ al-Ḥaramayn rely on the factuality of architecture, indicating that in the 16th century, the Islamic holy land was landmarked by domes that had a clear monumental and sacred connotation.



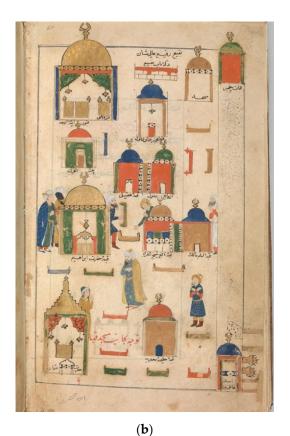


Figure 3. (a) Illustration of *Futūḥ al-Ḥaramayn*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 32.131, 22r. photo in public domain. (b) Illustration of *Futūḥ al-Ḥaramayn*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 32.131, 24r. photo in public domain.

In the paintings associated with Nizami's poetry and in the diagrams of religious manuscripts, the domes are represented chiefly in a sideways form with a pointed arch shape. Sometimes these representations even characterize the regional style of the domes. For example, domes are onion-shaped in some pilgrimage manuscripts from India. One exceptional case is an illustration of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem made from the top, using a diagram to indicate the holy site, similar to the description of the first and second most holy sites in Islam, Mecca, and Medina in Futūh al-Ḥaramayn. In this Ottoman manuscript (Figure 4), the illustration page is separated into two parts, the above is the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and below is the Dome of the Rock, depicted as an octagon. Furthermore, another version of this pilgrimage site, the Dome of the Rock, appears like a circle-shaped diagram collected in the University of Michigan Library (Isl. Ms. 397, f. 47r). (Gruber 2014) The rationale behind this unique description of the Dome of the Rock might come from two parts. On one hand, it inherited architectural traditions from the eastern Mediterranean, particularly from local Christian material traditions, for instance, the Church of the Kathisma, a 5th-century Byzantine church located between Jerusalem and Bethlehem (Avner 2010, pp. 31-49; Ettinghausen et al. 2001, p. 17). On the other hand, the diagrammatical representation of the Dome of the Rock in the 16th century pilgrimage manuscription is needed to be octagonal to reflect the unique religious scenario, like Mecca and Medina. It is possible that Jerusalem, as the site of the Last Judgment, is directly associated with the fact of ascending to Heaven, the circle being used so as to emphasize this symbolism.



Figure 4. Jerusalem. Muḥyī al-Dīn Lārī, *Futūḥ al-Ḥaramayn*, 1577 A.D., Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Suppl. Pers. 1514, folio 42r. © Bibliothèque nationale de France. 2022.

Analyzing these two kinds of dome images in Islamic manuscripts leads us to two conclusions. First, both the imagery of domes relate to Islamic cosmology, and the sightseeing of domes were probably (and may still be) triggering cosmological representations for Muslim viewers. Second, domes became the standardized form of monumental architecture in pre-modern Islam, as shown by pilgrimage illustrations. Among the illustrations of religious scenarios in *Futūḥ al-Ḥaramayn*, the most important pilgrimage destinations are shown in a top-view way, remarkably with Mecca and Medina, and in some manuscripts, Jerusalem. Nevertheless, we still do not know how the dome representations connect to the rituals performed under it, and in the mosques how rituals and representations are combined by practitioners. Here, we need to start from the basic fact that believers prostrate under the dome, face to Mecca, in order to worship God. In what follows, I will thus further investigate Islamic cosmology in association with the symbolism of the prostration so as to explore Dome and Ritual as an interconnected structure.

3. From Representation to Ritual

In his book *Cosmology and Architecture in Premodern Islam*, Akkach combined cosmology with architectural symbolism through a premodern Sufi perspective. Akkach notably focuses on the Kaʿba, and notes: "According to premodern Islamic sources, Mecca was the omphalos of the earth, and the Kaʿba was God's first house of worship. Being, so to speak, the first divine-sponsored architectural project, the Kaʿba is a key element in the interplay of cosmology and architecture." (Akkach 2005, p. 179) He grounds his analysis of the order and symbolism of the Kaʿba into textual analysis. Following Akkach's perspective, I will now mobilize some visual material to illustrate the fact that the symbolic/cosmological representation of the Kaʿba associates with the ritual circumambulation around the Kaʿba. This discussion will allow us to assert the fact that cosmological representations, on the one hand, and rituals, on the other, share common structures. Making use of the approach to "ritual-architectural event" propounded by Jones, I will analyze how the presence of the

cube and the circle within cosmological patterns have induced Ottoman worshippers to look at the Süleymaniye mosque. An example drawn from the realm of contemporary art will then suggest that patterns of cube and circle continue to shape the vision of contemporary onlookers.

3.1. The Circle as the Cosmos

Islamic cosmology is primarily based on the Quranic verses. For instance, the imagery of the seven heavens is recorded in Qur'an, "It is He who created for you all of that which is on the earth. Then He directed Himself to the heaven, [His being above all creation], and made them seven heavens, and He is Knowing of all things" (Qur'an 2:29, also see Qur'an 65:12). The absoluteness of the One God and of His creative power makes Islamic cosmology rely upon the formula of Unity in orthodoxy (Rahman 1967). As Nasr writes, "the cosmological sciences are closely related to the Revelation" (Nasr 1978, p. 1). The understanding of human and social facts, which in turn influences religious commemoration, is similarly determined by Revelation.

As we know well, the Lunar Hijri calendar emerged for commemorating Hijrah the Prophet Muhammad's migration (622 A.D.) from Mecca to Yathrib (Medina). And the month of Ramaḍān commemorates the revelation of the Holy Qur'an from the Angel Jabriel [Gabriel] to the Prophet Muhammad. The Muslim calendar combines the commemoration of religious events and lunar cycles. Catherine Bell notes: "just as rites of passage give order and definition to the biocultural life cycle, calendrical rites give socially meaningful definitions to the passage of time, creating an ever-renewing cycle of days, months, and years" (Bell 2009, p. 102). These calendrical rituals are profoundly inserted into everyday life, cover all the aspects of existence, and interlace with extensive astronomical and geographical knowledge. The Islamic calendar, based on a knowledge of astronomy, not only determines the dates of Ramaḍān and other festivals through the observation of the moon, but also, similarly, the measurement of the hours of day and night determines the time of the five daily prayers. Additionally, geographical knowledge helps one to accurately determine the direction of Mecca, orienting rituals such as worship, animal slaughter, and burial.

The development of Islamic science benefited from the quest for precision in ritual acts; it is well known that the earliest astronomical observatories appeared in Islamic science (Black 2016, pp. 26–28). To determine the orientation of Kaʿba, Muslims invented the qibla compass, endowed with capability for precise calculations. David King, a scholar of the history of Islamic science, points out this double origin: "folk science" derived from the astronomical knowledge gathered by the Arabs before Islam; "mathematical science" was deriving mainly from Greek sources. It was involving both theory and computation. The former was advocated by legal scholars and widely practiced over the centuries. A select few practiced the latter (King and Lorch 1992, p. 189).

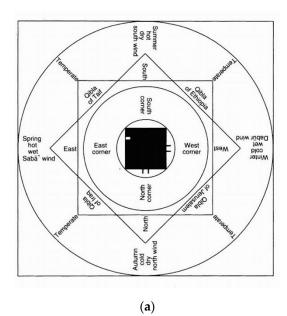
In astronomical and geographical manuscripts, celestial bodies appear in the form of circles. In the 13th century, Zakarīyā ibn Muḥammad ibn Maḥmūd al-Qazwīnī (d. 1283 A.D.) composed a book entitled "The Wonders of Creation and Strange Creatures" (ʿAjāʾib al-makhlūqāt wa-gharāʾib al-mawjūdāt), an encyclopedia that is one of the most remarkable books of Islamic cosmography. It has been translated from Arabic into Persian and Turkish, and transcribed and preserved in various libraries and museums. The Wonders of Creation and Strange Creatures incorporates a wide variety of astronomical, geographical, geological, mineral, botanical, animal, and ethnological content. The first part of the manuscript includes the heavenly bodies, angels, and time. In the illustrations, the angel Rukh is holding the celestial spheres (Figure 5a,b). In the Islamic celestial theory, the representation of celestial bodies as being circular is based on the Ptolemaic model or on later theories developed by scholars such as Ibn al-Haytham (965–1040 A.D.), an Arab mathematician, astronomer, and physicist (Langermann 2007). In addition to the illustration of an angel holding a celestial body, 'Ajāʾib al-makhlūqāt collected in Cambridge University Library (MS Nn.3.74) has multiple images of the celestial spheres in circles.



Figure 5. The angel Rukh holding the celestial spheres, The Wonders of Creation and Strange Creatures; (a) Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, EA1978.2573. © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford. 2022 (b) '*Ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt*, 1566, Cambridge University Library, MS Nn.3.74, 33r. © Cambridge University Library. 2022.

3.2. Kacba, Geography and Prayer

Another constitutive element of Islamic cosmology is sacred geography, with the Ka'ba, the black square, located at its center. This type of sacred geography appeared in the 10th century, and it remained popular until the Ottoman period in the 17th century, alongside geographical science based on precise calculations. David King researched these manuscripts in detail (King 2020, pp. 91–141; King and Lorch 1992, p. 189). King has astutely noticed that architectural details were used to define cosmological subdivisions. (Akkach also noticed it, see Akkach 2005, p. 188). Thus, while the four walls and four corners of a building indicate a division of the world into four or eight sectors, giving rise to a number of four- and eight-sector schemes, features such as the waterspout on the northwestern wall and the door on the northeastern wall were used to demarcate smaller sectors. In this way, the sacred geography of the inhabited parts of the earth comprised a variable number of sectors (jihah or hadd), all directly related to the Ka'ba (King and Lorch 1992, p. 190) (Figure 6a,b). We can find a number of these sacred geography diagrams constituted by circles around the cube in the center (Porter 2012, p. 65; King 2020, p. 165).



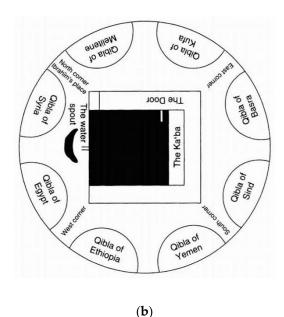


Figure 6. (a) Four-sector schemes of the Islamic sacred geography (King and Lorch 1992, p. 191); (b) eight-sector schemes of the Islamic sacred geography (King and Lorch 1992, p. 193). 2022.

Maps used for determining the direction to be observed while praying directly to the Kaʿba, as do the qibla walls in all mosques. And Muslims who worship under the dome in front of the mihrab undoubtedly head towards Mecca. Qurʾan (2:144): "We have certainly seen the turning of your face, [O Muḥammad], toward the heaven, and We will surely turn you to a qiblah with which you will be pleased. So, turn your face [i.e., yourself] toward al-Masjid al-Ḥarām. And wherever you [believers] are, turn your faces [i.e., yourselves] toward it [in prayer]." Besides orienting the prayer, the qibla is also used for directing burial and for implementing a taboo related to urinating. Simon OʻMeara, in his book *The Kaʿba Orientation*, widely discussed material culture related to the Kaʿba, and marked the Kaʿba a as "tectonic zero" of the visuality in Islam; "Kaʿba is to Islam what the vanishing point of linear perspective is to modernity" (OʻMeara 2020, pp. 123–24). These sacred maps, with the Kaʿba as a square in the center and the cosmos represented through circles around it, inevitably remind us of the illustrations of al-Masjid al-Haram in *Futūḥ al-Ḥaramayn*, discussed above: Kaʿba as the locus of orientation with all the buildings in the picture pointing towards it.

3.3. The Cube and the Circle as Structure of Pilgrimage

Futūḥ al-Ḥaramayn had a large number of transcriptions in the 16th–19th centuries, especially after the Ottoman Empire monitored a settled pilgrimage route to Mecca (Figure 7b). The diagram refers to al-Masjid al-Haram, which not only appeared in manuscripts but also in handscrolls of souvenirs and tiles. Several mihrabs in the Topkapi Palace's Haram also contain this diagram (Figure 7a).

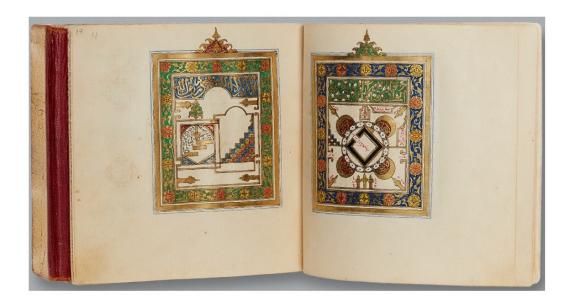
As noted above, two enclosures surround the al-Masjid al-Haram, and the names are signed in Persian or Arabic next to the arched gates. The hanging lights of the corridor direct towards the Kaʿba. All the small buildings inside the enclosure point to the black square. The outer part of the Kaʿba is distinctly drawn in the form of a circle, referring to maṭawāf, the place to practice circumambulation. The scheme shows the Kaʿba as the core and emphasizes the interior and exterior division, the interior being loaded with the utmost level of sacredness. The stress on such structural elements becomes even more potent in pilgrimage materials, generally more straightforward, sometimes rough, in their techniques of representation. One commemorative handscroll offers a most remarkable sample: The circular area of the maṭawāf is highlighted, and the passageways, painted in red color, lead from the enclosure to the maṭawāf and the Kaʿba (Figure 7a,b). Noticeably,

the craftsman has added many red dots, such enhancing the orientation of the maṭawāf area in the image (Figure 7b).



Figure 7. (a) Mihrab in Topkapi Palace, photo of the author, Istanbul, 2020; (b) Memorial scroll of pilgrimage, Saudi Arabia, probably Mecca/Hijjaz, late 18th century paper; watercolor and ink, 61.5×85.0 cm, Aga Khan Museum, AKM529 © The Aga Khan Museum. 2022.

Another pilgrimage book Dal'il al-khayrāt was composed by a Moroccan Sufi scholar, Muhammad al-Jazūlī (d. 1465 A.D.). Using a familiar model, a double-page illustration, this prayer book offers a representation of Medina and Mecca. The Aga Khan Museum collection has three manuscripts of *Dal'il al-khayrāt*, with illustrations in diverse styles. One of them has a bird's-eye view composition to show the Mosque of the Prophet in Medina and al-Majid al-Haram in Mecca, and depicts the dome of the Mosque of the Prophet in blue (AKM382) (Roxburgh 2011, pp. 40-47; see also Porter 2012, p. 54). Another made in North Africa looks more like charts than full-fledged images, such as the ones found in the illustrations of Futūḥ al-Ḥaramayn (O'Meara 2020, pp. 122, 126–27). This double-page image of Dal'il al-khayrāt applies contrasting colors of green and red and an intensive use of gold. The depiction of Medina includes a staircase, which refers to the minbar in the mosque of the Prophet; on the left are three staggered rectangles framed within an arched window-like scheme. Al-Masjid al-Haram in Mecca is depicted on the right page. The rectangular Ka ba occupies the center; the four magams or pavilions representing the four legal schools of Islam are drawn as crescent moons. 10 If we compare this four-sector schema to the 18th-century sacred geography diagrams (Figure 8), we find that they are similar in the way general orientation, the circles, and the four-sector area are underlined. Even though the illustrator may have not referred to geographical manuscripts, the symbolical space constructed by different texts (be they geographical or pilgrimage-related in scope) happens to be similar.



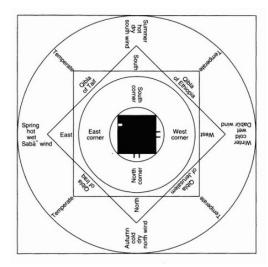




Figure 8. $Dal^2il\ al$ -khayrāt, 19th century (**above**). Manuscript of Dala'il al-Khayrat Prayerbook, North Africa, probably Morocco, 19th century, opaque watercolor, gold and ink on paper, H. 13.2 cm \times W. 13.8 cm \times D. 5.9 cm, AKM535 © Aga Khan Museum. Licensed under CC BY-NC 2.5 CA, Comparison between the image of al-Masjid al-Haram in $Dal^2il\ al$ -khayrāt and the four-sector Islamic sacred geography (**below**).

The Ottoman world provides us with examples of the way viewers/participants experience architectural forms from the background of preexisting cultural patterns that awaken in them a specific flux of meaning: the Ottoman scholars Nişancı Mehmed, Mustafa ibn Celal, and Sai Mustafa Çelebi compared the Süleymaniye mosque to the Kaʿba. In one of his poems, Sai wrote:

This well-proportioned mosque became the Kaʿba Its four columns became the Prophet's four friends, A house of Islam supported by four pillars, It gained strength through Prophet's four friends. (Neçipoğlu-Kafadar 1985, p. 106; Morkoç 2009, p. 205)

Both Neçipoğlu and Morkoç use this poetry to explain the importance of the four columns in the Süleymaniye mosque, and make inferences to Justinian, who had transported marble columns from antique sites to the Hagia Sophia. Morkoç applies Jones' theory to the analysis of Ottoman narratives, associating architecture with human experiences embodied into different acts, rituals, opinions, and events (Morkoç 2009, p. 200). As interesting as is this approach is, it does not allow us to directly answer the question: what made the Ottoman viewers associate the mosque and the Kaʿba?

Hagia Sophia was sharing a similar architectural form with the Süleymaniye mosque. More precisely, Mimar Sinan learnt to build the mosque from his study of Hagia Sophia. In the Christian tradition, the dome suggests a cosmic tent, a heavenly vault, and the church is a replica as the universe, while the four arches were considered at that time to correspond to the four sides of the earth. Hagia Sophia, with its great dome with four arches, was providing an occasion to present a clear image of the celestial home when homilies on God's creation were given (Smith 1971, pp. 88–89). It is worth noting that, in the early 16th century, after converting Hagia Sophia into a mosque, Ottoman writers compared the special sanctity of Hagia Sophia to that of the Ka'ba and of the Aqsa Mosque, and referred to Hagia Sophia as a second Ka'ba for the poor who could not afford the pilgrimage to Mecca (Necipoğlu 1992). The Ottoman viewers had a different experience than other Muslim believers of similar forms of building, namely a different experience of the mosque as the Ka'ba; this is because of contextual specificities.

In the poem by Sai Mustafa Çelebi that compares the Süleymaniye mosque with the Kaʿba, the comparison is based on the architectural form and on the surrounding environment, which is a fact also shown by visual materials. First, the baldaquin of the mosque, a dome with four pillars, constructed the space with circles and the square. Second, as Neçipoğlu pointed out, "Enclosing the mosque in a wide outer precinct where caravans would pitch their tents and surrounding it with four madrasas resembling those he built around the Kaʿba and dedicated to the four Sunni schools of law reinforced the analogy" (Neçipoğlu-Kafadar 1985, p. 107). This circle, square, and the four-sector setting is like the diagram of the Kaʿba in Dalʾi al-khayrāt (Figure 8). Therefore, I suggest that this presence of the same pattern in different visual materials goes beyond the mere reference to a "context", and evokes a specific architectural experience.

The imbrication of the cube within a circle remains present in contemporary imagery. Ahmed Mater made a photogravure etching titled *Magnetism* in 2011, which forcefully expresses and reinterprets the traditional iconography of ṭawāf (Figure 9). The material used for producing the photographic effect is a square magnet. Around it are iron filings attracted by the magnet. Several Arab art galleries and collections such as the Khalili foundation of Hajj Art include this artwork, seen as exemplifying contemporary Hajj art. The artwork was also shown in the exhibition "Hajj: Journey to the Heart of Islam", organized by the British Museum in 2012 (Porter 2012).

Magnetism is reminiscent of the power attached to the Kaʿba in Mecca, particularly for Muslim viewers. The artist describes his work as follows: "Iron filings radiate around a black cube, an emanation of attraction that evokes a congregation of pilgrims thronging the Kaʿba. The unseen pull of Islam's holiest site is made manifest in this moment of absolute equilibrium. The elusive draw is faith-driven, suggestive of the deeply spiritual force felt by the millions who pray in its direction five times a day, as well as those who circle during tawāf." Several contemporary time-lapse photographs of the tawāf site show shadows of pilgrims moving in the way shown by the artist. The simplicity in colors and form (black and white; the circles and the square without any other element) highlights the structure of Islamic cosmogony. Note that the circle symbolizes an architectural pattern whilst at the same time it simulates the circumambulation accomplished by the believers.

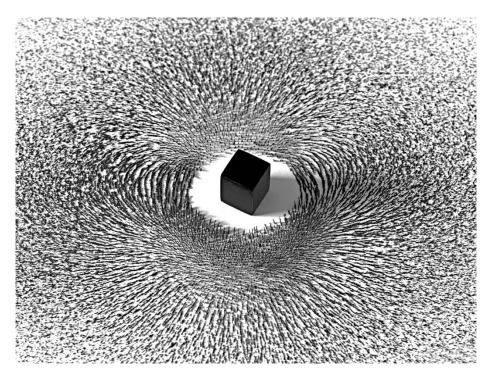


Figure 9. Magnetism IV, photogravure etching, Ahmet Mater, 2011. © Ahmet Mater 2022.

Summing up, the circle and the square constitute the dominant forms in Islamic cosmology. The celestial bodies are illustrated as concentric circles; in sacred geography, the cube is located at the center, surrounded by concentric circles. It is not a coincidence that Haft Paykar registers a cosmological correlation between architecture (the dome), astronomy (the planets), calendar (the days of the week), and geography (the princesses coming from different regions); a mental ring structure underlies the whole, and the same structure appears to determine ritual evolutions. Still, we will need to further understand and detail the way imagery, cosmology, and ritual practices are concretely correlated.

4. Circumambulation and the Spiritual Experience Evoked by Domes

4.1. The Experience of Circumambulation

The artwork Magnetism clearly hints at the fact that sacred geographical maps and ritual practices such as prayer and circumambulation obey a common schema: the Ka'ba as the cube and the cosmos as the circle. Circumambulation in Semitic tradition possesses a lengthy history: circling the "House of God' is circling the Axis Mundi (Fenton 1996, 1997). Circling the Ka'ba (in Arabic "ṭawāf") is a compulsory ritual, repeatedly performed during the Hajj, which directs the way Muslims circumambulate the Ka'ba seven times in a counterclockwise direction. The Qur'an (22:26) (2:125 it contains) mentions circumambulation: "Do not associate anything with Me and purify My House for those who perform ṭawāf and those who stand [in prayer] and those who bow and prostrate." Hajj and ṭawāf are so central that, in many Islamic countries, ṭawāf is broadcasted live on television. The site where circumambulation occurs is called "maṭawāf (the place of ṭawāf)".

The great Sufi master Ibn al-'Arabī, who elaborated on ritual as mystical experience, completed *The Revelation of Mecca (Futūḥāt al-Makkīyah)*, a vast encyclopedia of Islamic science comprising 560 chapters in the year 1260; this was shortly before he reached the end of his life (Chittick 1989, pp. x–xv). Eric Winkel published a new English translation of *The Revelation of Mecca* in 2019, including the description of ṭawāf it contains. After Ibn al-'Arabī introduces the book's purpose as to convey to the reader "the mysteries between me and him", the opening lines of the poem read as follows:

during the tawaf,

'Why shall I circle, as it is blind to perceiving our inner selves-Petrified, an unintelligent rock with no recognition of my circling movements?' Then was said: 'You are totally confused, you have lost out! Just look at the House! His light streams to purified hearts, bared, exposed to the light. They see him by means of God without a veiling curtain, as his inner self begins to shine forth, elevated, lofty. He shines brilliantly with tajallī to the hearts from the horizon of a majestic true Moon which never experiences eclipse ... (al-'Arabī 2019, p. 132)

In the mystical experience of circumambulating the House as described by Ibn al-'Arabī, several images often used in Islamic mysticism emerge, such as light, veil, and moon. The light of Allah illuminates the person who circumambulates the celestial room; his heart reaches the Sublime, the veil of Allah is lifted, and the truth comes out. In another word, the circumambulation of the Kaʿba in its core is a mystical ritual directed towards the communication with the Divine.

Ibn al-'Arabī's spiritual teachings and mystical texts are often combined with embodied experience. James Morris remarks: "Chapters 66–72—one of the most fascinating and potentially valuable sections of the entire Al-Futûhât offer what is almost certainly the most detailed and exacting phenomenology of spiritual experience in the Islamic tradition" (al-'Arabī 2002)¹³. Chapter 72 narrates the fact that, during the circumambulation of the Ka'ba, Ibn al-'Arabī witnessed the miracle of the manifestation of God as a youth, the divine companion. When the circumambulation was over, the two entered the Ka ba together (Corbin 2008, pp. 328–33; Fenton 1997, p. 363). O'Meara listed more medieval Muslims who had mystic experience from tawaf in his discussion on Ibn al-'Arabī's experience of tawāf. (O'Meara 2020, pp. 91–94). Meanwhile, O'Meara mentioned "the ritual-architectural event" to emphasis the physicality required by tawaf, which is "widely regarded as bodily demanding" (O'Meara 2020, p. 96). I agree with this statement, nevertheless, reiterating the representation of Ka ba in the pilgrimage and sacred geography manuscript, and the Ottoman's view of the Süleymaniye mosque's dome already discussed above, I suggest that there is a specific pattern shared between rituals and buildings that provide the context for these embodied experiences. A mental habit or a visual memory inscribes a common pattern into different materials. This structural feature goes beyond the specificities of a given cultural context. And it is this structural feature that enables the association between the Ka'ba and the dome.

4.2. Circling Back to the Dome

In the early Islamic period, circumambulation did occur in buildings other than the Kaʿba, the pilgrimage to some shrines sometimes replacing the pilgrimage to Mecca (Fenton 1997, p. 360). When Umayyad Caliph ʿAbd al-Malik (d. 705 A.D.) built the Dome of the Rock, he also built up a 'maṭawāf' around the rock, an area for circumambulation, and constructed Jerusalem as a primary place of pilgrimage (Fenton 1997, p. 361). The ritual directly requires a specific architectural form, and the architectural form symbolizes the ritual. We also see this from the illustration of al-Masjid al-Haram in *Futūḥ al-Haramayn* (Figure 2a,b)

and the Ka'ba diagram in Mihrab and Memorial scroll of pilgrimage (Figure 8a,b), all of which evidently use a circle to indicate the 'maṭawāf'.

It has been suggested that the design of the dome and the spiral figuration of the mosque complex together point towards rotation, and the meaning attached to this particular movement. The Turkish historian of architecture Jale Nejdet Erzen has such written:

"The first [function] would be that sacred or religious spaces are not properly entered directly, but only after respectfully circling around them. Another more subtle meaning concerning the use of spiral forms would be how the movement of the body and its experience could refer to both cosmic and spiritual movements." (Erzen 2011, pp. 129–30.)

Erzen has used as an example the complex of the Süleymaniye mosque, which contains different public buildings, such as the mosque, the medreses (colleges), the hamam (bath), the hospital, the hospice, the soup house, the stables, the latrines, and several courtyards in between, arranged in an enveloping concentric circular form (Erzen 2011, p. 129). This concentric circular form does not appear very clearly to us. However, for the Ottoman viewers, who compared the mosque to Kaʿba, the surrounding of the mosque could be abstracted to the figure of a circle (Figure 8).

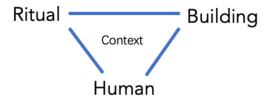
In the light of the insights brought by Islamic cosmological iconography, bodily movements around the mosque would evoke the experience of circling the Ka'ba, this particular experience deriving from the circular design of the dome. The viewing of the dome already points towards (and may awaken) the sacred experience linked to circumambulation.

We ascertained the symbolism of the Islamic dome in connection to Islamic cosmology, looking first at the poetry of Nizami. Seeking cosmological clues in the images of sacred maps and pilgrimage manuscripts, we further discovered that the combination of the circle and the square structures Islamic graphic representations. Not only is the Axis Mundi reflected in the images, but it also impacts the actions of the believers. This points towards an experience that may be awakened in the mind and the bodily senses of the viewer/practitioner: when Muslims stand under a dome, in front of the mihrab, thus facing Mecca, and when they behold the dome under which they stand, the view of this circular space possibly translates into a kind of mental and spiritual circumambulation.

5. Conclusions: Experiencing Sacred Architectural Places as a Structure of Meaning

We remember that Lindsay Jones has proposed to see the meaning awakened by a sacred building as a "ritual-architectural event", which incorporates building and viewer in a ritual situation. In Jones' theory, this corresponds to a total hermeneutical situation—the ritual-architectural event being constituted by (1) a human being, (2) an architectural monument, and (3) an occasion that draws the person and this monument into interaction (Jones 1993a, p. 214).

The "ritual-architectural event" can be seen as a triangular model of the interplay between people, ritual occasions, and architectural forms (Scheme 1). In this model, Jones argues that meaning arises from the interconnection between the ritual situation, the architectural space, and the viewer/participant within "a continuity of tradition".

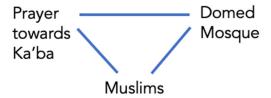


Scheme 1. The model of "ritual-architectural event", by the author.

Although "Humans" occupy only one corner of the "human-ritual-architecture" triangle, they are the subject of the ritual and are at the centre of the event that occurs in a given cultural context. Meanwhile, there are separate linkages between ritual and building, human and ritual, human and building:

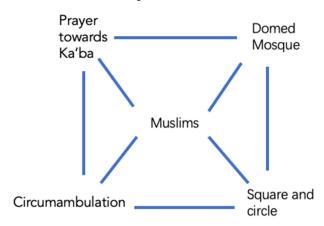
- 1. The ritual determines the function and layout of the building, and the building provides the place for the practice.
- 2. Humans look at sacred buildings even when rituals do not take place.
- 3. Humans also perform some rituals outside designated buildings.

With this model, the "architectural-ritual event" generated by a domed mosque would be represented as in Scheme 2, the specific situation of this specific "ritual-architectural event" being characterized by the fact that Muslims under the dome pray towards the Ka'ba.



Scheme 2. "Ritual-architectural event" generated by a domed mosque, by the author.

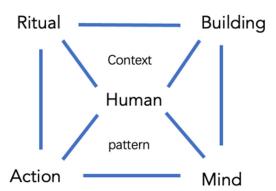
However, the consideration developed in this article, the association between images, cosmology, and circumambulation, suggests a more complex structure of meaning. Scheme 3 "constructs" meaning by taking into consideration the importance of the presence of a dome in the mosque:



Scheme 3. The structure of meaning created by the presence of a dome in front of the mihrab, by the author.

What has just been said for a specific architectural form linked to the performance of a specific ritual can be generalized in the following way:

In the model (Scheme 4) here suggested, the connections between ritual and action, on the one hand, and building and mind, on the other hand, are organized into symbolic structures that support the performance of "ritual-architectural events". An implication of this model is that "ritual-architectural events" are not isolated, random occurrences, but rather are produced within an established symbolic pattern of meaning production. In other words, "ritual-architectural events" happen in the continuity of a tradition: the new experience happens within already existing patterns. Note that our approach differs from the ones that merely focus on the symbolic meaning of religious building (Kieckhefer 2014, p. 210; Smith 1971 on the symbolism of domes). While it recognizes the importance of identifying the symbolism located into the patterns, it clearly identifies the focus on the participant/viewer as key for determining the meaning taken by a building in the context of a particular event.



Scheme 4. The structure of meaning generated by the correlation between sacred architecture and ritual performance, by the author.

This model presents the participants as located at the center of the production of meaning: any one of the four triangles shaped by this model can be considered independently: human-ritual-building, human-ritual-action, human-building-mind, and human-action-mind. The consideration of these triangles will inspire my three final remarks:

- 1. In the structure of meaning generated by the interaction with sacred buildings, the epicenter lies in the "human–action–mind" triangle, a given cultural/religious context that determines the imaginary triggered by looking at the building and performing rituals within it.
- 2. The triangle "human-ritual-action" does not only refer to rituals performed in religious buildings; it also applies to ritual acts held in other settings. In this particular dimension, the stress is on a specific structure of action that determines a ritual performance.
- 3. Conversely, the triangle shaped by the relationship "human-building-mind" does not focus upon ritual performances but rather upon certain ways of looking at architecture.

Said otherwise, it is the taking into action of our four triangles that specifies the set of specific occurrences that this article has endeavored to study. The meaning attached to sacred architecture places is triggered by a complex of interactions between patterns referred respectively to the mind, to bodily actions, and to cultural settings. Specific "ritual-architectural events" actualize the encounter between these different patterns, but such events cannot be understood outside the patterns that preexist them.

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Notes

- There are a few differences between among the several translations of Haft Paykar and researches about it, in Wilson's translation, the seven domes' representation are the following: 1st. Hindustan Assigned to Saturn; 2nd. China and Khatā. to Jupiter; 3rd. Turkistan to Mars; 4th. Irāq and Khurāsān to the sun; 5th. Transoxiana. To Venus; 6th. Rüm (the Eastern Empire) to Mercury; 7th. The hyperborean regions to the moon. (See Nizami 1924, p. 30) And in Cross' research, the second day is the dome of Rome, and the sixth day is the dome of China. (Cross 2016, p. 60).
- For the symbolism of "7" in Persian culture, see also https://iranicaonline.org/articles/haft, (accessed on 1 April 2022).
- On the Brethren of Purity's concept of number, see (Nasr 1978, pp. 96–97); Nasr wrote, The number 7 plays a central role in I smā'īli cosmology (there being seven "original" imāms and seven cycles of history), (Nasr 1978, p. 97); al-Bruni's explanation on seven climates, which has a table to show the ascensions of the signs at the equator and in the middle of each of seven climates, see (Biruni 1934, pp. 242–43).

- The root of the word 'ilm occurs in 13 per cent of the Quranic verses, a total of 811 occurrences (El-Tobgui 2020, p. 23). The definition of 'ilm in the religious science see (Rosenthal 2007, pp. 46–70).
- The description of the artwork *Futuh al-Haramayn* on the page of The Metropolitan Museum of Art notes: "Two details indicate that the manuscript must have been painted in the late sixteenth century: the first gate into the enclosure is labelled "blocked" (sadda), thus reflecting the closing of this gate sometime between 1569 and 1573, and there are seven minarets, thus including the one added by the Ottoman sultan Suleyman in 1565–66." See: https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/456969, (accessed on 1 April 2022).
- In a page of *Futuh-i Haramayn* (Figure 3b), it signed Persian words different from "qubba" next to the two mausoleums, one mausoleum is in the upper left corner and another one is in the lower right corner. Moreover, the remaining domes in the diagram are named "qubba", also referring to the graves of various saints. It is noticeable that the mosque in the upper right-hand corner has no dome.
- Christiane Gruber in her article "Signs of the Hour, Eschatological Imagery in Islamic Book Arts" studied these two illustrations. She writes: "The Dome of the Rock flanked by the scales of justice (tawāzīn) and Kawthar Pond, [...] a number of additional graphic markers and captions, such as the scales of justice (mīzān) and the bridge over hell (pul-i ṣiraṭ). Still others identify the mount as the "Rock of God" (ṣakhrat Allāh), from which it is believed that both God and Muhammad ascended into the heavens". (Gruber 2014) Rachel Milstein also published the image of the Dome of the Rock in *Kitab-e Shawqnameh*, which is shown in octagon from the top view. (Milstein 2014, p. 193).
- All citations of the Qur'an in this article refer to Saheeh International English Translation, see https://quran.com, (accessed on 1 April 2022).
- A number of libraries and museums collect 'Ajā' ib al-makhlūqāt wa-gharā' ib al-mawjūdāt, for example, the British Library Or 14140, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford EA 1978, Cambridge University Library MS Nn.3.74, Aga Khan Museum AKM 367, Metropolitan Museum of Art 45.174.17. The research on the manuscripts of this book is rich: see (Berlekamp 2011, pp. 6–8, 17–18; Zadeh 2010, pp. 21–48; Carboni 1989, pp. 15–31; 2015, pp. 13–22).
- Deniz Beyazit, Dal'il al-khayrāt Prayer book: https://www.agakhanmuseum.org/collection/artifact/dala-il-al-khayrat-prayer-book-akm535, accessed on 1 April 2022.
- The artist's personal website: https://www.ahmedmater.com/artworks/magnetism, accessed on 1 April 2022. The artwork's explanation is also cited in *The Art of Hajj* (Porter 2012, p. 252).
- The time-lapse photographs or video of the tawāf site are available online, for example, https://www.istockphoto.com/photo/kaaba-mecca-gm601375684-103413957 (accessed on 1 April 2022).
- James Morris wrote the Introduction of the translated and edited version of *The Mecca Revelation* in 2002 (al-ʿArabī 2002). Also see Online resource: James Morris, "Introduction to The Mecca Revelations", Online source: https://ibnarabisociety.org/introduction-to-the-meccan-revelations-james-morris/, (accessed on 1 April 2022).

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Article

The Religious Plot in Museums or the Lack Thereof: The Case of Islamic Art Display

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Abstract: During the last decade, the curation of Islamic art and artifacts has been crossed by tensions at both the theoretical and practical level. Not only has it been continuously grappling with the Orientalist legacy, but it has also been operating in a global contemporaneity affected by multiple conflicts engendering a misperception of Muslims and Islam by non-Muslims. With this heavy background, this curation has been pursuing three main objectives: educating the public, decolonizing the museum, and reaching out to the Muslim communities and refugees living in non-Muslim societies. However, in the West, which remains worldly influential in the domain of heritage management, the first two objectives drove curators to engage in problematic practices, most notably the suppression of what we may call the "religious plot" in the exhibits' narrative. Moreover, while the educational impulse led to a secular didactic scholasticism erected as the supreme exhibitory norm, the decolonizing enterprise took on an ideological turn in the form of a neo-postcolonial discourse at odds with a reality that has considerably changed since the seventies. Contesting the "being Islamic" of the material curated, this discourse separates religion from culture, thus relegating the faith to a theme among other multiple themes in the museum displays. That this state of affairs is problematic appears in crude light as, in the last decade, a new Muslim-led curatorship has been challenging this secularist curatorial politics. Re-centering Islam in the representational emplotment regarding Islamic culture in the exhibitory space and experimenting in the installations' design to this effect, this curatorship, this essay's author believes, holds the future of Islamic museology.

Keywords: Islamic material religion; Islamic museology; museal phenomenology; Islamic art scholarship; display philosophy; postcoloniality

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1. Introduction

In the twenty-first century, Islamic art and artifacts have gained in global visibility thanks to momentous refurbishments of galleries in historic institutions like the Metropolitan Museum of Art (MET) in New York or the Louvre Museum in Paris, and to a multiplication of new museums like the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, Qatar, and the Aga Khan Museum in Toronto, Canada. This is, as we know, the latest global development of a history of collecting and display that began in colonial Europe (see Rico 2019, pp. 148-63; Shaw 2003; Vernoit 2000). This essay does not aim to retrace this museology's developmental trajectory, amply discussed in the ever-growing museum studies (Macdonald 2006; Messias Carbonell 2012; Rey 2019a, pp. 250–52; Rey 2019b; Rey 2022, pp. 183–96; Junod et al. 2012; Bier 2017, pp. 1-25; Exell 2017; Exell and Wakefield 2016). Instead, it examines some problems raised by the contemporary curation of Islamic material culture that are less discussed in the literature, if at all. Most relevantly, in relation to this special edition's theme, it addresses the central question that Heba Nayel Barakat, the head curator of the new Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia, aptly posed in a recent conference: "Representation of faith in Islamic galleries: where do we go wrong?" (Nayel Barakat 2017, pp. 34–35). This question explicitly underscores a problem, namely the deficient religious plot or mode of emplotment on the subject of the sacred in the display of Islamic art and artifacts. To

discuss this problem, above all one must bear in mind the intellectual context of Islamic museology.

2. General Background of Islamic Museology

The Eurocentric post-Enlightenment epistemology of global cultural production based on the divide of the religious versus the secular has been dominating since the beginning of the scholarship and curatorship concerned with the Islamic arts and artifacts. This development, however, had been accompanied in the twentieth century by an intellectual counter-current whose adherents, called "Perennialists", comprised famous Muslim and Muslim converts like Louis Massignon, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, and Titus Burckhardt. These Perennialists, as well as their heirs in the twenty-first century, have been consistently claiming that art and faith are indissociable in Islam and that, therefore, aesthetic materialities constitute an instrument of piety regardless of the context of the objects' function, religious or non-religious (see for example Wazeri 2020, pp. 1–6; Hassanpour Loumer 2014, pp. 474–81; Kassam 2006, pp. 5–7). These two antagonistic strands of thought subtend this problem of the representation of the faith in Islamic art curation signaled by Heba Nayel Barakat that interests us, although this curation is also shaped by a variety of other important factors of conjunctural order.

Today, several socio-political elements frame the installation of Islamic art and artifacts in museums: lingering postcolonial concerns, ongoing conflicts and unrest in the Middle East and Africa, global violence committed in the name of Islam, and waves of refugees involving a significant influx of Muslim populations in the Euro-American and Australian space.² In this difficult framework, curators and museum critics have been pursuing essentially three objectives: the decolonization of Islamic museology; educating the public and thwarting the negative perception of Muslims the mentioned painful events generate among non-Muslims; and reaching out to the Muslim communities and refugees living among non-Muslim societies (Grinell 2014; Shatanawi 2012b, p. 55; Brown and Mairesse 2018, pp. 525–39). As Rebecca Bridgman remarks about one of the earliest existing Quranic manuscripts kept at the University of Birmingham, "it contributes to the understanding of the display of "Islamic" objects that have historical importance, but which are also central to the faith of many people in the UK and beyond". Similarly, Kimberly Masteller, curator at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, which holds a sizeable Islamic collection, reports a change of "focus towards increasing the institution's engagement with visitors and the community, demonstrated by its new strategic plan and mission statement: "Where the Power of Art Meets the Spirit of Community"" (Masteller 2020, p. 147). The museum critic Klas Grinell calls this empathy-oriented social-political approach to Islamic museology "soteriology" (Grinell 2019a, pp. 123-37). A note about this concept of soteriology, as Grinell employs it, is necessary given its primal meaning related to spiritual doctrines of salvation.

From the viewpoint of the religious plot under observation, it appears that in his critique's framework Grinell downplays this primal religious meaning of soteriology. More exactly, he secularizes the concept as he turns it into a moral-ethical principle serving to re-build, through the institutional representation of Islamic culture, the broken relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims in the Western societies. At the cultural plane, this break's multiple causes past and present in this relationship include the legacy of the colonial rationale of civilizational hegemony and epistemology, and the colonialists' looting of the colonized's heritage. In view of this complex problematic, soteriology refers more to a redemptive logic of reparation of political-sociological nature than to any form of spiritual salvation, even though it points to the religious identity of the different communities involved in the said relationship. Consequently, while the topic of the sacred in Islamic museology is not central to Grinell's critique, his soteriological emplotment, in the secular sense of reparation, nevertheless constitutes a parameter to heed for discussing the deficient religious plot in question. And so too are the two other following parameters of the curatorial practice.

3. Postcoloniality and the Western Concept of the Museum

The Western hegemonistic narrative of global cultures in both art history and museum display is of primal importance in the twentieth-century postcolonial criticism. In the last decade, which saw the rise of a renewed decolonizing current in the cultural studies, Islamic art historians have been re-formulating this criticism of the past century in a neopostcolonial discourse targeting the art historical practice's Eurocentric parameters, the post-Enlightenment concept of the museum, and the distorting representation of Islamic culture it has led to produce in the twentieth century. However, theoretically exhausted and rehashing ideas from the seventies, this discourse has turned into a pure rhetoric detached from a reality that since then has significantly changed.⁴ In 2019 for example, one may read this statement by Wendy M.K. Shaw: "Art history is a fortress of form, the museum its trap. It robs our consciousness by offering objects as substitutes for concepts". 5 Overlooking the absurdity of opposing concepts to objects in museal context and of denying material products the capacity of awakening consciousness, there is no doubt that, would the museum truly be a robber of our thoughts, it would have disappeared by now. Museums are not only multiplying everywhere as pivotal places of cultural construct and social activities but, crucially, the Muslim curatorship and patronage play no small part in this phenomenon. In addition to the spectacular museums recently built in the Muslim world such as the Islamic Art Museum in Doha, the Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilization in the United Arab Emirates, and the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur, the creation of smaller "Muslim-led museums," to use Virginia Rey's expression, also forms a steady global trend (Rey 2019a, p. 252; Rey 2019b; Rico 2019, pp. 148-63). In Australia, for instance, the showcasing of Islamic artistic culture thrives in the unique framework of the local religious-cultural cosmopolitanism. As Sam Bowker explains, "Two major institutions [The Art Gallery in South Australia and Charles Sturt University] explore revised representations of, and relations between, South-East Asian, Islamic and Indigenous Australian visual cultures to create a distinctive Australian vision of Islamic art" (Bowker 2017, p. 47).

Clearly, what was initially a Western cultural instrument implementing Western imperialist visions of the global artworld has turned into a borderless institution to the service of this artworld itself. Curating teams also have become largely transnational. Therefore, criticizing today the post-Enlightenment concept of the museum and returning incessantly to the colonial history of collecting and display appear to me seldom useful. More relevant is a re-examination of the museum's workings in global contemporaneity, notably by paying attention to this institution's ontology as a highly malleable and most efficient cultural tool that enables, and not prevents, the insertion of religious plots in the exhibitory scenography's narrative. Besides, it is worth recalling that, although a post-Enlightenment creation, the museum only re-conceptualized the age-old global institution of collecting, preserving, and exhibiting objects in sacred or profane and private or public spaces. Booties, treasures, and other rarities or valuables accumulated by the elites and governing classes in all cultures pre-date the modern European art collection (Kreps 2006, pp. 457–71). Like the latter, the former promoted stories underpinned by specific interests of whatever nature, political, religious or otherwise. In Islam, royal treasures exhibited on special occasions and ceremonial gift exchanges have a long well-documented history (al-Hijjawi al-Qaddumi 1996).

Nonetheless, what is unique to the post-Enlightenment museum and distinguishes it from the relics' chamber, the palace treasure room, the church treasury and other cabinets des curiosities resides in its principled "neutrality," positing the exhibitory space as an unsegregated institution suitable for any type of representational phenomenology, including a fortiori the phenomenology of the sacred. "Neutrality" indeed, not "secularity," is what empowers and inscribes in duration the institution of the museum, as neutrality neutralizes the binarity that secularity implicates in its opposition to and exclusion of sacrality. In other words, the museum is neutral because, contrary to the common view of it as a typical post-Enlightenment secular institution, it does not exclude sacrality and does

not exclusively produce "secular rituals" of spectatorship, to appropriate Carol Duncan's famous words (Duncan 1991, p. 88). Yet, firmly holding this view theorized in the nineties, the said neo-postcolonial discourse in Islamic art history continues to nurture the idea that the museum can only offer a de-spiritualizing, even fetishizing some say, frame of viewing decontextualized religious Islamic objects. A fresh critical analysis will prove that this is an outdated theory and that the institution of the museum authorizes the development of very efficient religious plots in the open semantic of its space.

4. The Question of the Sacred in the Museum

In the general context of museological studies represented by ICOFOM (International Committee for Museology), some critics recently questioned this old certitude that a genuine religious expression has no place in museums (ICOFOM Studies Series 2019). I will push further this questioning by arguing that, due to its open and neutral ontology, the museum does have the capacity to foster both sacrality and spirituality in its space. To begin with the deconstruction of Duncan's theory, let us imagine a non-believer going to the Church of San Luigi dei Francesi, in Rome, in order to see Caravaggio's paintings for pure aesthetic enjoyment (Figure 1). Although the artworks deliver their religious narrative in their original Roman Christian context, this visitor indisputably engages in a "secular ritual" all the same. Conversely, a Catholic faithful encountering Velasquez's painting of Christ on the cross in the Prado Museum, in Madrid, or a Buddhist beholder of the Pensive Bodhisattvas in the National Museum of Korea, in Seoul, do perceive religiously the religious imagery, regardless of the non-religious frame of viewing (Figures 2 and 3). Thus, the adherents to these faiths re-enact "a spiritual ritual" in the non-religious context of the museum. This means three things.



Figure 1. Caravaggio paintings, 17th century. Church of San Luigi dei Francesi, Rome, Italy. Photo in public domain.



Figure 2. Christ Crucified, Diego Rodríguez de Silva y Velázquez, 1632. Photo: Bernardo Pérez, public domain. From *El País*, 31 Janvier 2013, "Velázquez made in China". Chinese artists came to the museum to copy masterpieces of its collection. The copies were subsequently put on a show in Beijing. On the photo is "Li Wendong, de 40 años, entró por primera vez al Prado en 2004. Desde entonces admiró "El Cristo" de Velázquez". (https://elpais.com/cultura/2013/01/27/album/1359 245069_373345.html#foto_gal_4) (accessed on 8 March 2022).



Figure 3. "A Room of Quiet Contemplation", two Pensive Bodhisattvas, Three Kingdoms period (57 BCE-668 CE). National Museum of Korea, Seoul. Photo from The Korean JoongAng Daily, 1 February 2022. Photo in public domain.

First, secularity and sacrality reside as much in the beholder's mind as in the exhibitory space itself that, by inference, does not necessarily determine the nature of the experience of devotional objects. This said, obviously this experience takes on a particular cathartic

character and a variable level of intensity depending on the exhibitory space's institutional genre, be it a place of worship, an art center or else.

Second, religious artworks and artifacts have a mighty and indestructible agency of their own, even though undoubtedly they lose an important layer of meaning through the process of displacement from their original context to the museum space (Figure 4). Wendy M.K. Shaw misses this crucial point when she asserts, "the museum saved devotional objects, but in doing so it secularized them". (Shaw 2002, p. 144) While meanings performatively given to artifacts during religious rituals indeed get lost in the decontextualizing acts of collecting and displaying, the religious values and significations embedded in their material forms do not. Displaced in art galleries, mihrabs covered with Quranic calligraphies and sculpted and painted altarpieces do not become secular objects (Figure 5). Even in the cases of decontextualized items whose meaning depends quasi-exclusively on performing rituals like many African animist artifacts or the "yad," the pointer employed to read the Torah in Jewish ceremonies, these artifacts' past use leaves a spiritual trace or an aura of spirituality sticking to them that can be construed as an active force against secularization. Consequently, in the museum decontextualization does not equate secularization, thus leaving entirely possible the re-building of the religious plot in this institution's framework.

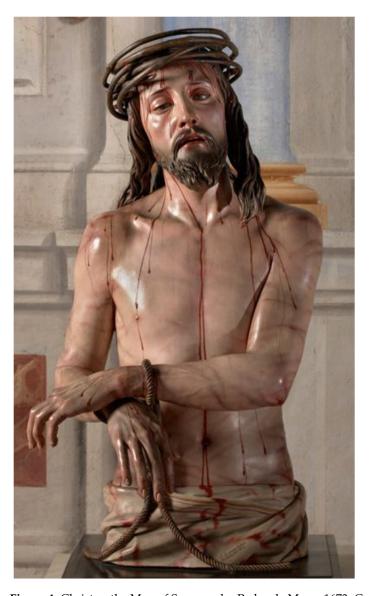


Figure 4. Christ as the Man of Sorrows, by Pedro de Mena, 1673. Convento de las Descalzas Reales, Madrid © 2009 Photo Gonzalo de la Serna. Patrimonio Nacional, Madrid.



Figure 5. Stone inscribed with the name of the Khwarazmshah Jalal al-Din Mangubirti, and engraved with a representation of mihrab, with Quranic inscriptions. Nishapur, Historic Iran, 1230. Albukhary Gallery, British Museum. Photo of the author.

Third, the museum does offer an alternative environment for decontextualized devotional objects to be appreciated as producers of spiritual experience. This is due to this institution's intrinsic conceptual functioning, independently of its historical instrumental-

ization in the post-Enlightenment context of suppression of the religious in public affairs in which it was invented. The terms of this functioning are the following.

As the product of a pure ideal, the museum functions upon a double process of de-semantization and re-semantization of its space that allows the re-staging of works uprooted from their civilizational milieu to be a totally free and open act.⁷ The only condition for this to work is neutrality. The fact that, for historical-cultural reasons, post-Enlightenment thought construed total freedom as the triumph of reason over religion does not alter this unique conceptual structure of the museum beyond binarities and civilizational determinism. A museum can be a museum of anything, science, cinema, torture or ... religion for that matter, precisely because it is primarily the museum of nothing, a space in the blank region of neutrality to be semantized at will.⁸ It can foster plays of binarities, mix them up in ambiguous settings, or enclose them in sharply contoured domains in an infinite range of configuring possibilities. The secularizing plot constitutes only one of these possibilities, like its opposite, the sacralizing emplotment and the staging of theological aesthetics. A look at some examples of installations will demonstrate these semantizing properties of the museum.

Nefertiti's bust in the Neues Museum in Berlin illustrates the sacralizing power of the museum, thanks to a well-crafted scenography (Figure 6). Appearing like a goddess in the middle of a wide empty perimeter, the queen's image is bathed in a heavenly light seemingly pouring out of a pierced dome high above it, in dramatic contrast with the surrounding penumbra. To be noted, this process of sacralization relies more on the Westerners' modern view of this valued archaeological object in their possession and their romanticized perception of the figure it represents than on the historical certitude that the latter indeed possessed a divine status in the Egyptian pharaonic context.



Figure 6. Nefertiti bust, Neues Museum, Berlin. Photo in public domain.

For a more ambiguous case, one may ponder under different angles the Cloister Museum in New York. Does it produce a secularized, religious, or neutral history-archeology-

based narrative of medieval Christian art? As for a frankly religious scenography, two extraordinary exhibitions demonstrate the art of what can be called "the theological emplotment" in the museum: the new permanent installation of the two aforementioned Pensive Bodhisattvas entitled "A Room of Quiet Contemplation", which opened in 2021 in the National Museum of Korea in Seoul, and "The Sacred Made Real, Spanish Painting and Sculpture, 1600–1700," held at the National Gallery in London in 2009–2010. (Figures 3 and 7). While the former radically innovates with the creation of a wide awe-inspiring immersive spatiality filled with subtle sacral references such as the evocation of the nocturnal firmament by a dark ceiling lit with tiny lamps, the latter consisted of, in Adrian Searle's words in *The Guardian*, "a show of painted space and real space, real light and painted shadows, ruined flesh and immaculate drapery, miraculous paintings and sculpted, morbid miseries" (Searle 2009) (Figures 8–10). Dealing with the representation of one of the Abrahamic monotheistic cultures, this National gallery exhibit will serve as a model in the subsequent discussion on the Islamic art displays; it therefore deserves further attention.

In the National Gallery's poignant spiritual atmosphere, the Catholic masterpieces irradiated intensely with this tortured religious numen the Spanish artists had lodged in their aesthetic materiality palpitating and bleeding like a living organism. Believing and non-believing visitors alike could mightily feel this numinous force, thanks to a carefully calibrated light and object phenomenology whereby artworks appeared irregularly placed and subtly lit in chiaroscuro. As Searle noted when he visited the show, "whatever one believes, or whatever belief one feels estranged from. Painted or sculpted, these are real presences. I left devastated and deeply moved". The intention though, the "big idea" as Klas Grinell would say, was not to mimic the religious phenomenology of the churches and monasteries from which the artworks where momentarily extracted, but to expose the latter's inner power of seizing the faithful's soul and impregnating them with the Catholic creed (Grinell 2020, p. 30). By no means contrived, the scenography was true to Spain's Baroque religious materialism. It just laid it bare, crude, pure, and undisturbed by the usual multitude of interferences produced in the place of worship.



Figure 7. Installation shot of the Sacred Made Real exhibition at National Gallery, Courtesy of the National Gallery.



Figure 8. Vestibule leading to the entrance to "A Room of Quiet Contemplation". Photos from The Korean Joong Ang Daily, 1 February 2022. Photos in public domain.

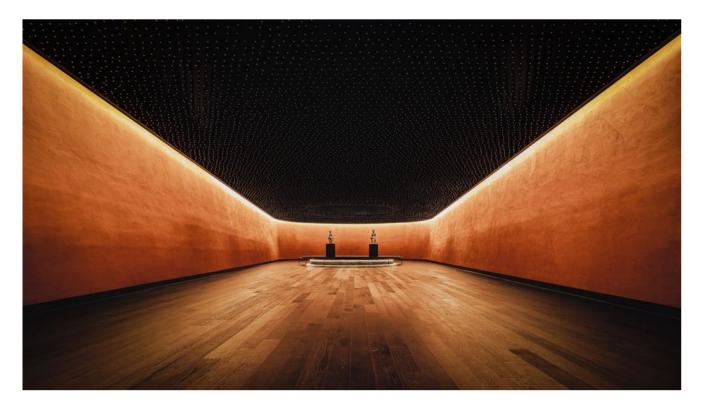


Figure 9. View from the entrance unto "A Room of Quiet Contemplation". Photos from The Korean JoongAng Daily, 1 February 2022. Photos in public domain.



Figure 10. View from the rear of "A Room of Quiet Contemplation". Photos from The Korean JoongAng Daily, 1 February 2022. Photos in public domain.

Consequently, if a spiritual encounter in the museum like this one obviously does not possess the same character as the religious anagnorisis in the temple, nevertheless both frameworks share the compound of dramaturgy, affect, and cognitivity that stimulates the experience of the sacred.

5. From the Critique of the Museum to the Critique of the Curatorship

Islamic museology past and present builds upon this post-Enlightenment museum as precisely that: a neutral space open to any possibility of semantization. For this very reason the museum is a great invention. It is therefore time, it seems to me, to close the postcolonial chapter about this institution as a problematic Western legacy for the contemporary display of non-Western material culture, and instead to reflect about efficient methods of installing in relation to both the nature of the objects curated and the always evolving context of their viewing. Similarly, questioning the validity of the museological pragmatic parameters as part of this legacy, which are still globally applied and flexible enough to be manipulated as desired, should be replaced by an unrestrained critique of the curatorship itself. Fully conscious of the curatorial practice's European history, which has become common knowledge, and of its stakes in contemporaneity, curators are now solely responsible for any repetition of past mistakes or for any failure to update their working method. In this respect, the aforementioned neo-postcolonial rhetoric does little to address the numerous issues affecting many Islamic art installations in the West such as the pre-eminence of the historical-archaeological rationale over other accounts, the stifling of religious narratives, the overemphasis on didacticism, and the often ill-managed phenomenology of the scenographies. 12 In view of this re-problematization of Islamic museology, a major question to scrutinize is that of categories and its corollary, the question of the religious narrative pattern.

6. Are Islamic Art and Artifacts "Islamic"?

The question of category in Islamic museology revolves around the generic notion of "being Islamic" that was applied to Islamic art and culture in the early stages of European art history and museology. The said neo-postcolonial discourse questions the validity of this notion on the basis that it essentializes the material thus labelled by presenting it uniformly religious and culturally unified. Yet, scholars and curators continue to use it, sometimes in alternation with the term "Islamicate" that some think better represents Islamic pluralism. This conceptual contestation has yielded to a separation of religion and culture in both Islamic museology and art history as they are practiced in the West. Only works with an obvious pious function are studied or displayed in relation to the faith. More than that, in the museum the cultural dominates the religious, which is then relegated to a second plane. A striking example of this epistemic positioning in the curatorial practice is the removal of the term "Islamic" from the labelling of the re-installed Islamic collections of the MET in 2011, problematically re-named "The Art of the Arab Lands, Turkey, Iran, Central Asia and Later South Asia". This gesture signals the removal of the religious plot as an articulated sense-giver in the installations' scenography.

To cite another example, in her review of the redesigning of the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art in Istanbul, Patricia Blessing writes: "A new room was added to display Qur'an manuscripts and relics of the Prophet Muhammad, in a space that evokes the relic treasury of Topkapi Palace. While the latter is a historical collection, the curatorial value of the new room at TIEM is certainly questionable. Fortunately, this approach of conflating Islamic art and religion has not extended to the rest of the exhibition" (Blessing 2018, p. 151). Curiously, Blessing does not provide any argument to support these statements.

However, this terminological debate has no currency in the Muslim world itself. Reflecting the dichotomic scholarly situation evoked earlier, which is rooted in the double antagonistic trend of the Perennialists versus the secularists, in this part of the globe sponsors and curators serenely label "Islamic" museums and galleries holding collections of Islamic material culture at large. Thus, not only history repeats itself, but now, with the diversification and globalization of the museological phenomenon it has more far-reaching consequences. If, like the Perennialists in the past the present Muslim and non-Muslim scholars and curators seeking to valorize spirituality in the epistemology of Islamic material culture hardly collide with the Western secularist mainstream, the latter's orthodoxy, in all its aspects, remains consequentially prevalent. The following aspect in particular is to be underscored.

The secularist orthodoxy considers as essentialist the detection of faith-based principles of unity beyond regional and sectarian differentiation. The thought that the scholarship issued by Muslim people from the culture, which seeks to unravel these principles, might deliver some form of truth to heed in the said category debate is not even contemplated. As a result, Muslim scholars and curators operating outside the Western academic-curatorial circles not only receive little attention, but also, in the light of these circles' view they appear guilty of the said intellectual crime of essentialism. But can these academics in the West continue to be deaf to these Muslim voices? Any issue of methodology this Muslim scholarship may have is beside the point. This two track-configuration of the cultural discourse only indicates a serious problem, so that one may wonder: does not this so called "decolonizing" enterprise today ironically bear the signs of some form of neo-colonialism? It is at best ideological. In a rare courageous article, Nadia Ali argues:

"Any critical work that does not fit into the current orthodoxy or into some dubious notions of 'ethics' is framed as 'essentializing'. This is indeed a clever way to shut down the discussion by trumping up a series of false moral charges. I can go further. I also suspect that the post-colonialist allergy to 'essentialism' is equally myopic. With respect to my own case, the truth is that I am an equal 'essentializer'". (Ali 2020, note 123, p. 221)

Fortunately, Ali is not alone to react to this imposed orthodoxy. She represents a Western counter-current that, in epistemic tune with the perennial revival in the Muslim world, subscribes to what Shahab Ahmed eloquently terms "the importance of being Islamic" in his opus magnum *What is Islam?*. This counter-current apprehends the notions of Islam and the Islamic as inclusive, not exclusive, of the pre-Islamic and minority cultures that contributed to the Muslim world's civilizational shaping. Thus understood, these notions pointedly refer to the foundational fact that the Qur'an, the hadiths, and the Kaaba in Mecca form the spiritual-material nucleus around which gravitate Muslim lives past and present throughout the globe, regardless of any form of differentiation. As Ahmed puts it, being Muslim is "a mode of being with God, of identifying, experiencing, and living with the values and meaning of Divine Truth" (Ahmed 2015, p. 38). The terms "Islam" and "Islamic" thus designate not only a faith, but also a way of life engulfing all domains of human activities, without any exclusion. By extension, arguing that this Islamic mode of being informs the creative processes and gives meaning to Islamic art, subscribers to this counter-current fully endorse the labelling "Islamic art and culture".

Moreover, this endorsement equally relies on the solid evidence provided by the art itself. For example, while in his book Ahmed cogently unravels the Islamic meaning of some Persian paintings with no apparent religious iconography, in an article of mine I demonstrate the spiritual aesthetic of the Samanid ceramics with calligraphic decoration (Ahmed 2015, pp. 408–30; Gonzalez 2016, pp. 9–12). Another case in point is the monumental Egyptian door that was installed at the entrance of the Shangri La Museum of Islamic Art culture and Design in Honolulu, Hawaii. Ornated with arabesques in pierced metal applique, this wooden door imitates the design of a Quranic manuscript's leather cover. In a video made when he stayed in the museum as a scholar in residence, Wheeler Thackston translates in English the Arabic calligraphic program containing Quranic inscriptions and eulogies to God. 16 In doing so, Thackston highlights the role of Islamic piety in Muslims' everyday domestic life evidenced by this piece. Yet again, let us imagine that a Christian or a Jewish craftsman participated in the making of this door, and that a non-Muslim customer bought or commissioned a similar item for their own house out of aesthetic appreciation. Would that make of this door a less Islamic or a questionably Muslim artifact? Clearly the answer is negative, as the property of being Islamic resides in the work's aesthetic materiality.

In sum, in my view, the conceptual contestation in question is a faux problem that obstructs the real interrogations raised by "the being Islamic" of Islamic art and artifacts. In pure scholarly terms, the fundamental question is not to know whether these objects are Islamic or not, but to understand how "the Islamic" operates in the pluralistic Muslim artworld in all its Sunni and Shi'i forms throughout history. On the museal terrain, it concerns the possible manners of translating efficiently this being Islamic of the objects in the visual space of display, like the National gallery's exhibition had magnificently translated the theological aesthetic of the Spanish Catholic sculptures and paintings. However, that is not all. Eclipsed by this faux problem, the conflation of the two distinct categories of "Islamic art" and "the art of the Muslim world" generates another confusion that has yet to be clarified.

Interfaith Hybridization in the Muslim Artworld

While Islamic art is Islamic art and nothing else, the art of the Muslim world includes both Islamic and non-Islamic artistic traditions, whether it is Buddhist and Hindu art in Muslim-majority Indonesia, Hindu and Jain art in the Mughal empire, Christian and Jewish art in Al-Andalus, etc. Coexisting within the same cultural sphere, these varied religious materialisms cross-fertilized and produced another category: the category of Islamic hybrid forms. These forms are not always easy to define as they may belong to yet two other distinct sub-categories: "the newly created hybrid Islamic art" and "the pre-or non-Islamic art repurposed for Muslim use". Heba Nayel Barakat underscores this problem of categorization acutely posed by the pluralistic Malaysian artistic culture she curates: "in

a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious society, the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia (IAMM) faces many challenges when attempting to incorporate 'faith' as a component in curating collections". 17

One may observe this phenomenon of religious hybridization in the Albukhary Foundation Gallery of the Islamic World, opened in 2018 in the British Museum, which showcases this world in the light of its internal and external connections with non-Muslim cultures. However, in this gallery the combination of cumulative installations and mixed ethnographic-historical narratives, in addition conceptualized by an ambivalent approach to the theme of spirituality, does not help viewers to grasp these ontological complexities (Figures 11 and 12). This thorny issue of the religious plot in the exhibitory space epitomized in the British gallery, together with the category problem, affects more broadly the great historic museums and galleries of Islamic art.



Figure 11. View of the displays in enfilade. The Albukhary Gallery, British Museum. Photos of the author.



Figure 12. Close up of an archaeological display. The Albukhary Gallery, British Museum. Photos of the author.

7. Religious Introversion in the Traditional Islamic Art Displays

As Nadia Ali writes, "One may wonder what is left when the new generations of historians of Islamic art rejected Herzfeld's search for influences and dismissed Massignon's spiritual model as essentialist or dogmatic. New models affirm their basis in claims of objectivity, factualism, textualism, and historical contextualization, in which the most impressionistic interpretations have come to replace bolder grand narratives" (Ali 2020, p. 222). This well described epistemic structure of the studies mirrors that of the curation of the great historic collections of Islamic art, which indicates the consequential fusion of genre between curatorship and scholarship. Before elaborating on this fusion, a brief note about these collections is necessary.

The first world-class public collections of Islamic art since the inception of Islamic museology are mostly located in the Euro-American zone, except for a few in the Muslim world such as the old museums of Islamic art in Cairo and Istanbul. Today, the curatorial politics implemented in these paradigmatic historic institutions, be they the MET, the British Museum or the Louvre, continue to influence the manner newer museums present their

collections.¹⁸ This politics basically promotes one dominant model of display, which became normative since the twentieth century. Historical chronology, dynastic succession, topology of regions and medium taxonomy constitute this model's principles. The difference of priority between these organizational principles from one museum to the other does not affect the underlying overarching historical-contextual narrative common to all these institutions. I call this established museology "traditional display," as opposed to the more experimental forms of Islamic art installation that recently emerged.

Owing to the control the Western mainstream of Islamic art history exerts on this area curatorship, the traditional displays bespeak the same introversion, sometimes on the verge of aversion, of religion that characterizes the studies. The latter indeed restrict the epistemic access to the sphere of the sacred to the obviously devotional objects and religious buildings, thus treating religious art and architecture separately from the rest of Islamic material culture. 19 In the traditional displays in question, this introversion is perceptible in the reduction of the religious narrative to an understated evocation with the aid of a few devotional objects among a variety of historical-cultural themes disconnected from the faith such as craftmanship, book painting, stylistic and medium topology, the transregional trade of objects, etc. (Figure 13). Telling of this approach and echoing Patricia Blessing's aforementioned view, Venetia Porter and William Greenwood explain the Albukhary Gallery's project in these terms: "While making it clear that this is not a gallery about religion (a frequently made assumption), we address aspects of faith, including the sacred place of Jerusalem within the three monotheistic religions" (Porter and Greenwood 2020, p. 112). Precisely, this very idea that we should not assume that a gallery presenting the Muslim artworld necessarily foregrounds the theme of faith, as if this was something to fear, just shows the extent of the problem. In response to the latter, Nayel Barakat aptly stated, "Addressing diverse groups and applying the analytical scientific approach of Islamic art historians by analyzing, categorizing, and tracing the development and continuation of artistic trends stops short of comprehending or admitting 'faith' as a component of such art" (Nayel Barakat 2017, p. 34).



Figure 13. View of the gallery of "The Art of the Arab Lands, Turkey, Iran, Central Asia and Later South Asia", Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Photo in public domain.

This selective attitude to the Islamic creed in the traditional museums appears evident in the Albukhary Gallery. For example, more space is given to, and emphasis placed on, the coffee industry than to the representation of the Islamic piety (Figures 14–16). The glass box dedicated to "belief and practice" appears particularly confined and pitifully played down by comparison to the coffee-themed installation in which a large panel displays an assortment of coffee bags. The re-installations of the MET's collections constitute another conspicuous evidence of this anti-religious pattern. In this regard, a blog by Sharon Kitchens narrating her experience of these re-installations and featuring an interview of Navina Haidar, the Nasser Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah Curator, is worth reporting (Kitchens 2020).



Figure 14. View of the showcasing box "Belief and Piety" in the Albukhary Gallery, British Museum. Photos of the author.

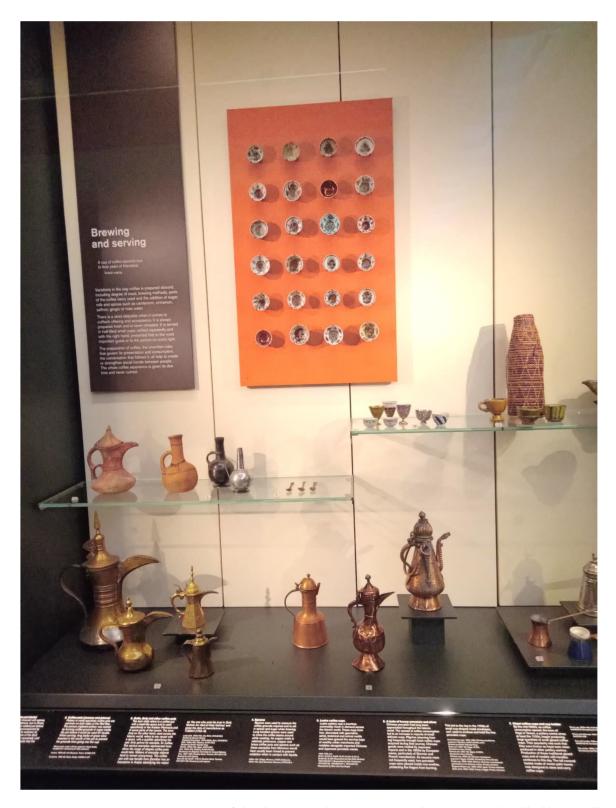


Figure 15. View of the showcasing box "Brewing and Serving" in the Albukhary Gallery, British Museum. Photos of the author.



Figure 16. The coffee bags' display. The Albukhary Gallery, British Museum. Photos of the author.

A Blogger's Experience in the MET's Islamic Galleries

In the blog's introduction, Kitchens's general impressions hint that her experience did not include the understanding of Islam or of the objects' spiritual dimension: "The modern Middle East that's in the news is characterized by conflict, geopolitics, and the political economy of oil. Yet in the MET's galleries I can travel back through history to a world of poets and craftspeople" (Figure 17). Instead, these impressions signal the fulfilment

of the museum's secular soteriological agenda through the awe inspired by the historical scope and artistic finesse of the iconic American collection. As the curator Navina Haidar underlines, "One challenge is to overcome the perceptions and politics of the moment and take a view of history and art history in a more educated way". In the interview like in the blogger's own report, Islam is only the name given to these phenomena as the blog ends with a "TIP: Wondering what the word Islam means or how artists in the Islamic world worked? Visit the MET's Frequently Asked Questions web page".



Figure 17. View of the gallery of "The Art of the Arab Lands, Turkey, Iran, Central Asia and Later South Asia", Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Photo in public domain.

Haidar's responses to Kitchens's questions reveal yet another aspect of this problem of religious introversion. While Porter, Greenwood and Blessing assert a secularist viewpoint on Islamic art display taken as granted on certain scholarly grounds, Haidar's explanations betray the sub-conscious anxieties of someone from within the culture caught between her profound awareness of the Islamic spiritual source of the art she curates and her submission to the neo-postcolonialist orthodoxy. She thus confesses informally to Kitchens that "the inspiration of Islam itself gives a lot of power and meaning to works of art. Especially in the calligraphic tradition, which is a highpoint always". Although Haidar does not define this "Islam itself," by mentioning the ubiquitous presence of calligraphy she clearly implies that there exist powerful forces of unification in the Muslim artworld. Yet, for some reason, she follows this orthodoxy's rules in her curatorial practice. As she expounds the installations' underpinnings, what I see as the fundamental piece of truth she had just told Kitchens disappears in the normative historical discourse filled with menaces against any unifying principle: "One route through the galleries offers a chronological view, tracing the evolution of art from the dawn of Islam in the middle east through its spread to Europe and India. However, if the visitor chooses to walk through the galleries in any other direction, they will experience the spaces in a more regional way, focused on important centers and the patronage of ruling dynasties. As a result, Islamic tradition is not presented as an essentialized monolith to represent a single idea, but a constellation of cultures and art forms brought together in communication and shared exchange".

The interview finally concludes on this thought: "Ms. Haidar hopes visitors gain an appreciation of art and history and a sense of the inspiration that Islam has provided to artists and patrons everywhere". But how can this be possibly achieved without giving the public a sense of the Islamic faith as the shaper of this Muslim visual culture in view? And how exactly is this secularist vision of this culture materially translated in these traditional displays?

8. "Secular Scholasticism" of the Narratives and Conservative Installation Design

From Berlin, New York, to Copenhagen, the traditional Islamic displays present uniformly the same overreaching cultural-historical narratives promoting a de-spiritualizing encyclopedic notion of cultural richness. This notion expresses itself in a standardized visual allure of the installations, which are often filled up with objects to maximum capacity and invariably loaded with densely written text boxes and historical and technical explanatory panels (Figures 11–17). Most notably, the religious content of the culture dilutes itself in these extensive explanations. Here and there, a few highlighted masterpieces meant to pinpoint a particular artistic achievement appear isolated rather than enhanced in the cluttered and frequently eclectic rooms. Moreover, although the artworks in the miscellanea of material astound by their beauty and the new neat frames and high-tech lighting please the eye, this type of arrangement echoes in the museum the compilations of data and evidences cherished in the Islamic art studies (Figure 18). Among these compilations of objects, the beautiful immersive reconstitutions of Syrian domestic interiors in the Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin and the MET, and the recreated Moroccan patio commissioned to Moroccan craftsmen by the latter's curators definitely stand out. However, these installations do not suffice to make these displays any less outdatedly didactic and predominantly secularist.



Figure 18. Gallery of Islamic art, Louvre, Paris. Photo: © M. Bellini—R. Ricciotti/Musée du Louvre © 2012 Musée du Louvre/Philippe Ruault.

Moreover, this didactic feature entails an inadequate phenomenology of perception in the museum. Instead of engaging an appreciation-based participatory reception revelatory of the faith the objects represent, these iconic museums overall produce a phenomenology of perception conditioning viewers to assimilate passively as much historical information as possible, for the greatest pleasure of the mainstream academic spectatorship. It is a "most informative and just plain beautiful summation of Islamic material culture over fifteen centuries", said a satisfied scholar on social media after visiting the overpacked Albukhary Gallery which, within two rooms, aims to cover Islamic visual culture in all its aspects, from the medieval period to the contemporary era. 20 Indeed, what can only be described as the hubristic transference of the "scholastic" preoccupations and speculations of the Islamic art historians sitting at their desks in the museum's social space may only satisfy scholars themselves. As if lay visitors could possibly follow the Borgesian meanders of academic knowledge. Even with the most beautiful artifacts in view, semantically convoluted or complicated installations fall short of efficacity if we deign to consider that scholars form only a small portion of the museum's public at large. As Klas Grinell observes in thinking about spectatorship from an unsegregated viewpoint, "different logics of categorisation are intertwined in a way that makes exhibition narratives very complex".21 Therefore, following up on Grinell and its concept of the "big idea," successful displays actually require simpler structures of semantization in response to the visitors' infinitely varied background and structures of beholding.

However, this requirement of semantic simplification goes hand in hand with the necessity of a skillful space and object phenomenology re-attributing the main power of communication to the works themselves. The impressive scenography of the two Pensive Bodhisattvas in Seoul and the National gallery's exhibition of Spanish Baroque art are exemplary in this respect. They most successfully induce(d) an experience of the material without overloading the space with artworks, and without the aid of overlength explanatory labels dispatched everywhere in the exhibition room. Instead, this experience is/was possible as visitors are/were plunged in a sacral immersive atmosphere that enable(d) them to relate spiritually or emotionally to the artworks and to dialogue silently with them.

To cite another installation of similar high caliber, the display of menorahs at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem equally discards scholasticism and privileges object and space phenomenology, for an optimally cognitive and affective albeit non-didactic reception. In this museum, a wall features suspended cases lit from the inside like multiple luminescent cabinets, each containing menorahs from different countries. Astutely placed in a disorderly manner, the cabinets seem to pop out randomly from the wall's surface where the name of the provenance locations appears discretely written in pale letters. Without being explanatory, this poetic installation fulfills most efficiently the double semantic-aesthetic mission of asserting the religious symbolism of the candelabra used in Jewish rituals, and of unraveling the inexhaustive artistic versatility of its form.

Having these most creative religious exhibits in mind, the conservative secularist scholastic model pressingly raises the question of how precisely it inserts Islam and the Islamic in its encyclopedic complexities, as obviously the religious plot cannot be eliminated.

Islam as a Theme among Other Themes

"Faith offers an important dimension and an added value in curating exhibitions," says Nayel Barakat about Islamic curation in general (Nayel Barakat 2017, pp. 34–35). I would add that any exhibit of Islamic material culture for whatever representational purpose, historical, archaeological, ethnographic or aesthetic, requires at least to place them in a meaningful Muslim perspective. Means of shaping this perspective in the museum are plentiful. They may consist of an introductory scenography marking a strong point of semantic entry, like in the renovated Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo in which panels explaining in detail the religion appear on the foreground albeit at a proper distance of the well-spaced out installations, and/or a consistent thread of meaning throughout the galleries. The latter objective, for example, is achieved through an eloquent choice of

room labels in the Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilization, with one room named after the first Righteous Caliph Abu Bakr and another one after the Muslim scientist Ibn Al-Haytham. Needless to say, the kind of idiosyncratic elements of décor one finds frequently in the traditional displays in the form of a mocked Middle Eastern profiled arcade, or of *masharabiya* panels inserted in walls, do not fulfil this requirement of situating the objects in the Islamic spiritual domain (Figure 17).

As a general rule, owing to their historicizing exhibitory philosophy and principled introversion of religion, the traditional displays fall short of providing what qualifies as a genuine Islamic framework. The latest of these displays to date, the Albukhary Gallery, is again a perfect case for discussing this issue. To locate its collection in the Muslim world at its title indicates, the gallery employs two devices: customized masharabiyat like in the MET, and a diptych presenting a fragment of calligraphy and a mihrab pertinently placed before the installations (Figure 19). This diptych does put the collection in religious perspective. Yet, it appears minimalist by comparison with the rest of the overloaded installations. The condensed visual semiosis it delivers may therefore only superficially settle in the non-Muslim visitors' mind, as most of them do not know the profound signification of the mihrab and calligraphy in Islam. In effect, the contrast is such that the attention is quickly absorbed in the displays' jigsaw puzzle of historical, archaeological, and ethnographic plots in which Islamic spirituality constitutes only one among numerous narrative pieces. How can visitors possibly connect the dots between a nineteenth-century Soudanese lyre belonging to the age-old local African culture and Soudan's Islamic religious materialism, just after encountering medieval pieces of Shi'i piety in Iran and archaeological findings from a given Middle Eastern site, all being showcased in densely loaded boxes put in tight conjunction?²²

Most problematically, to non-specialists this multidirectionality of the displays' emplotment can only communicate an ambiguous conception of the Muslim world in which Islam appears decentered, thereby giving the subliminal message that this world is not as Islamic as one might think it is. In thus decentering Islam in its own cultural realm, the Albukhary Gallery is ultimately seldom different from the other traditional displays lacking a proper Islamic semantic anchorage; an anchorage, it must be underscored, that by no means diminishes the chiefly contributive agency of the non-Muslim traditions in the Islamic cultural area. In this respect, however, the MET's re-installations are even more radically de-centering. As Sharon Kitchens's blog indicates, the scholastic separation of religion and culture takes place right at the galleries' entrance where "visitors are greeted with a map showing the major artistic centers represented in the collection of the Galleries.". This map is undeniably a useful tool. But strategically positioned as the first thing the public encounters and naturally prehends as the installations' narrative foundation, it designs a secularist polycentric façade of a cultural space that, in the Muslim reality, is religiously mapped and monocentric.

The Muslim world indeed revolves around the one single holy center of the Kaaba in Mecca, the *qibla* and direction of prayer toward which mosques and many old public buildings, palaces and cities are oriented. Today like yesterday, this Islamic axis mundi structures the Muslim universe engulfing all lands on earth; and Muslim believers do view this universe thus structured wherever they live and whatever the branch of Islam they belong to. Moreover, this horizontal mundane organization centered on the visible Kaaba has an unseen vertical metaphysical extension that, from Mecca, reaches two cosmological points: the heavens on one side, and the strata bellow the earth's surface on the other side. This supranatural organization engenders a cosmogonic mise-en-abyme producing multiple qiblas-Kaabas. As Simon O'Meara underscores in his illuminating book on the Meccan sanctuary, "Muslims are known as 'the people of the *qibla*' (*ahl al-qibla*)" (O'Meara 2020, p. 1). It is this Islamic cosmogony and the faith in the Quran that unite all the regions flatly listed in the MET galleries' label that otherwise would not make any sense.

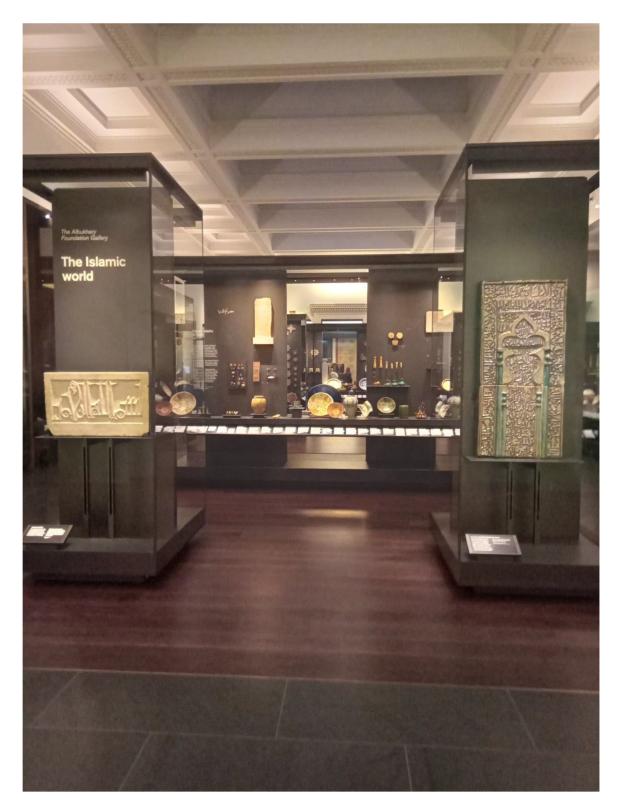


Figure 19. View from the entrance to the Albukhary Gallery, British Museum. Photo of the author.

On the same track of thought, one may then cognize the anomaly of putting this cosmogony and the Islamic faith into the spotlight only in temporary thematic events, as in the case of the memorable exhibitions "Hajj: Journey to the Heart of Islam," held at the British Museum in 2012, and "Longing for Mecca" at the Tropenmuseum in 2019–2020.²³ This anomaly, characterizing the mainstream Islamic museology in the West, takes on

further relief as the new Muslim-led museums do posit the Islamic cosmogony and faith as the pivot of their installations. The latter includes, for example, rooms dedicated to the hajj and the Kaaba in the Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilization, a compelling exhibit of models of mosques from all over the world in both the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia and the Islamic collection in the King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra) in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, or the relics' display appropriately accompanied by audio Quranic recitations in the Topkapi Palace Museum (Figures 20–23).²⁴

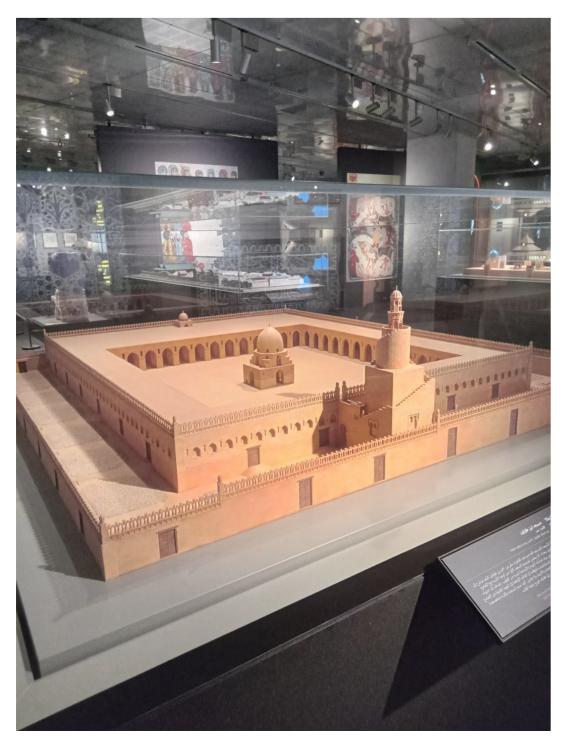


Figure 20. The collection of Islamic art in the King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra), Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. Model of the Mosque of Ibn Tulun, Cairo, Egypt. Photo of the author.



Figure 21. The collection of Islamic art in the King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra), Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. Model of mosque in Xinjian, China. Photo of the author.



Figure 22. The collection of Islamic art in the King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra), Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. Model of the mosque complex of Po-i-Kalyan, Bukhara, Uzbekistan. Photo of the author.

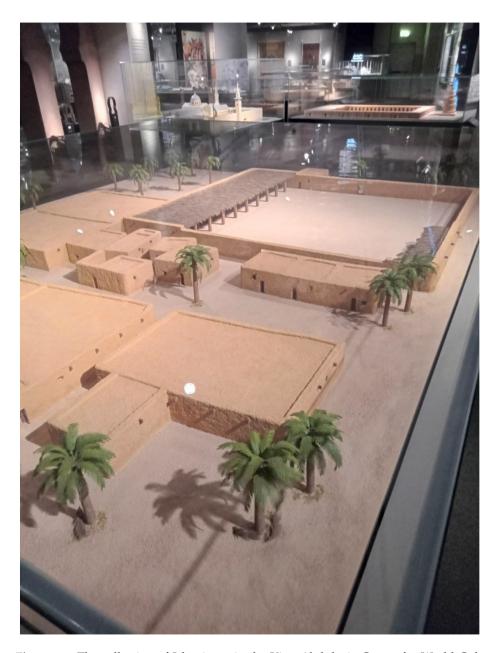


Figure 23. The collection of Islamic art in the King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra), Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. Model reconstituting the original mosque and house of the Prophet, Medina, Arabia. Photo of the author.

9. Epilogue: The Future Resides in the New Muslim Museology

Although the power of the secularist mainstream Islamic museology is still globally felt, the new Islamic museums in and outside the Muslim world offer a much desirable alternative to the religion-averse traditional displays, some of these museums being located in the rich Gulf region. Yet, how just preposterous is this statement some Westerners made in response to the museal development in Qatar: "There is no heritage in Qatar"! (Exell and Rico 2013, pp. 670–85) First and foremost, in all its diversity of exhibitory philosophy, this dynamic and refreshingly experimental global Muslim-led museology re-attributes to Islam its due place in the museum. Be it the gallery of Islamic civilization at the King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture, the Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilization, the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia, the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha or the florilegium of smaller institutions created throughout the world, the new museum of Islamic art and artifacts finally gives us, the masses of spectators, the opportunity to enjoy what we have

been longing for, namely a cultural immersion in which we may learn and appreciate Muslim culture in all its diverse aspects without ever losing sight of the faith that bore it.

Not specifically Islamic but containing a substantial Islamic material, the positively grandiose National Museum of Qatar in Doha also deserves a mention. At the avant-garde of design installation thanks to its hyper efficient use of multimedia technology and to the interdisciplinary team of cultural practitioners employed at its creation, this museum constitutes a formidable model for future projects of Islamic art display (Figure 24). Heeding the issue of budget, it must be said that it is always possible to use, as this museum does, films animating walls for both storytelling and fashioning atmospheres, to increase the role of sound and space, and to play with the illusionist tricks of images and photography in order to enrich or complete the objects' phenomenology. In conclusion, what is basically needed, alongside understanding the all-embracing power of the faith in Islamic culture, is creativity and the loosening of the mainstream secularist scholarship's yoke on the curatorial practice.

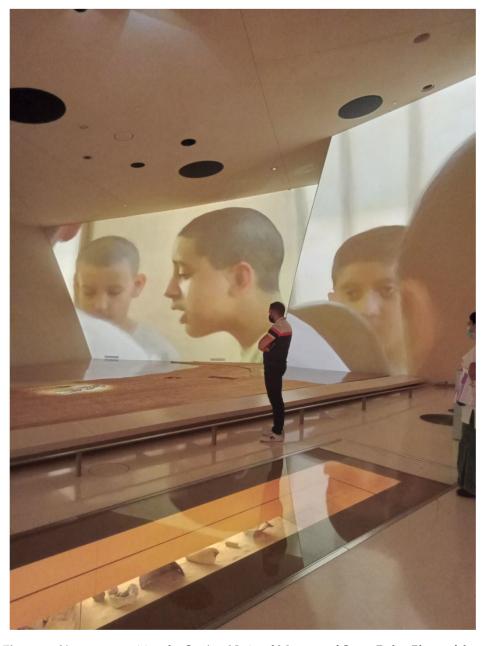


Figure 24. Youngsters reciting the Qur'an, National Museum of Qatar, Doha. Photo of the author.

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Conflicts of Interest: The proposed article discusses a problem concerning a mainstream of scholarship and curatorship in the area of Islam. The criticism that results from this discussion will not please the representatives of this mainstream, hence the existence of a conflict of interest.

Notes

- For terminological clarity, art and artifacts form two distinct categories that belong to the broad ensemble of things called "material culture". While all artworks are artifacts, namely objects created for a certain function with certain skills or a certain artistry, the reverse is not true. Unlike artifacts, artworks present a scope of meaning and cognitivity beyond functional efficacy, possess a metaphysical and affective dimension, and express deep thoughts either articulated by a high level of aesthetic research and experiment or as the result of a long history of these researching and experimenting processes. The ontological line separating art from artifacts is, however, mobile and often blurred.
- This issue has been discussed in a variety of publications: in the paragraph entitled "Social-historical Background of Islamic Art Curation," in (Gonzalez 2018; Demerdash-Fatemi 2020, pp. 15–30; Shatanawi 2012a, pp. 177–92; Grinell et al. 2019, pp. 370–71).
- Rebecca Bridgman in the booklet of the conference, *From Malacca to Manchester* 20. See also (Weber 2018, pp. 237–61; Grinell et al. 2019, pp. 370–71).
- The state of affairs of the studies and curation of non-Western material cultures obviously varies depending on the areas concerned. This discussion deals only with the Islamic scholarship and curatorship. For an updated reflection on post-colonialism thought, see (Gandhi 2019).
- ⁵ (Shaw 2019, p. 221). See my review of this problematic book in (Gonzalez 2020).
- Wendy M.K. Shaw holds firmly this view. See (Shaw 2002, pp. 133–55).
- See the account from the museum's inception in the aftermath of the French Revolution up to nowadays by (Exell 2017, pp. 49–64).
- A remarkable installation proving this malleability of the museum, "Exposing the Public," was conceptualized and is discussed by (Bal 2006, pp. 525–42).
- See https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/exhibitions/past/the-sacred-made-real and https://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/20 21/11/11/culture/koreanHeritage/pensive-bodhisattva-national-museum-of-korea-pensive-bodhisattva/20211111160231358. html (accessed on 8 March 2022). See also my references to some powerful religious installations in East Asian museums, in particular in Korea, in (Gonzalez 2018). This article critiques some key museums and galleries of Islamic art.
- (Searle 2009). My own critical description is based on my visit of this show.
- Here the term "materialism" refers to the recent trend of religious studies that emphasizes the role of objects and materiality in the exercise of piety.
- 12 I discuss some of these issues in "Islamic Art Curation in Perspective".
- See the introduction and articles in the online (*Journal of Art Historiography* 2012), "Islamic Art Historiography," and (Lanwerd 2012, p. 206). For a critique of this view see (Ahmed 2015; Gonzalez 2016, pp. 5–14).
- This term "Islamicate" was famously coined by Marshall Hogdson, in (Hogdson 1974).
- (Ahmed 2015). A sample of this scholarship also includes (O'Meara 2020; Shatanawi 2014; Akkach 2005; Gonzalez 2001, 2019; Elias 2012).
- See the video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KWkyF02YdA4 (accessed on 8 March 2022).
- Heba Nayel Barakat in the booklet of the conference, *From Malacca to Manchester* p. 34. Mirjam Shatanawi faced similar challenges when she curated and studied the similarly Islamic eclectic collections of the ethnographic Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam, ranging from historic and colonial-era artifacts, household items, to popular art and contemporary creations from South East Asia, the Middle East, to Africa and the Caribbean. See (Shatanawi 2014).
- The literature dealing with this museology is plentiful. See for example, (Rey 2019a, 2019b, 2022; Blessing 2018; Bier 2017).
- I wish to mention but not to discuss the issue of the representation of Prophet Muhammad in museums that ensued the infamous cartoons affair. For this topic, see (Grinell 2019b, pp. 1–13).

- Nasser Rabbat on Twitter, https://twitter.com/nayelshafei/status/1089659395519205376 (accessed on 8 March 2022). See also (Rabbat 2012), https://www.artforum.com/print/201201/the-new-islamic-art-galleries-at-the-metropolitan-museum-of-art-29813 (accessed on 8 March 2022), and (Porter and Greenwood 2020).
- (Grinell 2020, p. 31). It must be noted that, in their writings, curators of Islamic art often theorize against didacticism and narrative complexity in the museum, and thereby assert the benefit of the objects' phenomenology. However, they do not follow suit in their practice, as Grinell demonstrates in his sharp critique of the renovated Museum of Islamic art in Berlin in this same article, pp. 38–41.
- About this Soudanese lyre, see https://islamicworld.britishmuseum.org/collection/EAF40250/ (accessed on 8 March 2022).
- See the accounts on these exhibitions by (Porter and Abdel Haleem 2012; Tamimi Arab 2020, pp. 1–4).
- About these new Islamic museums see: (Trevathan 2020, pp. 119–33); and (*Mirrors of Beauty, Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia Guide* 2020; Rey 2019a, 2019b; Shaw 2010, pp. 129–31). About the Museum of Islamic art in Doha, see my critique in (*Gonzalez 2018*). For a collection of concisely critical essays on the museums in Qatar and the Arabian Peninsula, see the (*Journal of Arabian Studies* 2017).
- See the report on this museum by (Junker 2020), in this website: https://www.afr.com/life-and-luxury/arts-and-culture/off-the-screen-and-off-the-charts-at-qatar-s-newest-museum-20200220-p542qz (accessed on 8 March 2022).

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Article

The Globalization of Catholicism as Expressed in the Sacramental Narratives of Jiangnan Catholics from the Late Ming to Early Republican Period

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Abstract: From the Late Ming to the Republican period, Chinese Catholics living in Jiangnan (present-day Shanghai, Jiangsu, and Anhui) progressively appropriated the sacramental doctrine and practices of the Church. This study examines the implementation and evolution of the sacraments of baptism, marriage, and extreme unction, and it focuses on each of them at a different moment in the process of acculturation. The latter can be analyzed in terms of both localization and globalization: on the one hand, the religiosity displayed by the grassroots communities integrated elements proper to Chinese tradition and sensitivity. On the other hand, local believers developed a consciousness of their participation in the global Church through active sacramental practice. Sacramental acculturation and identity building were mediated by a "ritual rhetoric" that provided communities with *topoi* through which to endow their existence with accrued meaning and blessings.

Keywords: baptism; Chinese Catholics; extreme unction; grace; Jiangnan region; marriage (sacrament of); Rites Controversy; ritual rhetoric; sacraments

1. Introduction

Catholicism first developed in the Jiangnan region under the impetus and protection of the intellectual and stateman Xu Guangqi 徐光啟 (1562–1633) and, later on, of his grand-daughter Candida Xu 徐甘第大 (1607–1680), of whose personality and agency the Jesuit Philippe Couplet (1623–1685) has left a striking description (Couplet 1688). The new religion soon spread in several areas of a region that an extended network of rivers and canals makes a hub of transportation. Local communities survived the period during which Christianity had become a prohibited religion, and they greeted a new generation of missionaries after 1842. The initial period of this new encounter was marred with tensions between these communities and missionary tutelage (De La Servière 1915; Tiedemann 2008). Still, around 1950, Shanghai and its surroundings constituted one of the most flourishing Catholic territories in China, with laypeople and local clergy actively involved in its development (Mariani 2011, pp. 7–26).

In this article, I examine the process of consolidation and evolution of the Jiangnan-based Catholic local communities from the late Ming to the early Republican period, and I do so by looking at their sacramental practices. This entails focusing on narrative documents such as personal diaries, notes, and letters by missionaries or believers, examining them not from the viewpoint of their factual objectivity but rather from that of the experiences they convey. They must be read as a "retrospective narrative" (Yamane 2000), the rhetoric of which is part of its historical value. By doing so, I intend to highlight a twofold historical process: (a) the progressive localization of the Church's universal prescriptions; (b) the globalization process of Catholicism in the period under consideration from the viewpoint of Catholic development within one specific regional context.

I will proceed in four stages. The first one defines what a focus on sacraments may bring to the understanding of local Catholic communities, while inserting such focus into

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the research that bears on "religiosity" and contextualizing this line of inquiry. I continue by studying three sacramental rituals, with a frame of reference centered on the Late Ming period for baptism, the timespan from 1842 to the beginning of the 20th century for marriage, and the first decades of the same century for extreme unction. This will allow us to examine both the specificities attached to each of these sacraments and the global evolution of sacramental religiosity over the whole of the period. My conclusion will assess what this research has led us to understand about the ethos and faith experience of successive generations of Jiangnan Catholics.

2. Sacramental Religiosity: Concept, Method, and Setting

2.1. Sacraments in Time and Space

For Catholics, "sacraments" are the visible signs of the grace that God bestows on believers' souls. Accordingly, studies on sacraments have traditionally focused on their theological connotations (Rahner 1963; Jenson 1997; Holcomb and Johnson 2017). However, anthropological and sociological studies on rituals, symbols, and religious organizations have progressively opened up new venues of understanding, focused on the context of their reception as well as on their meaning for the faithful and the impact it has on their existence. For example, Terence Cuneo analyzes the prayer texts and ritual processes used when administering the Orthodox baptism, pointing out that the person being baptized achieves in its course a twofold transformation (Cuneo 2014). Marion's phenomenological perspective (Marion 2002) has inspired Woody's research on the Catholic Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). Woody does not focus on the specific ritual process; he rather attempts to interpret baptism as a "profound experience" for new Christians (Woody 2021). These research paths differ significantly one from another, and they are anchored into different disciplines. However, it is precisely these constantly emerging differences that expand our understanding of the sacraments and what they achieve.

In addition, sacraments are anchored into specific times and contexts, and the taking into account of the latter is part of the interpretative process. For example, sacraments became a locus of exploration for scholars studying the social and intellectual changes in European society, as the Reformation sought to break free from the constraints imposed by the Catholic Church (Peters 2000; Cristellon 2017). The limits of a purely historical focus, which treats sacraments as indexes of the contradictions brewing in society, may include that it pays little attention to the impact of the sacraments themselves on the people who receive them. However, the significance of documentary narratives is greatly expanded when re-read through a convincing interpretative frame. Henrietta Harrison's research is a case in point: studying both history and memory of Shaanxi Catholic rural communities, she uses local material, especially oral narratives, in order to highlight what the stories being told reveal of the experience and worldview of their narrators, thus going beyond the mere examination of the "truth" or "falsehood" value to be attributed to these local narratives (Harrison 2013). Concurrently, Harrison integrates the same narratives into the global background that has led to their emergence. Harrison's research also reminds us that the process through which sacraments are enacted and interpreted in local Catholic communities is of a similar level of complexity in various settings—Western Europe, the Andes, Goa, or even Shaanxi province. It is worth noting that Chinese scholars have paid special attention to (Thomist-inspired) Catholic sacramental theology as developing a specific cultural and anthropological perspective (Bai 2017). This attention may be due to perceived correspondences between the Catholic stress on liturgy and sacraments, on the one hand, and the Chinese focus on ritual (li 禮), traditionally seen as encompassing educational, moral, social, and religious dimensions, on the other hand.

2.2. Studying Religiosity in Jiangnan

Our focus on lived experience and meaning explains our use of the term "religiosity": the use of this term avoids "[the trap of a] distinction between inner (individual) faith and collective religious institutions" (Yang 2008, p. 18). In other words, it makes the commu-

nity under study the subject of both its representations and devotional practices. Needless to say, this collective subject develops both representations and practices within a web of relationships with other subjects—clergy, state representatives, society at large, and other faith communities.

Religiosity finds its expression through a "ritual rhetoric." As Podemann Sørensen (2003) does, I understand by "ritual rhetoric" a set of motives (topoi)—or master plots—that organize both the practice of rituals and the narratives that coalesce around them. These motives are legitimized by communal acceptance; they pattern the forms taken by the ritual, linking together stories and practices; moreover, they contribute to the social efficacy of the ritual (generally reinforcing communal cohesion) while also defining its sacred efficacy. I will highlight the diversity of ritual purposes and forms that this approach enables us to cover and interpret. Additionally, by studying believing communities in their formative period, we will be able to analyze some of these rhetorical motives in statunascendi, until the time they crystallize.

I am looking for expressions of Jiangnan Catholics' religiosity through the reading of narratives related to specific sacramental rituals, supplemented by reference to doctrinal literature (including sacramental rules) compiled by the Church for the communities under study. Among the latter are Tianzhu shengjiao baiwenda 天主聖教百問答 (One hundred questions on {the doctrine of} the Holy Catholic Church) (1675) by the Jesuit Philippe Couplet (1624–1692); Ludovico Buglio S.J. (1606–1682)'s translation of Manvale ad Sacramēta ministranda iuxta ritū as Shengshi lidian 聖事禮典 (Rituals for Administering the Sacraments) (Buglio [1675] 2002); and Joannes Twrdy S.J. (1846–1910)'s three-volume Jiaoli xiangjie 教理詳解 (Detailed explanations on the Doctrine of the Church), published in 1887 and already reprinted for the third time in 1907 (see Twrdy [1887] 1907). (See a Chinese-language analysis of these materials for the Late Ming and Early Qing period in Huiling Yang 2021). The texts provided by the Church were authoritatively clarifying ritual performances, giving them theological significance, and establishing the basic norms that local believers should follow. Sacramental rules can be seen as the formal framework of the ritual, and researchers put this framework in relation with the specific content of a ritual occurrence, such as the words, behaviors, and feelings of the participating believers, as well as with the spatial atmosphere of the ritual. This set of data is scattered in narrative documents such as missionary letters, notes, or believers' genealogies.

I thus take catechetical/doctrinal literature as a basis for understanding rituals and narrative literature related to sacramental occurrences as the focus of research and analysis. The interaction between the two sets of documents unveils the presence of aflexiblespace between rulesand practices. This space allows for the coordination of sacramental rituals, on the one hand, and local customs and concepts, on the other hand. Both missionaries and local believers were endeavoring to create space for conciliation and coordination, though they were doing so with different concerns and sensitivities.

2.3. Sacramental Practices in Catholic China: Beyond the Rites Controversy

While the research around the "Rites Controversy" has accumulated fruitful results (Mungello 1994; Županov and Fabre 2018; Han 2021), it has generated such interest among historians that it may obscure all issues related to Christian rituals in Chinese context by interpreting them under this umbrella. Studies around the "Chinese Rites Controversy" generally focus on the collision between Chinese and Western cultures, while this article is interested in the history and development of Chinese Catholicism in its own terms. I will mention differences and contradictions between sacramental rituals and local customs and beliefs, but I will mainly explore how local Catholics in the Jiangnan region during the Ming and Qing Dynasties continued their faith practices in the midst of the aforesaid conflicts and differences. Their specific practices organically constituted Chinese Catholicism in the form it has taken.

While not being the object of this study, the "Rites Controversy" constitutes an indispensable backdrop for constructing our historical context. As a historical event, it profoundly affected the development of Catholicism in China, leading the Yongzheng 雍正 Emperor to revoke in 1724 the Kangxi 康熙 emperor's edict of Christian toleration issued in 1692. Further restrictive measures would soon follow. However, the policy initiated by Yongzheng did not lead to the actual disappearance of Catholicism. Historical documents describe missionaries venturing to various places in the Jiangnan region and believers inviting missionaries to visit communities (*huikou* 會口)² and perform sacramental services (Xu 1932). For example, before being arrested and executed in Suzhou 苏州, António-José Henriques S.J. (1707–1747) and Tristano Attimis S.J. (–1747) had traveled around Suzhou and Songjiang 松江 in such a way as "to avoid the non-believers, hiding during the day and walking at night, and staying at the homes of believers. When it was late at night and quiet, they gathered their flock to perform the sacraments, and dispersed at dawn." (Xu 1932, p. 20)

Historians often see the kind of local resilience exemplified by the micro-story quoted above as a mere manifestation of personal faith and thus fail to account for the stress that agents place on the "grace" attached to the reception of the sacraments. This may be because they see terms such as "grace," as formulaic expressions. However, Catholic believers tend to see themselves as being prepared to enter supernatural life only if they regularly receive the sacraments and obtain divine grace through the liturgy through which sacraments are offered. Each of the seven sacraments has a specific significance, and they are linked to different life situations. Baptism, marriage, and anointing of the sick (or "last rites") are directly related to the three basic experiences of a believer's life: birth, marriage, and death. Beyond their understanding as "rites of passage", as Arnold vanGennep famously put it, they receive specific meaning: baptism erases the original sin and forgives all the trespasses committed by the newly baptized person, thus reborn as a child of God; the sacrament of marriage ensures the legitimacy of the new family and blesses the offspring to come; as to the anointing of the sick, it can forgive all sins of the dying person and alleviate her pains. Therefore, even in situations where missionary work and worship activities were drastically restricted, missionaries and local believers in the Jiangnan region would try their best to enact and receive these three sacraments, and they would record such occurrences.³

3. Baptism: Reconciling Confucianism and Christianity

In the time span covered by this study (from the end of the Ming Dynasty to the early Republic of China era), the Jiangnan region underwent the same social and political experiences as the rest of China, i.e., a dynastic change, the rise of the Qing Empire, and then its gradual collapse under external pressures. From a broader perspective, international flows and connections, as well as the formation of a world pattern centered on Europe, gradually integrated the Jiangnan region into the globalization process. This coincided with the time when Catholicism began its own journey towards becoming truly globalized. This journey inevitably retroacted upon the development of Catholicism in Jiangnan. The devotional practices of local believers would eventually become part of a globally organized Catholicism.

3.1. The Initiation Ceremony of Catechumenate for Literati

In 1620, a candidate to a government position in Shaanxi province had succeeded in the examination and was waiting for his official appointment in his native city of Yangzhou 扬州, in Jiangnan. He intended to convert to Catholicism. Before baptism, he needed to learn doctrinal and practical precepts. This process of apprenticeship—the catechumenate—has received a rather elegant Chinese designation, mudao 慕道.

Progressively, after the promulgation of the Edict of Milan, most Europeans were baptized shortly after birth and were growing up in Christian families. The catechumenate that was designed by the early Church for helping converts to overcome the influence of their pagan environment was no longer necessary. However, for converts of the late Ming Dynasty who "[had] been obscured in pagan darkness for some thousands of years,

without ever, or scarcely ever, beholding a ray of the light of Christianity" (Ricci 1953, p. 82.), it was particularly necessary to undertake the catechumenate before baptism.

Giulio Aleni S.J. (1582–1649) arranged for our candidate to publicly become a cate-chumen through an ad hoc ceremony, which would be referred to as the "catechumenate initiation ceremony." On that day, this candidate for the *daotai* 道台 (province official) position wore the official uniform that indicated his upcoming promotion to government office, knelt and paid respect in front of the altar, and then accepted the doctrinal books placed on the altar (Colombel 2009, vol. I, p. 181⁵).

Auguste M. Colombel S.J. (1833–1905) describes the process in just one sentence, which evokes a Confucian scholar entering apprenticeship. Was this ceremony alien to the ritual of the Catholic Church? What we now call the "catechumenate" was divided into two stages: the one of inquiring, and the catechumenate proper. In the inquiring stage, the persons asking to enter the Church needed to understand its basic teachings and regulations, so as to establish the foundations of the faith, and to show their determination to live according to Christian precepts. Afterwards, they were considered as catechumens, candidates for baptism, giving up all pagan habits and learning to become Christians (Edelby 2021). At this point, catechumens could participate in the Liturgy of the Word and were regarded as "almost Christians": their identity had already changed. Therefore, the Church had set up a symbolic ceremony to enter into the stage of the catechumenate. In the *De catechizandis rudibus* (*On the Catechising of the Uninstructed*), St. Augustine had written: "The person is to be asked whether he believes these things and earnestly desires to observe them. And on his replying to that effect then certainly he is to be solemnly signed and dealt with in accordance with the custom of the Church." (Augustine n.d., chp. 26)

The missionaries in the late Ming Dynasty did set requirements for aspiring believers in Jiangnan, but they did not follow the early practices of the Church. The ceremony they arranged borrowed from the tradition of Confucian ritual. In the eyes of literati nurtured by Confucianism, when a scholar dressed in formal attire kneels and bows before the altar where the sacred books are placed, the ritual not only conforms to the etiquette of Confucian disciples paying respect to their teachers but also reflects their yearning for the true path. At the same time, this altar is dedicated to "God [$Tianzhu \ \pm 1$ ", and these books contain the basic doctrines of Catholicism, so the seeker's pursuit of the "true path" is nothing else than Catholicism.

Though the initiation ceremony for Jiangnan scholars differs from the one of the Early Church in Europe, the purpose and significance of the two ceremonies are identical. As stipulated by Augustine, the petitioner must show to the Christian community that he/she believes in God and is willing to abide by the doctrine. Performing the ceremony also means that he/she has been accepted by the community and should begin to live in the way Christians are asked to do.

The initiation ceremony performed in Yangzhou was specifically designed for literati and was not applicable to the common people: the latter could not wear official robes during the ceremony. In the documents recording the baptism of local Catholics in Jiangnan, there is almost no trace of similar ceremonies after the ban on Christianity was issued. Of course, this does not mean that the process of the catechumenate was abolished. Many descriptions of local conversion reflect the fact that those who intended to convert had to renounce all heresies, including all objects and customs related to idolatry, before being accepted as "people keeping the doctrine" (baoshouzhe 保守者) by local Catholic communities and missionaries⁶. "[The postulant] visits the instructor or teacher in person and asks him to write his name in the register. Once the teacher accepts the request, it is anticipated that the postulant will be baptized." (Vagne n.d., p. 5)⁷

The uniqueness of the initiation ceremony for Confucian literati was due to the adherence to the principles set up by Matteo Ricci: abiding by Chinese laws, understanding the social structure and local customs of China, and realizing that the support of the social elite class for missionary work required the missionaries to observe Confucian etiquette. Therefore, scholars and ordinary people were treated differently. Scholars were allowed

to display the marks of their identity while affirming their wholehearted devotion to God and their willingness to learn how to become a Christian.

3.2. The Declaration of Faith

During the late Ming Dynasty, such a strategy led missionaries in Jiangnan to show flexibility in carrying out the baptismal ceremony. The most famous example was the baptism on 16 March 1605, at the Jesuit church in Nanjing, of Qu Taisu 瞿太素⁸, who came from a family of officials. The entire baptismal ceremony was based on the rules set up by the Church, with two addenda: "he prostrated himself and struck the floor with his forehead four times", and then reading a "Declaration of Faith" written by the newly baptized before the pouring of water. (Ricci 1953, pp. 467–71)

Kneeling and bowing devoutly is a traditional Chinese etiquette rule, expressing supplication and/or gratitude towards a superior. Qu Taisu performed this gesture in order to pray that God may forgive his past sins and evils. The recitation of the "Declaration of Faith" was an even more explicit expression of his intent. The main contents included his personal experience of converting to Catholicism, his resolution to break with the past, his firm belief in God, and his acceptance of doctrine as truth. Although this can be read as a mere confirmation that the requirements of the Church had been met, the agency of Qu Taisu should not be overlooked. Rather paradoxically, agency is first shown by the fact that this literati from a prominent family read a text written in a specialized idiom, which he needed to appropriate. Such public appropriation is a rhetorical statement per se. Second, Qu explicitly referred to his former faith in Buddhism. This, he said, had been idol worship, a "heinous sin." Now believing that only God can forgive sinners, he was emphasizing his personal acceptance of faith: " ... the holy sacrament of baptism which cleanses the soul of every stain, I shall wholly eradicate from my mind every vestige of belief in false gods, and in the unreasonable doctrine that centers about them." (Ricci 1953, p. 470) Qu Taisu clearly stated what his past "sins" were and that in which he now was believing. Although he did not mention "original sin", he expressed his understanding of the unfamiliar ritual of baptism in his own language. Then he continued, "As for the various doctrines and teachings of the Catholicism, although I cannot understand their great and lofty mysteries, I humbly obey what they teach, and I pray that the Holy Spirit of God may enlighten me and help me understand their true essence." (Gu 1989, p. 15) The rhetoric of this statement is characteristic of Catholicism, not only because of its vocabulary, but also because of its logical expression: the neophyte must maintain a humble heart and fully rely on God in order to understand in a deeper fashion the truths in which he already believes. The rhetoric of Qu Taisu's declaration reflects his new faith consciousness as well as his personal agency, the two combined leading him to declare already believing in truths he still needs to appropriate.

4. The Sacrament of Matrimony and Traditional Family Values

4.1. Implementing the Sacramental Ritual of Marriage

In 1900, Joseph Dannic (1867–1923), a Jesuit missionary who preached in Maojia (Maokia) 毛家 village, in Anhui 安徽 province, recorded the six marriage ceremonies he had performed in the past four years. He had hoped to recreate solemn and joyous Bretonstyle wedding ceremonies here. Considering that Chinese customs often use the color red in celebrations, he had allowed Catholic newlyweds to wear red wedding attire and encouraged believers to decorate the church with red instead of the white or blue typical of Western weddings. However, it was still very difficult to hold a "real" Sacrament of Matrimony, which the priest found disappointing. According to Joseph Dannic, the bride was always ashamed to show her face in front of everyone, the groom refused to answer the priest when the latter asked whether he was willing to accept the bride, or both parties were unwilling to even enter the church publicly. The priest could only wait patiently in front of the altar, or limit the number of spectators in the church and simplify the ceremony. Otherwise, he would fall into the embarrassment of refusing to perform the marriage and

then seeing the people "praise [the couple] (for refusing to marry) and curse us." In his view, only one of the six weddings held for local believers was in accordance with the sacramental stipulations of the Church (Dannic 1900).

The difficulty of performing a Catholic wedding ceremony was not limited to extremely traditional places like Mao-kia village. Even in Shanghai, which had already opened its doors to foreign influence, priests often needed to urge believers to hold matrimony in the church. In contrast with baptism, which had no corresponding custom in traditional Chinese rites, the regulations governing marriage in China were established since antiquity, and they had developed into an important component of social and ethical order. Wedding was regarded as one of the most important social ceremonies. Regardless of the individual's social status, there were etiquette customs to be followed. The full implementation of the Catholic sacrament of matrimony among local believers in Jiangnan during the late Ming and late Qing dynasties was certainly not an overnight process.

For Catholics, the prerequisite for receiving the sacrament of matrimony lies in their commitment to follow the Catholic rules of marriage. In China, the most basic of them were spelt out as follows: one man and one woman, established as legitimate husband and wife; lifelong commitment without separation; no concubines; and prohibition on marrying non-Catholics (Huang 1936, p. 62).9 These were the rules most emphasized among Catholic believers in Jiangnan, and it restricted the baptism of people who intended to convert but kept concubines (this led Qu Taisu to delay his baptism). In addition, due to the constraints attached to gender roles, Jesuit missionaries in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties decided to temporarily suspend matrimony ceremonies, so to avoid misunderstandings and conflicts, while asking local believers to follow local precepts related to marriage: "Till now, we have been unable to secure the observance of the rules established by the holy Council of Trent as to matrimony, neither to ensure the presence of a priest et of two witnesses, nor to make the couple hold hands as a testimony of faith and mutual consent." (Couplet 1688, p. 15) Consequently, the Chinese Shengshi lidian 聖事裡典 compiled by the Church in 1675 contented itself with explaining the sacredness and regulations of Catholic marriage, and it omitted all content related to the marriage ceremony, stating "it is not convenient to perform the marriage ceremony now, so let it be." (Buglio [1675] 2002, p. 52)

This situation continued until Lodovico Maria Bési (1805-1871), also known as Luo Lei 羅類思, became the Bishop of the Nanjing Diocese. Although the missionary work in Jiangnan had just resumed and the ban on Christianity had not yet been lifted, Mgr. Besi issued a special decree to the entire diocese, requiring that believers' weddings be held in accordance with the Catholic Order of Celebrating Matrimony (Bési [1845] 1996). Thus, believers had to follow rituals that they were once able to avoid during marriage celebrations, even if were worriedthat they would violate customs and attract socialscrutiny. The most difficult, for both men and women, was to kneel together in front of the altar, and to express verbally in front of the priest and of witnesses, their willingness to marry. In China, marriage is traditionally arranged by "parental command and matchmaker's words (fumu zhi ming, meishuo zhi yan 父母之命,媒妁之言)". Personal preference is often regarded as a private matter, which etiquette and customs forbid expressing in public. Therefore, Mgr. Bési granted some leniency, allowing the couple to hold hands and to make the sign of the cross, so as to express their willingness through body language and not explicit wording. If the two would not perform this gesture, it was to be inferred that they had no intention to remain husband and wife, and they could not receive this sacramental grace. Moreover, MgrBési emphasizedthatthere could be no wedding banquet withoutthe sacrament of marriage having been celebrated first.

4.2. From Matrimony to Family

Although the bishop demanded strict adherence to the liturgical dispositions he had prescribed, their implementation among believers in Jiangnan was slow, and many believers still refused to follow certain rituals even decades later, especially when it came

to expressing personal will during the marriage ceremony. This does not mean that local believers did not value the sacrament: "forming a family" through marriage was of the utmost importance for the vast majority of local believers. An unmarried man could obtain fame in the imperial examinations, bringing gloryto his family and gaining social respect, but still, if yet unmarried, he had not the status of an "adult". For a woman, marriage not only brought her into another family space but also granted her a clear social identity. Therefore, as a transitional life rite, a wedding meant not only that individuals were granted a new social status but also that a new family had taken shape. Catholic weddings needed to take into account both local customs and Church precepts. In other words, believers were hoping that the new families formed by the celebration of weddings would obtain not only social recognition but also the blessing of the Church.

When celebrating a wedding, the priest was well aware of the core position of "family (jia 家)" for Chinese Catholics and gave blessings that responded to such centrality. One of them reads as follows: "The Church blesses the newlyweds to live to see their descendants thrive for three or four generations, and to receive eternal life after death. The blessing of the Church [consists in] asking from God that it may be so." (Shen 1917, p. 14) Such blessings sounded beautiful even in the ear of non-believers. Local believers were interpreting the good fortune bestowed upon their family as a result of divine blessing, the latter due to the fact that they were respecting Catholic rules on matrimony. The Shen family of Zhuxianghui 諸巷會 in Qingpu 青浦 county linked the prosperity of their family's offspring with adhering to the monogamous marriage system as Catholics:

Among the fifteen families of the Shen clan, nine have more than ten children born to one parent ... the remaining six families have children born to different mothers. However, the heads of these families were all followers of the Catholic faith, practicing monogamy and rejecting concubinage and polygamy. All of their children are legitimate and none are illegitimate. Compared to many non-Catholic families, isn't this quite remarkable? This is also a great testimony to the blessings that God bestowed on our believers' community. (Shen 1917, p. 14)

This short account is meant to prove that monogamy will not lead to the rarefaction of offspring and family extinction, and that faith makes family flourish much more than sticking to concubinage does. Future generations need to be aware of this fact, and this is why the account recalls it.

The last stage of the implementation of the marriage liturgy among believers in Jiangnan is related to the 1911 Revolution, the "New Culture" movement, and the promotion of "Transforming outmoded customs and habits (yi feng yisu 移風易俗)" by the government of the Republic of China. In society as a whole, the concept of marriage began to change. Traditional Chinese weddings had gradually become regarded as outdated and vulgar, while Western-style weddings had become the fashion of the times. Thus, the Church rules as to the marriage liturgy started to be socially recognized and even praised. Still, the view of marriage implied in the ceremony now seen as "leading-edge" was not deviating completely from tradition. Fr. Xu Zongze 徐宗澤 S.J. (1886–1947), a leading intellectual deeply influenced by Western learning, criticized in his writings the concept that marriage was based entirely on freedom and individual will, seeing such a trend as an important factor in shaking the stability of the family (Xu 1926, pp. 19–20). This was not a personal opinion: as the chiefeditor of the Revue Catholique (Shengjiao zazhi 聖教雜誌) he was both representing and leading mainstream Catholic thinking in Shanghai and surrounding areas at that time.

In 1896, Auguste Pierre S.J. (1856–1910), a priest at the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Zhangjialou 張家樓, ¹⁰ wrote an article to the American newspaper *The Messenger of the Sacred Heart of Jesus* and attached a family photo of the leader of a believers' community (local community leaders were known as *huizhang* 會長, or *guantang xianshen* 管堂先生) of this church. (Figure 1) It was taken in the hall of his newly built house. Although the picture is a bit blurry, it can still be seen that the owner arranged the house according to the manner of a small chapel in a private house; clothing also indicates that this is a well-off traditional Chinese family. The head of the household and wife sit directly in the middle,

and the male and female families are on separate sides. A few young children either stand or sit in the front row, and the two babies are held in the arms of the young man. The article indicates that a boy and girl were missing from the family photo. They were studying at a boarding school run by the Xujiahui Jesuit Order. The priest is very satisfied with the local Catholic family and hopes that "the family will continue to revere the Sacred Heart of Jesus from generation to generation." (Pierre 1896, p. 337).



Figure 1. A lay Catholic leader and his family, 1896. Sourced from Pierre (1896, p. 337).

5. The Last Anointing: Preparing for the End of Life

5.1. Receiving Extreme Unction

Let us start with the homage that a Jesuit parish priest gave to the recently deceased leader of a local community:

On Saturday, December 16th, the administrator of the believers' community belonging to the church of Jesus Sacred Heart in Zhangjialou near the city of Shanghai, the most senior and respected among our many administrators, passed away quietly. I have mentioned what kind of administrator he was many times before, so there is no need to repeat it. As long as he did his job well, everything would go smoothly, otherwise there would be a crisis. André Tsang-ming-king, was a good person.

In early December, Tsang suddenly fell ill while managing his rice business in Shanghai. His attendants were very calm and, considering his age, decided to quickly send him back to his home, located in front of the church, where he could receive the Eucharist more conveniently and frequently. Soon, his condition worsened and Father Rodolf Beaugendre¹¹ of the Church performed the Extreme Unction on him.

On Friday, December 15th, I went to administer the Holy Eucharist for the fourth time. He was conscious and his confession was very moving. He looked well, but said to me, "Father, it's time to end it. I will die tomorrow, which is Saturday. I often recite the Little Office to obtain this grace! Before I leave, I want to talk to the children." Everyone was surprised: "Father, this is too shocking. He said he will die tomorrow!"

The old man summoned his family and asked them to forgive him for his past mistakes. Everyone knelt down and said he had done nothing wrong. As their father and head of the family, he spoke these words. They all unanimously asked for his blessing. He lifted up the cross on his body and said, "In the name of the

Lord Jesus, I bless you all." He added a few words: 'Believe me, relying on God wholeheartedly will bring great happiness." . . .

Late at night, the whole family was with him. Around one o'clock, he asked, "Is it Saturday?" This was his last words. There was no wailing, no trembling, he returned his soul to God. (Baumert 1912, pp. 449–50)

This short article published in the Jesuit periodical *Relations de Chine* does not focus on the life of André Tsang. Instead, it describes several fragments of his final moments.

The first fragment narrates how he was taken home after falling ill, how he soon received extreme unction due to his worsening condition. The implicit message is that he did not stay in Shanghai to seek medical treatment but chose to go home because his home was close to the church, so he could receive more often the Eucharist. Between "asking for medicine" and "dying saintly", André Tsang chose the latter. He anticipated the near end of his life. This choice seemed logical to Catholics at the time but might not have been so sixty years before this story.

The core purpose of the sacrament then known as extreme unction ¹² is to give spiritual comfort to Christians who are seriously ill. In a document of the Qing period that gives a Chinese summary of the Catholic doctrine and was reprinted by local churches, anointing was said "to strengthen the weakness of the soul of the severely ill, forgive their sins, increase their spiritual strength . . . so as to repel the temptation of the devil when one is seriously ill, . . . to strengthen the weakness of the flesh, or to make itrecover from illness, or to make it endure the suffering of this life, inorderto make up for the sins of life, and to avoid the heavy punishment of the sins after death." (Ortiz [1705] 1842, pp. 97–98)

Compared to the Confucian emphasis on funeral rites and customs, aiming at strengthening the body of the dying and providing comfort and salvation for their soul were originally objectives unfamiliar to Chinese Catholics who had grown up in a traditional cultural context. In the process of becoming accustomed to this sacrament, this unfamiliarity led to misunderstandings and divergence among believers.

On the one hand, some believers regarded the anointing as a ritual for the dead and were unwilling to ask the priest to perform the ritual, as they were afraid that the anointing would hasten death. The sacrament was not asked for until the patient had lost consciousness, unable to confess and receive the Holy Eucharist, which, in the eye of the Church, was impeding the grace that should have been given to the patient. Therefore, the priest would request family or friends to urge the patient to make a confession and receive the Eucharist as soon as possible. "Any male or female parishioners who know that a good or bad person is seriously ill should do so, lest it is difficult to confess when they are unconscious." (Twrdy [1887] 1907, vol. III, p. 112) Furthermore, in the course of this sacramental ritual, the priest also explained the effects of the sacrament to the patient, saying, "there are people who, having received the Eucharist in the inner and been anointed on the outer, have recovered" (Buglio [1675] 2002, p. 468). Still, there was no shortage of cases where patients entered a critical stage after receiving the sacrament. As a result, the liturgical book added: "If the sick person recovers, but later falls seriously ill again, he/she may receive the sacrament of extreme unction again." (Buglio [1675] 2002, p. 468). This license is confirmed in latter-day documents: "If the danger of death is first gone but the patient has another attack later on and is going to die, s/hecanreceivethe sacrament again." (Twrdy [1887] 1907, vol. III, p. 112)

On the opposite side, some believers were focusing on the healing aspect of extreme unction, connecting the power of the holy oil with physical well-being, thus believing that many patients were recovering quickly after receiving the anointing. Because the Church was not limiting the number of times one could receive extreme unction, priests in Jiangnan were busy with its administration. One of the first Jesuits to return to Jiangnan, Fr. François Estève S.J. (1807–1848), mentions in a letter written from Pudong 浦東 in 1843 that local believers who were ill could travel 12, 24 or 48 miles by waterway to receive the sacrament, regardless of the severity of the illness or of the season: "Do not think that these difficulties will scare our brave believers. As soon as they get sick, before even thinking of

seeing a doctor, they try to find a missionary." (Estève 1847 [written in 1843]) It was not uncommon for parishioners to come to the priest when there was a rare diseaseintheir immediateneighborhood. As attested by J. De La Servière S.J. (1866–1937), there were even cases where people pretended to be seriously ill in order to have a priest come to their home to administer the sacraments. (De La Servière 1915, p. 126) It was for this reason that the Church authorities admonished, "do not be distracted by praying for the body, to be strengthened, but rather for the soul." (Buglio [1675] 2002, p. 53) A priest also advised the faithful that "not all parishioners who had received the Unction would recover, and death cannot be avoided." (Luo 1935, p. 253)

The process of accommodation would gradually change both the priests' and the faithful's outlook on the sacrament. In the early 20th century, most priests in Jiangnan believed that extreme unction should not be administered only when the patient was dying: "First, at the moment of death, one's mind may be confused and it may be difficult to make proper preparations . . . Second, our Lord Jesus established this sacrament of the anointing of the sick for the benefit of the patient's body. If it is only received at the moment of death, unless God works a miracle, it often cannot be restored. Therefore, it is better to receive it early, in the hope of recovery." (Twrdy [1887] 1907, vol. III, p. 112)

5.2. Preparing for Death

In an environment where the sacrament of unction had become part of local identity and practices, André Tsang made a choice that was in line with his faith. Before his passing, he received communion for the fourth time and confessed again beforehand. Even though he was bedridden, he recited the Little Office every day, trying his best to continue to follow the rules of the Church. The narrative stresses his request for forgiveness from his own family as well as the blessing and admonition he extends upon it. Then, death came as expected—the accomplishment of a meritorious life.

This passage indicates that preparing for death was not just about receiving the last anointing. In the case of André Tsang, extreme unction rather seems to inaugurate his preparation for death. Even after the ritual is completed, he continues to strive so as to be found in the appropriate state: reciting scriptures, confessing and receiving the Eucharist repeatedly, praying for God's forgiveness and understanding from loved ones, and seeking redemption and comfort for his soul, until the last moment arrives. This attitude differs from traditional Chinese etiquette, which emphasizes arranging one's state of affairs after death has occurred, notably funeral dispositions.

The narrator–priest rhetorically emphasizes the calmness of the old man in the face of death, and this until the last moment, the absence of struggle and fear. It is not explicitly ascertained whether such tranquility comes from physical weakness or from the peace bestowed to the soul by the last anointing, though inferences are easily made by the reader. What is more, the peaceful atmosphere that the reception of the last rites seems to have created has permeated the entire family. This atmosphere contrasts sharply with the mourning tradition typical of Chinese folk religion. The narrative offers both a model of the attitude expected from a faithful person when facing death and a contrast to the way death is envisioned and managed in Chinese society at large.

One last point requires attention: the readers of the periodical are living overseas, but the story of a Chinese lay Catholic presents them with an exemplary model of sacramental devotion. Through the latter, the local communities of Jiangnan have established their setting in the universal Church.

6. Conclusions

I have associated three specific historical moments with the history of the reception of three distinct sacraments and also with the treatment of materials that differ in nature and style. This combination allows us to draw four concluding theses.

Through a process that was at times convoluted, local Catholics in Jiangnan gradually conformed to Church regulations concerning sacraments and liturgy. In the late Ming Dy-

nasty, missionaries were interpreting sacramental discipline in a way that could conciliate Christianity with the Confucian ethos, even bending the rules governing the sacrament of marriage so as to avoid violating Chinese etiquette and ritual. Around the time when the Qing Dynasty entered a period of crises, compliance with these same rules were required from all levels of society. Over time, local Catholics had not only become familiar with the sacramental rules and regulations but also seem to have internalized them. While the impact of the edicts prohibiting Christianity during the first half of the Qing dynasty cannot be overlooked, overall, sacramental practice in the Jiangnan region became increasingly "Romanized". Without doubt, the Church's reliance on the Western powers was a crucial factor in the process. Moreover, the Roman Catholic Church had been strengthening the universal character of its liturgical rules since the time of Reformation. The emphasis on the consistency of sacramental rituals was meant for the entire Church, not for China or any region in particular.

Regardless of the preceding considerations, there always remained a flexible space for local sacramental practices. Such a space continued to accommodate sacramental rituals and local customs at different historical moments. We have seen examples of the initiation ceremony of the catechumenate and declaration of faith for Confucians in the late Ming dynasty or even in the use of body language (rather than verbal consent) in the wedding ceremonies of the late Qing period. The rhetoric of ritual is what allows for the formation of an elastic space where the meaning of sacraments and ceremonies can be internalized by local agents.

Through the ritual rhetoric they allow participants to develop, baptism, the sacrament of marriage, and last anointing integrate Catholic doctrine on life, marriage, and death into an individual's understanding of human and divine existence. Such ritual rhetoric is reflected in the different narratives speaking to sacramental practices. Some texts are written by local believers, mixing traditional rhetorical tropes with Catholic characteristics. The contemporary Catholic Chinese lexicon partly originates from the texts written by these local believers. This is the case with the expression "various doctrines and teachings (geduan xindao 各端信道)" or "{the} Holy Spirit of God (tianzhu shengshen 天主圣神)". A more detailed analysis of these texts would also reveal how the Catholic concept of "grace" was progressively constructed, helping local believers to appropriate universal concepts in their own language. Other texts originate from missionaries. Besides offering interesting factual records, the latter present us with typical expectations as to what local believers were meant to become—Christians conforming to the universal model offered by the Church.

In fact, from the Late Ming to the Republican period, Jesuit missionaries continuously emphasized that sacramental rituals are identical in their form and purpose everywhere in the world. Because the doctrine is universally applicable, it lays the seeds for intercommunication among believers beyond geographical boundaries, progressively shaping the global consciousness of local Catholics, even when this dimension of consciousness does not explicitly appear. The influential intellectual and educator Ma Xiangbo 馬相伯 (1840–1939) has expressed this in a style that made his statement strongly resonate in the ears of the faithful to whom he was speaking:

A Catholic has in his mind a concept of the Global (quanqiu 全球), as the altar where ten million sacrifices [take place]. [It goes] from the altar consecrated by the Pope to the altars that can be moved by the missionaries to the farthest corners of the Earth. And in the altars set up in the forests of Africa, it is still the highest and greatest sacrifice, [receiving] always the same reverence. Every hour, every minute, twenty-four hours a day, there is a great Mass celebrated on Earth. Whether it is the Pope who officiates or others, whether the sacrifice is offered in a large city, in a large Church, in all its glory and splendor, or in the chapel of a small congregation, in the chapel of a small monastery, or in a vessel at sea, or in the open air, or in the woods, in wilderness, or in a desert where no one comes, sacramentally speaking, the Eucharist is exactly the same. (Ma 1926, p. 459)

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Notes

- Jiangnan 江南 (formerly romanized Kiang-nan) region is a geographical term endowed with rich cultural connotations. The specific area it refers to varies according to the historical context. For Chinese Catholics, it has special cultural and religious attributes and often directly refers to the "Vicariate Apostolic of Kiang-nan", i.e., to a missionary district established by Rome. Considering that our research subject is related to the history of Catholicism in China, this study amalgamates the Jiangnan region with the territory of the Vicariate: the provinces of Jiangsu (Kiang-su) 江蘇 and Anhui (Ngan-hwei) 安徽, as delimited in the time of its existence.
- Huikou, also known as tangkou 堂口, corresponds to the basic missionary organization—a faith-based local community—of the Catholic Apostolic Vicariate of Kiang-nan. In the writings of French Jesuit missionaries, it is usually translated as "[une/la] chrétienté". As missionaries and priests were few, many affairs of the local church were usually handled by the leaders of native believers' communities. For more details, see Section 5.
- For a study on the practice and understanding of the Eucharist in Chinese context during the Late Ming and Early Qing periods, see Hongfan Yang (2021).
- Mudao 慕道, also known as wangjiao 望教, or baoshou 保守 in non-Confucian Catholic communities, means "catechumenate". Correspondingly, those who have not yet been baptized in this stage can be called mudaoyou 慕道友, wangjiaoyou 望教友, or baoshouzhe 保守者. These terms all designate the catechumens. The latter can participate in the first half of the Mass, which includes teaching, reading scripture, and preaching, before the Eucharistic celebration.
- The Jesuit Augustin Cololmbel, 1833–1905, first director of the Meteorological Observatory of Zikawei, is also the auhotr of a history of the Jiangnan mission that has remained unpublished in French but was published and translated in Chinese. In his official history of the mission (De La Servière 1915), Joseph de la Servière points out both the quality and the shortcomings of Colombel's manuscript, on which his own work largely relies.
- "Those who sincerely wish to save their souls by following the teachings of the Church, have abandoned all heresies and are diligently studying the important scriptures and doctrines of the Church, are called *baoshou de ren* 保守的人." (Twrdy [1887] 1907, vol. 3, p. 21).
- Although this text comes from Xian County 獻縣, Hebei 河北, the situation it describes is similar to the one met by Catholic communities around Shanghai. For example, Father Gandar S.J. records that a family surnamed Cai in Beicai 北蔡, Pudong 浦東, "took out all their superstitious items and threw them into the river to show their intention to convert. They then hurriedly went to find the local church leader and asked to start learning the doctrines of the faith." (Gandar 1885, p. 341)
- ⁸ 瞿太素 (pinyin: Qu Taisu) is romanized as Chiutaisu in Ricci (1953, p. 467).
- ⁹ The last rule was not applied at the beginning of the mission, especially for influential people (cf. Couplet 1688, p. 11).
- The history of Zhangjialou can be tracked back to a steward of Xu Guangqwi, from whom the parish takes its usual name. It retains strong local anchorage (see Vermander et al. 2018, p. 89).
- 11 Rodolf Beaugendre (1844–1917): A French Jesuit of the Jiangnan Mission.
- Extreme unction is the name generally given to the sacrament before the Second Vatican Council. It is now known as the "Anointing of the sick". Because our research period ends at the beginning of the Republic of China, the old name is still used.

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Article

Animals, Sages and Saints: Alfonso Vagnone's Rhetorical Strategy in Chinese Context

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Abstract: Around 1632, while stationed in Shanxi Province (China), the Italian Jesuit Alfonso Vagnone published a pedagogical treatise entitled *On the Education of Children (Tongyou jiaoyu)* on which he had worked for several years. The book achieves a carefully crafted synthesis between Confucian educational principles, European Humanism, and Jesuit pedagogy. This is achieved through various rhetorical devices, one of them being the extensive use of animal simile, which prepares considerations about behavioral models to be found in (Pagan) Sages and (Christian) saints. This study focuses on the rhetorical and narrative methods through which Vagnone grounds a gradation and continuum between Nature and Grace, inserting his pedagogical considerations into a carefully crafted apologetics. Vagnone's work is also remarkable by its implicit openness to various Confucian schools, while Matteo Ricci was drawing a sharp distinction between original Confucianism and the School of the Principle. In more than one way, Vagnone's work is "ecumenical". It makes the love for one's offspring, found in all living species and in all nations, the ground of moral reform, itself conducive to greater openness toward revealed truths.

Keywords: animal stories; Confucianism; education; European Humanism; Jesuits in China; parables; pedagogy; School of the Principle; rhetoric

1. Introduction

Around 1632, the Italian Jesuit Alfonso Vagnone (Gao Yizhi, 高一志, 1568–1640) published a pedagogical treatise entitled On the education of Children (Tongyou jiaoyu 童幼教育).1 In his preface to the book, the well-known scholar Han Lin (韩霖, 1559–?) underscores the crucial role that the care brought to the education of young children (mengqiu 蒙求)³ needs to play when striving to implement the Confucian vision of a world of "great unity" (datong 大同).⁴ Han Lin applauds the contributions made in the field by the Dadai Liji (大戴礼记, Records of ritual matters by Dai the Elder) and Dizizhi (弟子职, Duties of the student), which are two books dated from the Western Han dynasty. He also decries the neglect for mengqiu that was shown at other times. He notably laments the Qin Dynasty's adherence to Legalism (fajia 法家), the Eastern Han Dynasty's preference for the Huang Lao 黄老 school of Daoism, the Jin Dynasty's reliance on "lofty discourses (qingtan 清談)" (a distinctive feature of "Arcane studies" (xuanxue 玄学)), and the Tang Dynasty's passion for the cifu 词赋 literary form,⁵ which led to the demise of the ancient approach to education. In addition, Han Lin criticizes the model prevalent at his time, arguing that the education provided by fathers and teachers (*fushi zhi jiao* 父師之教) focuses merely on the acquisition of official titles through the imperial examination system. In contrast, the primer authored by Zhu Xi 朱熹, Xiaoxue 小学, is portrayed by Han Lin as successfully responding to the deficiencies shown by the other modes of early childhood learning. Han Lin not only compares Vagnone's Tongyoujiaoyu with Zhu Xi's Xiaoxue, but he also stresses the fact that Vagnone's work, due to its excellent rhetorical and argumentative style, surpasses the latter: "The Master's words are in line with Zhu Xi's book, but [his] book is characterized by eloquent rhetoric (hao ci 好辭)" (Mei and Tan 2017, p. 150; Falato 2020, p. 137, modified).

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This article takes as its starting point Han Lin's evaluation of Vagnone's *Tongyou jiaoyu* as a book characterized by "eloquent rhetoric". It analyzes the way Western thinking and Vagnone's unwavering Catholic faith have combined with the latter's "eloquent rhetoric" and knowledge of the Confucian tradition for creating a remarkably successful pedagogical primer. I pay special attention to three aspects of Vagnone's rhetoric: first, his use of animal analogies; second, the way these analogies are mobilized into a continuum that is both pedagogical and theological; third, his implicit openness to the whole of the Confucian tradition rather than merely to one particular school within it. By examining these particular features, I intend to highlight the fact that Vagnone's position as a Jesuit missionary located in China was shaped by three major ideological currents: the European Renaissance's Humanism; Counter-Reformation's theological inflexions; and the "return to the Classics" movement within Confucianism. Ultimately, this article aims to shed light on the relationship between Vagnone's Jesuit-inspired educational and theological model, on the one hand, and Confucian thought, both pre-Qin and Song-Ming, on the other hand.

2. Vagnone's Rhetorical Science

2.1. The Ciceronian Tradition

According to Vagnone, there is not much difference between humans and animals in the learning of survival skills, but it is the study of "literature" that truly distinguishes human beings from animals:

In the West, from where I come, after the child has received initial education, he continues with the study of Letters. For it is skillful language that distinguishes humans from animals and makes him able to communicate with others, and thus at the start of study one cannot neglect to exercise in Letters. (Falato 2020, p. 239, modified)

吾西] 小童開蒙之後遂習于文。盖言者,人所以别于獸而交接于物,則始學無不宜修文者。 (Mei and Tan 2017, pp. 216–17)

In the fifth chapter of the second part of the work (Western Studies (xixue 西學)), Vagnone introduces Cicero's five-step Art of Rhetoric, which includes the choice of a subject (inventio), style (elocutio), structure (compositio), memory (memoria), and delivery (actio). Building on Cicero's rhetorical theory, the Jesuit scholar Cypriano Suarez had published in 1569 De arte rhetorica, which was later used by Jesuit schools as the basis for literary education. The description of Cicero's division of the rhetorical art comes immediately after the part just quoted:

The Western Art of Letters can be roughly summed up in five aspects: firstly, one must investigate the situation of people and things in order to understand the underlying principles that should be spoken about, thus revealing their beautiful meaning. Secondly, one must pay attention to the orderly arrangement of ideas, the way a wise leader orders his troops, placing the brave at the forefront and the cowardly in the middle. Thirdly, one should use elegant and refined language to embellish one's ideas. Fourthly, one must refine and practice one's opinions, reciting them until they are fully internalized. Finally, what is hidden in our minds must be presented in a public forum, or in front of a group of wise scholars. When it comes to debate and argue, among these five aspects, the most important is to prioritize practical principles and put them into application. How could someone possess these language skills and allow one's words to be scattered in the wind? (Falato 2020, pp. 239–40, modified)

然太西之文, 約歸於五而成, 先究事物人時之勢而思具 所當言之道理, 以發明 其美意焉。次貴乎, 先後布置有序,如師之智者。節制行伍。勇者置於軍之前後 而懦者屯之於中。次以古語美言潤飾之。 次以所成議論, 嫺習成誦。 黙識心胸 终至于公堂或諸智者之前。 辨誦之, 此五者之中, 必貴實理, 而致于用焉, 豈 徒具其文而苟吐散于空中乎? (Mei and Tan 2017, p. 217) By pointing out the central role of literary studies in the education of youngsters, Vagnone clearly privileges "nurture" over "nature":

Ancient sages used to debate: "If one wishes to become outstanding, what is more important, nature or learning? It is certainly learning that needs to be considered more important. Good nature is like a fertile field, if it is not constantly managed it will surely sprout weeds. [Even] those who are considered stupid by nature will eventually succeed through study. Someone with a gifted nature succeeding without study is a sight that has never been seen." (Falato 2020, p. 229)

先智者, 嘗設論曰: 欲成大器, 質與學 孰重, 則必以學爲重焉。夫美質者, 如田之膏腴, 非恆修治之,徒長豊草耳。嘗觀質之鈍者, 多用學之功力,竟得成全。末見美質者,不學而能成 也。是以古智以美質不學,譬之美軀之無兩目,寰宇之無三光也。(Mei and Tan 2017, p. 210)

2.2. Accommodating the Naturalism of the School of Principle

Yet, Man is anchored into Nature, as shown by Vagnone's extensive use of animal analogies in the *Tongyou Jiaoyu*. The use of this rhetorical device is in harmony with a basic precept propounded by the School of Principle (*Lixue* 理學): "Using natural laws to clarify human affairs (*tui tiandao yi ming renshi* 推天道以明人事)"⁶, a precept that departs from pre-Qin Confucianism: the pre-Qin Confucian tradition was rarely concerned with "naturalism" nor did it often elevate observations of animals to ethical principles. (It goes without saying that our discussion would be totally different if the Jesuits' main interlocutor had not been Confucianism but the doctrine originating from the *Zhuangzi* for instance—see (Lynn 2019).) In fact, Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) had implicitly rejected the naturalistic tendency of the School of Principle and insisted upon the fact that that pre-Qin Confucianism was more conducive to the spread of the Catholic faith than latter versions of the same tradition.⁷ In early Confucianism, the clear distinction to be made between humans and animals is emphasized in several passages of the *Xunzi* 荀子, and it is exemplified in the following passage from the *Mencius* 孟子:

Once people have plenty of food and warm clothes, they lead idle lives. This is their Way. Then, unless they are taught, they are hardly different from the birds and animals. The sage emperor worried about this. H made Xie minister of education so the people would be taught about the bonds of human community; affection between father and son; duty between sovereign and subject; responsibility between husband and wife; proper station between young and old; trust between friend and friend. ("Ten Wen Gong" 1.4, transl. Hinton (1999, p. 92), modified)

人之有道也,飽食、煖衣、逸居而無教,則近於禽獸。聖人有憂之,使契為司徒, 教以人倫:父子有親,君臣有義,夫婦有別,長幼有序,朋友有信。

For sure, early Confucian texts attribute human features to animals (the pheasant for instance being endowed with honesty and nobility) but they merely *suggest* such equivalences, often doing so in an ambiguous fashion, and such analogies will not be developed and systematized until Song-Ming scholars engage into the task (Wu 2020). If Vagnone's use of animal parables conforms to the Greek and Latin rhetorical tradition, in the Chinese context, this rhetorical strategy cannot be seen only as an embellishment meant at pleasing and convincing his audience (although this aspect should not be overlooked): it inscribes natural and human realities into the continuum that the School of Principles had been emphasizing.

What is more, Vagnone highlights lessons in educational wisdom that can be drawn from the animal realm:

At birth bears are merely [a ball of] flesh and their cubs are not perceived [by their own kind] as being bears, therefore [the mothers] lick their young for correcting the matter, till they become like bears. [. . .] All animals want their young to

be like them, so should people not want their offspring to do the same? (Falato 2020, pp. 154–55, modified)

熊生僅肉團耳, 自視之非熊也, 常用舌餂摩脩治之, 漸漸成熊 矣 [。。] 禽獸皆欲其子肖, 人乃不欲其子肖耶? (Mei and Tan 2017, p. 163)

In the West, the use of animal parable to illustrate ethical principles is a well-established rhetorical device. This approach is often used in order to draw parallels between animal behavior and human nature as well as provide guidance for moral education. Vagnone cites examples coming from the animal kingdom, such as the magpie, the ostrich, the deer, the raccoon the dog, the wolf, the elephant and the bear to illustrate practices that foster sense of kinship, promote nursing, or determine the appropriate time to enter into marriage. On this last point, Vagnone states that those who are considering marriage should be able to wait until the moment has come: even animals who fly and run wait for the right season to mate, and they do not mate or breed outside this time. Therefore, humans should also be patient and wait for the appropriate time to start a family (see Falato 2020, p. 140; Mei and Tan 2017, p. 159).

These examples are generally drawn from the works of ancient authors, first and foremost from Pliny the Elder's *Historia naturalis* as well as from the writings of Erasmus and Renaissance zoologists, who all proclaim Nature to be the best teacher (Mei and Tan 2017, p. 108). Vagnone associates the Western humanistic tradition with the Chinese tradition, finding ethical and educational patterns in examples taken from the natural world. Vagnone operates a few cross-cultural adaptations, for instance when he attributes to the phoenix educational techniques ascribed by Pliny to the eagle or when he substitutes the name of the nightingale for a species common in China. (on these two examples, Falato 2020, pp. 112–13).

2.3. Animal Parables as an Emplotment Device

Should we speak of animal "analogies", "fables" or "parables"? The difference is sometimes hard to tell, and it becomes irrelevant when we simply define a parable as a "short stories with allegorical significance" (Vermander 2022a, p. 5, after Meier 2016): even if animal references function as mere simile, they are always anchored into embryonic story-telling: the phoenix teaches its hatchlings to look at the sun without blinking, and it ostracizes the ones who cannot do so; likewise, the elephant teaches its youngsters to dance and purify themselves at each new moon (Falato 2020, p. 296); the nightingale, the deer, the fox and the wolf spare no effort to teach their offspring to respectively sing, run, charm and hunt, each species teaching its youngsters skills that derive from its nature but all sharing the same zeal for education (Falato 2020, pp. 266–67). The lesson taught by these fables is double: (a) one must act according to one's specific nature; (b) all species obey a law that fosters the love and care for one's offspring. In so far as human beings do not recognize such principles and do not act accordingly, they run the risk of becoming degenerated, i.e., to harm irremediably their very nature.

A corpus of interrelated parables can thus suggest an overall emplotment model, a "metanarrative [. . .] directed by the observation of some foundational realities" (Vermander 2022a, p. 4). The emplotment model privileged by Vagnone is straightforward: it corresponds to a model of gradation, which is often found in the Gospels and in biblical antecedents. "If God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not *much more* clothe you—you of little faith?" (Lk 12.28) "If you then, evil as you are, know how to give your children what is good, how *much more* will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"" (Lk 11.13) In the first example, the care shown by God towards the vegetal realm is felt as becoming necessarily even greater when the apex of creation—the human being—is concerned. In the second example, the imperfect care that people extend to their children announces the perfect love and gift bestowed by God upon them. Similarly, in Vagnone's logic: (a) the educational devotion displayed by inferior creatures must incite parents and teachers to bring to the fullest their pedagogical zeal and expertise; (b) as we will see, pedagogical excellence is

gradually displayed in the hierarchy that extends from animals to sages and then to saints, on the one hand, and from natural to human and finally divine knowledge, on the other hand

3. Vagnone's Argumentative Strategy

3.1. Not Truly a "Renaissance Man"

Vagnone's extensive use of classical authors as well as Erasmus and scientists from the same period could easily make the reader identify him with a "Renaissance figure." This would constitute a slightly mistaken perspective. The way Vagnone progressively crafts his argument needs careful investigation.

Thierry Meynard has suggested that the target audience of Tongyou jiaoyu was not Christians, as the book does not use extensively Christian hagingraphies but rather stories from ancient Greece and Rome (Mei and Tan 2017, p. 117). Although this prevalence cannot be disputed, a precise account of quotes and mentions shows a diversified picture: 31 of the names being cited belong to ancient Greece and Rome-Plato (15 occurrences), Aristotle (6), Pythagoras (6), Diogenes (5) or Alexander (5). However, there are also 17 names from the Christian tradition (Li 1998, p. 116). Vagnone carefully suggests a hierarchy within his sources; he refers to ancient Greek and Roman figures as "literati" (shi \pm) and "sages," (xian 賢) while speaking of Church saints as "saints" (sheng 聖). Vagnone also speaks of God as the "Creator" (zaohuazhu 造化主) and "Heavenly Lord" (Tianzhu 天主), which is the divine name that the Jesuits decided to adopt as a consequence of the Terms Controversy (1616-1633) that divided the China mission shortly after the death of Matteo Ricci (the controversy was bearing upon the Chinese expressions—or transliterations to be adopted when translating the basic lexicon of the Christian faith). On the part of Vagnone, some of the lexical choices he made in the book were probably an act of obedience: at the time he was writing the *Tongyou jiaoyu*, he was still requesting that the translation of "God" as shangdi 上帝 be allowed (Ricci had used both tianzhu and shangdi), and he had written (in 1628) to the General of the Society of Jesus, protesting against the decision that allowed only for the term *tianzhu* to be used (Vu Thanh 2019, p. 415).

The lexical hierarchy that Vagnone develops in his book brings to mind the famous words of Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (1017–1073), the founder of the Song-Ming School of Confucianism:

The saints emulate [or: admire] Heaven, the sages emulate the saints, and the literati emulate the sages. (*Tongshu*, *Zhixue*)

In his lexical choices, Vagnone combines Confucian traditions rephrased by the School of the Principle with an approach to Christian truths based on a gradualism that evokes Saint Ignatius' famous adage according to which, in spiritual conversations, "we enter his door with [our interlocutor], but we come out our own" (Loyola n.d.). Greek thinkers such as Diogenes, Plato, Pythagoras, Demosthenes, Pythagoras, Solon, Zeno or yet Phocion are mentioned with praise, notably for the way they used to attribute a child's defects to the shortcomings of parents or teachers (*Tongyou jiaoyu*, chapter 6), and they are all described as being noble personalities. Still, biblical figures and church saints rank higher than the figures from ancient Greece and Rome. For example, in various places, Vagnone refers to Plato and Pythagoras as "great sages of ancient times [上古大賢], or "masters of ancient times" [上古之學宗]" while Saint Jerome is referred to as "a Saint from the West [西之聖人] and Saint Malachy is referred to as "an ancient saint from a northern Western country [西北國古聖]". Likewise, David is a "holy ruler" (*shengzhu* 聖主).

There are only two exceptions to the above-mentioned pattern, which reveal a clever strategy on the part of Vagnone; when he advocates for the study of classics, he mentions two famous figures from the Church: Saint Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits, and Augustine of Hippo, who are both referred to as literati ($shi \pm$) rather than sages (xian 賢) or saints (sheng 聖) (Falato 2020, pp. 235–36; Mei and Tan 2017, p. 214). This uncon-

ventional reference to these two Church figures is not a result of Vagnone's negligence but rather a deliberate emphasis on the misguided paths that both figures took before converting to Catholicism: Saint Ignatius was initially "fond of bravery" and had not yet mastered practical learning, but he became a "teacher of enlightened thought" after reading books on the lives of the saints following his injury on the battlefield. Augustine of Hippo, on the other hand, "unfortunately studied under heretical teachers in his youth and was lost to the heretical books, but his heart was never at peace". It was only after reading Paul's epistles that he "abandoned heresy and entered the holy realm". Thus, Vagnone links together two famous conversion stories by insisting on their common thread; it is by reading virtuous books that both men entered the right path.

Vagnone makes his first direct reference to the Bible when emphasizing the importance of fearing reproach and humiliation as the foundation of all learning. Further explicit biblical references insist upon the stress that the Bible puts on filial piety—an obvious accommodation strategy. In the "Western Learning" section of the second volume of the book, when discussing the Jesuit educational program known as *Ratio Studiorum*, Vagnone emphasizes the following:

Above human studies there are heavenly studies that are called *theologia* in the West. These studies are based on the ancient and modern classics, along with texts written by saints and sages. [Theology] analyses the origin of the righteous doctrine, refuting the evils of heterodoxy. This learning is also divided into four great branches: the first states that above all things there must be a Lord who is the greatest, brightest, kindest, and fairest. His nature is all-encompassing and His qualities are wondrous. (Falato 2020, p. 247)

人學之上尚有天學。西土所謂陡羅日亚也。此學乃依古今經典,與諸聖賢註論。 剖析正道之本源,而攻闢異端之邪也。其學亦分四大支。一論物上必有一主, 至大至明至善至公。即詳其性,及其妙情。(Mei and Tan 2017, p. 220)

At first look, Vagnone's outlook is still anchored into scholasticism, more theo-centric than anthropocentric. The focus on learning and the rightful doctrine reminds the reader of Niccolo Longobardi's stress on orthodoxy⁸ rather than Ricci's encompassing natural theology (see Canaris 2021) without the former totally excluding the latter. Additionally, the transliteration of the term "theology" (陡羅日亚) is reminiscent of the caution shown by the Jesuit missionaries formerly stationed in Japan, who had started the so-called Terms Controversy: Influenced by Francis Xavier's way of preaching, the Society of Jesus in Japan had made theological and linguistic choices that were far less accommodating than those of Ricci, and he had transliterated the name of God from the Latin Deus. The end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the following century were marked by a theology of a more pessimistic outlook than the training that Ricci had enjoyed during his formative years. After Ricci had died, almost all the Jesuits in the province of Japan and some of the Jesuits in the vice-province of China protested, often violently, against the linguistic and ritual accommodations already made, and they even threatened to appeal to the Inquisition based in Manila. The majority of the Jesuits of the China mission, led by Nicolas Trigault (1577–1628) and Alfonso Vagnone, were remaining faithful to the accommodations decided by the founder of the mission (Duan 2017; Falato 2020, pp. 57–58). After the conference of Jiading (near Shanghai) which, starting in December 1627, brought together eleven of the Jesuits involved in the controversy, the Visitor, André Palmeiro (1569–1635) decided to authorize the use of the term Tianzhu (Lord of Heaven) to designate the Christian God but to banish those of Shangdi (Lord of Above) and Tian (Heaven), which Ricci was also using. On the other hand, the lawfulness of attending rites in honor of Confucius and the ancestors was confirmed (see Pina 2003; Kim 2004; Brockney 2014). When reading Vagnone's presentation of what theologia is meant to be, it first looks as if finding a Chinese equivalent name of this sacred science would have run the risk of corrupting the purity of the doctrine it conveys. However, as we have seen, during the term's controversy, Vagnone was pleading for preserving Ricci's lexical openness against the strictness shown by Longobardi and Jesuits having arrived from Japan, as persecutions destroyed this formerly flourishing mission. Some lexical choices of the *Tongyou jiaoyu* may have less to do with Vagnone's own choices than with the debate raging at that time and the necessity of securing approval from his superiors before publishing the book: the printed edition informs us that the text was revised by the Jesuits Gaspar Ferreira, Niccolo Longobardi and Johann Terrenz Shreck before it was approved by the vice-provincial Manuel Dias Jr. "Revisions" may imply a mere examination that will focus on doctrinal orthodoxy, or it may entail modifications, be they lexical or content-related. In the acrimonious climate that was prevailing at that time within the Jesuit Chinese mission (the Terms Controversy was not fully concluded at that time), the latter hypothesis enjoys a high degree of probability.

3.2. A Theology of Nature and Grace

As far as his argumentative strategy makes us able to approach it, Vagnone's theology remains strongly inscribed in the Catholic mainstream. The use of animal parables in the Christian context originated with Origen and was adopted by Augustine (for a general history of Christian parables, see Gowler 2017). More generally, reliance on allegories highlights the Catholic Church's belief that between "the Book of Nature" and "the Book of Grace", a continuity can be drawn. Taken from the natural world, the simile that Vagnone makes use of constitutes proof enough that he fully adheres to the Catholic doctrine of "inheritance of natural grace" against the Protestant outlook focused on the "disruption of natural grace". The multiple meanings generated from allegories develop according to the way the reader envisions human nature (a parable is an open-ended story in the sense that its ultimate meaning is affixed by the reader). At the same time, the field of interpretations is not fully open: Vagnone's combined use of animal micro-stories and biblical references first and foremost testifies to the potential for good inscribed into human nature, even after the Fall, provided that the same nature be adequately helped and guided along the years of apprenticeship.

One may go as far as to contend that Vagnone's reliance on animal parables and similar techniques inscribes the worldview he shares with his readers into Catholic symbolism: the use of physical objects bestows visible forms to spiritual concepts, enabling the listener or the viewer to better understand and experience matters related to faith. Going yet one step further, the frequent references to biblical and Church figures highlights Vagnone's commitment to the Catholic sacramental tradition.

One discerns here a specificity of Vagnone's approach when compared to Ricci's *True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven (Tianzhu shiyi* 天主實義): in the case of Vagnone, the stress on the inheritance of natural grace serves as a bridge for entering into a (cautious) dialogue with the naturalism proper to Song-Ming Confucianism, while the distrust shown by Ricci toward the School of the Principle is well-known. Conversely, Ricci is at ease with the "natural theology" of pre-Qin Confucianism, more or less equated to Theism, while Vagnone, even if he refers to (scholastic) *theologia* when it comes to things divine, sees in the natural knowledge displayed by latter-day Confucians a bridge that leads to orthodox thinking but that stops at its sacred doors.

4. Assessing Educational Models

4.1. Ricci's Implicit Anthropology

Although the *Tianzhu shiyi* is generally seen—and justly so—as a book meant to foster positive and respectful dialogue, its assessment of Chinese practical and moral education is implicitly more negative than the one that Vagnone's treatise seems to suggest. In Chapter VII of the *Tianzhu shiyi*, Ricci makes "the capacity to infer and reason (*neng tuilun li* zhe 能推論理者)" a defining human characteristics (he does not follow Mencius' approach that gives precedence to the "four seeds" giving rise to Humaneness, Duty, Ritual and Wisdom—see *Mencius* 2A.6) while refusing to assimilate Reason (*li* 理) with Nature (*xing* 性) as Zhu Xi does. Ricci gives preeminence to the human capacity to discern and freely decide, contrasting it with the fact that minerals and animals cannot enact "good"

or "bad" deeds (*Tianzhu shiyi*, ch. VII).¹⁰ Here, Ricci's use of animal metaphor creates a divide rather than a continuum within the Creation. In addition, Ricci stresses the fact that studying (*xue*) is not about recovering the state of nature that was supposedly once lost (an idea present not only in the School of the Principle but already in Confucius and Mencius—see notably *Mencius* 6A.11) but rather to enter into a new level of consciousness and understanding, i.e., to acquire the capacity to discern, which is a capacity that Man is not naturally endowed with (par. 434–438). The stress on becoming able to discern and then decide accordingly is a distinctive feature of Jesuit spirituality and education, which resonates with (but also slightly diverges from) the Confucian tradition (see Vermander 2022b).

In the same Chapter VII of the *Tianzhu shiyi*, criticisms against a model of teaching that relies mainly on the study of ancient Classics rather than on cultivating the capacity to discern and make good use of one's freedom becomes at times more stringent:

To study does not mean only to follow the words and actions of the Ancients as they have been related, but also to enlighten oneself, this by scrutinizing Heaven, Earth and all things, so as to deduce from them knowledge concerning human affairs. This is why it is said: The wise man does not fear lacking books. If there is no teacher to instruct me, Heaven, Earth and all things are my all-encompassing teacher and book. (*Tianzhu shiyi*, par. 446)¹¹

夫學之謂,非但專效先覺行動語錄謂之學,亦有自己領悟之學,有視察天地萬物 而推習人事之學。故曰智者不患乏書冊、無傳師,天地萬物盡我師、盡我券也。

More generally, Ricci stresses an approach to education that starts from the heart and not from the disciplining of one's appearance and the memorizing of Classics. Likewise, the *Tongyou jiaoyu* speaks of moral education before treating of the study of Letters, Classics and Rhetoric. Still, some passages of the same book resonate in a way slightly different from the one produced by the *Tianzhu shiyi*:

In the past, in the Western countries, there was a sage called Zeno, who dedicated himself from an early age to orthodox learning. He asked the gods how he could complete his studies. The gods replied: "The method is to engage often with those who have passed away and be diligent." Zeno carefully considered the gods' meaning for a long while and understood that "passed away" referred to the people of the past who had already died. [. . .] Studying, but giving up the classics, would be like wishing to fly without wings, is this possible? (Falato 2020, p. 231, modified)

西國古之名賢, 曰責諾者, 初志於正學, 則問於神, 何由而成其學乎, 神曰: 多交於終者而勤法之可也。賢思察神意良久, 知終者, 已死之古人也。[...] 學而舎典籍, 猶舍毛羽而欲高飛, 豈可得乎? (Mei and Tan 2017, p. 211)

4.2. Vagnone and Humanistic Education

On the basis of the preceding analysis, we can now elucidate Vagnone's position on educational matters as well as the rhetorical strategy he uses. Some specific features appear clearly throughout the *Tongyou jiaoyu*:

Vagnone focuses on "role models", the latter being found in ancient Greece and Rome as well as in Catholic saints (with the subtle lexical differentiation already noted). References to Chinese sages are muted but nevertheless present; the praise of the practice of keeping silent as a privileged way to listen and to learn evokes *Analects* 19.1; the stress on the sense of shame as essential for moral conduct is reminiscent of *Mencius* 2A.6 and 7A.7. More importantly, Vagnone refers explicitly and positively to the doctrine of the Five Relationships (*wu lun* 五倫) developed by the same Mencius. Still, when it comes to the Chinese tradition, *values* are emphasized much more than living examples are, while the Western moral and educational model is introduced mainly through *figures*, probably so as to show that the West was not lacking in models of virtue similar to (or greater than) the ones familiar to a Chinese audience.

The stress on the continuity existing between the animal and human kingdoms allows for a sense of universality anchored into Natural Law. The fact that all people are able to read the "Book of Nature" justifies the commonalities in values and practices found between the West and China. More broadly, the love of one's offspring common to all living species, which fosters the wish to see youngsters fulfill their potential and destiny, explains the supposedly universal agreement on educational principles that Vagnone seeks to highlight and foster. The large number of agriculture-related metaphors, especially when it comes to marriage and the raising of one's family, anchors the text even more into a rhetoric that implies the recognition by all of the natural principles that apply to every nation and domain of activity.

Additionally, the *Tongyou* jiaoyu subtly pleads for the development of a system of local education that would follow the Jesuit system. After having showcased the crucial role played by teachers in the formation of children (suggested to be even more decisive than the one played by parents)¹², Vagnone writes:

In each of the Western countries, the local Society of Jesus has established colleges, where wise teachers are invited from all around to devote themselves to the education of the youngsters. There are scholars who, as soon as they terminate their studies, disregarding emoluments and personal glory, attempt to provide a meritorious service to God and to serve their country with the establishment of such schools and teachings: this is what the Society of Jesus does. (Falato 2020, p. 164, modified)¹³

吾西諸國,每都會,又立一大學,遍邀賢師,專務幼教。又有士既成學,而不計罰祿,不計榮達,但圖立功於天主,有利於國家,設學頒訓者,既耶穌會也。 (Mei and Tan 2017, p. 170)

At that time, the Jesuit Chinese mission was far too understaffed for seriously considering to establish colleges in China. However, as had been the case in Europe (see Casalini 2019), Vagnone and his fellow Jesuits may have been hoping that, at some point, benefactors would help to establish first elementary schools and then colleges placed under the authority of the Society even if most teachers would have been recruited among local scholars. Jesuits would have considered such an endeavor as an excellent way to foster local vocations as well. In other words, Vagnone's desire to see the excellence of his educational principles recognized by all may have come with an ulterior motive: opening for his Order a way of establishing itself in China through the foundation of endowed schools—a strategy that had remarkably succeeded in Europe. The absence of a critical mass of local Christians and thus of potential benefactors was making such a project a mere dream, but Vagnone may have thought that he was thus preparing for the Society's future endeavors. ¹⁴

5. Conclusions

Vagnone was focused on crafting spaces of agreement between Confucianism and a streak of Christianity that emphasizes the continuity between the realms of Nature and Grace while giving a prominent role to humanistic learning in the shaping of one's consciousness and capacity for action. He does not seem to have been as concerned as Ricci was with the drawing of a firm line among different Confucian schools: the *Tongyou jiaoyu* was to be read not as a competitor to the *Xiaoxue* but rather as embellishing and furthering its teachings.

Agreement among people religions and schools was more easily reached, in Vagnone's view, when focusing on questions as elemental as the love for one's children and the education to provide them with. A number of questions he discusses (age of marriage and conformity between the spouses, wet nursing, criteria to apply when it comes to child punishment) testify to his immersion in Chinese society. The gradual and gentle approach of Vagnone is indeed that of a born educator. He builds bridges and points of convergence through the workings of a prose filled with reminiscences of natural and human realities.

The "eloquent rhetoric" of which Han Lin credits the book is rooted in a variety of simile and examples that resonates with Song-Ming Confucianism's naturalism and that attempts at the same time to progressively lead the reader from the realm of Nature to the one of Grace and divine realities. For Vagnone, there are dwelling places in the divine household for animals, sages and saints, and there are ways to circulate from one of these dwellings to another.

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Notes

- In what follows, references to the book will be given according to both the Chinese edition annotated by Thierry Meynard (Mei Qianli) and Tan Jie (Mei and Tan 2017) and the Chinese–English edition and translation offered by Giulia Falato (Falato 2020). In addition to the original of Vagnone's opus and an extremely careful English translation, Falato (2020) offers precious indications on the sources and the composition of the text as well as a wealth of lexical and historical information. In a slightly earlier publication, Thierry Meynard and Tan Jie provide the reader with a Chinese-language edition and presentation of the same text and insert it into the corpus of Late Ming Jesuit publications. My study draws extensively on these publications. With respect to the existing literature, the goal I specifically assign to myself is defined in the Introduction.
- Han Lin 韩霖was a Ming Dynasty book collector and scholar who also went by the names of Yu Gong 雨公 and Yu An 寓庵. He was born in the town of Chengguan in Xinjiang County. In 1621, during the reign of the Xizong Emperor (also known as Tianqi), he passed the imperial examination at the *juren* 举人 level.
- The term applies first to a children's book authored by the Tang dynasty scholar 李瀚.
- 4 Among the Confucian classics, *The Great Learning (DaXue* 大學) emphasizes the cultivation of moral character, family education, national governance, and world peace as prerequisites for achieving "the great unity". The *Zhongyong* (中庸) posits that "peace through rituals and music" constitutes the cornerstone of good governance and social order, and it underscores the importance of the ritual system in establishing a harmonious and stable society.
- ⁵ *Cifu* is a literary form of poetry in traditional Chinese culture, usually referring to a poem in the style of *Fu* 赋, a form of prose writing, combined with Ci 词, a type of lyric poetry, which was popular in the Tang and Song Dynasties.
- This expression is a latter-day reformulation of an idea first found in the conversations of Zhu Xi (Zhu 2014) related to the *Yijing* 易經 when he speaks of "discussing the *Yijing* [so as to] clarify human affairs [論易明人事]." The stress is on the observation of natural laws so as to clarify the logic of events apparently happening at random.
- For an overview of Ricci's strategy and further developments, see (Tan 2014).
- On Longobardi's objections to Ricci's approach, his reasons for not finding cultural equivalents between Christian doctrine and Confucianism, and his subsequent insistence on transliterating key Catholic terms, see Golden (2009).
- Let us note however that the term "philosophy' is also transliterated. This is the radical difference between "philosophy" and "theology", on the one hand, and the disciplines included in the Chinese system of knowledge that is implied by such transliterations.
- We refer here to the text of the *Tianzhu shiyi* available on the site https://ctext.org (Ricci n.d.) (accessed on 11 April 2023). We also consulted (Zhu 2001).
- 11 My translation.
- See the example of Phocion entrusting his son to the care of a teacher (Falato 2020, pp. 160–61).
- The paragraph of the *Tongyou jiaoyu* that follows the one just quoted stresses the fact that, besides teaching about human and divine matters, Jesuits schools in Europe instruct children to respect the country's sovereign and foster filial piety. This may work as further reassurance for potential benefactors of such establishments in China. At the same time, in several places of the book, Vagnone writes that only the love and respect of God can ground respect for one's sovereign and one's parents.
- After 1843, the Jesuits would indeed open colleges in the Jiangnan region, and education (primary schools related to parishes, colleges, universities) would become an apostolic priority of the Second Jesuit Mission.
- Vagnone was first stationed in Nanjing and (for a brief time at the time of the publication of the *Tongyou jiaoyu*) in Shanxi, where his apostolate was remarkably successful. He prepared the book manuscript (as well as other writings) during his eight years exile in Macao (which may explain a number of references included in the book, as he could use the resources of the Jesuit college here). However, the book was finalized after his arrival in Jiangzhou 绛州 (today Xinjiang county, Shanxi province) in 1624.

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Article

Jesuit Rhetoric and Language Studies in Modern Shanghai

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Abstract: From the sixteenth century onwards, the Jesuit educational model, as well as the method of evangelization propounded by the same religious Order, have been relying on the mastery of certain rhetorical techniques and, notably, in strong linguistic competency. This contribution examines how the Jesuits in modern Shanghai understood and put into application their traditional focus on rhetoric in the semi-colonial context of the time. After having recalled how Jesuits engaged with Chinese language and discourse in the Ming and early Qing dynasties, we take the 1923 *Catalogue* of the Jesuit publications in the missionary enclave of Zi-ka-wei as a reference point so as to describe and assess a number of trends that we summarize as follows. A privileged relationship was maintained between Latin and ancient Chinese and a growing interest in the "margins" and the way to address them efficiently triggered a renewal of ethnographic and linguistic studies; specifically, the expertise developed in dialectology testifies to the change that was occurring in the way to rhetorically address hearts and minds.

Keywords: dialectology; Jesuit education; Latin; rhetoric; Shanghai; sinology; Society of Jesus; Jesuits

1. Introduction

As they launched into the building of a network of educational institutions in Europe and beyond, the nascent Jesuits decisively contributed to the shaping of a model of humanistic education grounded on Classical Rhetoric (Gannett and Brereton 2016). "The Renaissance and the humanism at its core did not die with the outbreak of the Reformation, as textbooks generally imply, but was just getting launched on a triumphant conquest of minds and hearts, which was accomplished primarily by school systems based on the humanistic program." (O'Malley 2016, p. ix). As stressed by Marc Fumaroli (1990), for the Jesuits, Rhetoric was the force enabling those who mastered its techniques to understand and formulate ethical, spiritual, exegetical, anthropological, and theological principles. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw the consolidation and expansion of this institutional and pedagogical network, mainly in Europe. At the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century, the French Revolution, the Napoleonic conquests, and the development of state-sponsored education somehow weakened the influence of Jesuit education in the territories where it was at its strongest. However, from 1830–1840 onwards, the development of Catholic missions throughout the world gave the Jesuit model of education new impetus. The focus on the skills and outlook that Rhetoric provides the student with was maintained in the nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth century, when Jesuits were developing their educational network in their new mission territories. While being reshaped, this educational network continues to expand today, notably in Africa (Vermander 2019), reviving and reinterpreting its rhetorical tradition (Gannett and Brereton 2016).

This contribution analyzes how the Jesuits continued to focus on the way to acquire and make use of classical rhetorical techniques within the context of their mission in Shanghai. How were the insights gathered from Cicero and Quintilian harnessed for shaping the mind of young Chinese students and, more largely, for acculturating Christianity and

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promoting evangelization in the Jiangnan region? Although our study intends to cover the whole of the Jesuit presence in modern Shanghai (1843–1955), its main point of reference is a document kept in the Zi-ka-wei [Xujiahui] Library, the *Catalogue des Ouvrages Européens* (*Imprimerie de l'Orphelinat de T'ou*-sè-wè, *Zi-ka-wei*, *près Chang-hai*) of 1923. In other words, we take as our main lead the multi-lingual and multi-purpose publications that the Jesuits of Zi-ka-wei were choosing to print. Through this study, we hope to illustrate how a well-established model of education, largely based on the mastery of languages and rhetorical techniques, was both maintained and thoroughly adopted in a non-Western, semi-colonial context.

2. Jesuit Rhetoric and the Chinese Presence in China

2.1. Rhetoric and Humanistic Education

The colleges that Jesuits started to create from the time of Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556) onwards offered the institutional context where the study of Rhetoric was to take place. The first of these schools was created in Messina in 1548 (Casalini 2019, p. 155). The consistency of the pedagogical method implemented throughout this network of institutions was ensured by the adoption of the Jesuit *Ratio Studiorum*, finalized in 1599. Grammar, Humanities, and Christian doctrine were advertised as the main disciplines being taught. The declared aim was for the student to attain eloquentia perfecta, through which erudition, wisdom, virtue, and eloquence were integrated. Latin was the sole medium of instruction, and education "was predicated on mastery and active reproduction of the ancient tongues." (Haskell 2019, p. 553).

This focus on ancient languages actually helped and guided Jesuits in their acquisition of new tongues. Being trained in multi-linguistic competency was part of a requirement that was both spiritual and practical: "The Jesuits were constantly advised to adapt what they said and did to times, circumstances, and persons. The rhetorical dimension of Jesuit ministry in this sense transcended the preaching and lecturing in which they were engaged and even the rhetorical foundation of the casuistry they practiced—it was a basic principle in all their ministries, even if they did not explicitly identify it as rhetorical." (O'Malley 1993, p. 255). Gannett and Brereton have aptly described the style of teaching that such inspiration developed, as well as the human type it fostered:

The students were also asked to participate actively in the classes. Importantly, Jesuits taught students to achieve speaking competence in Latin, not just reading skill, using an early version of whole-language immersion, and since they had their students for seven years, they could move slowly, step by step, with plenty of active learning techniques: drills, carefully graded exercises, writing assignments of many kinds, and constant oral work (double translation, competitions, debates, declamations, and other verbal performances). [...] Jesuit rhetorical education placed a great deal of emphasis on style, using Cicero as a touchstone (along with many other models in different settings) [...] The many years of extremely close attention to analysis and production of language gave Jesuit education a distinct flavor. (Gannett and Brereton 2016, p. 9)

2.2. Jesuit Rhetoric in the Chinese Context

The Jesuit model was destined to meet with another humanistic tradition, the one started by Confucius and his disciples. While Jesuit missions spread worldwide, mission-aries trained in philology and liberal arts naturally started to map the syntax, lexicon, and oratory of non-European languages. Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) associated humanist scholarship with a flexible "policy of adaptation": "[The] humanist culture so carefully cultivated by Ricci was a set of scholarly practices centered on the rhetorical-philological skills of attentive reading, interpretation, composition, and translation that were applied to texts in both European and non-European languages on a wide range of topics, although always with an eye *ad maiorem dei gloriam*." (McManus 2019, p. 738). The skillful tapestry of quotations, arguments, and references engineered by Ricci in his main apologetic work, *The True*

Meaning of the Lord of Heaven [Tianzhu shiyi 天主實義], certainly represents a major cross-cultural rhetorical achievement. Later on, in 1687, the Confucius Sinarum Philosophus, a translation of the foundational Chinese classics published by Philippe Couplet (1623–1693), Christian Wolfgang Herdrich (1625–1684), Prospero Intorcetta (1626–1696), and François de Rougemont (1624–1676), testified to the attentive study made by Jesuits of Chinese literary sources and rhetorical resources (Meynard 2011).

2.3. Modern Zi-Ka-Wei and Rhetorical Accommodation: An Editorial Endeavor

After 1843, the Jesuit missionary endeavor in China developed in a complicated and ever-evolving context:

Catholic missions resumed in China in a context profoundly different from the one that had marked the arrival of Matteo Ricci. Missionary congregations were allowed to enter or re-enter by the grace of the "Unequal Treaties" (from the Treaty of Nanjing in 1842 to the Sino-Japanese agreements of 1914), which, by the force of guns, opened the country to opium trade and religious proselytism. [...] In 1856–1859, the Vatican divided the Chinese territory into Apostolic Vicariates, which were assigned to different religious congregations. The Jesuit province of Champagne (covering the north and east of France) inherited rural areas of Hebei, while the Province of France (i.e., Paris) was placed in charge of the Jiangnan region (mainly Jiangsu and Anhui), a region that included both urban areas (Nanjing and Shanghai) and poor countryside. [...] Jesuit provinces in charge of a missionary territory received support from other provinces until the latter were given an independent territory once the Mission had grown sufficiently for justifying a new territorial division. (Vermander 2014, pp. 10–11)

The headquarters of the Jesuit Jiangnan Mission was established in Zi-ka-wei, a land located in what is now the Xuhui district of Shanghai in the southwest part of the city. Modern Zi-ka-wei provides us with an important example of the way Ricci's model of acculturation was reframed in a semi-colonial context. From the middle of the 1860s onwards, the Jesuit Zi-ka-wei compound gradually transformed from a religious and charitable community to a center of scientific, educational, and cultural institutions that were spanning fields of humanities and natural sciences, interweaving the global scholarly network by connecting international associations, and publishing reports, journals, and book series (Mo 2018, 2021). So far, research has been mainly concentrated on the framework of the "Plan Scientifique du Kiang-nan" that Jesuit's endeavored (see Standaert 1996; Shanghai Library 2020; Tao 2017; Wang 2004, 2017; Ren 2018; Wang 2015). Looking to enlarge the scope of the research, this article selects as its point of reference the Catalogue des Ouvrages Européens (1923), which advertises the works printed by the T'ou-sè-wè Press, a Jesuit institution located within the Xujiahui missionary enclave. As these were commercial pamphlets, similar catalogs were not systematically preserved. The one in our possession constitutes an excellent sample of the way works published by the Jesuit-led Press were advertised to the public, at a time where Catholic and especially Jesuit activities in Shanghai were still experiencing strong growth.

The *Catalogue* comprises 20 pages and divides the works it advertises into the following sections: a sinological series (*Variétés Sinologiques*) totaling 55 titles; a section dedicated to ethnographic studies on ethnic minorities (which includes only one book, see Section 4.1); and another section focused on the study of the Mandarin language that offers ten dictionaries and textbooks, while a complementary one advertises 14 works on the study of the Shanghai dialects and practical/devotional leaflets romanticized in the same dialects. The *Catalogue* offers also ten textbooks for helping Chinese students to study French, two for the study of English, and seven for helping Chinese students to learn Latin. Linguistic, geographical, and historical Atlases account for 17 publications, and 15 books cover a variety of topics, such as medicine, apostolic practices, the Chinese calendar, and popular religion. Finally, there is a list of the devotional, pedagogical, meteorological, and scientific periodicals published by the same Press. Most of the publications listed are au-

thored by Jesuits pertaining to the Jiangnan mission. The publications were to be ordered directly from the Press, with some outlets in Beijing, Tianjin, Paris, and London.

3. The Latin Language Inheritance

3.1. Learning Latin in China

Young European Jesuits arriving in China had been trained in Latin, and were starting their studies of literary Chinese and local dialect when arriving at their destination. As if reciprocally, young Chinese Jesuits had to learn Latin in order to fulfill priestly duties. Many of them had been educated at the Jesuit St. Ignatius College of Zi-ka-wei, and thus received early exposure to this language. Additionally, learning Latin was an efficient and resourceful channel for young Chinese scholars to enter the new intellectual "upper class" of modern China. Though there were inevitable tensions and cultural misunderstandings arising from a semi-colonial context, the publications in the Latin language, namely the "Zi-ka-wei textbooks" 匯學課本, were a flagship of Catholic publishing institutions in China, with a few competitors, such as the publications of the Yanzhou Cathedral of the German Divine Word Missionaries 德國聖言會兗州天主堂印書館¹ and the Peking French Lazarist Mission Press (or Pei Tang Press) 法國遺使會北平北堂印書館².

Since the Latin-language publications of T'ou-sè-wè Press were first meant to be teaching materials for the Jesuit-led Zi-ka-wei St. Ignatius College and Aurora University, they were designed according to specific educational purposes. For example, the core disciplines taught at Aurora University included law, astronomy, medicine, flora, and fauna, all of which were built on Latin vocabulary. Other Jesuit scientific institutions, such as the Zi-ka-wei Observatory and the Heude Museum of Natural History, relied on the college system for intellect resources. Therefore, Jesuits consciously affirmed the special importance of Latin and prepared Latin textbooks adapted to the curriculum of St. Ignatius College.

At the same time, the Zi-ka-wei educational undertakings integrated a classical ideal of the *Academie*, according to which scholars held different viewpoints, should enter into discussion, a model revived during the Renaissance (Li 2021). So as to nurture such an ideal, a textbook of classical Latin (*Ciceroniana syntaxis et exempla*) was written for the needs of the students of St Ignatius College (its study was preceded by one of two textbooks of rudiments). The mention of Cicero was pointing at more than at a model of eloquence. After Augustine, Cicero was the first source for the little treatise on friendship by which Ricci opened his literary career in China. The author of the *Laelius*, *De Amicita Dialogus* provided his readers with a model of scholarship based on the cultivation of the soul and of human relationships (Ricci 2005; Zou 2001). Therefore, Cicero was a perfect medium for evoking the historical depth of Jesuit cultural interactions in China.

We have already mentioned that learning Latin was a necessary requisite for accessing the priesthood. More broadly, for Chinese graduates who had completed their courses and language training at St Ignatius College, it also facilitated their integration into the French higher education system, as well as their access to French and Italian languages spoken by foreign Jesuit missionaries.

3.2. Angelo Zottoli, Ma Xiangbo and the Interaction between Latin and Classical Chinese

Angelo Zottoli 晁德蒞 (1826–1902) represents a major figure when it comes to the perpetuation of Latin literacy in the context of Zi-ka-wei. Zottoli was an influential teacher of both foreign and Chinese young Jesuits, initiating the first ones to Chinese Letters, and the second to the Latin language. His *Cursus litteraturae sinicae: neo-missionariis accommodatus* ("Course of Chinese Literature: Accommodated for New Missionaries" 中國文化教程), published in five bilingual volumes between 1879 and 1882, was also widely consulted by Chinese Jesuits, and adapted under various formats.

The first volume is designed to address basic notions of Chinese grammar and to provide more elementary texts for the students. The second volume mainly addresses the study of the Four Books (Sishu 四書). The third volume focuses on the study of selected passages from the Five Classics (Wujing 五經). The fourth is

mostly an analysis of more complex texts such as historical accounts and epistles. Finally, the fifth one contains examination essays and poems involving a higher level of difficulty. (De Caro 2022, p. 58)

In the section "Langue Mandarine", the Catalogue of 1923 lists first this bilingual Latin/Chinese course, stressing its special status within the Shanghai Jesuits' educational endeavor. Zottoli's monumental course is not only a textbook but also a collection of Chinese texts translated into Latin. These texts deal with a variety of topics, ranging from linguistic issues to philosophy, historical essays, or poetry (William 2015). The gradual acquisition of Chinese culture by the young Jesuits arriving from Europe was the main concern to be dealt with during their training in Zi-ka-wei. The work involved in the acquisition of the *Cursus* was intense. The first volume, *Lingua familiaris*, consisted of four parts: Primæ lectiones 蒙學, Dialogi comici 雜劇, Parvæ narrationes 小說, and Descriptiones ro*manenses* 才子. These four parts were followed by a grammatical table and various lexicons. The second volume, Studium classicorum, included a brief introduction to the Chinese calendar and chronology, from the Yellow Emperor to the Guangxu Emperor, as well as the names of historical places, elements on heavenly stems and earthly branches, seasonal festivals, folk gods and goddesses, metrology, oracle bones and divination, bells and chimes, drums and ceremonies, sacrificial vessels, rituals and dances, and it was completed by illustrations. Then followed the study of some of the Confucian classics. The third volume, Studium canonicorum, focused on the study of selected passages from the Five Classics, with a stress on the Classic of Odes 詩經, Classic of Documents 書經, and Classic of Changes 易經. The volume, entitled Stylus rhetoricus, was mostly an analysis of more complex texts. The first part was centered on "ancient prose", and the second on a number of specialized literary styles (epistolary documents, historical relations). Finally, the Pars Oratoria et Poetica was containing examination essays and poems, all of them involving a higher level of difficulty, with preliminary explanations about the Chinese imperial examination system. The selection was balancing classics and more popular writings, many of which were introduced for the very first time to a foreign audience. Somehow, the Cursus was introducing Chinese language and literature to its readers the way Latin language and rhetoric used to be throughout the European educational courses.

The *Cursus* was an essential element of the life of the Jesuits in Zi-ka-wei, who often consulted this text in order to improve their knowledge of Chinese culture, language, and philosophy. Its use was multi-purposed; although the Jesuits had traditionally sought to evangelize Chinese officials, the French Jesuits in Zi-ka-wei had adapted their strategy to the political and cultural environment of the place and period in which they were located. Missionaries preparing to minister to the common people of Jiangnan were focusing on basic learning and then on local dialects, while others, still focused on the elites or perpetuating the sinological tradition of their Order, would pay more attention to the *Cursus'* advanced sections. Considering the fact that they were starting the study of the Chinese classics much later than Literati was doing, they certainly would never achieve eloquentia perfecta in Chinese, but the Latin model was still indicating to them towards which ideal they should strive.

Ma Xiangbo 馬相伯 (1840–1939) provides us with a most impressive example of the personal integration of Latin and ancient Chinese rhetoric. A member of the Society of Jesus from 1862 to 1876, and a student of Fr. Zottoli, he always remained in close communication with the Order, even when disagreeing with the course of action chosen by the French Jesuits. He left the nascent Aurora University of which he was the Rector and funded Fudan University (1903–1905). His linguistic abilities were impressive, and his knowledge of Latin (a language he taught to Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培 (1868–1940), among other luminaries) was celebrated throughout China (Zou 2005). At the same time, Ma Xiangbo was well-versed in the knowledge of Chinese classics, which Fr. Zottoli had encouraged him to study so as to complement his Western-style education. His rhetorical training led him to reach a compromise between literary elegance and the necessity to touch hearts and minds. This is reflected in the linguistic choice he made in his translations of the Four Gospel based

on the (Latin) Vulgate (1919–1937). Ma elected the so-called "easy wenli 文理" style, i.e., a simplified version of classical Chinese, for bridging the gap between Catholicism and China. This choice locates him halfway between the Protestant translations that, exactly in the same period, were privileging modern Chinese and most Catholic translations, still faithful to high-level classical Chinese (Hong 2022). Ma Xiangbo's literary preferences reflect the rhetorical style developed during the first decades of Zi-ka-wei's existence. The title of one of his articles, (Shengjing yu renqun zhi guanxi 聖經與人群之關係, "The Relation between the Bible and the Crowd", see Hong 2022, p. 7), speaks well of the fact that, for Ma, "translating the Bible" is an act that, from the start, needs to take into consideration the translator's readership. At the same time, as stressed by Vermander (2021) at that particular time in China's history, most Chinese intellectuals were considering the Bible as a "Classic" (jing 經), and the language that was proper for the classics was, by definition, classical prose. Later on, some Chinese Jesuits, Xu Zongze 徐宗澤 (1886–1947) notably, would use with more audacity the possibilities offered by different traditions of Chinese writing (see Starr 2016, pp. 100–27).

4. The French Language and the Sinological Endeavor

During the first decades of their presence in the Jiangnan region, most Jesuits were of French origin, supplemented by Jesuits coming from the Milan Province. The proportion of Chinese Jesuits gradually grew. In addition, new mission territories were carved in the Jiangnan apostolic region (Vicariat apostolique de Kiangnan or *Vicariatus Apostolicus Nanchinensis*), entrusted to Spanish, Canadian, American, and Hungarian Jesuits, among other nationalities represented (Rule 2014; Lardinois et al. 2018). Still, French remained prevalent both as a language of communication and as the one in which Chinese studies were undertaken and published.

4.1. Sinology at the Frontiers

This focus on the French tradition may explain sinological trends that gave particular importance to geographical knowledge based on a semi-colonial model of exploration and ethnographic research. The *Catalogue* puts in a good place a ground-breaking study by the MEP missionary Paul Vial 鄧明德 (1855–1917): *Les Lolos: Histoire, religion, mœurs, langue, écriture,* though this work is the only in the section focusing on minority studies ("Études sino-orientales")³. This book is based on a decade of in-depth fieldwork in what is now called the Yi 彝 ethnic area of Yunnan Province. *Les Lolos* systematically collected Yi's folklore and related it to various cultural theories, linking ethnographic fieldwork, linguistics, and geography. It also made use of figurism, (the search for biblical tropes in traditional myths and cultural heroes), when giving an account of the language, identity, and cosmogonies of the group under study. Whatever its limitations, Vial's research was developing a method anchored in comparative linguistics. The book was both "traditional" in its ethnographic and folklorist focus and "modern" in its quest for new methods and explanatory patterns. It triggered a strong interest in studies around the Chinese ethnographic frontiers.

The fact that the Jesuit Press of Shanghai elected to publish this book authored by an MEP missionary from Yunnan was indicative of a trend that the Sinology of this time and, notably, the one promoted by the Shanghai Jesuits underwent a process of "decentralization" that led it away from a focus on classical and Confucian texts and directed it towards the study of minority people and/or popular customs and ways of life. The *Variétés Sinologiques* monograph series comprised a good number of volumes about the popular customs and ethos of the island of Chongming, on Chinese "superstitions" (gathered in a famous series of volumes on popular religion authored by Fr. Henri Doré 禄是遵 (1859–1931)), or on the Chinese proverbs collected in Inner Mongolia. This ethnography-driven sinology could not but go along a shift in rhetorical patterns; collecting information about the people located "at the margins" and understanding what could move their minds and

hearts were endeavors taking precedence over the mastery of "official" rhetorical patterns and techniques.

4.2. Sinology and Localization in Zi-Ka-Wei

We have just mentioned that the monograph series *Variétés Sinologiques* was grouping together studies undertaken by Jesuits based in Jiangnan. As such, this series occupies a place of choice in the *Catalogue*. Some volumes deal with the very distinctive characteristics of the Jiangnan Delta region. Some also echo the rise of modern China. The frequent interplay between images and text is also an interesting feature of the series. The scholarly quality of the *Variétés* helped to upgrade Zi-ka-wei from a mere geographical setting to a distinctive "intellectual field" of sinology. The fact that eight volumes of the series (there were sixty-six in all and fifty-five of them were published at the time the *Catalogue* appeared) were awarded the "Prix Julien" by the *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* illustrated the fact that "diaspora sinology" as practiced in Zi-ka-wei could be equated with mainstream academic sinology.

Among the volumes listed in the *Catalogue* that bear more directly on the mastery of languages and Rhetoric, let us note Augustus Debesse 華克誠's (1851–1928) *Petit dictionnaire française-chinois* 法漢字典簡編 and Joseph de Lapparent 孔明道's (1862–1953) *Petit dictionnaire chinois-français* 上海方言法華字彙. This last volume also deals with the Shanghai dialect, a subject to which we will come in the next section. Let us note that Fr. Joseph de Lapparent contributed much to the compilation of dialect dictionaries, gathering nearly 30,000 daily Shanghainese dialectal expressions.

Said otherwise, and for developing a point we already hinted towards, Zi-ka-wei, sinology went with a recognition of local knowledge, where linguistics and anthropology met each other. Included in the Catalogue, Henri Dugout 屠恩烈's (1875–1927) Atlas philologique élémentaire, Essai de classification géographique des langues 基礎語史學地圖集一語言地理分類 was published in 1910, pioneering a cartographic approach of linguistics. Dugout's second and third volumes, Classement général des langues par genres et par familles, Les langues maternelles, and les plus répandues, furthered his endeavor in linguistic geography and contributed to the recognition of the richness of regional cultures.

The *Catalogue*, with the material on languages and linguistics it lists, shows that the Shanghai Jesuits were pragmatically undertaking a localization of rhetorical resources operated through the study of languages, as well as of ordinary ways of communicating and interacting, anchored into ethnographic research.

4.3. Teaching French in Shanghai

The use of the French language was in no way restricted to scientific publications. Taught and used at St. Ignatius College, its study was also compulsory at Aurora University In 1912, the University obtained from the French Republic the official recognition of the diplomas it awarded. In 1918, the French Ministry of Public Instruction granted the Aurora preparatory course the equivalence of the French baccalaureate. This preparatory course lasted three years with French as the language of instruction during the last two years, and included courses in French, English, European literature, Chinese and Western history and geography, philosophy, mathematics, physics, and the natural sciences. The senior course was also a three-year preparation for the Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree with various specializations within each program (Hayhoe 1983). French language textbooks were thus in high demand. Early on, the T'ou-sè-wè Press published for the Chinese students at St. Ignatius College, Introduction à l'étude de la langue française 法語進階 by Henri Boucher 董師中 and Grammaire française 法文初範 by Laurent Tchang 張省機. Later on, the needs specific to the students of Aurora University resulted in the publication of new textbooks, some of them focusing on syntax, and others on literary compositions (Ren 2019). The array of textbooks had to be extremely wide, since they had to respond to the needs of beginners, as well as to the ones of extremely advanced students, i.e., former students of St Ignatius already well-trained in the language and studying at Aurora University in order to prepare for advanced university studies in France.

5. Dialectology and Rhetoric

One of the distinguishing marks of the localization of classical rhetoric was the art of persuasion by means of dialects. Though the Jesuits were educated in classical eloquence and letters, they needed to engage with dialects in order to instruct, persuade, and inspire.

5.1. Dialects and Accommodation

Missionary orders had to preach for very diverse congregations, many of them hardly literate, and conversant mainly or uniquely in the local dialect. Therefore, they had to apply language science to the spoken Chinese dialects, breaking away from the Chinese literati's concentration on classical literature (You 2002). In modern China, Protestant missionaries worked in translating the Bible into dialects, including Shanghainese, which was the first of the Wu dialects to be used for Bible translation (Choi 2018, pp. 432–44)⁴.

The Catalogue contains several examples of biblical readings for the ordinary people, such as the General Catalogue of Sacred Scriptures 經書總目, reproducing early devotional literature, and the Catalogueus Librorum Lingua Sinica Scriptorum 中文語言寫作圖書出品目錄, a Latin compilation of sacred books in the Chinese language. Stanislas Chevalier 蔡尚質's (1852–1930) Histoire de la Passion de N-S. Jesus Christ 耶穌受難記略方言, a collection of stories about the crucifixion of Jesus compiled from the four Gospels of the New Testament, constituted a most creative attempt at Chinese-language biblical commentary (You 2002). Chevalier was known as one of the founders of Zi-ka-wei's scientific apostolate, chairing the daily operation of the Zi-ka-wei Observatory. He was also concerned with daily missionary work, translating the Passion into the Songjiang dialect with romanticized spelling (Qian 2014).

In the Catalogue, the section "Dialecte de Chang-hai" includes nine pieces. More than half of them were translated from Mandarin publications. For instance, La Boussole du langage mandarin, traduit en dialecte de Changhai 土話指南 was a translation of Henri Boucher 董師中's (1857–1939) *La Boussole du langage mandarin* into the Songjiang dialect. The French version originated from the textbook bearing the same title published for Japanese diplomats in China during the early Meiji era (Xu 2013, pp. 24–74), which was regarded as a founding work in the history of Chinese language education in Japan, breaking away from the model based on Thomas F. Wade's (1818–1895) Yü-yen Tzŭ-erh Chi 語言自邇集 (Zhang 2016). Boucher offered a detailed depiction of folk customs, economic life, and diplomacy in the late Qing Dynasty. The eighty chapters of La Boussole du langage mandarin were divided into four parts: "Formules de conversation qu'il faut savoir" 應對須知, "Mandarins et marchands parlant de leurs affaires" 官商吐屬, "Style ordinaire des commandements" 使令通話, and "Dialogues entre mandarins" 官話問答. The first three parts were retained and reorganized into two volumes when they were translated into dialect. The fourth part, "Dialogues entre Mandarins", was omitted, as it was mainly used by the interpreters of the Chinese embassies and consulates for diplomatic receptions in the Qing period, and had little to do with the use of dialect as well as with changing political circumstances. The rearrangements undergone by the dialect version showed that missionaries working in the Jiangnan context were mainly posted in areas where the population was more and more engaged in trade and commerce.

5.2. Sacred Rhetoric in Shanghai

Many works in Shanghai dialects can be included in the category of "sacred rhetoric". They notably include collections of sermons and prayers. Their study helps one to record the gradual changes that occurred in the Shanghai dialect during the modernization process (Chen 1992). It also helps the analyst to map the diversity of the dialectical variants spoken in the region. In addition to the Songjiang dialect mentioned above, the Italian Jesuit Christophorus Bortolazzi 苗景筠 (1856–1934) worked on Chongming Island where

he familiarized himself with the local language and culture. The *Catalogue* includes his dialectal translations of pious leaflets such as *Préparation* à *la mort* 方言備終錄 and *Petit recueil de vies de Saints* 方言聖人行實摘錄. The original Mandarin versions of these leaflets were compiled in Xu Zongze's *Synopsis of Jesuit Translations in the Ming and Qing Dynasties* 明清間耶穌會士譯著提要. The original manuscript of *Préparation* à *la mort* was written by St. Alphonsus Ligoretti (1696–1787). It was first translated into dialect by the philosopher Li Wenyu 李問漁 (1840–1911). The *Petit recueil de vies de Saints* was originally composed on the basis of the *Legenda Aurea*, with several revisions introduced (Li 2011). Both dialectal adaptations included additional considerations, for instance, for evil methods, for confessing one's sins, and the afterlife.

The Catalogue sub-section "Série d'opuscules en dialecte de Chang-hai" includes five volumes. There were booklets such as Conversations usuelles 日常交談 and Dialogues à l'hōpital 就醫對話, and only one classic in its entirety, namely, the Three Character Classic 三字經, a Confucian work meant for the education of children, which the Zi-ka-wei Jesuits also published in Mandarin. This illustrates the interest consistently shown by both Catholic and Protestant missionaries towards this specific work, which combines language teaching with moral education. The English Congregationalist missionary W. H. Medhurst once argued that the Three Character Classic was an ideal sermon manual (Guo 2009). The publication in the dialect of this classic work was meant both to provide for the moral education of local people and to help newly arrived missionaries to immerse themselves in the local language and society. Both the illiterate and the missionaries were required to memorize the text, much as Catholic Catechisms might be, even before they could read and write correctly.

It was noteworthy that the works covered in the *Catalogue* section "Série d'opuscules en dialecte de Chang-hai" are the only ones that use lithography among all language books. Usually, lithography was used for non-sale printed materials, such as flyers, as it came cheaper. The T'ou-sè-wè Press long practiced the art of lithographic printing (Xu 2014, pp. 32–33). Photo-lithography allowed for the inserting of images within devotional literature. The Shanghainese dialect booklets were usually small in size, they were distributed with other language books rather than separately sold, and dialect pronunciation was supplemented by simple drawings. All these factors pleaded for the preferential use of lithography.

5.3. Jesuit Lexicography in Local Context

The Jesuit attempts to theorize the Shanghai dialect was based on the French linguistic tradition and proceeded mainly through the compilation of textbooks and lexicons. Albert Bourgeois 浦君南 (1893–1948), who taught at Aurora University, compiled the Leçons sur le dialecte de Chang-hai 上海話練習課本. It consisted of thirty-one lessons, presented in a matchable French-Shanghainese pattern, with a "Shanghai-French Glossary" at the end of the book. The Catalogue recorded its first edition in 1922. Although dictionaries for everyday use were compiled during the Ming and Qing dynasties, dictionaries dedicated to dialects were then a very recent development. The Jesuits, who came to China in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, used Latin as the main tool for studying Chinese phonology, such as the Dictionarium Sinico-Latinum 漢拉詞典 compiled by Matteo Ricci, Nicolas Trigault 金尼閣 (1577–1628), and Lazzaro Cattaneo 郭居靜 (1560–1640) with the assistance of Sebastião Fernandez 鐘鳴仁 (1562–1621), as well as another dictionary of the same title compiled by the French Jesuit Alexandre Delacharme 孫璋 (1695–1765). From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, advances in printing techniques triggered a large number of bilingual dictionaries. Dictionaries produced in Zi-ka-wei were following the French model of the "définition de mot". The lexical works of Corentin Pétilion 貝迪榮 (1858–1939) and Joseph de Lapparent were progressively supplemented by the ones of Auguste Debesse, notably his Petit dictionnaire chinois-français (1901). Paul Rabouin 應儒望's (1828–1896) Petite grammaire 松江方言語法詞典, a grammatical dictionary of the Songjiang dialect, was also anchored into the French lexicographic tradition. Entries were completed

by synonyms and antonyms, and closely related to their French equivalents. The index was sorted alphabetically according to the pronunciation in the Shanghainese dialect; the use of four tones discriminating among homophones. The lexical works of the French Jesuits of the Champagne Province, based in Hebei, were inclined to privilege the "définition de chose" over the "définition de mot". Séraphin Couvreur 顧賽芬's (1835–1919) *Dictionaire français-chinois, contenant les expressions les plus usitées de la langue mandarine* 法漢常談 and Dictionaire français-chinois 法華字典 were of an encyclopedic nature.

The publications on dialects coming from the T'ou-sè-wè Press were much more systematic than the various Chinese Pidgin English 洋涇浜英語 textbooks and dictionaries that were popular in Shanghai at the same time. A comparative study between publications on Shanghai dialects at the T'ou-sè-wè Press and the ones on Cantonese, Hakka, and other dialects at the Nazareth Press in Hong Kong would help to characterize further the way linguistic and cultural studies were understood and undertaken in different contexts.

6. Concluding Remarks

The studies of the publications coming from the T'ou-sè-wè Press as listed by the Catalogue of 1923 provide us with precious insights as to the way the Jesuit's approached rhetoric and language studies that unfolded in modern Shanghai. First, there was a strong commitment to follow the traditional model of humanist education, able to touch both heart and mind through the use of the "right word" in the right context (O'Malley 2016). Second, as shown by Zolotti's Cursus, Latin was still seen as the nearest equivalent to classical Chinese. These two written languages were considered to constitute the embodiment of the style and values proper of each of the civilizations they represent. Classical Chinese and Latin rhetorical patterns were mutually translatable. They were conveying a common humanist outlook. At the same time, and this is the third characteristic we noted, Jiangnanbased Jesuits were conscious that these two rhetorical models were located "at the center". Growing attention was being given to "the margins", the margins of the Chinese Empire (the publication of Vial's ethnographic work), the margins of Shanghai city (Jesuits were very much present in the island of Chongming, as well as in the marginalized community of fishermen), and the margins constituted by Catholic villages that were suddenly displaced into an urban milieu by modernization. These considerations triggered a style of research relying on the French language and an ethnographic tradition that is reflected in a good number of the volumes gathered in the Variétés Sinologiques monograph series. The art of touching hearts and minds in the context in which the Shanghai Jesuits operated meant to focus on local dialects (and the territory of today Shanghai was home to several variants) and to develop proper instruments and methods towards their learning and their use for evangelization. Additionally, Jesuit publications reflect the rapid evolution of these dialects under a process of accelerated modernization.

This attention to "margins" and, especially, to dialects may reflect what Professor Tao Feiya has called the phenomenon of "fragmentation" in modern Chinese Christianity (Tao 2014) and, confronted with a changing situation in modern Shanghai and China, Jesuits had to challenge a rhetorical model that was too much anchored into past references, and ways of proceeding for remaining influential. At the same time, they relied on resources proper to their tradition and training for acclimating their way of touching hearts and minds through the mobilization of linguistic competency. The *Catalogue* of 1923 points towards a work in process, in which its very nature, as well as its historical circumstances, would compel it to stay unfinished.

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Notes

- Giorgio Weig 維昌祿 (1883–1941) and Theodor Mittler 苗德秀 (1887–1956) of the Yanzhou Catholic Church Printing House prepared three series of German Latin textbooks: *Rudimenta linguæ latinæ* 拉丁文初學, *Elementa* 拉丁文詞學, *Syntaxis* 拉丁文句學, accompanied by *Grammatica* 話規 and *Exercitia* 課文. This was supplemented by the *Pars Magistri* and several large-scale dictionaries such as the *Latin Lexicon* and the *Chinese-Latin Dictionary*. See Lei (2012).
- The two sets of Latin textbooks published by the Beitang Press in 1931 and 1951, the three-volume *Elementa Grammaticæ latinæ* 辣丁文規, the four-volume *Exempla Latina* 辣丁習課, and a series of reference books, have been published many times in the past half century and have become classic textbooks. See Lei (2012).
- On the life and work of Paul Vial, see notably Moussay (2004).
- The Shanghai Dialect Bible was first translated into Chinese characters by Walter H. Medhurst (1796–1857) in 1847 with the Gospel of John. See Choi (2018).

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Article

Hakkō Ichiu: Religious Rhetoric in Imperial Japan

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Abstract: The wartime propaganda slogan Hakkō Ichiu 八紘一字 ("Unify the whole world under one roof") was loaded with historical meaning: Japan was glorifying the aggression and colonization of war by fostering a specific interpretation of the narrative about how Jimmu, the first emperor, founded the nation in State Shinto mythology. In this article, I consider this slogan as central to a religious rhetoric with nationalistic overtones and I analyze it in terms of etymology, connotation, and rhetorical devices. First, the expression Hakkō Ichiu originated in ancient East Asian cosmology, before becoming one of the rhetorical expressions of State Shinto, emphasizing the extent of the imperial reign. Second, the Nichirenist activist Tanaka Chigaku rediscovered it and gave it an expansionist connotation, fostering a syncretistic approach mixing Buddhist and Shinto features. Finally, during wartime, in official documents, lyrics, trademarks, etc., the slogan gave way to a number of graphic and monumental expressions, reinforcing its connections with militarism and ultranationalism. The most notable of these material expressions was the Hakkō Ichiu Tower, erected to commemorate the 2600th anniversary of the foundation of the nation and perpetuate the State Shinto rhetoric.

Keywords: Hakkō Ichiu; State Shinto; Emperor Jimmu; Kokutai; Nichirenism; religious rhetoric; political mythology

1. Introduction

After the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese war in 1937, people living in Imperial Japan would frequently notice the four-character formula propaganda slogan *Hakkō Ichiu* 八紘一宇, literally "eight cords with one roof", the meaning of which was: "Unify the whole world under one roof". It is generally believed that this elusive expression was a State Shinto term, derived from the declaration attributed to Emperor Jimmu, the legendary first emperor of Japan and the descendant of the sun goddess Amaterasu, when he proclaimed his accession to the throne. This declaration is recorded in the Japanese Chronicle *Nihongi* 『日本書紀』—the official history of Japan at that time—completed in 720. After the Meiji Restoration, State Shinto was gradually established as the official ideology of Imperial Japan by the government, whose religious accounts would regard the origin of Japanese mythology as authentic history. Therefore, Jimmu's legendary accession became a significant token of the "unbroken Imperial line" 万世一系 that originated from Amaterasu.

From Murakami Shigeyoshi's influential book, *Kokka Shintō*, onwards, scholars have developed successive discourses around the idea of State Shinto and its influence on postwar Japan. Murakami regarded State Shinto as a state religion, which led the country into militarism, ultranationalism, and disastrous wars, by ruling the spiritual world of Japanese people (Murakami 1970). Shimazono Susumu emphasizes State Shinto's influence on education and regards the imperial rites as an important part of State Shinto, which has not been fundamentally abolished to date (Shimazono 2010, 2021). Inoue Hiroshi regards State Shinto as modern Japan's system of official religion in a form that emerged from the theoretical and institutional reorganization of shrines and "Shinto". Some western researchers prefer to treat State Shinto as an "invented tradition". Helen Hardacre analyzes how Shinto

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formed new relations with the government through state management, which deeply affected shrines, the priesthood, and shrine communities (Hardacre 1989, 2017). Trent E. Maxey expounded how the Meiji government strove to draw a clear line of demarcation between secular and religious dominations (Maxey 2014). In recent years, scholarship has gradually focused on the relationship between Kokutai 国体 ("national polity") and State Shinto, a dimension that had been overlooked in past historical studies. In particular, in 2019, Fudita Hiromasa compiled the results of a symposium, State Shinto and Kokutai: A study of the interdisciplinarity of Religion and Nationalism, advancing research in the field (Fudita 2019).

Still, in the studies around the field, a point of importance has been overlooked till now: before being used by State Shinto, the expression <code>Hakko Ichiu</code> had been coined in 1918 by a Buddhist, namely, the Nichiren Buddhist 日蓮宗 scholar, Tanaka Chigaku 田中智学 (1861–1939). Tanaka was aiming at creating a religious philosophy that blended Nichiren beliefs with Japanese nationalism. He launched a movement called Nichirenism 日蓮主義, which has been a hot topic in Japanese Buddhist studies, with Nishiyama Shigeru's discussion on Nichirenism and nationalism and Ōtani Eiichi's recent efforts to divide Nichirenists into three generations (Nishiyama 2016; Ōtani 2001, 2019).

In the late 1930s, following the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, Japan accelerated the process of aggression and expansion, and the term *Hakkō Ichiu* was borrowed as a propaganda slogan. As a rallying cry and a legitimate endorsement of aggression and expansion, around 1940, *Hakkō Ichiu* was widely circulated in newspapers, newsreels, radio, lyrics, stamps, and everywhere, becoming synonymous with Imperial Japanese expansionism. The year 1940 was an unusual year for the Empire of Japan. According to the Japanese Chronicle, historians with official backgrounds speculated that Emperor Jimmu's enthronement took place in 660BC; hence, 1940 was considered the 2600th anniversary of the Empire of Japan. The Japanese held grandiose national commemorations to celebrate the anniversary, the account of which provides us with a window to examine Imperial Japan at its zenith (Ruoff 2010, p. 1). A magnificent monument was erected in Miyazaki 宮崎, a prefecture anciently called Hyūga 日向 in southeastern Kyushu, where (so the mythical narrative tells us) Emperor Jimmu started an eastward expedition and eventually reached Yamato 大和. A colossal *Hakkō Ichiu* four-character inscription was carved on the front tablet, so that the building was named "Hakkō Ichiu Tower".

Not much scholarly research has been undertaken on *Hakkō Ichiu* and its appendants. Walter Edwards has researched the Hakkō Ichiu Tower in Miyazaki as a representation of Japanese wartime ideology, examining how Imperial Japan performatively glorified its expansionism (Edwards 2003, pp. 298–324). A left-wing civic group in Miyazaki, "Hakkō Ichiu Tower Research Association(「八紘一宇」の塔を考える会)," contributed a lot to the research in this field, compiling a detailed account of the construction of the tower and the origin of each denoted stone used in its construction, based on searching for evidence of Japanese war crimes, holding several exhibitions in China (Hakkō 2017). Shimakawa Masashi researched how the propagation of the idea of Hakkō Ichiu, together with the Japanization movement in Manchuria, resulted in the construction of a shrine in Manchuria (Shimakawa 1984). Konno Nobuyuki placed the discourse of Hakkō Ichiu in the context of State Shinto and examined the debate in Shinto circles over the scope of application of Hakkō Ichiu and other issues (Konno 2019, pp. 421-44). Recently, a systematic study of Hakkō Ichiu has been published: Kuroiwa Akihiko examines the formula from the perspective of social and intellectual history during wartime and postwar and discovers that, in addition to being utilized by the central institutions of Japan, Hakkō Ichiu also had its folk and local expressions (Kuroiwa 2022).

In this article, I analyze the formula *Hakkō Ichiu* as an example of religious rhetoric. First, I examine the spatial connotations of the term from the perspective of its etymology, and how it entered into the discourse of State Shinto. Second, I connect the rediscovery of the expression *Hakkō Ichiu* in modern times to Nichirenism, investigating the way Buddhism gave it a new meaning and, by doing so, triggered a specific kind of "interreligious"

dialogue". Finally, I explore the path through which the expression came to represent Japanese wartime nationalist ideology, which leads me to detail the role that the mythology proper to State Shinto played in wartime nationalism and war propaganda. By doing so, I hope to show how specific metaphors become part of an overall narrative that is inextricably religious and political.

2. From Bahong to Hakkō: An Etymology Investigation

The formula *Hakkō Ichiu* can be divided into two parts, *Hakkō* 八紘, and *Ichiu* 一字. Literally, *Hakkō* means "eight cords", while *Ichiu* translates as "one roof". Etymologically, *Hakkō* 八紘 is derived from ancient Chinese classics, and is pronounced *Bahong* in Standard Mandarin.

2.1. Chinese Sources

As recorded in Chapter *Benming* 《本命》 of *Da Dai Liji* 《大戴禮記》, the number Eight (*Ba* 八) was formed by the coincidence of the cosmic principles *Wei* 維 and *Gang* 綱, from which Heaven and Earth were shaped and the union of *Yin* and *Yang* was understood by the Ancient Sages (see Fang 2008, p. 1287).³ The cosmology behind such an assertion is not entirely clear, as both *Wei* and *Gang* actually have "cord" as their original meaning. In the Qing Dynasty, the scholar Kong Guangsen 孔廣森 (1753–1786) annotated this sentence, stating that the four corners of the cosmos were called *Wei*, and the four directions were called *Gang*.⁴ Therefore, *Ba* refers to the eight divisions through which space is structured, and by extension, to cosmic organization. Similarly, *Hong* 紘 also represents cords or strings, and it is sometimes thought to be more or less synonymous to *Wei*.⁵ The connection between cords and spatial orientation may be derived from very ancient Chinese cosmological beliefs according to which Heaven is dome-like, supported by nine mountainous pillars, and Earth is square, stretched by four gigantic cords. Thus, *Ba* and *Hong* combined together into one word, designating the world seen from the viewpoint of its spatial organization.

The word *Bahong* first appeared in the Daoist Classic *Liezi* 《列子》, attributed to Lie Yukou 列御寇, the forerunner of the Daoist school in the Spring and Autumn Period in China, though the dating of this work remains very disputed. In any case, the *Liezi* is influenced by the cosmology that develops during the Warring States period. In the chapter *Tangwen* 《汤问》, the *Liezi* presents the reader with a fictional dialogue between Tang of Yin 殷汤 and a sage Xia Ge 夏革 in which the two interlocutors discuss whether the universe is finite or infinite.

Once, Tang of Yin asked: "Is there a difference between gigantic and wee? Is there a difference between long and short? What are the differences and similarities?" Xia Ge answered: "There is a vast ocean in the east of the Bohai Sea, I do not

know over how many hundreds of millions of miles it extends. It is a bottomless valley. It has no bottom and is named *Guixu* 归墟. All the waters from *Bahong* 八纮 and *Jiuye* 九野, all the waves of the Milky Way, pour here. But its water level is neither increasing nor decreasing". (Yang 1997, pp. 147–51)

This dialogue reveals that the *Liezi* used hyperbole to depict the vastness between Heaven and Earth. Additionally, the expression *Bahong* is used to describe the farthest places on the Earth.

In *Huainanzi* 《淮南子》, an encyclopedic work of the Han Dynasty, Liu An 刘安 (179BC–122BC) and his retainers proposed a more detailed explanation of the word *Bahong* as a terrestrial term. In the chapter "Terrestrial Forms" (*Dixing Xun* 《墬形訓》), the book records: "The borders of each of the nine provinces [*Jiuzhou* 九州] encompass one thousand li. Beyond the nine provinces are eight distant regions [*Bayin* 八殥], each encompassing a thousand li [. . .] Beyond the eight distant regions are eight outlying regions [*Bahong* 八紘], each also encompassing one thousand li (He 1998, pp. 364–65)". After this, the chapter enumerates the specific names and locations of the *Bahong*. Beyond *Bahong* lies

the end of the Earth, the eight "ultimate regions" [Baji 八極]. In contrast to the imaginary world by Baji, Bahong in the Huainanzi still refers to concrete, identifiable regions. However, Bahong gradually became an abstract term, more or less a synonym of Tianxia 天下, the classical expression for designating "the world" in Chinese culture.

2.2. The Japanese Acculturation

After communications between China and Yamataikoku started to occur in the 3rd century, many Chinese cultural elements were introduced to Japan, the more so as exchanges became increasingly intensive. It is not clear when the word *Bahong* was introduced into Japan. However, the term is used in the *Nihongi* (completed, as we already said, in 720AD). As already indicated, *Bahong* is pronounced *Hakkō* in Japanese.

The myth we have summarized in the introduction deserves a closer investigation: Emperor Jimmu, a direct descendant of Amaterasu, led his clansmen on an eastward expedition from Hyūga 日向, an ancient province in the present Miyazaki Prefecture, southeast of Kyushu, using forces to subjugate many ethnic groups, such as the *Emishi* 蝦夷, until he invincibly reached the center of Yamato Province.

After his enemies were driven out, Emperor Jimmu declared in an edict that he would ascend the throne in Kashihara, a place chosen to be his capital where he would build a palace in order to manifest the glory of his ancestors. In the edict, Emperor Jimmu asserted: "Thereafter the capital may be extended so as to embrace all the six cardinal points, and the eight cords may be covered so as to form a roof. Will this not be well?" (Translation by Aston 1972, p. 131). This is the original provenance of the expression $Hakk\bar{o}$ Ichiu in Japan, and this edict was called Kashihara Kentō no Rei—Hakkō Nariu no Mikotonori 「橿原建都の令一八紘為宇の韶」, i.e., "The decree of capital founding in Kashihara—The imperial edict of $Hakk\bar{o}$ Nariu" by later historians (Kuroiwa 2022, p. 161). Emperor Jimmu became the founding ancestor of the imperial lineage, advocating Japan's perpetual rule according to the imperial chronicles and State Shinto mythology.

Apparently, in Jimmu's edict, $Hakk\bar{o}$ takes the figurative sense of Tianxia ("the world"), less ambiguous than the one it takes when the formula resurged in the early 20th century as a token of Japanese expansionism. Jimmu unquestionably referred to the world, albeit he had no idea of its actual expanse. In contrast, it was clear that the imperial army and navy were unable to rule all over the world in the Pacific War, thereby making the boundaries of expansion represented by $Hakk\bar{o}$ become a contentious subject. Moreover, the single character \mp means "roof". Its meaning was extended to the house in its entirety, coming to refer to the family or household, with an affective connotation.

With its establishment in 1868, the new Meiji government was eager to establish the new regime's legitimacy. Although the Meiji government, before the creation of parliament in 1890, was, de facto, an oligarchy, it was ostensibly an absolute monarchy ruled by the emperor. In consideration of the elements of veneration of the emperor and the idea of Kokutai from Fukkō Shintō 復古神道, advocated by Hirata Atsutane 平田篤胤 in the Edo period (Hardacre 2017, p. 348), the government spontaneously took note of Shinto. On March 13th, the new government, acting in the name of the young emperor, proclaimed a decree that the new country would: "Ōsei Fukko 王政復古 (restore the antique imperial rule)"; "Saisei Itchi 祭政一致 ([ensure the] unity of ritual and government)"; and also reestablish the Jingikan 神祇官, i.e., the "Department of Divinities", an imperial bureau first established in the 8th century in order to administrate rituals and emperors' mausoleums (Yasumaru and Miyachi 1988, p. 425). The next day, March 14th, the emperor promulgated the famous Charter Oath as a fundamental document of the Meiji Restoration, setting up Japan's modernization. Thus, by adopting a series of measures, including the so-called Shinbutsu Bunri 神仏分離 (the separation of Shinto from Buddhism), the government gradually established the regime of State Shinto, an official "quasi-religion"⁶.

The March 13th Decree stipulated that the government would restore imperial rule based upon the foundations established by Emperor Jimmu. The expression "Promoting the Jimmu's spirit" appeared in many other documents. Based on the Shinto ritual, the

government formulated a comprehensive ritual calendar, marked by a number of ceremonies. There were two festivals and imperial rituals related to Emperor Jimmu, Jimmu Tennōsai 神武天皇祭, and Kigensetsu 紀元節. Established in 1871, Jimmu Tennōsai was meant to commemorate the anniversary of the demise of Emperor Jimmu on April 3rd, and Kigensetsu (the commemoration of the enthronement of Jimmu), celebrated on February 11th, was established in 1873. The emperor was required to participate personally in the rituals of both festivals (Hardacre 2017, pp. 363-64). Kigensetsu was listed as one of the most important festivals of Imperial Japan before being abolished in 1948 by the General Headquarters (GHQ). Nevertheless, it resurged in 1967 by changing its name to "National Foundation Day". In the State Shinto narrative, Emperor Jimmu, as the first earthly emperor, could be ranked only second to Amaterasu, and his eastward expedition was later regarded as typological of Japanese colonial expansion. However, the expression *Hakkō Ichiu*, as relating to Emperor Jimmu, rarely appeared throughout the Meiji era. A more common expression was Tenjō Mukyū 天壌無窮 ("eternal as Heaven and Earth"), also derived from the Nihongi, aiming to describe the successive reigns composing the imperial line as one perpetual reign.8

2.3. The "National Polity" in Time and Space

At this point, a related concept needs to be introduced into our analysis. *Kokutai* is commonly translated as "national polity" and can be said to designate the national structure. *Kokutai* was at the basis of the emperor's sovereignty and served as the official ideology of the Japanese Empire, part of which, including the core content of *Tennō Sūkei* 天皇崇敬 (emperor reverence), overlapped with some ideas of State Shinto but also incorporated some Confucianism. It was elaborated in the *Imperial Rescript on Education*, proclaimed in 1890, and distributed to secondary and primary schools with a portrait of the emperor shortly afterward. Simultaneously, students were required to recite and revere it. In the beginning of the *Imperial Rescript on Education*, one reads:

"Our Imperial Ancestors have founded Our Empire on a basis broad and everlasting and have deeply and firmly implanted virtue; Our subjects ever united in loyalty and filial piety have from generation to generation illustrated the beauty thereof. This is the glory of the fundamental character of *Kokutai*, and herein lies the source of Our education." (Monbushō 1909, p. 8)

In addition to emphasizing the continuous imperial line, the stress on the subjects' loyalty to the emperor was also an essential part of Kokutai. Walter Edwards investigated the phrase $Tenj\bar{o}$ $Muky\bar{u}$ in a work by the Meiji era historian Kita Sadakichi 喜田貞吉 Kokushi no $Ky\bar{o}iku$ 『国史之教育』, a reference book for history teachers published by the Ministry of Education in 1910 (Edwards 2003, pp. 301–2). In this book, Kita repeatedly discussed the conception of $Tenj\bar{o}$ $Muky\bar{u}$ and proposed that:

"Loyalty and filial piety are absolute obligations to our emperor and father. We are subjects of a continuous imperial line that remained unchanged for over 2500 years. The relationship between the emperor and subjects is $Tenj\bar{o}$ $Muky\bar{u}$, which is as real as the parent–child relationship. How fortunate that we are born in such Kokutai!". (Kita 1910, p. 62)

The *Imperial Rescript on Education* was not a document limited to the field of education but was also a canon that sanctified *Kokutai* and controlled all of society. The rescript itself also became sacrosanct, promoting the establishment of a patriarchal imperial state.

Kita also wrote that the *Tenjō Mukyū* relationship between the emperor and his subjects was precisely what made Japan superior to other countries (Kita 1910, pp. 1–2, 30). Still, the intent of the *Tenjō Mukyū* relationship did not have an expansionist meaning. Kita asserted that the relationship was only bestowed to the subjects in the Japanese archipelago, and foreign territories were excluded (Kita 1910, p. 104). The *Tenjō Mukyū* catchphrase was meant to emphasize the immutability of the unbroken imperial line in *time*, while the *Hakkō Ichiu* expression was emphasizing the *spatial scope* of imperial domination.

3. Emperor Jimmu's Spirit and Nichirenism

Although the mythology of Emperor Jimmu was enjoying a critically important status in the narrative of State Shinto, the formula *Hakkō Ichiu* did not appear until the 1910s, and the word was coined by the Nichiren Buddhist preacher and scholar Tanaka Chigaku 田中智学. As the third son of a noted physician in a Nichirenist family, he was born in 1861, the same year when the famous Japanese Christian evangelist Uchimura Kanzō 内村鑑三 was born. Ōtani Eiichi 大谷栄一, a specialist in Japanese Buddhism, has drawn a striking parallel: "If Uchimura Kanzō loved two J (Jesus and Japan), it could be said that Tanaka Chigaku devoted his life to two N (Nichiren and Nippon)." (Ōtani 2019, p. 45).

3.1. Tanaka Chigaku and the Propagation of Nichirenism

Tanaka was born in Edo and was first given the name of Tomoenosuke 巴之助. When he was ten years old, Tomoenosuke joined the Nichiren sect as a monk, and received the Dharma name Chigaku 智学, meaning "Wisdom and learning". After seven years as a monk, he resumed secular life, becoming a lay preacher of the Nichiren sect and initiating lay Buddhist campaigns. In 1884, he established his Nichiren study group, *Risshō Ankokukai* 立正安国会, composed entirely of laypeople. The name of the group was derived from the treatise *Risshō Ankoku Ron* 『立正安国論』 of Nichiren: "To assert the doctrine of Nichiren as the basis for state construction". The group changed its name to *Kokuchūkai* 国柱会 ("Pillar of the Nation") in 1914, a name that was derived from Nichiren's words, "I will be the pillar of Japan (我日本の柱とならん)".

Tanaka believed, in line with Nichiren Buddhist teachings, that the *Lotus Sūtra* recorded the highest and the most genuine Dharma and that other sūtras and other sects were not transmitting the authentic Dharma (Ōtani 2019, p. 50). Additionally, he defined his thoughts as Nichirenism⁹ to distinguish from other sects that have faith in Nichiren, where he wrote that: "In terms of religion, it is called the Nichiren sect, and when it comes to the sūtra, it is also called the 'Lotus sect.' However, when used in a broader sense than pure faith, ideology, or even life awareness, [this doctrine] generally should be called Nichirenism (Tanaka 1936, p. 17)".

In 1910, Tanaka began to promote reform of the Nichiren sect and wrote a reform manifesto entitled *Shūmon no Ishin* 『宗門之維新』. In this work, he implies an expansionist and even cosmopolitan view, asserting that "the doctrine of Nichiren is not just for our sect, but for the whole state. That is to say, Nichiren's tenets should protect Japan, and in the future, humanity all over the world must have a common destination (faith in Nichiren), which is the highest Dharma of karma (Tanaka 1901a, p. 2)". In the appendix of this book, he gave a timetable *Myōshō Mirai Nenhyō* 『妙宗未来年表』 for the development of Nichirenism over the next 50 years, dividing it into ten periods. He projected that the Imperial Diet would establish Nichiren Buddhism as the state religion, and other religions in the country would be dismissed. Afterward, becoming the state religion, the Nichiren Sect would set up a network of ordination platforms in the country (*Kokuristu Kaidan* 国立戒壇), and dispatch missionary groups abroad, also establishing overseas mission headquarters to preach Dharma, and expecting the unification of the world through Nichiren Buddhism (Tanaka 1901b, pp. 8–28). Seemingly, Tanaka constructed a Utopian blueprint that was taking its model from the expansion of Catholicism in the Age of Discovery.

After two victories in the First Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War, nationalism and national pride peaked in Japan. The government took a series of actions, such as propagating the *Kokutai* mythology and doctrine in schools. Quite naturally, Tanaka endeavored to engineer an amalgamation of Nichiren Buddhism and *Kokutai* ideology. Based on Nichiren doctrines, he proposed the conception of *Hōkoku Myōgō* 法国冥合, meaning the integration of Buddhism and politics, dividing it into three stages that can be summarized as follows: First, the state should comprehensively implement *Kokutai* and popularize Buddhism throughout the whole country. Second, the emperor needed to issue an edict to establish altars and, at the same time, the Diet was urged to amend Article 28 of the Constitution on the freedom of religious belief so as to establish Nichiren Buddhism as the State

Religion, thus achieving the integration of religion and politics. Finally, according to the way the Dharma was expounded in the *Lotus Sūtra*, the unification of thought, religion, morality, and politics would be realized in the world (\bar{O} tani 2019, pp. 140–41).

3.2. The Emperor, the Nation and the World

Tanaka flexibly utilized the syncretic tradition of Japanese religions, remolding the *Kokutai* by adding some Buddhist elements, as he transformed the emperor into the *cakravartin*, an ideal universal ruler in Indian mythology. The imperial family was to be the highest flamen of Nichiren ordination platforms. Tanaka claimed that the imperial seal of Japan was a 16-petalled chrysanthemum, which originated from the *dharmacakra* of *cakravartin* in Indian thought, a result of his belief in the fact that there had been a royal family meant to unify the world from time immemorial, and that this pattern has been passed down to the present (Tanaka 1910, p. 17). The presence of the emperor was indispensable to Nichirenism, Tanaka asserted.

In 1903, Tanaka's study group organized a journey to Emperor Jimmu's mausoleum. Tanaka gave a four and a half hours' speech that was later compiled and presented to the soldiers who went to the Russo-Japanese War the following year in an essay called Sekai Tōistu no Tengyō 「世界統一の天業」 ("The Sacred Work of World Unification"), which expounded Tanaka's theory of Kokutai. Obviously, his Kokutai theory was also centered on the emperor and imperial reign line, and Emperor Jimmu became a fixture of his discourse. In his exposition, Emperor Jimmu's enterprise of the national foundation represented two spirits, one called Jūki 重暉 and another called Yōsei 養正. Jūki was about cherishing the virtues accumulated for a long time in the past. It was the virtue of the Heaven, and, as the sun is the most prominent of all celestial signs, such spirit found an ideal representation in the sun, which is why the country was called "sun's origin". Yōsei meant the design of practicing virtue forever in the future. It represented the virtue of the Earth, and the most prominent object on the Earth is the mountain, used to express the virtue of longevity, and this was why the country was called "Yamato," 10 the Fuji being a national landmark (Tanaka 1910, pp. 10–11). Emperor Jimmu not only founded the nation but also embodied the virtues of Heaven and Earth, which means that he also endeavored to unify the world through the practice of virtue.

In 1913, Tanaka published an essay called *Emperor Jimmu's National Foundation* on *Kokuchū Shinbun* 『国柱新聞』, the official newspaper of *Risshō Ankokukai*. He selected the paragraph from the *Nihongi* where the expression *Hakkō Ichiu* appears, for expressing the ambition that world unification will be realized under the auspices of Emperor Jimmu. The formula *Hakkō Ichiu* subsequently started to circulate. In fact, what Tanaka wanted to emphasize was the sentence preceding the expression *Hakkō Ichiu*, in which Emperor Jimmu says: "Above, I should then respond to the kindness of the Heavenly Powers in granting me the Kingdom, and below, I should extend the line of the Imperial descendants and foster rightmindedness (Translation by Aston 1972, p. 131)". Tanaka's focus is on the word *Yōsei*, translated here as "to foster rightmindedness", read as being Jimmu's manifesto for world unification and as setting the historical mission of the Japanese people (Tanaka 1922, p. 277).

For the first time in Imperial Japan, Tanaka had rediscovered the term *Hakkō Ichiu* from the *Nihongi* and had given it a connotation of expansionism and even of world unification, all of which was undoubtedly based on his innovative Nichirenist theory of *Kokutai*. As Yulia Burenina commented, "Nichirenism seems to have enabled the coexistence of Japancentralism and cosmopolitanism (Burenina 2020, p. 219)". Burenina believes that Tanaka attempted to reconsider Japanese uniqueness as embodying a universal truth with a supernational perspective (Burenina 2020, p. 219).

It is noteworthy that, following Nichiren's notion of an "unprecedented great struggle" as expressed in the *Senjishō* 撰時抄, Tanaka predicted that there would be a great world war just before the world's unification, although Tanaka himself preferred to unify the world through moral means (Ōtani 2006, pp. 89–92). This theory was inherited and put

into practice by Ishiwara Kanji 石原莞爾, a member of the *Kokuchūkai* and the disciple of Tanaka, who later became world-famous for plotting the Manchurian Incident. I Ironically, the phrase *Hakkō Ichiu*, coined from Nichirenism, eventually became a propaganda slogan for starting a World War but ended up merely symbolizing the utopian dream nurtured by Imperial Japan.

4. Hakkō Ichiu during Wartime

With the unexpected outbreak of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident in the summer of 1937, Imperial Japan rapidly became embroiled in a conflict with China while beginning to accelerate its aggression and colonization in East and Southeast Asia. The Japanese government and Imperial Japanese Armed Forces soon found themselves confronted with two problems: one was how to conduct a national mobilization, and the second was how to establish legitimacy for the war.

4.1. From Hakkō Ichiu to "Greater East Asia"

In response to the first problem, the government launched the National Spiritual Mobilization Movement following the emperor's edict proclaimed in September 1937, calling on soldiers to fight bravely and the nation to overcome difficulties with loyalty and perseverance (Seo 1939, pp. 1–8). In November, the Ministry of Education released a pamphlet entitled "The Spirit of Hakkō Ichiu" to promote patriotism and loyalty in the context of the National Spiritual Mobilization Movement. The pamphlet's contents were mainly based on the State Shinto creation myth and the "justification" for the Second Sino-Japanese War. Still, it specifically explained what *Hakkō Ichiu* meant, i.e., to create a unified and orderly community of harmony ruled by the emperor, said otherwise: "To make people become subjects of the emperor" (Kōka 皇化). The pamphlet also proclaimed that "Hakkō Ichiu means that all disasters are removed through Kōka, not only in Japan but also in every country and every nation, so that each country and nation can not only stand on its own feet but also support each other as a harmonious family". In addition, it emphasized that Hakkō Ichiu did not mean the same thing as having a foreign hegemonic state annexing the territory of another country: "It was the ultimate goal of our subjects to support imperial reign within the brotherhood" (Monbushō 1937, pp. 10-11). The Japanese government intended to cloak its aggression in a veneer of familial harmony to distinguish it from the violent colonial expansion of the European powers, thereby concealing its expansionist intentions.

To tackle the second problem, the government harnessed the ideological resources of State Shinto and *Kokutai*. With Japan mired in the Sino-Japanese War, Prime Minister Konoe Fumimaro 近衛文麿 issued his second declaration on 3 November 1938, changing the previous stress on "self-defense" to one on "Establishing a New Order in East Asia" (which later on was changed for the notorious slogan "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere") as a way to justify and glorify the war of aggression being led. In the pronouncement, Konoe mentioned that "the establishment of a new order in East Asia is in complete conformity with the very spirit in which the Empire was founded; to achieve such a task is the exalted responsibility with which our present generation is entrusted (Konoe 1938)". The mention of the "spirit of Jimmu" reappeared in official documents, tied to the current mission of Japan.

On 22 July 1940, Konoe established his second cabinet, and, four days later, the government proposed its "Basic Guideline for the Nation Policies (Yagami 2006, pp. 88–89)". The first article of this document stated that "the national policy of the imperial state shall lead to the establishment of world peace based on the great spirit of the national foundation with *Hakkō Ichiu* [as its basis]. The first principle bears on constructing a new order in Greater East Asia, through the firm bond of Japan, Manchuria, and China, with the imperial state as its core (Konoe 1940)". While Tanaka Chigaku envisioned that *Hakkō Ichiu* would include the whole world, so as to build a universal brotherhood, the reference to "Greater East Asia" found in Konoe's proclamation was extremely vague, but it did imply

that *Hakkō Ichiu* had territorial boundaries. Especially after the signing of the Tripartite Pact in September 1940, Japan, Germany, and Italy mutually recognized each other's scope and order within their respective spheres.

Nonetheless, there were still different voices in the Diet querying the blueprint of the "New Order in East Asia". On 2 February 1940, Diet member Saitō Takao 斎藤隆夫 made a notable speech to the Diet, questioning the so-called "New Order in East Asia" as just a pretext to justify the war with China, which the military was constantly involved in but could not finish. He argued, "The ideals of Chinese $\bar{O}d\bar{o}$ 王道 (benevolent rule) and $Hakk\bar{o}$ Ichiu are difficult to understand for those of us who are actually involved in politics (Kanpō 1940a, p. 40)". In response, on the following day, Army Minister Hata Shunroku 畑俊六 claimed that "the New Order in East Asia will be established to manifest the great cause of $Hakk\bar{o}$ Ichiu, which has been the national enterprise since the founding of Japan. This is why it is called a holy war and is fundamentally different from the so-called aggression war, which is just the law of the jungle (Kanpō 1940b, p. 46)". Saitō was one of the rare wartime anti-militarist politicians and one of the staunchest defenders of particracy. He was soon expelled from the Diet for his blasphemy, which also goes to show that the expansionist reading of Jimmu's ascension to the Throne had become inviolable as a principle governing national policy (Edwards 2003, p. 311).

4.2. Hakkō Ichiu and the Military Spirit

In fact, the term *Hakkō Ichiu* had long been popular in both civilian and military communities. The Manchurian Incident of 1931 was a catalyst for the spread of *Hakkō Ichiu* among the military, a fact that was also foreshadowed by the Showa Restoration, with a series of coup d'états based on the spirit of Jimmu's national foundation. In particular, the *Kekki Shuisho* 「蹶起趣意書」("Manifesto of the Uprising"), which the young military officers wished to submit to the Emperor in the 26 February Incident in 1936, advocated: "Under the leadership of His Majesty the Emperor, the whole nation shall live and grow in unity, and the national spirit of *Hakkō Ichiu* shall be fully realized (Kuroiwa 2022, p. 11)" Throughout the 1930s, young military officers who aspired to the Showa Restoration and participated in several assassination attempts were more or less influenced or were believers in Nichirenism. Nevertheless, in this context, the use of *Hakkō Ichiu* was not so much about expansionism than about the return to Jimmu's spirit.

However, from the late 1930s onwards, *Hakkō Ichiu* became increasingly used in public life to glorify wars of aggression. After the government decided to launch the National Spiritual Mobilization Movement, the Cabinet Intelligence Bureau immediately sponsored a competition to solicit, from all over the country, that a march be composed, so as to express the ideals of the empire and the spirit of the nation. It was scheduled to be broadcasted on the "National Ballad," a popular national radio program. The song, entitled *Aikoku Kōshinkyoku* 愛国行進曲 ("Patriotic March"), was released in December 1937. It soon became popular music, selling more than 100,000 copies within a few days, the figure rising to a million shortly thereafter (Oba 2002, p. 234). In the lyrics, it portrayed the glory of the emperor and the mission of the subjects in quaint verse:

"He who reigns above in power and in virtue dight.

Sovereign of unbroken line is our changeless light.

We will follow—one and all loyal subjects, we—

Follow Him aright: fulfil our great destiny!

Onward, east, west, north, and south. Over land and main!

Let us make the world our home, call to fellow men (*Yuke Hakkō wo Ie to nashi* 往け八紘を宇となし).

Everywhere on the four seas, let us build the tower of just peace—let our ideal Bloom forth like a flower." 13

Above are the lyrics of the song's second verse, in which the emperor is like the shepherd leading his flock to peace and light. The sixth line (the fifth line in the Japanese version) is literally translated as "Carry up the eight cords ($Hakk\bar{o}$) to be the roof", and it is

a variant of *Hakkō Ichiu*, expressing the ideal of universal brotherhood under the emperor. *Hakkō Ichiu* seemed to be a rallying cry for more peoples to join the emperor's flock. As argued by Atsuko Ichijo, the Meiji oligarchs believed that religion was essential for the building of a modern nation: "The Meiji oligarchs thought that something similar to Christianity was essential to mold the people of Japan into a unified and self-aware Japanese nation (Ichijo 2009, p. 126)". Thus, in a way, State Shinto was a product of a certain interpretation of Christianity, elevating the emperor and the imperial family to an exalted position close to God.

During the war, mass media were increasingly used for war propaganda, and newsreels were becoming a novel form of broadcast that allowed audiences to watch carefully censored videos of the war front. Every newsreel released in Japan from 1940 to 1945 began and ended with a brief flickered trademark of Hakkō Ichiu (Figure 1), such as MGM's lion or Paramount's mountain and stars. The logo consisted of a golden kite spreading its wings in an attempt to encircle the Earth that emitted rays from behind, and the image of the Earth precisely showed the entirety of East Asia. Roger W. Purdy argued that "it projected to theater audiences throughout Tokyo's empire a gleaming vision of a new East Asia enlightened and protected by Japanese Leadership (Purdy 2009, pp. 106–7)." Moreover, it had a strong connection with the mythology of Emperor Jimmu: according to the Nihongi, when Emperor Jimmu struggled with Nagasunehiko, a golden kite landed on the tip of Jimmu's bow, the light emitted from the kite's body blinded Nagasunehiko's soldiers and enabled the army of the eastward expedition to win the war (Translation by Aston 1972, p. 126). The golden kite thereby became the symbol of Jimmu's victory and appeared everywhere, such as on medals, stamps, and cigarette cases in wartime Japan. If Hakkō Ichiu was the linguistic rhetoric of the State Shinto myth, then the golden kite was its pictorial rhetoric. Consequently, with its figurative forms, the trademark of the newsreel was a perfect visualization of the origins and ambitions of the Imperial Japanese $Hakk\bar{o}$ Ichiu.



Figure 1. Japanese newsreels' logo. © NHK Archives. 2022.

5. The 2600th Anniversary of the Empire and the Hakkō Ichiu Tower

When living in the Japanese Empire, one would orient oneself in time according to two types of chronology in parallel: firstly, the regnal year chronology based on the reigning emperor, such as Meiji, Taishō, and Shōwa; secondly, the $K\bar{o}ki$ 皇紀 (Japanese imperial year), counting years from the enthronement of Emperor Jimmu in 660BC, the legendary time of the state's foundation. ¹⁴

5.1. Planning for the Anniversary

Accordingly, in 1940, the Japanese celebrated the 2600th anniversary of the Empire via a series of celebrations, a climactic moment for the "unbroken imperial line" and *Kokutai* ideology, essential to emperor worship and imperial legitimacy until defeat in 1945 (Ruoff 2010, p. 1). The Japanese made a bid to host the 1940 Summer Olympics, in conjunction with the 2600th anniversary celebrations, as early as the early 1930s. During the Berlin 1936 Summer Olympics, Tokyo was successfully chosen as the 1940 Olympic Games host city by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). The same year, Japan planned to hold the Sapporo Winter Olympics and the Tokyo World EXPO to commemorate its twenty-sixth centennial. However, with Japan stuck in the Sino-Japanese War, these world events were canceled, and the hosting rights were handed back to the IOC. Thus, the commemoration of the 2600th anniversary could only be limited to the domestic scope.

In October 1935, the government established the 2600th Anniversary Events Bureau to plan and promote commemorative events, including the renovation of the Kashihara Shrine and Jimmu's mausoleum, and, in 1937, they established the semigovernmental, semicivil "Association to celebrate the 2600th Anniversary", which would organize fundraising events (Ruoff 2010, p. 13). In 1940, various commemorative events were held throughout the country and colonies, including exhibitions and athletic meetings, and, on 11 February, Kigensetsu (the festival for celebrating Jimmu's enthronement), more than 110,000 shrines nationwide practiced rituals. The commemoration culminating on 10 November, the 2600th Anniversary Ceremony was grandly held by the second Konoe cabinet in front of the Tokyo Imperial Palace, over which Emperor Hirohito and Empress Köjun presided, and related events continued to be held until 14 November. Kenneth J. Ruoff believes that, among modern nations, only the 2500th anniversary of the founding of the Persian Empire staged by Iran in 1971 could be comparable to Japan's commemoration in terms of the outrageous extent of historical continuity attributed to what was a modern nation state and also in the crediting of the monarchy for this lengthy continuity and unity (Ruoff 2010, p. 1). In addition to the national level, a series of activities had been carried out at the local level to commemorate the 2600th anniversary, the most famous of which was the construction of the Hakkō Ichiu Tower (Figure 2) in Miyazaki Prefecture.

5.2. A Tower to Be Erected

As mentioned above, Miyazaki Prefecture, formerly known as Hyūga, was believed to be the birthplace of Emperor Jimmu and the origin of the sacred imperial state of Japan in State Shinto mythology. Thus, local residents called their prefecture their "ancestral land", considered Miyazaki Prefecture to be a gift for the whole of Japan, and argued that, somehow, Miyazaki was an ancestral land for the rest of the country as well. Some scholars called this regional nationalism "Sokoku Hyūga Shugi" 祖国日向主義 (Ethnocentrism of Hyūga) (Kuroiwa 2022, p. 163). In 1937, Aikawa Katsuroku 相川勝六, a self-proclaimed kami-fearing man and fervent nationalist, was appointed as the new governor of Miyazaki Prefecture. In response to the National Spiritual Mobilization Movement and the regional nationalistic sentiment of Miyazaki, Aikawa organized a number of activities, including the establishment of the "Ancestral Land Hyūga Promotion Unit (Hakkō 2017, pp. 74-76)". However, his greatest ambition was to erect a monument in Miyazaki that would become a landmark for the country to commemorate the spirit of Emperor Jimmu's national foundation. On 2 December 1938, he unveiled the plan to build the Hakkō Ichiu Tower in such a way as to coincide with the commemoration of the 2600th anniversary at the Prefectural Assembly. He argued that, as the prefecture's own project, it should be the highest tower in Japan, adorned with the motto of Hakkō Ichiu. He then laid out the basics of his plan: "We will select a suitable site in the site of Emperor Jimmu's palace prior to eastern expedition, and erect the magnificent Pillar of Heaven in the purely Japanese style, made of solid stones (Hakkō 2017, p. 82)." On the following Kigensetsu, 2 February 1939, the Osaka mainichi published an article requesting assistance in terms of donations of money and stones from all communities. On the same day, Miyazaki Prefecture also

released the outline of the 2600th anniversary celebration, emphasizing that the stones donated for the construction came not only from East Asia but also from every corner of the world where the Japanese had reached. This would contribute to highlight the achievements of the present emperor's holy war and to promote the spirit of *Hakkō Ichiu* originated by Emperor Jimmu (Hakkō 2017, p. 88).

Consequently, it solicited 1789 standard-size stones, ¹⁵ used in the tower's base, with the vast majority of stones coming from the local area of Miyazaki and domestic Japan, donated from various governmental and civic institutions, such as Miyazaki Prefecture Women's Normal School, Fukui Prefecture Shrine Association, and so forth. ¹⁶ Aikawa also asked War Minister Itagaki Seishirō 板垣征四郎 and Sugiyama Hajime 杉山元, the commander of the North China Area Army, to cooperate in soliciting stones, so the imperial troops plundered booty from all over China from the so-called Manchukuo–Soviet border in the north to the Mongolian border in the west to Hainan Island in the south, and brought them back to Miyazaki, even looting buildings of historical value, including the stone from Ming Palace in Nanjing, just one year after the massacre (Hakkō 2017, pp. 54–55, 92). There were also a few stones donated by Japanese groups from Southeast Asia, the United States, Germany, South America, etc. The spoliatory stones from China and colonies were indeed a good demonstration of the spirit of *Hakkō Ichiu*. Still, they also became incriminating evidence of Japan's aggression and expansion.

The famous sculptor Hinago Jitsuzo 日名子実三, who sculpted a statue of Nichiren and had been influenced by Tanaka, volunteered to design and carve this tower without receiving payment (Kuroiwa 2022, pp. 36–38). When he visited the Miyazaki Shrine, he saw the *Gohei* 御幣¹⁷, and gained inspiration from it, combing it with a shield in his design. During the construction of the tower, several local civic groups, such as the Patriotic Women's Association and Ancestral Land Hyūga Promotion Unit, were mobilized to participate in the construction.



Figure 2. Hakkō Ichiu Tower, Miyazaki, Japan. © Hatena Blog. 2022.

5.3. A Monumental Rhetoric

The tower was 36.4 meters high, with a square base of 65 meters in circumference, made of stacked stones at the bottom. On the frontage of the tower was the four-character $Hakk\bar{o}$ Ichiu inscription written by Prince Yasuhito Chichibu. This is why the tower is commonly known as $Hakk\bar{o}$ Ichiu no $T\bar{o}$ 八紘一字の塔, although its official name was Ametsuchi no Motohashira 八紘之基柱. On the back of the tower was carved the overview of the Japanese Empire, manifesting the power of the empire ($Hakk\bar{o}$ 2017, pp. 16–24). At the four corners of the base of the tower were braziers, which represent the unity and endeavor of the people, and beneath the braziers were four kami (Aratama, Nigitama, Sachitama, and Kushitama) symbolizing courage, peace, love, and wisdom in their mythological images, which were also representations of warriors, craftsmen, farmers, and fishermen. Inside the tower was an adytum (the architect Hinago believed that the soul of the tower lies in the interior). On the bronze door of the adytum was engraved an etching of Jimmu's eastern expedition, with the army sailing from Hyūga, warships in formation, warriors holding flags and rowing oars, an image of irresistible momentum. Inside the adytum was the calligraphy of the expression $Hakk\bar{o}$ Ichiu by Prince Yasuhito Chichibu.

The tower was finally completed on 25 November 1940, in time for the 2600th anniversary of Jimmu's ascension. Prince Chichibu was not present due to health reasons, and the third younger brother of Emperor Shōwa, Prince Nobuhito Takamatsu, presided over the ceremony instead. The ceremony can be seen as the *fin de siècle* entertainment of Imperial Japan, as the catastrophe came a few years later.

During wartime, the image of the Hakkō Ichiu Tower as a symbol of ultranationalism was popular in the Empire, appearing on stamps, postcards, and even printed on the 10-yen bill. As a monument of State Shinto, the tower was undoubtedly the most substantive expression of *Hakkō ichiu* through its architectural rhetoric, fusing the mythology of Shinto, the ideology of *Kokutai*, and the imperial warfare phraseology. Meanwhile, it also manifested a regional nationalism promoted by Governor Aikawa. The stones donated from all over the world, especially from the occupied areas and colonies, gave its material expression to the expansionism represented by the *Hakkō Ichiu* discourse.

6. Conclusions

The *Hakkō Ichiu* rhetoric is imbued with a diversity of sources and expressions, interacting among themselves. It refers to a cosmic spatial apprehension typical of ancient East Asian thought. It is also closely related to the Shinto mythology of Emperor Jimmu's eastward expedition. In the ideology of State Shinto, the emphasis on the myth of Emperor Jimmu also evolved from the original *Tenjō Mukyū*, which represented the unbroken Imperial line, to *Hakkō Ichiu*, representing Japan's imperial expansionism, enriching but also displacing the connotations attached to Jimmu's legend in State Shinto during the early 20th century. It, thus, provided state legitimacy to a policy of foreign aggression.

Additionally, one should not ignore the contribution of Tanaka Chigaku, who rediscovered *Hakkō Ichiu* in the modern era and gave it renewed expression and meaning. Tanaka, a firm nationalist, creatively expounded Nichiren's thought, launching a Buddhist Renaissance movement that he called Nichirenism. After realizing that *Kokutai* offered a solid foundation for Japanese nationalism, he intelligently exploited it, and the mythology of Shinto became an excellent ideological resource for the promotion of Nichirenism. It is at this point that he rediscovered the *Hakkō Ichiu* phraseology and gave it an expansionist coloring, through which he depicted the Buddhist utopia of world unification. Tanaka's contribution allowed for the reviving of a syncretistic approach to the worship of both *kami* and buddhas, this after the syncretism underwent a brief hiatus during the Meiji Restoration period. Although State Shinto was not a religion in the historical context, Tanaka still fostered Nichirenism to be one of the most important nationalist forces in Imperial Japan, by incorporating elements from State Shinto and *Kokutai*. Furthermore, Nichirenism profoundly influenced the nationalist movement in the early Showa era, and many military

officers, including Ishiwara Kanji, were followers of Nichirenism, whose radical actions accelerated Imperial Japan into disastrous wars.

After the Second Sino-Japanese War, the *Hakkō Ichiu* phraseology escaped the context of religious discourse and became a tool utilized in order to glorify the war of aggression and colonization. Its use illustrated the ideology of emperor worship and continuous imperial expansion, becoming synonymous with militarism and ultranationalism. Because of its widespread use in war propaganda, it was well known to the public through a wide range of embodied and material representations, including lyrics, newsreels, stamps, bills, and even architecture. The Hakkō Ichiu Tower, built to commemorate the 2600th anniversary of national foundation, played a special role in perpetuating this State Shinto rhetoric. In addition to the Hakkō Ichiu Tower, the motto was often carved on stone monuments and pillars of shrines throughout Japan and overseas, manifesting the ideal of "universal brotherhood".

The term *Hakkō Ichiu* was banned by the GHQ through the "Shinto Directive" ¹⁸ as a term promoting State Shinto, militarism, and ultranationalism. In 1946, the GHQ ordered the removal of the inscription *Hakkō Ichiu* on the front face of the tower as well as the one of the statue of Aratama, the symbol of the warriors. Subsequently, the tower was left unattended. However, for the sake of tourism promotion, the Prefecture gradually proceeded to readministrate the tower and its surrounding area. The place was renamed "Peace Tower" in 1957, the statue of Aratama was restored in 1965, and the motto *Hakkō Ichiu* was resharpened in the same year. Despite opposition from left-wing groups, supporters claimed that: "*Hakkō Ichiu* conveys the idea of praying for world peace and has nothing to do with the war (Kuroiwa 2022, pp. 143–44)". Today, the nationalistic rhetoric of *Hakkō Ichiu* could be compared to a nearly dead language, both in the Shinto context and in public life. However, its historical and religious connotations still deserve scrutiny.

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Notes

- Some scholars literally translated *Hakkō Ichiu* as "eight corners of the world under one roof" (Beasley 1987, p. 226; Edwards 2003, p. 291), but R. W. Purdy translated it as "eight cords, one roof", and I prefer Purdy's translation, "eight cords" (Purdy 2009, p. 106), because it better reflects the original meaning of the word from an etymological perspective. In the second section, I discuss how "eight cords" can refer to the world.
- ² Inoue Hiroshi's summary is quoted in Okuyama Michiaki's paper (Okuyama 2011, p. 135).
- 3 八者, 維綱也。天地以發明, 故聖人以合陰陽之數也, see (Fang 2008, p. 1287).
- ⁴ "Four corners are called *Wei*; four directions are called *Gang*." (四隅曰维,四正曰纲.) (Fang 2008, p. 1292)
- 5 紘,維也。維落天地而為之表,故曰紘也 (He 1998, p. 334).
- It is noteworthy that the applicability of Shinto to the concept of "religion" has been controversial since it was introduced to Japan along with a number of Euro-American concepts in the 1870s (Josephson 2012, p. 94). The bureaucrats in the Meiji era strove to draw a clear boundary between the secular and religious spheres, avoiding to define State Shinto as a religion and especially a state religion, but rather the rites of state, a patriotic morality in which all people were compelled to participate in. The distinction between State Shinto and other religions, such as Buddhism, Christianity and Sect Shinto, was eventually confirmed in the 1889 Imperial Constitution, as Trent E. Maxey commented, "the Constitution codified the religious settlement by explicitly rejecting religion as a component of national definition. It thus adopted the principle of religious freedom over toleration (Maxey 2014, p. 14)." This constituted what Yasumaru Yoshio calls the "Separation of church and state of Japanese type", in which State Shinto was the rites of state in the public sphere requiring mandatory participation, while the religious affairs were restricted to the private sphere, and individuals had the constitutional right of the freedom of belief (Yasumaru 1979, pp. 208–9). However, it cannot be ignored that the distinction was more confined to the legal and administrative level. State Shinto contained many religious elements, from historical sources and mythology to the ritual with its temporal and spatial dimensions. In reality, there

- were still multiple cases of conflicts between State Shinto and religious beliefs, especially in the area of individual spirituality, such as the lèse-majesté incident of Uchimura Kanzo and the 1932 Sophia University—Yasukuni Shrine incident. Therefore, this article prefers to define State Shinto as a "quasi-religion" and discusses its rhetoric with a religious dimension.
- The was often articulated as Jimmu's entrepreneurship spirit (神武創業の精神) or spirit of national foundation (肇国の精神). During the Meiji Restoration period, the promotion of Jimmu's spirit was often associated with the abolition of the shogunate system and direct imperial rule, but its exact meaning was still left vague.
- ⁸ The phrase was derived from the imperial edict of *Tenjō Mukyū* (天壌無窮の勅令) (Toneri 2019, pp. 32–33).
- If used as a term of Religious Studies, Ōtani Eiichi defined Nichirenism as "the Nichirenism was a social and political movement in pre-World War II Japan, aiming to achieve a utopian world through the unification of Japan and the unification of the world through the Buddhist unity of government and religion based on the *Lotus Sūtra*. It is a Buddhist religious movement developed with ambition." Qtd. (Ōtani 2001, p. 15.)
- Yamato is another name for Japan, which includes the pronunciation of the word mountain, "Yama."
- For more information on Ishiwara's ideas of Nichirenism and the final war, as well as the practice, see (Godart 2015).
- At that time, neither side of the conflict declared war, and the Nationalist government of China did not formally declare war until after the Pearl Harbor attack in 1941, while Japan called it "collision" or *Hokushi Jihen* 北支事変 (North China Incident) domestically, and only after the Battle of Shanghai did the word *Sen* 戦 (war) appear, which are all called "war" in this paper.
- The official English lyric was translated by Foreign Ministry officer Obata Shigeyoshi 小畑薫良, see (Obata 1938, p. 27).
- Although *Anno Domini* was introduced to Japan as early as the Meiji era, it was not as commonly used as in other Asian countries prior to 1945. Additionally, it is often translated as *Seireiki* 西曆 (Western Year).
- According to the statistics from the Hakkō Ichiu Tower Research Association, they collected 1789 pieces, totaling 834 stere of stone (Hakkō 2017, p. 18).
- Walter Edwards gives a table of donors for stones (Edwards 2003, pp. 297–98).
- A wooden wand with two zigzagging paper streamers used in Shinto rituals to bless or sanctify people or objects.
- The Shinto Directive was an order issued by the GHQ to abolish State Shinto and Japanese ultranationalistic and militaristic slogans in 1945, and its full title was "Abolition of Governmental Sponsorship, Support, Perpetuation, Control and Dissemination of State Shinto" (SCAPIN-448 1945, p. 3).

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Article

Metaphors as Knowledge in Mystical Writings

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Abstract: Writers anchored in the Christian mystical tradition generally present their spiritual experience as loaded with cognitive content bearing on things divine. The nature of this mystical knowledge, the way they receive it, and its effect on their existence can be fruitfully approached only by elucidating the way their language and discourse make use of metaphors. Accordingly, starting with references to the early modern period, this article investigates a set of classical mystical metaphors so as to gain insight into the unique mode of metaphorical cognition, highlight the epistemological status proper to mystical experience, and distinguish the latter from other theological cognitive modes. Metaphors borrowed from daily life endow the mystical experience—of which the object is described as being beyond senses and reason—with a perceptible, comprehensible, and communicable configuration. At the same time, metaphors should not be regarded as being merely an approximate expression of an ineffable experience. Through the "gestalt" or structure of a metaphor, mystical experience locates itself and develops in spacetime, thus laying out the path of the spiritual journey. The way various metaphors naturally associate allows the expression, intensity, and self-understanding of spiritual experience to "grow" from one image to another. Thanks to the metaphorical operation, mystics are able to describe their journey and give spiritual direction, providing disciples and readers with concrete directions for reforming and renewing their lives. Furthermore, the connection that metaphor establishes between everyday routines and things divine allows for a two-way exchange of meanings: the objects or events met in daily life are "sanctified" as they become metaphors that convey spiritual understanding and allow an ever-growing number of people to "seek and find God in all things".

Keywords: John of the Cross; metaphor; mystical experience; mystical knowledge; purification; Teresa of Avila

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1. Introduction

Spiritual literature and mystical works abound in metaphors and symbols. The poetic language they privilege differs from that of theology, which is primarily based on concepts and reasoning. Although mystical writers also draw on preexisting doctrines and concepts, the works they produce are customarily considered to constitute subjective accounts, which are contrasted with attempts at assessing and establishing a body of objective knowledge. Especially in the modern period, metaphorical language and symbolic thinking were (and often remain) sharply contrasted with scientific rationality. For thinkers following in the footsteps of Hobbes, Locke, and others, making use of metaphors testifies to a lack of "real thinking": when expressed through metaphors, religious experience would possess no epistemological significance. Mystics, however, have unanimously affirmed that their experience was leading them towards a knowledge of things divine that is located beyond both reason and the senses. For them, the use of metaphors is justified by the limitations proper to concepts and logic when facing ultimate reality. Accordingly, mystical authors have not been merely crafting a language specific to their objectives; they also discussed the means of expression (metaphors, among them, playing a leading role) that they needed to mobilize. This was especially the case for the Christian mystical writers of the early modern period, to whom I will refer in the first instance while investigating at times the

textual network they weave with writers located in different contexts.² If, as suggested by Charles M. Stang, mystical writing is to be approached "as a spiritual exercise in the service of soliciting an encounter with the mystery of God" (Stang 2012, p. 257), then such "exercise" necessarily contains a reflexive return upon its conditions and results.

During the course of the 20th century, linguistics and philosophy have jointly worked towards a deeper understanding of the way "metaphor" and "knowledge" interact. As Lakoff and Johnson made clear in their classic study (Metaphors We Live By, 1980), metaphors, concepts, experiences, and human action are associated through a web of complex, multidimensional relationships. In fact, our conceptual system, our thinking process, and our behavioral patterns are, to a large extent, constructed, understood, and shaped through metaphors. For example, our understanding of what an "argument" is about cannot be separated from the metaphor of "war" to which it refers. Metaphors arise from clear, intuitive, and concrete experiences, and they endow abstract concepts with intelligible connotations. On a first level, metaphor is based on existing similarities between things. On a second level, it creates new similarities through a gestalt of perceptions and meanings. Much of our experience is metaphorical in nature; we use metaphors to define reality, and we act upon metaphors. From this perspective, the use of metaphors in mystical writings is not an index of obscurity or imagination gone wild. On the contrary, it is the stock of metaphors, symbols, analogies, and fables shared by mystical authors that makes it possible to reach a kind of understanding of what "mystical knowledge" may be about.³

I will first assess the oft-repeated assertion made by mystics: spiritual experiences allow them to acquire knowledge about God. Such knowledge does not come from rational speculation. It is given to them; it is direct in its nature and its mode of acquisition, and it is sometimes associated with a "spiritual vision". While going beyond or behind sensitive perception, a concrete image is needed for highlighting the knowledge such experience brings to the mystic, the conditions under which mystical knowledge is granted, and the effects it has upon the soul. Thus, the nature, means, and effects of mystical knowledge are expressed and united into one fitting metaphor.

In a second part, I will stress the fact that, in mystical writings, metaphors are not akin to an approximate expression of transcendental experience. Rather, they organize and structure the experience at stake. Going one step further, the mystic herself does not really "know" what she has been experiencing until she finds the words and the image to express it. "[An] event is always an event of language, and [...] the adventure is inseparable from the speech that tells it" (Agamben 2018, p. 69). In this sense, metaphors arise in simultaneity with both experience and knowledge: there is no cognition without metaphor; metaphor also allows experience to recognize and understand itself as experience. Although mystical experience is said to be characterized by "immediacy" and "passivity", mystics do, in a sense, actively "construct" their experience through the mediation brought by metaphors. As we will see, this makes possible an "experience of the absence", particularly in the history of Christian spirituality, even if the nature of this particular "experience" remains controverted.

In the third part, I will ponder over the following: in mystical texts, metaphors create a narrative space-time where spiritual experience becomes an adventure, a journey (climbing in the dark, exploring a castle, entering the state of marriage, etc.). Metaphors allow the mystic to determine the journey's starting point and its various stages until the accomplishment of one's spiritual development. Organized around a suitable metaphor, the cognitive process unfolds along with the transformation of the pilgrim.

Finally, as will be discussed in the fourth part, the use of metaphors opens up a two-way communication between the everyday world and the "sacred world", enabling the pilgrim "to seek and find God in everything", as the well-known sentence by Ignatius of Loyola summarizes such a quest (see *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* III. 288, in Ignatius of Loyola 1996, p. 124; see also De Koninck 2007). Using A as a metaphor for B does not only bring in analogical knowledge of B; it also makes A and B become mirrors of each other and reflect each other in all aspects. Building upon this observation, one is entitled to say that

metaphor functions as a meeting point between the sacred world and the secular world, and further, between the writer and the reader. Mystics not only make use of metaphors in their writings; they also increase the depth and array of their experience by thinking and acting on the basis of metaphorical patterns.

2. Metaphors and Mystical Knowledge

Teresa of Avila speaks of the knowledge of the Trinity she received in a mystical vision and that other souls can receive likewise in the following way:

"The Most Blessed Trinity, all three Persons, through an intellectual vision, is revealed to it...[And] through an admirable knowledge the soul understands as a most profound truth that all three Persons are one substance and one power and one knowledge and one God alone. It knows in such a way that what we hold by faith, it understands, we can say, through sight—although the sight is not with the bodily eyes or with the eyes of the soul". (*Interior Castle 7.1.6–7*, in Payne [2017] 2023, p. 456)

Teresa states that she experienced, through intellectual vision, that the three divine persons were communicating with her and dwelling in her soul, an experience through which she came to cognize the "most profound truth" of the Trinity. Her vision did not bring to her new propositional knowledge; rather, it infused in her, in an entirely new way, the mysteries brought by revelation. What she had only grasped by faith thus became what she was now comprehending through clear and definite knowledge. When attempting to give an account of this way of knowing, she resorts to Augustine's categorization of biblical visions as corporeal, spiritual (or imaginative), and intellectual (truth presented in the mind in an immediate way). This triple paradigm dominated the understanding of visions throughout the Middle Ages and early modern times, and Teresa of Avila had learned of it (McGinn 2017, pp. 139–40, with reference to Saint Augustine, Literal commentary on Genesis, 12). Expressions such as "spiritual vision" and "intellectual vision" constitute a kind of oxymoron: the adjective suggests that no sensory seeing happens in the course of the experience, that no mediation through image is needed, while the word "sight" or "vision" signals (mediated) reception of knowledge. As we know, "seeing" is almost a synonym for "understanding"; in other words, it constitutes a "dead metaphor" (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, p. 55) since we almost forget its metaphorical nature when making use of it. "Light" works in the same way when referring to the cognitive faculty ("the light of natural reason") or to the domain of truth and knowledge" (cf. Psalm 36.9: "in your light we see light").

2.1. Spiritual Senses: An Epistemic Metaphorical Framework

Origen was the first to articulate the concept of "spiritual senses". "Seeing" constitutes only one of the perceptions at stake. Throughout the history of Christian spirituality, descriptions of the experiences of "hearing", "touching", and "tasting" God are common. Some of them record extraordinary experiences (though whether these experiences are related to bodily sensations is not always clear, especially among some of the women mystics of the Middle Ages), while others are metaphors deliberately constructed. For example, Guigo II (Guigues II le Chartreux), when expounding on the progress made by the practitioners of the *lectio divina*, deliberately develops the comparison between "taste" and "contemplation" (Egan 1976, pp. 111-12). However, Origen's spiritual senses should not be viewed as a set of "soul functions" parallel to the bodily senses; spiritual seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching are all metaphors for how we might know and grasp spiritual realities (cf. Howells 2020). Richard of St. Victor speaks of spiritual "seeing" or intellectual contemplation as an analogy based on sensory perceptions (Howells 2020; van Liere 2018). Although "spiritual seeing" involves purely spiritual operations and an object of cognition that, likewise, is purely spiritual, the operation is nevertheless immediate, self-evident, and definite, just as is the case for sensory perception, while reasoning goes through an abstract and indirect process (Copleston 1962, p. 193). What matters here is

that the introduction of "spiritual senses" as a category of its own distinguishes mystical experience from the realm of psychological emotions and allows us to map the former into a cognitive process.

2.2. Metaphor in Action

Within the realm of the five spiritual senses, visual metaphors are probably the most frequent. This is partly due to the influence exercised by the classical metaphorical tradition centered upon "light" and "truth". Another factor might lie in the fact that the elements composing an image can be easily described, analyzed, and expanded. John of the Cross consciously uses the metaphor of a window illuminated by sunlight to illustrate the union of the soul with God:

"A ray of sunlight shining on a smudgy window is unable to illumine that window completely and transform it into its own light. It could do this if the window were cleaned and polished. The less the film and stain are wiped away, the less the window will be illumined; and the cleaner the window is, the brighter will be its illumination. The extent of illumination is not dependent on the ray of sunlight but on the window. If the window is totally clean and pure, the sunlight will so transform and illumine it that to all appearances the window will be identical with the ray of sunlight and shine just as the sun's ray. Although obviously the nature of the window is distinct from that of the sun's ray (even if the two seem identical), we can assert that the window is the ray or light of the sun by participation. The soul on which the divine light of God's being is ever shining, or better, in which it is ever dwelling by nature, is like this window, as we have affirmed." (*The Ascent of Mount Carmel* 2.5.6 in Kavanaugh and Rodriguez 1991, pp. 164–65).

This image describes the soul as it receives light (truth/God) and is filled with it. The object of cognition is no longer external to the subject; rather, it enters and transforms her soul. To that effect, the subject needs to perform on herself the twin operations of "cleaning" and "polishing", a daily labor, the evocation of which will flow naturally from the original image. The very fact of associating into a whole mutually related experience expands the scope and depth of spiritual understanding.

The present case well illustrates what is at stake: since Origen and the Desert Fathers, the "purification" of the soul has been seen as a prerequisite for interpreting the Bible and explaining its mysteries. The word "purification" itself is a metaphor, which will call for further specifications: washing with water, refining with fire, or practicing file carving are all different actions leading to purification. Some of them are perceived as softer than others, and some are violent and painful. These evocations trigger further associations; they lead the reader to imagine how the soul can be examined and exercised in order to foster virtue and help the subject become a recipient of divine knowledge and grace. Faithful to such tradition, John of the Cross repeatedly mentions that mystical knowledge of God (unlike ordinary knowledge, which requires the mediation of the senses) is transmitted directly to the soul. John of the Cross does not describe his visions the way Teresa did for hers, but he resorts to metaphors to express their immediacy. The soul, or the highest part of it, must appear "naked" before God; it must "deprive" itself of everything that wraps around the spirit. Because the soul is used to living in a world that is constructed by the senses, like if it were in a dungeon, it remains alienated from supernatural mysteries (Ascent. 1.3.3; Ascent 2.17.3, in Kavanaugh and Rodriguez 1991, pp. 122, 206). The realignment of the soul corresponds to its "purification" and "simplification". In this specific thread of metaphors, prejudices, concepts, fantasies, emotions, and sensory desires are "externalized", described as being the clothes of the soul or yet as the prison barriers that surround them. They need to be stripped off and removed until nothing needs to be taken away anymore.

2.3. Metaphors on Fire

Expanding the scope and degree of intricacy of a given metaphorical set constitutes another device through which the effect that mystical knowledge exercises upon the soul can be expressed. Let us continue to reflect upon the example offered by John of the Cross: the light reflected on the glass window is inseparable from the window itself. The substance of the window still exists, but, from the outside, one can no longer "see" the difference between the two. Windows become light by participating in it. Another traditional metaphor, also beloved by John of the Cross, evokes divine love/divine truth in the form of fire. It comes with a stress on the transformative effect of the latter:

"We ought to note that this purgative and loving knowledge (or divine light) we are speaking of, has the same effect on a soul that fire has on a log of wood. The soul is purged and prepared for union with the divine light, just as the wood is prepared for transformation into the fire. Fire, when applied to wood, first dehumidifies it, dispelling all moisture and making it give off any water it contains. Then it gradually turns the wood black, makes it dark and ugly, and even causes it to emit a bad odor. By drying out the wood, the fire brings to light and expels all those ugly and dark accidents that are contrary to fire. Finally, by heating and enkindling it from without, the fire transforms the wood into itself and makes it as beautiful as it is itself..." (*Night* 2.10.1, in Kavanaugh and Rodriguez 1991, pp. 416–17)

In the Greco-Latin world, the metaphorical meaning attached to fire was first developed by Heraclitus. Within the Christian tradition, the use of the fire metaphor can be traced back to the Greek Fathers and to their observation of the process of iron smelting: iron plunged in fire gradually becomes as hot and as red as fire, but, at first, it maintains its nature. Relying upon this image, St. Maximus tried to explain the relationship existing between the two natures of Christ: in every act of Christ, humanity and divinity are clearly different, and yet they are inseparable, like a sword put in the fire, which hacks as iron and simultaneously burns as fire. Gradually, this metaphor was applied to the relationship between the human will and the will of God as the exercitant entered the spiritual struggle (Lossky 1957, p. 146). Similar statements were often made by the Franciscans and by Spanish mystics, both deeply influenced by Augustinism. Hugh of Saint Victor vividly describes how the flame "takes hold of the wood", and, when fanned by a stronger draft, begins to ignite the wood, raising thick black clouds of smoke that make the flame almost invisible; then, bit by bit, all the moisture in the wood is driven out, the smoke and steam disappear, and there remains only light and a blazing flame. When the flame embraces the whole of the wood, the latter becomes exactly like the former. All the crackling has disappeared. There is no longer any difference between fire and wood, and all is silent, just as the soul is totally transformed into the fire of love and feels that God is truly all in all (see A Benedictine Monk of Stanbrook Abbey 1954, p. 29). From a slightly different perspective but using similar images, Eckhart, when speaking of the soul being "ignited in the love of the Holy Spirit", also describes how the fire ignites and decomposes the wood, removes its roughness and coldness, makes it different from what it was and more and more akin to the fire...until the fire gives the wood its own unique nature and being, and thus makes everything the same fire (Eckhart 2004; Duclow 1983).

As we have seen, the metaphor of the fusion of fire and iron/wood was first used to better grasp the concept of the two natures of Christ, which is loaded with logical difficulties. The concept becomes "embodied", existing in the world of our lived experience and not suspended in dialectical abstraction anymore. Transiting in time, the same metaphor is used to describe the process and purpose of spiritual exertion. Supported by a strong visual image, concepts such as "deification" or "mystical union" are no longer empty words; they become intelligible, at least partially. We "see" how the process that these words designate can possibly take place. Furthermore, when the metaphor used for speaking of the human component no longer relies on iron but shifts to wood, the fragility and perishability of

the soul are highlighted. Step by step, from the objective and detached observation of the sword in the fire to a more vivid description of the action of the fire and of the union of fire and wood through the painful transformation of the wood in the fire, there occurs a shift in cognitive emphasis as well as a shift in spiritual climate.

3. Embodying the Absence

3.1. Experience and Interpretation

Assessing the extent to which metaphors can express mystical experience and load it with epistemic significance requires us to ascertain the nature of the relationship existing between experience and interpretation. Whenever William James' account of the characteristics of mystical experience (ineffability, noetic quality, transiency, and passivity) is followed (see James [1902] 2008), authors frequently privilege the categories of ineffability and passivity in order to highlight the transcendental source of said experience. The question that necessarily arises depends on how these two characteristics relate to the cognitive quality of the experience being described. Post-Kantian discussions on knowledge need to account for the way the cognitive process relies on constructions actively operated by the mind. According to the way mystical authors describe them; mystical experiences are a given insofar as they are mediated neither by reason nor by the senses. However, to be aware of an experience (and not just of a sensory stimulus) requires an understanding and grasp of what has been happening—an understanding that allows for a clear and conscious statement: "I experienced/I underwent such or such experience". Said otherwise, the mind needs to give a "form" to what it receives, a form that can be grasped by reason and the senses. Otherwise, we are confronted with an indescribable "primary matter". As underlined by Steven Katz, every experience is an interpreted experience. Experience is fraught with interpretation as soon as something is experienced. From the start, experiencing something means interpreting it (Katz 1978; see also Howells 2020).

The former statement differs from James' claim that mysticism has a core of "pure experience" prior to interpretation, independent of the period, culture, religion, and language of the mystic. This "common core thesis" has been supported and attacked from different perspectives (see Gäb 2021). As a matter of fact, in the context of this article, the question of whether or not there exists some kind of "raw mental content" preexisting the metaphorical operation needs to be relativized. When paying close attention to the way mystical experience is presented, we find that, beyond basic metaphorical expressions, the stress is actually on silence—not only the silence of language and thinking, but also the silence of sensibility and imagination. Here, again, we are meeting with a paradox: although it is possible to say that all mystical discourses eventually return to silence, they cannot be reduced to "mere silence". When the mind "passively" receives something (is infused with something), it still must resort to an intelligible utterance (a metaphor, an image), which will enable it to "possess" and "deliver" what has been experienced. The verb "to infuse" metaphorically describes the process through which passivity goes along with appropriation and, later on, communication of the experience: an "inexpressible" experience will be substantiated through the process of reception and assimilation and will thus become cognized and communicated. Therefore, even if there is a "core mystical experience", a raw mental content infused into the mind, such core content still needs to be "formed" by a metaphor so the experience may be truly realized.

3.2. Experience of Absence and Absence of Experience

The fact that mystical experience is communicated through metaphors emanating from daily life does not identify mystical experience with everyday experience. On the contrary, the pivotal "experience of absence" emphasized by the mystics is made possible by means of down-to-earth metaphors. Following the path of apophatic theology, mysticism has always been critical of those trying to grasp God through sensory and, more precisely, "sensual" experiences—the latter different in nature from the ones delivered by the ordinariness of everyday life. The "divine darkness" of Gregory of Nyssa, the "desert [wuste]" and the

"ground" of Eckhart, the "dark night" of John of the Cross, or yet the frequent references to the "wounds of love" throughout the mystical tradition, all of them embody a lived contradiction: the most intense embodiment of the experience of God lies "in the negation of experience and in the negation of the negation so that everything is denied and nothing is abandoned, so that all things lead to a God who is beyond what they lead to, by means of ways, which are the active practice of the denial of ways' (Turner 1995, p. 272). This is the ground upon which Denys Turner offers a pointed critique of William James, who, in his perspective, develops a pragmatic view of mysticism joined to a strong empirical orientation. Turner distinguishes the "experience of [God's] absence" (which experientialists such as James are looking for) from the "absence of experience" at the core of what is expressed by Pseudo-Dionysius, Eckhart, John of the Cross, and others. The "experience" that apophatic theology talks about is a kind of "no-experience", an experiential vacuum, i.e., a break in humankind's experience of God, rather than an attempt at grasping God as "experienced", even in his absence. Mysticism is "a failure of experience", which paradoxically reveals that our humanity is united to God prior to experience. The mystical union, which the mystics express in terms of annihilation, darkness, wounds, etc., is essentially a union of grace that transcends any experience (Turner 1995; Howells 2020).

As strong as the insights just summarized may be, let us note that the perspective offered by Turner is also criticized for its one-sidedness. When looking at the history of mysticism from a holistic perspective and pondering over the accounts delivered by mystics such as Ignatius of Loyola, Teresa of Avila, and others, it is impossible to discard the fact that "experiencing God" is a statement that also receives positive content throughout the mainstream of Western spiritual literature (McGinn 1997).

3.3. The Setting of the Placeless

This is where our focus on the cognitive use of metaphors may clarify the issue at stake: the central metaphors mobilized by the mystical tradition always perform a double task. They express two experiences—or, equivalently, two absences—at the same time: the "experience of God's absence" and the "absence of experience". Let me give an example: on the one hand, an expression such as "dark night (noche oscura)" suggests a deprivation of feeling, or otherwise, a breakup in experience; on the other hand, the same expressions also display a strong visual picture, felt, "seen" or imagined by readers. Likewise, the word "desert" signals emptiness. While suggesting the detachment or removal of everything, it also creates a place, a setting, which we can make use of. Precisely because they strive to avoid reducing the experience of the Divine to the sensory level, the mystics make frequent use of rhetorical contradictions so as to create breaks or fissures within the imagery they use, thus expressing how the seeker "experiences" and "realizes" what apophatic theology speaks (and does not speak) about.

Let me further mention "the greatest darkness", which "illuminates the sightless intellects" (Pseudo-Dionysius, *Mystical Theology* 1), or yet "silent music, [the] sounding [murmuring] solitude" in John of the Cross's *Canticle* (Stanza 14). This kind of contradictory splicing evokes in the reader's mind a seemingly perceptible and intelligible experience and simultaneously introduces in the reader's perception a gap that makes her feel that she is unable to fully grasp what she has been approaching. Eckhart employs the metaphors of "ground [*grunt*]" and "abyss [*abgrunt*]" as the basis of his mystical theology. These two metaphors explain each other while standing in opposition: the limitless and uncreated "ground" in the human soul is the same as the boundless "ground" of God, with Eckhart pointing towards an "inexpressible placeless place" (see Mieth 2012 for references and contextualization), where God and the soul are united mystically through detachment. At the same time, the essence of the soul is also an abyss, entirely empty, deprived of images, into which only God pours himself endlessly. The abyss of the soul is also the abyss of God. The "identity" to be found between the soul and God refers to both the ground and the abyss (Radler 2020).

One must allow that, in the Church Fathers or in Eckhart, going the "apophatic way" did not imply undergoing any empirical experience. In contrast, in the sixteenth century's spiritual literature, mystical statements are clearly loaded with an empirical dimension, even if the latter does not exhaust their intent and meaning. As mentioned above, John of the Cross does not merely evoke the "darkness of the intellect" the way Pseudo-Dionysius does. When evoking "the emptiness of the memory" or "the nakedness of the will", he clothes the negative in a number of experiential images: being rejected, deprived, purged, emptied, naked, etc. Somehow, "being "deprived of experience" is made into a new experience. At the same time, as John of the Cross constantly reminds us while describing the journey of the "fourfold night of the soul", each time that detachment or deprivation coalesces into a fixed experience, we may need to enter again into a process of deprivation—to learn anew to become deprived.

4. Metaphorical Spacetimes

Metaphors provide mystical experience in an intelligible and, concurrently, self-deconstructing (or self-transcending) form, the latter originating from the way metaphor accommodates self-contradiction in the formulation it takes. Going one step further, the cognitive function of metaphor consists in that it enables mystical experience—essentially "timeless"—to acquire a specific structure in space and time. Not only do metaphors allow for mystical experience to be realized, appropriated, and communicated, but they also create a place that we can "inhabit" shape a road, and explicit a process. Said otherwise, the knowledge brought about by mystical experience is not only propositional; it is also a kind of practical knowledge, thanks to which the seeker himself will be transformed.

4.1. Teresa of Avila: Progressing towards the Inner Room

The "Interior Castle" of Teresa of Avila provides us with one of the most refined and structured metaphors that spiritual literature contains.

"I began to think of the soul as if it were a *castle*⁴ made of a single diamond or of very clear crystal [...] *Let us now imagine* that this castle, as I have said, contains many mansions, some above, others below, others at each side; and in the centre and midst of them all is the chiefest mansion where the most secret things pass between God and the soul." (*Interior Castle*, First Mansions, chp. 1, in Peers 1946, pp. 201–2)

The image of the castle is generally supposed to have emerged spontaneously from Teresa's unconscious, while related images, such as the "four waters" that water the garden of the soul, are believed to have been constructed consciously (Minnema 2012; on the formation and transformation of the castle imagery, see also Coelho 1987)⁵. In any case, basing herself on the structure of a typical castle in Spain in the 16th century, Teresa was able to organize the continuously intensified experience of her life, so that her visions, locutions, raptures, and ecstasies, which she experienced as obscure and disordered in her early years, could be set in a systematic description. The castle defines a starting point and an orderly journey towards the innermost center. Teresa also invites her readers to imagine and to walk with her, as they do with the founding metaphor. Facilitated by spatial orientation (from the first mansion to the seventh one), the steps along spiritual progress can be clearly demarcated: experiences, virtues, and challenges can be neatly grouped into the various mansions. Teresa does admit that as the experience deepens, making distinctions becomes a more and more difficult task, and the differentiation between the last three mansions is less clear than is the case for the others. Whatever the case may be, the work of spiritual direction that Teresa accomplished here through her authorship would have been inconceivable without the metaphorical tool provided by the castle analogy.

The "soul-garden" metaphor (which Teresa made use of in her *Life*) and the castle imagery are of a similar nature in that they both depict a space dedicated to inner activities, allowing the concept of interiority to be made clear and perceptible. The imagery of the

soul as a "closed garden" (hortus conclusus) originates in Song of Songs 4:12. The symbol has a rich history and, in the context proper to Teresa, evokes the daily labor of watering the monastery's garden; the different stages of prayer are distinguished by metaphors referring to different methods of labor (Lottman 2010; McGinn 2017, p. 146). Both the garden and the castle are closed spaces. They speak of an existence lived in seclusion and of a desire to be alone with God/Christ. But the imagery of the castle portrays in a clearer fashion an itinerary of introversion and "the most secret intercourse" that takes place between God and the soul (Castle First Mansions, chp. 1; Minnema 2012). In the garden, there is "water from heaven", while canals and wells are not clearly positioned. In contrast, in the immense inner castle, only the "bridegroom's room" located at the hidden center is emitting light, and it calls those who dwell in outer mansions to greater perfection (Castle, Seventh Mansion, chp. 4). Water, the source of life, the light of the origins, and the tree of life have all been "transplanted" into the soul center. Although Teresa admits that there are many different paths in the castle and that different people may circulate through different mansions, all these ways lead to the same center. Those who have entered the Reformed Carmelites have abandoned the external world, and they must learn how to open up spaces and paths within themselves. To that effect, the metaphors that Teresa of Avila mobilizes undoubtedly provide them with indispensable tools.

4.2. John of the Cross: Journeying by Night

John of the Cross also makes use of metaphors that construct a temporal and spatial itinerary. His core metaphor—night—is immediately reminiscent of the "divine darkness" glossed over by Gregory of Nyssa and the Pseudo-Dionysius. (Regarding the extent to which John of the Cross' "night" may have originated from the "darkness" metaphor in the Church Fathers, see Louth 2007, pp. 174–77). However, in contrast with the spatial imagery of the castle, the word "night" primarily expresses a change in time, and the advancement of the fourfold night makes the beginning, middle, and end of the pilgrimage all shrouded in different stages of night (*Ascent* 1.2–3, in Kavanaugh and Rodriguez 1991, pp. 120–23). The soul takes the figure of a night traveler, and the difficulties, challenges, and opportunities that a traveler may encounter in the night can be naturally compared to the process of spiritual development, making the metaphor of "darkness" move from a static and ontological level to a dynamic, psychological, and experiential dimension.

There is a difference between our two mystics: the first decisive action of the spiritual journey that Teresa underwent was to enter. The outside of the castle is full of filth and danger, and the decisive step is to step into the castle. The outer wall of the castle is a symbol of security, dividing the inside from the outside. In contrast, John of the Cross's first action is to depart, leaving the cabin that symbolizes self-centeredness and worldly attachments. The walls of the house refer to worldly desires. "I went out unseen, /my house being now all stilled" (Night. Stanza 1, in Kavanaugh and Rodriguez 1991, p. 113). The journey within Teresa's castle continues to converge toward the center, thus testifying to the deepening of the prayer of recollection (recogimiento): the bridegroom attracts the soul in such a way that the desire felt by the latter may become more and more intense and her contemplation more and more concentrated, till she is free from everything except himself. As to the process of exploration evoked in *La noche oscura*, it overlaps with the spatially-oriented process described in the Ascent of Mont Carmel. In the night, the soul constantly undergoes deprivation; her luggage becomes lighter and lighter, and the road into the deepest night identifies with possessing and desiring "nothing". Only when the soul is completely anchored in "nothing" (nada) can she possess "all" (todo)—reaching, in the same movement, the top of the mountain (Ascent 1.13.11; Howells 2023).

The use by Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross of different spacetime metaphors may reflect differences in their psychological makeup (Minnema 2012). At the same time, these two different journeys respond to each other insofar as they both culminate in "spiritual marriage". Teresa sets the presence of Christ (the bridegroom) at the very center of the castle, while John of the Cross' beloved one (*El amado*) waits in the garden like the lover in the

Song of Songs. At the same time, *El amado* is configured to "the mountains, lonely wooded valleys, strange islands" (*Canticle*, Stanzas 14–15, in Kavanaugh and Rodriguez 1991, p. 473) that appear in a distant landscape. Interpersonal exchanges and internalized pilgrimage become one: the intimate lover who is waiting in the inner room and the stranger, located in the distance, are intertwined into the figure of the same bridegroom. With the interweaving of such metaphors, two mystical traditions—neo-Platonic and Christ-centered—reinforce each other's impact on the consciousness of both the author and readers, doing so in an intuitive and holistic fashion.

5. Weaving and Interweaving Metaphors

We come to the last stage in our investigation of the cognitive function fulfilled by metaphors in spiritual writings: their usage brings into contact the everyday world, on the one hand, and the sacred (or mystical) world, on the other hand, allowing for the surge of a two-way communication channel. Mystical literature creates a world of symbols (here, we do not draw sharp distinctions between symbols and signs, metaphors and similes). This metaphorical universe functions as a set of tools through which transcendental realities can be explored—at least to a certain extent—and self-transformation endeavored. Every mystic has recourse to her or his favorite core metaphors. Some metaphors reflect the distinct psychological characteristics of these mystics or bear the imprint of their times and cultures. Other core metaphors have been passed down throughout history, and they have been increasingly recognized as symbols of a widely shared experience (widely shared, at least within the Christian world and sometimes also outside its frontiers). Among this set, the literality of some metaphors, considered signifiers, has undergone subtle changes, and the meaning of the signified has been expanded. For example, the word "darkness", which first symbolizes the unknowable nature of God, has given way to "dark night", which applies to the spiritual dynamic in its entirety. Alternatively, some metaphors keep the signifier unchanged, but their signified has changed. For example, for the Church Fathers, the word "desert" was referring to a concrete place of encounter with God, a place destined for such an encounter by its emptiness and also by its distance from the hustle and bustle. This concrete spatial anchorage has gradually evolved into a twofold mystical imagery: on the level of transcendence, it refers to the pure, indifferent, and infinite divine nature, to "divine nothingness"; on the level of immanence, the "desert" metaphor prompts people to enter into an operation of self-emptying, seeking in this way the "inner desert". Additionally, the inner desert itself is represented in the model of the divine desert. The equivalence between transcendent and immanent images allows the mystics to describe how human nature may enter into union with God (McGinn 1994).

5.1. A Process of Growth and Interaction

The above highlights a twofold principle of intelligibility: (a) metaphors are constantly "growing" throughout the interaction between experience and language. (b) Different metaphors are related to each other by virtue of their similarities or contrasts, so that the realities they refer to are connected and fused with each other, opening up a wider, new field of mystical experience. The essential emptiness and infinity of the "desert" invite people to embark on a journey, to "leave home". The infinite horizontal extension of the desert echoes the infinite vertical extension that is evoked by two other metaphors—the mountain and the abyss. In turn, these two last metaphors have seen their meaning extended. The mountain setting introduces a specific Biblical narrative: it is first and foremost the place where the prophet is called to leave the crowd and meet God. In conformity with such a narrative thread, in the writings of Gregory of Nyssa and Dionysius, the processes of ascension and purification merge into one as they clear the road that leads to the summit of divine darkness. When it comes to John of the Cross, the narratives of Mount Sinai and Mount Carmel are similarly united, while the road this time leads to "nothing" at the peak. The mountain at its highest and the abyss at its deepest seem to occupy two opposite spatial positions, but in terms of their "darkness" or "emptiness", their way of referring is identical. Saint Bernard of Clairvaux had made an extended use of the verse "Abyss calls upon abyss" (Psalm 42:8) in order to convey the following teaching: the divine abyss of God calls upon sinners, and this divine calling finds an echo in the abyss of the human heart. William of St. Thierry had spoken of the unfathomable depth of the abyss in order to describe the depth of the divine embrace: in this life, the soul sinks deeper and deeper into the embrace of the Holy Spirit (McGinn 2017, p. 216). In the case of Hadewijch, the abyss metaphor is endowed with an even more mystical and experiential significance: in love, God and Nan become a "mutual abyss". The abyss of God leads to man, and the abyss of man leads to God. Thus, most paradoxically, it is the depth, the "bottomless" of the abyss, that makes the abyss a passage, a road (Hadewijch 1980, p. 86; see also Leclercq et al. 1961, p. 435). For Hadewijch, the image of the abyss even awakens associations with "hell", here related to divine love: "Hell is the seventh name/of this love wherein I suffer./For there is nothing that love does not engulf and damn/As hell turns everything to ruin..." (Quoted in McGinn 2017, p. 204) This metaphor pushes the paradox and pain of divine love to the extreme. Though this usage of the abyss metaphor did not become widely shared, we cannot help but perceive its filiation in the way John of the Cross speaks of the agony of abandonment in the dark night of the spirit.

5.2. The Arrow and the Needle

Another common metaphor that refers to mystical suffering is "wound." Our authors typically evoke the experience of being stabbed or punctured, implying at the same time that, through such an operation, God (Divine Love) enters the soul. Thus, wound, as a metaphor for God's most intimate presence, forms an opposite with another kind of suffering: the experience of alienation, of being abandoned by God in the midst of the dark night. Teresa has recorded her mystical experience of being wounded by an angel's arrow, vividly representing how intense and violent Divine Love can be in action. Teresa presents her vision as a mystical gift. Still, we can also draw an analogy with another well-known metaphor, which, conversely, is deliberately constructed and very down-to-earth. When François de Sales describes God's work in the soul, he compares God's action of endowing the soul with virtues to the work of a needlewoman who endeavors to embroider flowers of various colors on a piece of pure white satin. The embroiderer lays the silk, gold, and silver, but the needle is never left in the satin, it merely makes the silk, gold, and silver pass. As the needle passes through the satin, beautiful flowers progressively take shape (Traité de l'amour de Dieu, 11.16 in François de Sales 1616, pp. 691-92). Hence, when God embroiders virtues into the soul, he first passes through it with "the needle of fear", causing it to feel like a prick. In this metaphor, "sting" is only the precursor of love; it manifests itself through the fear of being damned, a fear that will eventually be dispersed by the tender and sweet divine love. This metaphor is evidently softened and routinized by François de Sales, though the fear he mentions undoubtedly echoes the strong terror he was experiencing in his youth when thinking that he was possibly meant to be condemned to hell, obsessed as he was then by the idea of predestination (Bremond 1916, p. 85). Through the metaphor of embroidery, intentionally constructed, François de Sales educates his readers on the suffering involved in the process of spiritual progress while putting his own personal experience into context.

What needs to be noted in this last example is that the wound felt by the soul is no longer a highly intense, rare, and extraordinary experience (as is the case in Teresa's account), which could only be obtained at the peak of the spiritual journey. Rather, it has become the expression of the realities proper to everyday labor. François de Sales thus makes it easier for his lay readers to relate the difficulties and pains encountered in ordinary life to their spiritual and even mystical journey. The arrow has become a needle, but it is the same God who, in both cases, pierces the soul.

6. Conclusions

There are several ways of understanding and modeling the operations that allow for the cognition of things divine (starting with the model that denies the very possibility of grounding such cognition). Still, these models are interrelated and interdependent by the very fact that they share the commonalities of human language (Vermander 2023). Among these various modes, the knowledge brought by metaphor is not of the kind that is rationally deduced or induced, nor is it limited to providing "objective knowledge" expressed analogically. It does not correspond to the reception of external revelation "by faith alone." And it should not be too rapidly equated with "knowledge of the unknowable" obtained by the apophatic way. Rather, it belongs to the realm of experiential knowledge. It is to be seen as a form of practical knowledge that is acquired through personal engagement and communion with God. When Jean Gerson sought to establish "mystical theology" as an "experimental science" that elucidates a type of knowledge arising from inner experience, he drew upon Pseudo-Dionysius' distinction between the symbolic, speculative, and mystical theologies, showing that mystical theology is grounded upon the operations that take place in the innermost, that is to say, in the hearts of the devout souls, while symbolic and speculative theologies are grounded "externally" (extrinsecus) (Vermander 2023, p. 436).

The analysis I have developed on the way mystical metaphors operate may relativize Gerson's distinction between the "inside" and the "outside". Some of the metaphors favored by mystics come from direct, immediate visions; others are derived from the rational construction of daily experience; and still others may have been first unconsciously captured by the mind, taking shape in the consciousness together with the arising of a mystical experience. Metaphors themselves operate across boundaries between experience, rationality, revelation, and even the unconscious. In fact, the "inside" and the "outside" are themselves spatial metaphors related to the activity of the mind, which shows again how metaphors shape concepts and experiences. Today, working within the *episteme* proper to our time and challenging further the distinction between the inside and the outside, we could ask ourselves whether a Mobius ring or a Klein bottle would not provide us with new and more adequate metaphors when attempting to give an account of the relationship between God and the soul.

Metaphors ascribe a language/action perspective to the ineffable and the transcendent. Conversely, they confer sacred value on "ordinary" realities, inviting us to "contemplate" them. A scene, an object, or an action that is anchored into everyday realities and yet is used as a mystical metaphor is, in some sense, "consecrated." "The visible is the sacrament of the invisible" (Valentin 2001, p. 36). To borrow from Eliade's idea of religious symbolism, a symbol or metaphor causes the immediate reality to "bloom" (Eliade 1991, especially chp. 5). The verb denotes a reality that does not change in nature but that, no longer closed upon itself, opens up to another world. From the perspective of metaphor theory, metaphor is not limited to pointing out similarities between the ready-made attributes of two ready-made objects. Thanks to the structure that they confer on associations previously deprived of any, metaphors create new meanings, new similarities, and thereby define a new reality. When we connect two objects or realities through the mediation of a metaphor, our understanding of each other increases. The metaphorical association has enhanced and deepened the meaning found in each of them. The same is true for non-religious mystical experiences or, to put it another way, poetic experiences. Let us see how Georg Trakl juxtaposes "the nighting pond" with "the starry sky". The "nighting pond" is commonly considered a poetic metaphor for the "starry sky." However, Heidegger comments that the night sky, "in the truth of its nature", is the pond: what we usually call "night" becomes pale and empty when deprived of the associations in which the word is inserted, starting with the one of a pond (Heidegger 1971; Harries 1976; T. Clark 1986). Similarly, for the mystics, using "wound" as a metaphor for the action of divine love triggers a cognitive content that may be unfolded as follows: "wounding" in its essence corresponds to the effect of an act of love; the essence of love includes vulnerability; and love in act pierces, transforms, and renews the one who is loved. The same goes for "castle" as a metaphor for the structure of the

mind and for "night" when it comes to the spiritual journey. The metaphorical operation constructs a new reality, one that unites the sacred and the profane and fuses contemplation and action. In such a new reality, the mystic acts and lives "metaphorically", i.e., her inner experience is elucidated through her observation of the outer, and her outer life is radiated by her inner transformation. "Seeking and finding God in all things" means thinking and acting metaphorically, allowing metaphors to transform the way our consciousness relates to reality.

Today, we no longer live in castles, and the nights in our metropolises are certainly not shrouded in obscurity. As traditional metaphors leave real life behind, we feel that the world has been "demystified". And yet, the possibility of experiencing transcendence remains sustained by our ability to live symbolically. The creative reworking of traditional analogies and the crafting of unexpected associations and oppositions coming from the earthly realities that surround us foster new metaphors through which our inner space connects with an ever-changing external world. Ultimately, our desire to create new metaphors as well as our capacity to load with new meaning the ones we have inherited transmute our life journey into the space where an encounter with the mystery that we call God may take place.

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Notes

- For example, both for epistemological and political reasons, Hobbes assigned to himself the task of eliminating at its roots the use of metaphorical language, from which "monsters" had always arisen—even though figurative speech was constitutive of his own political science, as the eminently analogical title *Leviathan* already makes clear (see Stillman 1995). For Locke, passing sound judgment is an epistemic operation that first requires disassembling our spontaneous representations, "a way of proceeding quite contrary to Metaphors and Allusions" (*Essay on Human Understanding* II.xi.2, see S. H. Clark 1998, p. 243).
- This article privileges references to Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, and, to a lesser extent, Ignatius of Loyola and François de Sales. It tries to locate these authors in a genealogy that includes neoplatonician writers, Greek and Latin Church Fathers, as well as medieval mysticism. I also make passing references to Islamic mysticism. I am aware of the diversity of traditions and life settings covered by the term "mysticism". In her introduction to the *Cambridge Companion of Christian Mysticism* Amy Hollywood insists upon the necessity of relating mystical writings to the communal practices through which they took shape and that explain their variety. At the same time, Hollywood suggests a guiding principle that perfectly conforms to the perspective elected by the present article: "Early, medieval, and early modern Christian mysticism can best be understood as a series of ongoing experiential, communal, and textual commentaries on and debates about the possibilities and limitations of encounters between God and humanity as they occur within history, the time and place of the human as it is disrupted by the eternal God." (Hollywood 2012, p. 7) What could be called the "epistemological concern" of mystical writings helps us to interconnect texts that are otherwise strongly distinguished by their times and settings.
- I do not engage here in a discussion on "symbols", "symbolism", or "myth" in the comparative perspective initiated notably by Joseph Campbell. When it comes to this author, the nature and extent of the "knowledge" that myth and mythology would help us to attain remain ill-defined. In addition, metaphors and symbols do not always translate into myths. Teresa of Avila constructs a *metaphor* and not a *myth* of the inner castle. Still, Campbell's perspective has not been without influence on our topic: the title of the book by Lakoff and Johnson (*Metaphors We Live By*, 1980) directly refers to the best-seller of Campbell, *Myths to Live By* (Campbell 1972).
- 4 Italics are mine.
- Luce López-Baralt has related the castle imagery in Teresa of Avila to a number of Sufi medieval texts (López-Baralt 2000, esp. pp. 75–85). Though suggestive, these reapprochaents are to be considered with caution: "Seven-sectioned castles had appeared in some Sufi mystical works, but it is doubtful Teresa could have had knowledge of these, and her development of the image is quite her own. [...] The prioress's literary skill is evident in the flexible way she develops this master symbol." (McGinn 2017, p. 182). It remains true that the "soul-garden" and "water management" metaphors, shared by Teresa and John of the Cross, also

have Sufi antecedents. This may be due less to direct textual influences than to the culture and life setting created by the Arab presence in Spain.

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Article

Jesus, the Anthropologist: Patterns of Emplotment and Modes of Action in the Parables

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Abstract: This article uses a typology of action framework to analyze a selection of the gospels' parables. It does so by connecting these parables to A. G. Haudricourt and C. Ferret's research on the "anthropology of action". After summarizing Haudricourt's and Ferret's results, I relate modes of action to types of emplotment. I select four parables as the basis of my analysis, using J. P. Meier's findings as a guide for selection. I discern in these four parables four modes of emplotment, which enables me to insert them into larger narrative networks found within the gospels. I locate the corpus of narratives determined this way in the context of Jesus' time so as to better appreciate how the four modes of emplotment combine into a typology of action shaped by a specific social and cultural context. Within this typology of action, I put a spotlight on the way our corpus' modes of emplotment make use of "discontinuous actions" (coined by Ferret). "Discontinuous actions" decisively initiate or correct a specified course of events. The stress on this dimension of action applies to the relationships occurring between humans and the natural world, within the social world, and between humans and the supranatural world, thus connecting one order of reality with another.

Keywords: action (theory/typology of); emplotment; history of forms and sources; Jesus (historical); parables; synoptic gospels

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1. Introduction

There are several ways to look at the corpus constituted by the parables that the authors of the gospels attribute to Jesus.¹ One can attempt to find within them testimonies about the topics and teachings that were at the core of the historical Jesus' predication (Dodd 1935; Perrin 1967; Snodgrass 2008; Levine 2014), even though New Testament scholars nowadays navigate this line of inquiry with due caution. The unearthing of such content may focus on the message that Jesus was addressing directly to his contemporaries; it can also ground full-fledged Christological and theological developments (Käsermann 1969). It is also possible to find in the parables some indications about the putative narrator's life events or, more likely, about the social context in which these events were taking place (Van Eck 2009, 2014). Alternatively, the parables can be seen as coming from and speaking of the interpretive memory and predication developed by the first Christian communities (Zimmermann 2018). Some authors have attempted to harmonize these perspectives. For instance, Jeremias (1963) investigated the figure of the historical Jesus along with the nascent Church's narrative and doctrinal elaboration.

This article proceeds from yet another vantage point: while it relies on the findings accumulated by New Testament scholars, it primarily addresses itself to a different audience, one interested in finding in the gospels' narratives a stratum of "local knowledge", i.e., of practices and representations through which a community relates to its environment.² Although our questions widely differ from the ones asked in his time by Edmund Leach (1969, 1983), we similarly endeavor to make the biblical corpus a locus of anthropological findings.

Specifically, our goal is to detect, in the storytelling found in (part of) the parabolic corpus, a body of wisdom about the array of possible actions, reactions, and interactions triggered by a specified context, as well as about the consequences that follow the choice of such or such course of action. Thus, intending to find in the parables a depository of emic knowledge, we will recapture the features of the latter by identifying some recurring patterns of these short narratives. We will attempt to connect such "emic knowledge" to the historical Jesus while leaving space for inserting the insights found in our corpus into a body of shared representations. Informed by concerns proper to the "anthropology of action", i.e., by questions about "how people act" rather than about "why they act" (Ferret 2014), this contribution also hopes to demonstrate that the narrative springs proper to the gospels' parabolic corpus are consciously applied to three different realms: relationships among humans, relationships between humans and the natural world, and relationships between humans and the supranatural.

In order to elucidate the typology of action that is proper to the parables, we need to progress through a number of intermediate stages:

- (A) In Section 2 "Action & Narratives", we first summarize some results of the aforesaid "anthropology of action". Then, we will relate the modes of action it identifies to specific modes of emplotment. In other words, we will consider patterns of "action" and of "narration" as a whole.
- (B) In Section 3. "What Parables Did Jesus Tell?", we examine which parables may be related to the historical Jesus with a higher degree of probability than other narratives do. We thus isolate a core group of four parables.
- (C) In Section 4. "Beyond Historical Attestations: The Rhetoric of the Parables", we take into account some of the criticisms addressed to the probability approach used for the above-mentioned selection of four parables. We then insert these four core parables into networks of similar stories (narrative networks). We are thus enabled to work at two levels: (a) on a restricted corpus (i.e., the four parables) that provides basic modes of emplotment; (b) on an enlarged corpus characterized (at least in the view of some scholars) by a lower degree of probability as to its direct attribution to Jesus, but whose narrative logic fits into the patterns exhibited by the restricted corpus.
- (D) In Section 5. "Galilee: The Social & Mental", we locate our stories in the context of Jesus' time. We thus describe and assess local variables that bear upon a person or a community's election of a course of action in a specified context.
- (E) In Section 6. "From Storytelling to a Specific Typology of Action", on the basis of the above steps, we establish the typology of action to be found in our corpus. Further, Section 7. "Conclusions" will assess the significance of such findings.

2. Action and Narration

2.1. Modes of Action: Towards a Typology

In a seminal article, A.G. Haudricourt introduced the concept of modes of action on the basis of a paradigmatic opposition:

"The cultivation of yams (*Dioscorea alata* L.), as practiced by the Melanesians of New Caledonia, seems to me to be a good example of what I will call negative indirect action. There is never, so to speak, any brutal contact in space or simultaneity in time with the domesticated being. A ridge of topsoil is carefully constructed, then the seed yams are placed in it. If one wants to obtain a giant tuber, it is necessary to have arranged a vacuum there which this one will fill [...] The breeding of the sheep, such as it was practised in the Mediterranean area, seems to me on the contrary the model of the positive direct action. It requires a permanent contact with the domesticated being. The shepherd accompanies his flock night and day [...]. His action is direct: contact by the hand or the stick, clods of earth thrown with the rod, the dog which bites the sheep to direct it. His action is positive: he chooses the itinerary that he imposes on the herd at each moment". (Haudricourt 1962, pp. 41–42)

There would thus be a predominance within each society (or culture? Or civilization? The vocabulary remains imprecise) of a certain type of action. This is observable in diverse domains: it pertains as much to humans' treatment of nature (agriculture) as to humans' treatment of others (government). Carole Ferret reinterpreted and, in part, corrected Haudricourt's binary typology in the following way:

"The qualification of an action can only be relative each action being considered in relation to other alternative actions aiming at the same objective. Whatever the weight of the constraints, there are always several ways of doing things. What is significant is to know the choices made among several possible actions and to see whether, in these choices, a predilection or an aversion for certain types of action is manifest. [. . .] Each society uses a whole range of types of action (direct and indirect, interventionist and passive, continuous and discontinuous, etc.), without it always being possible or desirable to deduce from this a general propensity for this or that mode of action. [. . .] The lesson to be learned from Haudricourt is the proximity to the concrete. To know a little more about human beings, it is necessary to observe and describe their ways of acting as closely as possible". (Ferret 2012, p. 135)

The path followed by C. Ferret avoids the danger of making specific actions (tuber cultivation and sheep breeding, for instance) the paradigms of mentalities that would encompass all fields of human activity and thought. To draw from these paradigms a bipolar representation of the world (East and West, for example), as Haudricourt was tempted to do, is to expose oneself to being caught up in contradictions.³ For instance, China may well have developed a sophisticated theory of "nonaction" (wu wei),⁴ but it is hardly obvious that such theory really applied to the administration of collectives. After all, the first treatise of the Chinese encyclopedic work Guanzi (the final version of which dates from the first century A.C.) is entitled "Putting the people to pasture" (mu min), introducing the image of the shepherd where one would not expect it since the same work is also one of those which develops the theory of "non-action". Conversely, in the Palestine of the Gospel times, as evoked by the parables, the image of the shepherd is counterbalanced by that of a farmer who knows perfectly well how to act by the mere fact of not intervening: "The Kingdom of God is like a man who has thrown grain into the ground: whether he sleeps or rises, night and day, the seed sprouts and grows, he does not know how" (Mk 4:26, 27). This parable resonates perfectly with that of Mencius (372–289 BC) mentioned by Haudricourt: the man who wants to help rice grow by pulling on the stems will only uproot it (see Note 4).

Carole Ferret has thus tried to enrich the typology of modes of action by diversifying the dimensions to be taken into account. The main categories she mobilizes can be summarized as follows (see Ferret 2014):

- (a) An action is passive, active, or interventionist. (Interventionism corresponds to the highest degree of activism, such as is the action of diverting the course of rivers; *laissez-faire* corresponds to the other extremity of the dimension here described.)
- (b) An action is endogenous (the agent acts by herself), exogenous (the agent makes a third player intervene on her behalf), or participative (the agent participates in a process that goes beyond her reach).
- (c) Direct action tends entirely toward its objective, while indirect action is oblique (a wheel transforms circular movement into linear movement).
- (d) An action is positive (it leads towards an objective), negative (it prevents the accomplishment of an alternative objective), or contrary (it runs counter to the intended objective).
- (e) The action can be "internal" (pruning the plants of a garden) or "external" (working the soil of the same garden so as to obtain a specified result over the plants).⁵
- (f) Finally, the continuous action works by repetition, the discontinuous action by the irreversibility of its consequences (Ferret 2012, p. 133).⁶

When weighing these characteristics, a reader familiar with the world of the gospels' parables will immediately be struck by the number of actions evoked by the stories:: sowing the seed all around (Mk 4:3–8; Mt 13:3–8; Lk 8:4–8); letting darnel grow (Mt 13:24–30); mixing the yeast in the flour (Lk 13:21; Mt 13:33); making friends with tenants just before being fired by one's master (Lk 16:5–7); killing the son of the vineyard's owner (Mk 12:8; Mt 21:39; Lk 20:15); inviting guests to a supper (Mt 22:2–14; Lk 14:16–24); hiding money within a cloth (Lk 19:20) . . . And the same reader may tentatively attempt to locate these actions into the categories just sketched.

2.2. Enchainment of Actions as Narrative Plot

Once it is related to a mode of action, any isolated deed necessarily takes place within a plot. To put it otherwise: the chain of events that this deed provokes (or in which it is inserted) is akin to its emplotment. "Providing the 'meaning' of a story by identifying the kind of story that has been told is called explanation by emplotment. [. . .] Emplotment is the way by which a sequence of events fashioned into a story is gradually revealed to be a story of a particular kind". (White 1973, p. 7) The field investigated by White (XIXth century historical narratives) and the one constituted by our corpus are distinguishable by the fact that the scope of events considered in the parables is more restricted: there are several kinds of *events*, and *actions* are one type of events among others (the occurrence of a typhoon or the death of a character as a result of sickness correspond to other types of events). Actions (deeds, initiatives) understood as one specified type of meaningful event constitutes the privileged focus of wisdom narratives. For instance, the fact that the intervention of an agent provokes the destruction of the object of his solicitude, as shown by the story of the man "who helps rice grow" told by Mencius, constitutes both the plot and the meaning of the story.

Models of emplotment are directed by the observation of some foundational realities. In a society based on the cultivation of tubers, the fact that yam or taro clones are earnestly searched for in the fallow lands generates a style of storytelling in which the "uncultivated" (the ancestor, the foreigner—both figures characterized by the fact that they escape social constraints), once "cultivated" as a clone, becomes a source of wealth and life (Haudricourt 1964). Moreover, actions that are deeply embedded into a specified culture spontaneously suggest to the insider a specified mode of emplotment. In the case of the Yakut breeders of Siberia, a chain of discontinuous and inherently violent actions (massive but discriminating slaughter of foals, castration, formation of herds) leads, as if by itself, to a profitable optimization of horse management (Ferret 2012): the knowledge of their ultimate result filters the perception and understanding of the violent operations taking place.

More generally, actions will follow each other according to (a) a clearly perceived necessity, (b) subsequent choices that can break the spring of necessity, or yet, (c) a limited range of possibilities, a trade-off between free choice and necessity. The mechanism through which actions succeed in each other triggers a specific mode of emplotment.

3. What Parables Did Jesus Tell?

The narration of a sequence of actions conveys knowledge and wisdom about the proper way of interacting with one's environment. A specified set of narrations corresponds to a specific body of wisdom. At this point, the question of determining who is the "author" of the body of wisdom constituted by the parables found in the gospels intervenes. The "author" may be referred to as the historical Jesus, to the community he comes from, or yet to the one he fosters (the primitive Church). The response to this question is not absolutely decisive for our quest. Moreover, the three "agents' just distinguished are not easily separated one from the other. Still, investigating the question of the "author" of our corpus constitutes an excellent introduction to its critical reading. Furthermore, it will help us to come up with a reduced and more structured textual set.

3.1. Assessing Plausibility

In a long-term endeavor, John P. Meier has critically evaluated the data likely to contribute to properly historical knowledge of Jesus (see notably Meier 2016).⁷ In this regard, and in order to weigh the plausibility of the data, which are by far the most numerous, those provided by the gospel corpus, Meier has highlighted five criteria: (1) the criterion of embarrassment (the narration of facts likely to hinder the apologetic task of the early Church, such as the passage of Jesus through the baptism administered by John the Baptist, makes their assertion more credible); (2) the criterion of discontinuity, and in particular of double discontinuity when the acts and words of Jesus that are reported refer neither to the Judaism of his time nor to the practices of the early Church (Jesus' rejection of voluntary fasting); (3) the criterion of multiple independent attestations (Mark, Source Q⁹, Paul, John), especially when the attestation is based on different literary genres (narratives and speeches); (4) the criterion of coherence, when the statements and facts isolated by the preceding criteria are consistent with the historical database (concordance between the announcements of the Passion, the traditional representations of the fate of the prophets, and the execution of John the Baptist, Jesus' mentor); (5) finally, the consistency of the facts and statements recounted with what is known of the final fate of Jesus. In addition to this coordinated system, there are second-tier clues that must be handled with caution, in particular, traces of Aramaic in the reported words or echoes of the historical context.

In the next section (and while avoiding directly engaging in exegetical controversies), we will assess the consequences to be drawn from the fact that recent scholarship has severely challenged the very notion of authenticity criteria. Dale Alison has pointed out the fact that the use of such criteria leads to an atomistic approach to the New Testament corpus. In contrast, collective memory (the agency of which is central in the production of the gospels) focuses on general outlines rather than on details (Alison 2010). Theories that recognize in the gospels a product of collective memory are prone to posit that the process through which early Christians remembered and understood Jesus makes the historical figure of the latter (including the distinction between what he may and may not have said) unattainable, (Keith 2016). For Keith, this implies that "memory theory" and traditional historical criticisms are two mutually exclusive approaches. While recognizing the strength of these arguments, one remains entitled to follow the more pragmatic line defended by Hägerland (2015), who suggests that we should "problematize" the authenticity criteria: the critical evaluation of textual data is but one step in the process of elaborating scholarly accounts that may offer an interpretative framework where to insert philological or yet historical findings with due hermeneutical attentiveness.

Let me thus conciliate the taking into account of the authenticity criteria with approaches of the gospels not grounded upon them. Starting with the former: in the view propounded by Meier, and in conformity with the overall design of his endeavor, authenticity criteria help to assess the plausibility of the direct attribution of the parables to the historical Jesus (the only aspect of Meier's investigation that is of interest to us here) rather than imputing their writing to the literary creativity of the evangelist or to the purpose of the first ecclesial communities. The definition of the term "Parables" conditions the estimation of their number and, therefore, the extension of the corpus upon which to apply the criteria. Depending on the interpreter, the number of parables contained in the synoptic gospel oscillates between twenty-nine and sixty-five. A sapiential tale, a simple metaphor, a story with an enigma . . . where does the parable begin and end? Meier privileges a definition of the parable according to which the model pursued by Jesus is found in the short stories with allegorical significance, rather than in the wisdom literature and the proverbs that the latter contains, a definition I will adopt here. 11

3.2. *Applying Criteria*

While the criterion of multiple attestations allows one to affirm that "Jesus taught in parables," it is much more difficult to answer the question "but what parables did he tell?" To relate such or such parable directly to Jesus' teaching mobilizes, first and foremost, the

criterion of multiple attestations. However, the use of this specific criterion happens to be much more limited than originally foreseen, at least when, following Meier's conclusions, one does not identify in *the Coptic Gospel of Thomas* an autonomous source, but one rather discerns in it a work based upon the earlier synoptic writings, which deprives it of any independent value of attestation.¹² It then becomes necessary to make sure that a specified parable is present simultaneously in the Gospel of Mark and in Q (or, alternatively, in Mark and Matthew and/or Luke without recourse from the latter either to Mark or to Q, or again in Matthew and Luke according to two independent sources).¹³ As we shall see, the other criteria also play their part, as the criterion of multiple attestations would prove too rigorous a test: "Only the Mustard Seed, as a Mark-Q overlap, clearly enjoys multiple attestation". (Meier 2016, p. 194)

Eventually, this work of elucidation leads to the isolation of four parables that can be directly referred to the historical Jesus: (1) the Mustard Seed (Mk 4:30–32; Mt 13:31–32; Lk 13:18–19); (2) the Homicidal Vinedressers (Mk 12:1–11; Mt 21:33–43; Lk 20:9–18); (3) the Great Supper (Mt 22:2–14; Lk 14:16–24); and (4) the parable known as one of the Talents (or Mines) (Mt 25:14–30; Lk 19:11–227). Thus, paying our due to the methodological cautiousness propounded by the school of historical criticism, we will recognize in these four parables the stratum that enjoys the highest degree of probability in terms of the quest for "authenticity". An additional factor will encourage us to privilege this narrative kernel: each of these parables corresponds to a singular emplotment model (see Section 6). The mere mention of this second factor already points toward the next step in our inquiry: the nature of our investigation leads us to look for a middle way between approaches centered on the historical Jesus, on the one hand and, on the other hand, scholarship concerned with both memory theory and larger units than the ones isolated by *Formgeschichte*. As already indicated, I thus adopt for my own purpose the line of critical conciliation propounded by Hägerland (2015).

4. Beyond Historical Attestations: The Rhetoric of the Parables

With the need to explain why one finds such a large number of parables in the Gospels (while the genre is under-represented in the Hebrew Bible and non-existent in the rest of the New Testament) and why, in contrast, his inquiry isolates so restricted a corpus, Meier suggests the following: by narrating parables, Jesus would have shown his direct followers how to compose similarly memorable stories. Hence the proliferation of parables that would have been written between Jesus' death and the end of the first century. Though grounded in rigorous, step-by-step reasoning, Meier's approach has been submitted to at least three lines of criticism.

4.1. The Limits of Historical-Critical Methods

The first line of criticisms runs as follows: the minimalistic approach and results propounded by Meier are of little help when one focuses upon what should be the central question, i.e., the way the collective memory of Jesus as a parable teller has shaped a community through typifications and repetitions (Zimmermann 2018). The pursuit of textual material directly related to the historical Jesus finds its extreme limit in the study of the "authenticity" of the parables. Conversely, examining the shaping of the New Testament literary genres, among them the parables, as a way of remembering Jesus links together the teaching of the latter and the process of transmission. Transmission operates by defining and strengthening the forms (the genres) in which a specified content will be encapsulated. The stabilization of the genre goes together with the diversification of its usages: "Whoever has embraced or has been infused with the form of the parable will, in the process of remembering and re-telling, rightly carry out adaptations and assimilations. He or she will not simply recount a parable, but also retell and re-present it in new and different ways. [...] Parables are thus not only historical sources or witnesses of redactional narrative work. They are mimetic texts that bring the remembering of Jesus to life". (Zimmermann

2018, pp. 167–68) This change of focus relativizes the relevance of Meier's inquiry without fully invalidating it.

We have noted that the second line of criticism attacks the validity of the authenticity criteria. Apart from the reasons already indicated, some authors also contend that taking the existence of Q as provided is problematic: a theory about the Gospels' textual origins should not govern the reading of the text (Snodgrass 2017, p. 137; see also Campbell 2016). Moreover, parabolic and non-parabolic materials should be considered together in order to attain a fairer view of the former. Additionally, the distinctiveness of Jesus' parables is striking to the extent that implying that some of the most characteristic stories would have been created through a process of imitation is extremely hazardous (Snodgrass 2017).

The third line of criticism links together a variety of approaches—"rhetorical criticism" (Kennedy 1984), narratology (Rhoads and Michie 1982; Anderson and Moore 1992), "rhetorical narratology" (which attempts to reconcile the two aforementioned lines of inquiry, see Dinkler 2016), or yet "Biblical [structural] rhetoric" (critical of the former approaches' reliance on Greek-Roman rhetoric and poetic—see Meynet (2012); similar perspective already suggested in Bailey (1983)). These various schools all stress the following: rather than dividing the text into small, discrete units, one should approach the text as a whole so as to discern the structural features that govern its organization. For instance, in Biblical Rhetoric, various forms of ring composition as well as mechanisms such as juxtaposition and deuterosis play a central role in structuring the material, and the unearthing of such forms helps the reader to better apprehend what the text aims at showing (Meynet 2012).

As an example, the attention provided to the textual organization immediately reveals an intriguing feature of one of the four parables that Meier directly attributes to Jesus: in Matthew and Luke, the parable of the Mustard Seed (Mt 13, 30–32; Lk 13, 18–19) is immediately followed by the verse: "The kingdom of Heaven is like the yeast a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour till it was leavened all through". (Mt 13:33—ibid. in Lk 13:21, separated in the second instance by the mention" "Again he said, 'What shall I compare the kingdom of God with?'") This shows that these two parables are actually one, articulated and united by the parallelism established between "a man" and "a woman". Even without multiple attestations, there is every reason to consider that the redactor/compiler of Q did not invent the parable of the Yeast. Rather, the original storytelling was most probably based on a man/woman symmetry (cf. Meynet 2011, pp. 584–87). The reading of other passages would reveal similar textual solidarities, which makes the fact of isolating a specified parable from its context a questionable operation.

4.2. Networks of Stories

Though these three lines of criticism differ in inspiration, it seems to me that one way of drawing profit from their crisscrossing leads one to articulate less a rebuttal than a corrective of Meier's approach—a corrective that lets intact one of its main results while considerably enriching our material. The idea runs as follows: as we already know, Meier identifies four parables exhibiting a more probable direct connection to the storytelling conducted by the historical Jesus—the Mustard Seed; the Homicidal Winegrowers; the Great Supper; and the Talents. I propose to see these stories as being *networked with other narratives* in ways indicated both by their immediate content and by narrative/rhetorical analysis. In other words, I discern in these stories four *matrix plots* susceptible to receiving a number of variants and addenda. These variants remain close to the original storytelling. At times, as we have seen with the Mustard Seed and the Yeast parables, one may even assert that two networked stories constitute one and the same narrative. Put otherwise, the stories that we are able to connect with the four "matrix stories' could as well belong to Jesus' original storytelling as constitute a variant drawn by recorders/editors.

Even though this standpoint enriches our corpus, it still leads us to concentrate on a restricted number of storylines. We do not include, for instance, the parable of the Good Samaritan in our corpus: "The parable of the Good Samaritan is a pure creation of Luke the evangelist". (Meier 2016, p. 51) For sure, it can be argued that, contrary to Meier's

assertion, this story is to be directly related to Jesus' parabolic corpus (see Snodgrass 2017), though evidence in this regard is elusive. Still, even if one adopts this position, the "Good Samaritan" does not easily connect with our four matrix stories and probably constitutes a narrative category by itself. In any case, the combination of Meier's approach with others more sensitive to the memorial, literary, and structural dimensions helps one to determine at least *some* of the models of emplotment that govern Jesus' storytelling. This does not imply that other emplotment models could not be found if the corpus were to be enlarged. As we will see, the material harvested this way is already rich enough. In Section 6 of this article, we will thus gather additional stories around our four main narratives, and, more importantly, we will discern in each of these sets a specific emplotment model.

5. Galilee: The Social and the Mental

Before organizing our typology further around the four matrix plots identified, we need to fulfill an additional task. Presenting the context in which Jesus delivers parables (continued and/or edited by his immediate successors) will help us to better grasp the social and cultural anchorage of the actions and narrative sequences found in the parables.

5.1. Scarcity and Reciprocity

Studies of Galilee and Judea in the period covered by the Gospels have benefited greatly from the approaches developed by social and cultural anthropology (Malina 1986, Malina [1981] 1993, 2002; Hanson and Oakman 1998; Fiensy 2007; Oakman 2008; Neyrey and Steward 2008). By the beginning of the first century AD and in the period immediately preceding it, peasant society in Palestine was marked by a clear-cut opposition between landowners and those (the vast majority) to whom the landowners conceded land, tools, and seeds in exchange for a specified portion of the harvest, to which benefits in kind were sometimes added (Carney 1973, pp. 100-3; Hopkins 2002, p. 204). The total could amount to half the product of the harvest or even more. There were also (in much smaller proportions) taxes to be paid to the Roman power (tributum soli and tributum capitis) and to the Herodian power. Additionally, offerings required by the authorities of the Temple in Jerusalem were to be made (Applebaum 1977; Sawicki 2000; Van Eck 2014). 14 (In contrast, since 6 A.D., the priestly aristocracy controlled the territory of Judea under the supervision of a Roman Prefect.) The landowner had his steward directly exploit part of his estates. A portion of the land probably belonged to a numerically small class of "middle peasants," although the nature and existence of this class remain debated (Oakman 2008). In any case, this class of middle peasants probably shrank further during the reigns of Herod the Great (r. 37—4 BC) and Herod Antipas (r. 4 BC-39 AD) because of debts incurred when harvests failed, the usurious rate of borrowing forcing small or middle peasant owners to surrender their land to pay off their arrears (Applebaum 1977; Goodman 1987; Oakman 2008, 2012).

The contract, written or not, was leaving much to chance: the pressure exerted on the tenant farmers by drought, illness, or a sudden increase in the amount of taxes to be paid was met (or not) by the free intervention of the landlord, who, if he was willing to release the tenant farmer from part of his obligations, would then "give/forgive]/consent/grant a favor"—all the nuances summed up by the verb *charizomai*. Such an attitude, in turn, brings honor and status to the owner, transforming an essentially mercantile relationship into a patron-client one (Landé 1977, p. xxi). When the landlord was "granting favor", the relationship between the haves and the haves-not was entering into the realm of generalized reciprocity (Malina [1981] 1993, pp. 90–116). Generalized reciprocity constituted a specific mode of exchange: as for material goods, fame and honor were in limited supply (see Jn 3:30), and someone's increase in honor was someone else's increase in shame (Neyrey 1998). In any case, transiting from a mercantile to a patron-client type of relationship was by no means an automatic process. Around the time of Jesus, the changes in the patrimonial structure often made such transitioning unlikely: as a corollary of the establishment of a colonial system, large estates were controlled by mostly absentee landlords (members of the Herodian family rather than the Jewish aristocracy). Stewards (oikonomoi) and middlemen

were substituting for landlords¹⁵, and they resorted to violence to collect rent (Mk 12:9). Tax collectors were personally responsible for obtaining a predetermined product (Mt 18:23–34).

5.2. Skills and Professional Culture

The Palestinian villagers of the first century AD were mostly "generalists" whose skills extended beyond cultivating the fields. The agricultural cycle was freeing up time for building houses or silos (Lk 6:48–49; Lk 14:28–29). The peasant could also rent out his services by the day. Workers in excess were employed in the large estates. The organization of work and the relations within the community were heavily affected by climatic, financial, and political hazards, their impact redoubled by the narrow margin between subsistence and famine and, as a result, the strong tension that marked the lean periods.

The culture of the group of fishermen working around Lake Tiberias (also called the Sea of Galilee) should probably be distinguished from the culture of the peasants (Hanson 1997). Yet, there were common features between them: similar to the farmers, fishermen also suffered from the level and multiplicity of taxes imposed on them by the state. There were also differences in status among them, between boat owners and workers (Mk 1:20 et al.). However, fishermen were united by a specific professional culture and consciousness. For example, the nets required a great deal of attention: not only did the fishermen and their workers make them, but after each fishing expedition, the nets had to be mended, washed, dried, and folded (Mark 1:19). Jesus' proclamation found its first, perhaps even its main, audience in the villages and towns of the fishermen of Galilee. His preaching from a boat (the water carrying his voice farther to the shore by an amplification effect), his crossings of the lake, and the incidents marking the visits to the villages around the shores ended up constituting the privileged *setting of* the stories peddled by the first groups of disciples.

Contextualizing the parables (obviously, the above constitutes only an extremely rough summary of the work already completed to that effect) greatly increases their depth and expressiveness. For their auditors, the fact of experiencing a heavy tax burden and weak grain product at the same time was amplifying the dramatic tension of narratives having to do with sowing, growth, and harvest, and well-publicized conflicts centering on land appropriation were making the parables of the Homicidal Vinedressers particularly vivid (Kloppenborg 2006). In Luke 16:1–13, the *charizomai* that the owner could mobilize is adroitly appropriated by the so-called "unjust" steward. In the same line, the symbolic and economic importance provided to the exercise of *charizomai* (with the honor/shame connotation attached to such exercise) increases the stakes attached to the fact of accepting or rejecting the invitation sent by the rich man (or the King) of the Great Supper parable (Mt 22:2–14; Lk 14:16–24). Put otherwise, the parables were unveiling the full intensity of situations and options that were deeply embedded into the experience of their listeners.

6. From Storytelling to a Specific Typology of Action

Let us now characterize the mode of emplotment proper to each of the four *narrative networks* already identified before approaching them as an interconnected whole.

6.1. The Mustard Seed Storyline [Mk, Mt, Lk] and Related Parables; The Unlimited Potential of Discontinuous Actions

From one version to the other of the Mustard Seed story, the same structure can be identified:

- A comparison between the Kingdom of God and everyday realities is introduced.
- A mustard seed (reported as the smallest of all the seeds in two of the versions) is *sown* in the soil, a field, and a garden.
- This grain *grows* until it becomes "the largest vegetable plant" (two versions) which can be compared to a tree (two versions).

The *result of the* growth is that the birds lodge on the branches or in the shade of the shrub produced.

As already noted, the Yeast parable (Lk 13:21; Mt 13:33) not only belongs to the same narrative network but is most probably part of the original parable. Fecundity, after all, comes from the association of feminine and masculine components. Apart from the fact that the man *sows* a seed in the soil while the woman *hides* yeast in the flour resonates as a discreet evocation of the reproductive process. Additionally, the three measures of flour (which correspond to 45 L, enough for a very great number of guests) refer to Gn.18:6: Sara prepares bread for three guests with three measures of flour, and the hospitality shown by Abraham and his wife will result in Sara conceiving a son (Meynet 2011, p. 587). Fecundity finds its highest expression in human birth.

The basic sowing/growing/harvesting narrative model connects the Mustard and Yeast parables to the ones of the Sower (Mk 4:3–9) and of the Growing Seed (Mk 4:26–29—not retained in Meier's corpus as it fails the test of the multiple attestation criterion) into the same network. The Growing Seed parable illustrates the well-known topic of the "passive action" that brings fruit by itself, attributed preferentially by Haudricourt to East Asian societies in contrast to the "active intervention" he thought typical of the Mediterranean world. The connection extends to the parable of the Darnel sown among the wheat (Mt 13:24–30). Though this parable does not explicitly stress the abundance of the harvest, it insists on the necessity not to intervene after the initial action has been performed. The gathering of these stories as a whole brings to light two characteristics:

- (1) They all highlight an initial action—sowing or mixing yeast in the flour—which is discontinuous in nature: no subsequent action is required, and the consequences of the initiative turn out to be inescapable. In the case of the Mustard Seed story, the impression of inescapability is reinforced by choice of the species: Pliny writes of wild mustard that "it is extremely difficult to rid the soil of it when once sown there, the seed when it falls germinating immediately". (Natural History, XIX-54 (Pliny the Elder 1856, p. 197)).
- (2) Maybe with the exception of the Darnel parable (although the final mention of the granaries where the wheat is gathered still introduces the theme of plentifulness), all stories emphasize the contrast between the minuteness of the initial action and of its object, on the one hand, and bountiful results, on the other hand. (In the case of the parable of the Sower, such consequence happens only in one of the cases being discussed, but, then, the harvest is described as being especially plentiful). An initial commitment is fraught with consequences that go beyond predictions—in this case, happy and fruitful consequences.

6.2. The Homicidal Vinedressers [Mk, Mt, Lk] and the Fig Tree: A Reverse Image of the Growth Process

The long developments of the parable of the Homicidal Vinedressers contrast with the brevity of the Mustard Seed story. This prolixity stems from a marked embarrassment on the part of the narrators. In fact, it is less the argument of multiple attestations (doubtful here) than the "criterion of embarrassment" that leads to Meier's conclusion that the story is original (see below). Beyond the differences noted from one version to another, the skeleton of the story reveals the latent difficulty the narrators had to meet with:

- An introduction sees an owner planting a vineyard and entrusting it to tenants.
- The owner sends servants to claim the product of the vineyard. With variations from one version to another, the servants are rejected, beaten, or even put to death.
- The owner sends his son, believing that he will be respected.
- So as to monopolize the inheritance, the tenants kill the son, and they leave his corpse outside the vineyard without burial.

It is in the exchange that, in all versions, follows the story proper and concludes the parable that the difficulty comes to light: if the original version ended, according to all the textual clues, with the murder of the son, the (embarrassed) conclusion added to it

is twofold: (a) an exchange with the interlocutors, who recognize that punishment will come and that the vineyard will be transferred to others; (b) the intervention of Jesus who, on a scriptural basis, makes the rejected son the cornerstone of the future vineyard. The discomfort with the original conclusion experienced by the early community most likely led to the rewriting of the end against a background of triumph and resurrection. Such observation further emphasizes the fact that this parable is a tragic mirror image of the parable of the mustard seed: the initial commitment of the owner meets with counter-actions that trigger death and destruction rather than a fecundity. The son that the parable of the Yeast discreetly evokes through the reference to Gn.18 is here put to death. Conclusion: once it has been set into motion, a process of destruction unfolds to its end, exactly as is the case, but in reverse, with a genuine growth process.

Whatever the exegetical difficulties raised by Meier, the fact that this story knows three versions with differences in accent (though the conclusion reached just now is valid for the three) already makes the parable part of a narrative network formed by its inner variants. The explicit reference to Is.5 also connects the story with the limited corpus of the Old Testament parables and, what is more, with its most representative specimen. Additionally, Mathew's and Mark's versions of the story insert into the same textual ensemble the story of the fig tree that withers after it is cursed by Jesus for not bearing figs (the fig tree story becomes a parable in Lk 13:6–9). This enigmatic story announces the parable that soon follows and the logic it describes; the fact of not bearing fruit (or of withholding the fruit one brings) leads to death. This narrative network is a mirror image of the one initiated by the Mustard Seed story.

6.3. The Great Supper [Mt, Lk] and Related Stories: From Reciprocity to Gratuitousness

With no equivalent in Mark, the versions of the parable preserved in Matthew and Luke can be considered independent of each other, at least on the basis of their extended lexical differences. Their comparison is further complicated by the autonomous developments that Matthew embeds in the central story (historically triggered by the destruction of Jerusalem), but the common structure is clear:

- A man (perhaps a king) provides a great banquet (possibly a wedding feast for his son).
- He sends one or more slaves to summon guests. These guests seem to have a certain social status and possess riches.
- The same guests, pretexting their business, refuse to come (whereas things were undoubtedly already settled, which suggests an existing network of relationships between the different actors), thus causing a serious affront to the host.
- Consequently, the latter sends his slaves to gather people of much more modest conditions, and the room of the banquet is eventually filled to capacity.

In Luke, the parable is preceded by a saying of Jesus that both describes the logic of gift and counter gift observable in most traditional societies and beyond (Mauss [1925] 2016) and challenges it to its core, at least when it comes to its effect on social relationships: "When you give a lunch or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relations or rich neighbors, in case they invite you back and so repay you. No; when you have a party, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind; then you will be blessed, for they have no means to repay you and so you will be repaid when the upright rise again". (Lk 14:12–14) As to Matthew, he inserts the parable between the one of the Homicidal Vinedressers (the two stories may be seen as a pair) and Jesus' answer to the question of whether it is permissible to pay taxes to Caesar: "Pay Caesar what belongs to Caesar—and God what belongs to God". (Mt 22:21) For both Matthew and Luke, questions raised by the exchange of gifts, free or forced, trigger a narrative thread that extends to other stories, notably the ones of the Unjust (or rather of the Astute) Steward (Lk 16:1–8) and of the Workers in the Vineyard (Mt 20:1–16). "Have I no right to do what I like with my own?" (Mt 20:15)

The Great Supper parable describes the double transgression that affects the principle of reciprocal obligation inscribed into the social fabric. The guests refuse to enter into the dynamic of reciprocity triggered by invitation to a feast. The host of the banquet also defies the logic of gift and counter-gift, this time by inviting people unable to reciprocate (hence the link with the saying recorded in Lk 14:12–14).

Somehow, the Great Supper storyline addresses the tension existing between the two preceding modes of emplotment, i.e., the ineluctability inherent to the processes of both growth and destruction. Once the dynamic of reciprocity that the invitations had launched has been reverted into its contrary by the guests' rebuff (which reduplicates the attitude of the Vinedressers—in Mt 22:6, the guests even proceed to kill the King's envoys), there is indeed a destructive drive irremediably launched: the one governing the relationship between the host and the original guests, the host's honor having been converted into shame. However, and most importantly, a new dynamic of growth is launched by the fact of liberating the gifting (the invitation to the banquet) from the necessity of offering and receiving a counter-gift. Through such reversal, and as in the Mustard Seed storyline, the fruition reaches its fullest, "the wedding hall [being] filled with guests". (Mt 22:10; see also Lk 14:23). A discontinuous action that counters a process of social disintegration renews the impetus of life. Here, a question may be raised; is the action truly discontinuous? Contrary to the Mustard Seed storyline, the course of events is marked by effort and repetition: the servants will need to painstakingly gather the new guests. Still, and even if the host's initiative requires a series of direct, positive actions entrusted to the servants, the action changes the extent and nature of the network of social relationships irremediably. It is discontinuous in so far as it constitutes both a breakdown and a breakthrough.

6.4. The Talents (or Mines) [Mt; Lk] and Related Stories: Growth as a Result of Risk-taking

When assessing the status of the Talents (or Mines¹⁶) parable, Meier mobilizes the same criterion as for the Great Supper: the lexical gap between the two versions goes far beyond what the differences in writing style would imply, which suggests that Matthew and Luke received the story from different sources. This time, it is not Matthew but Luke who inserts a second narrative into the story.¹⁷ If we disregard this insertion, we obtain the following primitive narrative:¹⁸

- A (noble) man goes on a journey and summons his slaves (three or ten).
- He entrusts each one with a different amount of money, with the same instruction: to make it grow.
- On his return, he settles the accounts with them.
- The first servants happen to have secured exceptional returns, in absolute amount (Matthew) or in relative gain (Luke). The master congratulates them, and he entrusts them with accrued responsibilities.
- A long, intense exchange follows. The remaining servant had buried his capital rather than make it bear fruit, afraid as he was (he explains) of the harshness of his greedy master. He returns the initial sum. The master severely blames him, and he transfers the deposit to the most deserving of the servants.

The conclusion, though common to Matthew and Luke, seems not to be primitive but rather to borrow from a proverb that was then in common use but may not be entirely appropriate to the story ("anyone who has not, will be deprived even of what he has"), though the judgment on the adequacy of the proverb to the story may differ. Whether the recalcitrant slave received a more severe punishment in the early version remains a matter of debate. Three connected features stand at the center of the parable: the discretionary power of the master; the resulting duty of obedience for the servant, including the risks that such obedience may entail; the reward, unpromised and yet certain, that awaits the one who shoulders such a duty and such a risk.

The narrative network into which to insert the story first leads us towards the Judgment of Solomon (1R 3:16–28): similar to the King when deciding between two claimants,

the master judges the unproductive servant "out of [his] own mouth" (Lk 19:22). The observation is not trivial: the judgment that takes place at the end of the story is primarily a mere factual assessment. Different decisions naturally produce different results: "Your one pound has brought in ten [or five]", say the servants who took a risk (Lk 19:16–18) (note the passive form of the sentence). Fruitfulness has a logic of its own, independent of the efforts that have been spent. The fact is confirmed by the master when he speaks to the last servant: "Then why did you not put my money in the bank? On my return I could have drawn it out with interest". (Lk 19:23) This last observation connects our parable with ... the Mustard Seed emplotment model since, in both cases, an initial "sowing" potentially brings in abundant results. The association between risk-taking and plentifulness is particularly underlined by both the Sower and the Talents parables. "Sowing" contrasts with "burying": the unproductive servant in Matthew hides the money in the ground (Mt 25:25); in Luke, he wraps it up in a cloth (Lk 19:20). The "corrective" action of the master makes even more obvious the results attached to the two logics put into parallel; what has not yet fructified will be entrusted to a risk-taker, who will not spare the resources at his disposal, and, as was the case in the parable of the Great Supper ("not one of those who were invited shall have a taste of my banquet" Lk 14:24), the one who has not entered into the logic of gifting, sowing and risk-taking will find himself totally dispossessed ("anyone who has not, will be deprived even of what he has" Mt 25:29). In Matthew, this parable is immediately followed by the narrative of the Last Judgement, centered upon the ultimate fruitfulness of all gifts, however small they may look. In contrast, not performing the deeds that are within one's reach, and avoiding engaging in risk-taking, amounts to engineering one's destruction. The transition between the parable of the Mines and one of the Last Judgement is ensured by a sentence proper to Matthew: "As for this good-for-nothing servant, throw him into the darkness outside, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth". (Mt 25:30).

6.5. Unearthing a Meta-Narrative Matrix

When taken as a whole, our four narrative matrixes combine into a kind of meta-matrix, which can be described as follows: the Mustard Seed and the Homicidal Vinedressers parables (as well as the stories that can be associated with them) are straightforward narratives, which, as already noted, mirror each other. In both cases, the stress is on a discontinuous action whose consequences are inescapable: the sowing of a seed results in bountifulness; the killing of the envoys leads to the murder of the son of the owner, and, from there, to ultimate destruction. The Great Supper and the Talents narrative matrixes complicate the previous storyline by the insertion of a counter-action. In the Great Supper narrative, the destructive logic initiated by the refusal of the hosts to attend the banquet (a refusal similar, as underlined by Mt. 22:6, to the action taken by the homicidal vinedressers) is reversed by the decisive counter-action of the master who suddenly directs invitations towards people unable to reciprocate. The Talents storyline speaks of a process of growth initiated by the deposit that a master entrusts to his servants. This process is hampered by a counter-action: the servant puts the "seed money" into a cloth. The fact that the master eventually transfers the seed money to another servant certainly corresponds to a new counter-action, but, without doubt, the accent of the story lies upon the first counter-action—the lazy (or fearful) servant's death-inducing (lack of) initiative.

The imbrication between our four storylines can thus be formalized as follows (Figure 1):

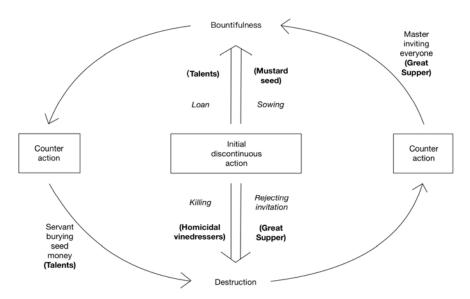


Figure 1. Meta-narrative suggested by the crisscrossing of four core storylines.

6.6. *Initiating and Re-Initiating*

Beyond the question of their authorship, and as their traditional reading rightly emphasize, the parables speak of the coming of the "Kingdom" (basileia): its inevitability as well as its active presence in almost imperceptible realities (the Mustard Seed); the opposition encountered by an envoy inscribed into the chain of prophets put to death (the Vinedressers); the transfer of the promises of the Kingdom from a restricted community to another that will be, in its principle, unlimited (the Great Supper); the commitment, to risk-taking that true obedience leads the listener to enter into (the Talents). Such spiritual teaching bases itself upon the reading of natural and social phenomena that offer the audience a glimpse at ultimate realities.

In each of the four narrative networks (and also in the meta-narrative they together design), the themes of inevitability and decision are subtly linked. In the first story, the inevitability of the final result (the plant becomes home for the birds) seems to be that of the natural process itself. However, the contextualization of the parable reveals that this process also applies to social realities: as we have seen, the narrative is hardly separable from those of the Sower, of the Growing Seed, of the Leaven, and of the Darnel. In all cases, allowing for growth is by itself a decision; growth is the result of both an inevitability and a choice. Note that when a man takes a mustard seed and sows it "in his field" (Mt 13:31) rather than "in a garden" (Lk 13:19), the product of the seed can be likened to a parasitic plant, as is the darnel mentioned by Matthew immediately before the Mustard Seed story (birdies are grain robbers that parasitize the crop once they gather in the shade of the shrub), and yet the agent of the parable lets the plant grow. Similarly, the description of the act of sowing "in all directions", as does the Sower of the story, associates the growth of the seed with a peculiar type of behavior. In sharp contrast, the inevitability becomes that of destruction in the parable of the Vinedressers: the decision not to "return the fruit" leads naturally to the one of "appropriating the inheritance" and then murdering the son.

In the parable of the Talents, the enterprising servants combine the "letting grow" and the "giving back" into one and the same process. In return, they are provided "much" (Mt 25:21) or (in the way Luke specifies their reward) the command of a city for every mine they have earned (Lk 19:17). Originally, the process of exchange and growth was inseparable from the dynamism of life itself. The parable of the Mustard Seed vividly illustrates such propensity. However, life dynamism can be hindered by the refusal of some of the members of a specified community to engage in the conduct that sustains this process of growth and exchange. The parable of the Great Supper exemplifies such refusal. The first guests were chosen because they were part of a presumably high-level patron–client network (a fact induced from the elevated, perhaps royal, status of the inviter)—a network they choose to

break with various justifications: purchase of land or of five pairs of oxen, or yet marriage (Lk 14:18–20). Such an interruption of the exchange, which greatly weakens the social capital of the inviter, breaks the multiplication of the benefits that could be expected in the course of time. However, at this point, a new note is heard: the "growth" will turn out to be that of the number of guests who, in the end, fill the room—similar to the birds come to "inhabit" (kataskēnoō) the great vegetable plant that springs up from the ground. Guests and birds do so without having to offer any counterpart. The "network" meal is transformed into a communal meal (on the contrast between these two types of meals in the Roman Empire and in an even wider area, cf. Jones 2007, pp. 225–26). An unexpected decision re-launches the process of growth through a mechanism that transmutes reciprocity into gratuitousness.

We can then summarize the "modes of action" that these four texts allow us to identify once we cross-reference the lessons or suggestions that each one contains:

- The lessons to be drawn from natural realities lead the wise observer to provide precedence to growth factors over any other consideration and to similarly prioritize processes conducive to growth in the social and supranatural realms.
- The process of unimpaired growth is nurtured by a logic of uninterrupted exchange.
- Exchange is activated by two mechanisms: obligation (contractual, statutory, or moral); and risk-taking.
- Interrupting the exchange induces a reverse dynamic, that of destruction unless it can be restarted on the basis of an initiative (a discontinuous counter-action, often characterized by risk-taking) that will change the very nature of the relationships at stake.
- In the end, our narratives illustrate the workings of the logic of reciprocity and risk-taking in society. They also exemplify the crises that the breaking-down of such logic produces, and they suggest to transmute reciprocity into gratuitousness so as to transcend the "inescapable" character attached to both the triggering of social mechanisms and the consequences of their dysfunctions.

Such results are certainly not trivial. Coming back to the typology of action sketched by Carole Ferret (2012, 2014), we observe the emphasis put over discontinuous actions (with the character of inevitability that goes with them) over continuous workings. We also observe the prominence provided to passive action (letting the grain grow, letting the servants or the vinedressers operate) over an active intervention (as would be the fact of discarding the darnel). When an active intervention takes place, it is both corrective and discontinuous. Furthermore, since the actions gathered within our corpus are all inserted into a nexus of social interactions or else into natural processes, they are on the whole "participative" rather than strictly "endogenous" or "exogenous". Therefore, the discontinuous, passive and participative dimensions of action are the ones privileged by parabolic emplotment, and the introduction of counter-actions that are preferentially active and discontinuous (at least when they are life-inducing 19) complements the emplotment models developed by our corpus.

7. Conclusions

Jesus, the anthropologist? Though the expression is obviously far-fetched, it has the merit to point out the following: (1) Not only are a few stories attributable directly to the historical Jesus, at least on a probability slider but also are there related narratives that depend upon the modes of emplotment found in the former. (2) These stories unfold social mechanisms at work in a specified social and cultural environment. Unveiling the (sometimes unintended) consequences of certain courses of action, they are part of a trove of "local knowledge". (3) The description of these mechanisms sketches a global apprehension of social exchange; on a first level, the narrator of the parables analyzes social mechanisms as a "given"; on a second level, he directs pointed criticisms toward them.

As discussed in Sections Three and Four of the present article, our selection of representative narratives is probably incomplete: the modes of action evoked by the four

storylines identified differ significantly from those suggested by the figure of the shepherd, found in Lk 15:3–7 (the Lost Sheep) or in Chapter 10 of John's gospel. Still, these four narratives remarkably confirm Haudricourt's observation according to which "modes of action" correlate quite logically the treatment of nature with the one of the Other: processes of growth in the cultivated fields and in social relationships (including in the fiduciary world) seem to obey similar laws, At the same time, the correction made by C. Ferret to Haudricourt's approach is validated: each society resorts to a range of modes of action, and we should not be in a hurry to identify a "propensity" towards such or such way of proceeding that a specified society would supposedly exhibit.

Sure enough, the historical Jesus is not an impassive observer of social mechanisms. In our corpus, judgments of fact and of value are hardly separable. Moreover, narratives loaded with social content also resonate with spiritual teaching. The term "spiritual" must be specified: the coming of the Kingdom cannot be separated from the coming of the justice ($dikaios un\bar{e}$) that it calls for. All things considered, the understanding of realities that are properly spiritual seems to postulate the deciphering of social workings. The way our societies operate and the reasons that explain the flowering and withering of our communities may well constitute one of the enigmas that have remained "hidden since the foundation of the world" (Mt 13:35).

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Notes

- The Greek term of the Septuagint, *parabol*ē translates the Hebrew *māšāl*, which is very polysemous. I do not enter here into the overabundant history of the interpretation of parables. One can consult, for example, (Snodgrass 2008), a late fruit of the exegetical schools developed since Adolf Jülicher (1857–1938) (on the latter's exegetical principles, consult Van Eck 2009).
- As one sees, my definition of "local knowledge" is larger than those that mainly focus on ecological or medicinal knowledge for instance. It understands local knowledge as an integrated system of representations that unify standpoints and experiences about relationships between persons, the community and its natural environment, and finally, humans and the supranatural world.
- In addition to the obvious presence of several modes of action in the same society, the criticisms levelled at Haudricourt have also focused on the confusion he maintained between three levels of analysis: individual behaviors; representations of the human, society and nature; and the actual functioning of social systems. I will not go back over these criticisms, which are summarized in (Ferret 2012).
- The concept of *wu wei is* sometimes translated as "action without effort". This is indeed a type of indirect action, very close to the one that Haudricourt claims to be typical of "oriental" societies. A paradigmatic example of effortless action is provided by the legend of one of the mythical Chinese emperors sitting among the fishermen to engage in the same work. After he had spent one year with them, the fishermen were offering each other the fish and the best coves. It was the attitude of the Sage Emperor (not his words) that transformed their behavior. This story is mentioned in particular in the first chapter of the *Huainanzi*, a text whose overall orientation is close to that of the *Guanzi*, quoted just below. On the various variants of the *wu wei* concept, see (Slingerland 2003).
- Note that Haudricourt was using the words "direct" and "indirect" for what Ferret terms as being "internal" and "external".
- ⁶ Curiously, Ferret (2014) does not mention this last distinction. Yet, as we will see below, we have found it of great importance for the reading of the Parables.
- Since 1991, John P. Meier has developed an exegetical-historical work (*A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*) of which, to date, five volumes have been published, the last, in 2016, devoted to the examination of the parables.
- One often speaks of 'authenticity criteria". At least in the way Meier makes use of them it would be better to speak of "plausibility criteria".

- The "Q [Source]" (German: *Quelle*) is a term that refers to the hypothetical reconstruction of material common to the Gospels of Luke and Matthew and unknown to Mark. It would have formed a collection of sayings of Jesus made around the year 50. Debates about its composition and even its existence are still going on, even if the existence of such a document remains the dominant hypothesis.
- The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke are close enough that their episodes can be compared using a columnar reading, "at a glance" (*synopsis*). John's follows an entirely different arrangement.
- This is, moreover, the usual meaning of the term *parabolē* in the context of the gospel writings, and it is the exegetes who have subsequently extended its meaning. We do not, therefore, classify here the "similitudes" that are contained in a short sentence as parables proper.
- A collection of sayings of Jesus, the earliest surviving manuscript version of which dates from the fourth century and was probably written in Coptic on the basis of a Greek original, the *Gospel of Thomas* continues to be the subject of heated debate as to its dating, its milieu of origin and inspiration, and its exegetical and historical authority. For Meier and others, the literary and lexical analysis of *Thomas* shows that, far from being a primitive set, it illustrates a tendency to harmonize earlier sources, tendency that can be found in other second-century Christian authors.
- Matthew's and (especially) Luke's own traditions each contain more parables than Mark's and Q's traditions combined. Since the hypothesis of a chronological progression from Q to Luke prevails, the idea that many of the parables are literary creations of the late first century has become largely received.
- Van Eck (2014) suggests that, in the parable of the Sower (Mk 4:1–9; Mt 13:1–9, Lk 8:4–8), the grains that fall on the path among the stones, or in the thorns, or yet are eaten by the birds, correspond to the various levies suffered by the Galilean farmer, with the portion that bears abundant fruit symbolizing the communal sharing of the untaxed harvest (see also Oakman 2012, p. 140). Similar to the vast majority of interpretations of the parables, and despite its statements of caution, this reading relies above all on the author's creativity.
- Their appearances in the gospels are frequent. Cf. in particular Lk 12:1–8; Mk 13:34–35.
- A "Talent" (*talanton*, the unit chosen by Matthew) was approximately thirty years' wages for a day laborer; a "Mine" (*mna*, Luke) was three months' wages. Since Matthew always overstates the amounts of money in his stories, the Mine is probably the unit used in the original story.
- The nobleman becomes a pretender to a throne, then a king; the story is thus inserted into Luke's "meta-narrative" about Jesus' destiny and status.
- The expression "primitive narrative" does not mean, of course, that the parable was told only once. It refers to its theme, to the logic that conditions its development.
- We were also presented with at least two counter-actions that are death-inducing: the killing of the son by the vinedressers is discontinuous/active; the hiding of seed money into a cloth is discontinuous/passive.

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Article

Water in the *Mencius*: Correlative Reasoning, Conceptual Metaphor, and/or Sacred Performative Narrative?

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Abstract: The way the water metaphor is mobilized in *Mencius* 6A.2 has been interpreted and assessed from a number of perspectives. While several commentators find the analogy developed by Mencius comparing water and human nature intrinsically weak, others see it as partially effective in its use of analogical reasoning or of conceptual metaphors, especially when related to a yin-yang-based cosmology. This contribution develops an alternative perspective: it locates this metaphor in the corpus of references to water found first in the *Mencius* and second in the works of Chinese antiquity until the early Han period. This survey allows us to highlight three important features: (a) a quasi-sacred status is attached to the aquatic element; (b) water's characteristics are developed according to a narrative model, causing the reader to circulate from one level of reality to another, such that the communication between the heart–mind and Heaven opens up; and (c) finally, as they mobilize a sense of contemplation and wonder, water narratives are meant to be transformative of the disciple's consciousness and behavior.

Keywords: analogies; correlative thinking; Dao; Heaven; human nature; *Mencius*; water metaphor; yin-yang

1. Introduction

References to the aquatic element pervade the text of the Mencius: the character shui 水 [water] can be found 48 times. The water metaphor plays a central role in Mencius 6A.2, where Gaozi 告子 (ca. 420–ca. 350 BCE) and Mencius (Mengzi 孟子 [372–289 BCE]¹) debate about human nature, the latter arguing that, just as water tends to swirl downwards, human nature has an innate tendency towards goodness. The appreciation of the argument's rhetorical strength varies from one commentator to another. As will be illustrated by what follows, some readers find it more figurative than argumentative, and ultimately, intrinsically weak. Others interpret the water metaphor as an "analogical argument", the strength of which depends on the degree of similarity between the two objects being compared or on the weight being given to Chinese "conceptual metaphors", possessing an epistemic status of their own. Still others place Mencius' reasoning into the framework of a larger yinyang cosmology. While appreciating the contribution made by these various approaches to the understanding of Mencius' text, this article suggests approaching it from another perspective: the way the various attributes of water are described combine into a "sacred narrative" through which human nature is referred to in an overall moral/cosmological structure. Knowing the nature of water allows us to connect our understanding of the heart-mind with our insights into the nature of Heaven and what it requires from us (see *Mencius* 7A.1). Moreover, this knowledge is performative in the sense that it leads us to direct our lives according to the moral/cosmological design that we intuit.

I will first ponder over the debate between Gaozi and Mengzi and will present how various commentators understand the way the water metaphor is here mobilized. In Section 2, I will insert this specific debate into a general presentation of the role played by water in Mengzi's thought and its connections with other thinkers. Finally, taking into account the results gathered in Sections 1 and 2, I will develop the reasons that cause me to

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argue that water provides Mengzi not only with a "metaphor", but also with a "narrative" which can be ultimately considered as a sacred story loaded with a performativity of its own.

2. Mengzi and Gaozi on Human Nature: The Interminable Debate

The core of the debate constitutes a locus of Chinese ancient philosophy: in *Mencius* 6A.2, Gaozi compares human nature to water, swirling aimlessly around a corner and only flowing in the direction of an open passage, suggesting that human nature has no inherent goodness or evilness. Mencius counters that water's natural tendency is to flow up or down, and not merely east or west, a tendency loaded with moral connotations: just as water tends to swirl downwards, human nature has an innate tendency to seek goodness:

Water certainly does not distinguish between East and West, but does it fail to distinguish between up and down? The goodness of human nature is like the downhill movement of water—there is no person who is not good, just as there is no water that does not flow downward. Now, as for water, if you strike it with your hand and cause it to splash up, you can make it go above your forehead; if you apply force and pump it, you can make it go uphill. Is this really the nature of water, though? No, it is merely the result of environmental influences. That a person can be made bad shows that his nature can also be altered like this. (*Mencius* 6A.2. Translation Slingerland 2011, p. 21)

水信無分於東西。無分於上下乎?人性之善也,猶水之就下也。人無有不善,水 無有不下。今夫水,搏而躍之,可使過顙,激而行之,可使在山。是豈水之性哉? 其勢則然也。人之可使為不善,其性亦猶是也。

As our survey will now show, the views of the commentators on the nature and strength of the argument vary widely.

2.1. The "Example-Only" Interpretation

The "example-only" interpretation focuses on Mencius's analogy as a means to refute Gaozi, rather than on the passage as a whole. According to its proponents, the analogy is more figurative than argumentative, and Mencius's reasoning is simply not logically grounded (Waley 1939; Hansen 1992). Mencius' train of thought would be essentially of an intuitive nature, which would explain his relative disdain for logical reasoning and step-by-step argumentation.

2.2. The Analogical-Argument Interpretation

Proponents of this approach suggest that the source object of the analogy must possess some features that are similar to the target object and that the similarities between the two objects must overshadow their dissimilarities. The strength of an analogical argument depends on the degree of similarity between the two objects being compared. If the similarities between the objects are more relevant to the claimed common features than the dissimilarities, the argument is considered strong and cogent. Conversely, if the dissimilarities are more related to the claimed common features, the argument is weak and not cogent.

Does Mencius pass the test? If we use a scientific lens to examine Mencius's reasoning, water is empirically evidenced to flow in the direction of least resistance, and not automatically downhill: water has a natural tendency to flow uphill when the region of low pressure is above that of high pressure. This would fatally undermine Mencius's argument. However, such a line of reasoning may be unfair: following the definition of Salmon (1973, pp. 97–98) and Waller (2001, p. 202), for an analogical reasoning to be convincing, the source object of the analogy must possess some features that are similar to the target object, and the similarities between the two objects must outweigh their dissimilarities. Those who support the analogical-argument interpretation understand the statements of Mencius and Gaozi as enthymematic, meaning that they obey rules inherent to syllogistic

or traditional logic. In this approach, the premise on which the argument is based is purposely omitted and left to be inferred by the reader. Mencius's belief that water tends to flow downward in the absence of externally applied forces was based on the general observation that water seems to seek the lower level, which was considered at that time not only as common sense, but also as deeply meaningful: "The innate tendency of water to flow downward is one of its most important attributes in early Chinese philosophical thinking" (Allan 1997, p. 41). In this perspective, Mencius was entitled to challenge Gaozi's assertion that water lacks directional tendency, and to conclude that Gaozi's own analogy was unconvincing, grounding his reasoning upon premises that both thinkers tacitly shared.

Nevertheless, one could not automatically infer from these same premises that human nature shares the same nature as water, i.e., embraces, as water does, a *predisposition*. In the absence of additional premises, Mengzi's argument remains weak (Chong 2002).

2.3. From Analogies to "Conceptual Metaphors"

This may still be the case, even when water is not seen as providing merely an "analogy", but also a "conceptual metaphor", as Slingerland has suggested (Slingerland 2003, 2011). If Slingerland's perspective has become popular, it is less straightforward than it first seems to be: the attitude characterized as "effortless action" (wu wei 無為) is described as the all-englobing conceptual metaphor, while water provides a series of related images, such as the picture of "flowing along with" (shun 順) (Slingerland 2003, p. 11). However, water can be considered a full-fledged conceptual metaphor when, for instance, it illustrates the fact that "going against the flow" is an attitude that originates from a wrong understanding of the nature of things (Slingerland 2011, p. 22). The strength of the argument would come from its congruence with universal cognitive processes, themselves based on our embodied reactions (Slingerland 2011). Still, Jones is right to note that Slingerland simply presupposes both the correctness of Mengzi's original assertion (water flows downhill) and its connection to human nature, rather than anchoring the two propositions to specific cognitive processes (Jones 2016).

2.4. Correlative Reasoning Associated with Yin-Yang Cosmology

Correlative reasoning constitutes a specific type of analogical argument. Analogical arguments use all available kinds of comparisons or analogies to draw conclusions about a subject, while correlative reasoning is a specific type of analogical argument that relies on the *relationship* between two phenomena or, more exactly, two *processes*. In ancient Chinese philosophy, correlative reasoning was often used to explain the workings of the natural world, as well as a number of social and existential features, wherein yin-yang cosmology provided thinkers with an overall context in which to insert specific correlations (Fung 2010; Graham 2016). As is well known, the concept of yin and yang is based on the idea of complementary opposites that are interdependent and interconnected, and this idea was used in order to explain the dynamic features of the natural, social, and human spheres, as well as for connecting these spheres with one another.

While Mengzi's contention that water flows downward possesses basically no weight when appreciated from the perspective of contemporary scientific standards, Nicholas Jones (2016) uses yin-yang cosmology to evaluate the plausibility of Mencius's claim. According to Jones, Mencius's argument succeeds in discrediting Gaozi's analogy because of the fact that the downward flow of water is consistent with the yin nature of water. However, Mencius's argument for the innate goodness of human nature is less compelling because the underlying analogy drawn between water and human nature is not strong. Although Mencius provides a reason for asserting that water and human nature share a common tendency, there is no basis within the yin-yang cosmology for linking goodness with downward directionality. Moreover, yin-yang cosmological thinking may have only become prevalent during the Han dynasty, long after Mencius's time, which would undermine Jones' overall approach (the chronology remains controverted). In other words, even in the event that one would consider Mencius's reasoning plausible when related to

yin-yang cosmology, one cannot establish that Mencius was influenced by this conceptual development. Therefore, the framework developed by a sympathetic commentator such as Jones is still not sufficient for establishing the central contention of Mengzi's argument.

3. Water in the Mencius, and Beyond

At the same time, once they are related to perspectives notably suggested by Allan (1997), the arguments developed by Slingerland (2011) and Jones (2016) lead us to pinpoint a fact crucial to the present discussion: the debate that takes place in *Mencius* 6A.2 should be inserted into the body of considerations about water found in the whole of the same book. Besides, these same considerations must be assessed within the intertextual network created by their connections with similar passages in relevant Chinese classics.

3.1. Water in the Mencius

The water metaphor first appears when Mengzi hypothesizes that a sovereign loving peace rather than conflict would attract people "like water running down" (*Mencius* IA.6). Mencius also draws the attention of his listeners towards the way water can trigger death and desolation and evokes how, in response, Yu the Great strenuously regulated rivers (see notably 3A.4). One of the most striking occurrences relevant to our subject matter is found in 4B.18, when Mengzi explains that those rooted in a source progressively fill every hollow, while the reputation of other people is like the surge brought on by a sudden and violent rain, followed by a time of dryness. In 4B.26, Mengzi comes back to the topic of Yu the Great: if literati would stop to "chisel knowledge" and would rather let things "have their way", as Yu let water "have its way" (*yu zhi xing shui* 禹之行水), then seeking for knowledge would indeed be a praiseworthy endeavor.

The debate with Gaozi summarized at the beginning of the present contribution occurs after this fragment, and is followed by Mengzi's renewed assertion that letting water follow its way provides a sovereign with the ultimate political model (6B.11). The final book of the *Mencius* provides the reader with three water metaphors. The one found in 7A.24 is of such importance that I will comment on it separately below.

Besides these explicit water metaphors, there are a number of implicit examples. The description of qi 氣 as both a moral and cosmological impetus is particularly vivid (*Mencius* 2A.2). Slingerland rightly writes that the "flood-like qi" (*haoran zhi qi* 浩然之氣) is described in terms of "hydraulic force" (Slingerland 2003, pp. 154–55). This provides us with the clearest example of the way Mengzi links the physiological, the moral, and the cosmological dimensions into a continuum of the worldview he propounds. This continuum flows throughout phenomenal and infra/supra-phenomenal realities, as does water from its source to the sea.

3.2. Water and Human Nature in the Mencius

As asserted by Tu Wei-ming,

Confucian humanism is fundamentally different from anthropocentrism because it professes the unity of man and Heaven rather than the imposition of the human will on nature. In fact the anthropocentric assumption that man is put on earth to pursue knowledge and, as knowledge expands, so does man's dominion over earth is quite different from the Confucian perception of the pursuit of knowledge as an integral part of one's self-cultivation. The human transformation of nature, therefore, means as much an integrative effort to learn to live harmoniously in one's natural environment as a modest attempt to use the environment to sustain basic livelihood. The idea of exploiting nature is rejected because it is incompatible with the Confucian concern for moral self-development. (Tu 2010, p. 75)

In other words, in the "Confucian humanism" tradition (which takes its roots from the *Mencius*), by aligning oneself with the natural order of things and cultivating virtues

such as sincerity, knowledge, and moral rectitude, a disciple of the Sages will achieve a state of balance and harmony, both in the innermost heart and with the external world.

Developing from this general framework, the philosophy of Mengzi also emphasizes the interconnectedness and mutual support between humans and nature. Metaphors anchored to natural realities are evocative: Mengzi posits that human beings possess inherent moral qualities, regarded as sprouts that grow naturally from the human heart, and which can be developed through education and self-cultivation (*Mencius* 6A, in the entirety of this section). Numerous are the passages in *Mencius* 2A and 4A that point towards the two following correlated propositions: the natural world, including the environment and other living creatures should be respected and protected; the relationship between humankind and the natural world is a symbiotic one.

At the same time, Mengzi's view takes into account the disruptions that may happen during any process of growth. Although innate predispositions lead towards goodness, in the course of one's development one may incline towards badness through external circumstances, or by not developing one's innate constitution in the appropriate direction (see notably Shun 1997; Wong 1991). Such a view has political implications: Mengzi stresses the fact that external factors such as poverty, injustice, and hunger can create a destructive and chaotic social environment that prevents the flourishing of virtue (6A.7). Accordingly, meeting people's basic needs (i.e., letting people "have their way" (see 4B.26 and 6B.11)) should constitute the ruler's main axiom (4A.9). A wise ruler should also provide his people with educational resources that support the growth of the four sprouts of virtue and a flourishing ethical life (see the entirety of Mencius 4A). If people live in an environment that supports the flourishing of human goodness, then the latter will be embodied in words and deeds, ideally leading society towards a state where "all men can be Yaos and Shuns" (6A.22). The stress on innate goodness may be even more prescriptive than descriptive: one must bet on human nature being intrinsically good in order to ground a truly harmonious society (Shun 1997).

In other words, the water metaphor in the *Mencius* speaks of a natural force that nourishes life and shapes the natural order in the same way that our innate potential (i.e., our nature *xing* 性) nourishes ethical life and shapes our relationships, as well as the way in which social order is defined. Both water and human nature (*xing*) are to be considered as a spring from which all good things will flow, if channeled and used according to their innate predispositions.

3.3. Water beyond the Mencius

The text of the *Mencius* strongly resonates with a number of other Chinese classics. Analogies with the *Daodejing* (a text which, like the Mencius, makes a privileged use of the water metaphor) have been often noted: "The Way is like a river, always flowing and never stagnant. It adapts to its surroundings, always changing but never losing its nature. It flows into the low places and creates the valleys, and it is always present, always the same" (*Daodejing* 8). The *Analects* provide us with similar echoes: "The man who moves through the world in a sagely way is like water. Water finds the lowest places and flows downward, and in doing so, it nourishes all things and brings life to the world" (*Analects* 14.8). Confucius's comparison of a sage to water, nourishing all things and bringing life to the world, is not without religious connotations, as it suggests a belief in downward flowing water as the origin of the world.

Going one step further, the *Yijing* 易經 states that "water is the foundation of all things" (Hexagram 29). The *Hongfan* 洪範 chapter of the *Classic of Documents* (*Shujing* 書經) expresses a similar doctrine when assimilating water with the Origin, and subtly, with the One (*shui yue yi* 水曰一, see Palmer 2014, pp. 94–99). On the basis of the representations provided by these texts and others, the popular doctrine of the five elements (water, fire, wood, metal, and earth) consistently introduces water as the first of them.

Sarah Allan (1997) has shown the myriad ways in which ancient Chinese thought has reflected upon the nature of water and deduced from it the characteristics of the Dao

道.³ Among other features, water, the source of life when it follows a course, becomes source of death when it flows out of it; water submits to everything it encounters, and yet it overcomes all resistance; water, being shapeless, takes any form; it can become a plane and a mirror that reflects the face of everyone bending over it. One of the difficulties raised by Allan's analysis lies in her specific application of these characteristics to the Dao as approached by the *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi*, which is not the ultimate reference point of several of the authors she quotes—namely, Confucius, Mencius, and Xunzi. I will come back to the question this raises in III.1.

Finally, several excavated documents have given us a much clearer picture of the religious representations associated with water (Allan 2003, 2005; Brindley 2019). The term "The Great One" ($Tai\ Yi\$ 太一) evokes the state of things that precedes the distinction between Heaven and Earth. At a time which remains debated (but which is probably that of the Warring States, or even before), a cult is formed around Tai Yi, who identifies him with the North Star and the spirit which inhabits it, represented as the point of origin of the Heavenly River, the Milky Way ($tian\ han\$ 天漢). It so happens that the excavations carried out at Guodian brought to light a text, the $Tai\ Yi\ sheng\ shui\ 太一生水\ [The\ Great\ One\ engenders\ water$]. Its cosmogony clearly designates water as the partner of the One (probably assimilated to the Way) in the process of creating Heaven. Heaven, in return, associates with the One in creating the Earth. "The dao was not simply modeled on a river that flows continuously from a natural spring, but that it was taken as the celestial river that flows unceasingly from the womb of the Great One" (Allan 2003, p. 283).

These considerations do not imply that early Chinese philosophers all considered and interpreted aquatic phenomena in the same way. According to the times and the sensitivities, the destructive power of water or its life-giving potential, its moral characteristics (notably humility, shown by its flowing downhill), or its mystical undertones (impenetrability and indivisibility) were variously emphasized. Still, water provided thinkers with a shared conceptual/experiential toolbox for envisioning and describing natural, social, cosmological, and (if the term may be used in Chinese context) "metaphysical" constants. This reliance is particularly striking in the case of the *Mencius*.

4. A Sacred Narrative

The preceding analyses encourage us to assess the comparison developed by Mengzi in his debate with Gaozi in function of the features that I have just highlighted. I will proceed by developing three interrelated theses: (a) Mengzi mobilizes water metaphors in order to develop an approach to knowledge that links together the human and the suprahuman levels of reality; (b) in this light, water metaphors become part of a sacred narrative; (c) this narrative is meant to become performative, i.e., to transform the mind and deeds of the one that makes herself attentive to it.

4.1. Water, Heaven, and the Dao

While the representation of water offered by Mencius is very close to the one found in the *Daodejing*, Mengzi does not make water an image of the Dao 道: he remains faithful to the traditional conception of Heaven (*Tian* 天) as the transcendental point of reference. As is the case of the *Analects*, in the *Mencius* the term *dao* refers mainly to specific ways of being (or of doing things), and is not elevated to the dignity of a supreme and universal principle. The *Mencius* and the *Analects* both use once the expression *tiandao* 天道 (Heavenly Way), a possible hint of the evolution that led to the concept acquiring full autonomy. Jean Levi has suggested the reasons for which the concept of Dao may have been progressively endowed with the traditional attributes of Heaven:

The concept of the Dao, the Way, which is very much like Heaven insofar as it is the expression of its creative power, would seem to be the result of a process of confiscation and occultation. Heaven is a distant entity whose contours are vague, and only the emperor can sacrifice to it in solemn and half-secret rites in which the highest officials at court do not participate, with the result that Heaven

may be said to have been appropriated by the king. Moreover, Heaven never reveals itself except by its effects—the movement of the planets, the course of the seasons, abnormal weather, that is, secondary manifestations which are so many dao 道, ways or modalities of its action. Outside the processes of hierarchy and categorization, the Principle is without determination of any kind. This lack of specificity gives it a creative power and makes it the basis of all that is conditioned. (Levi 2009, p. 691)

In the *Mencius'* religious and gnoseological representation, the analogy between the nature of water and that of the human species is to be located in-between the knowledge that human beings acquire of their heart–mind, on the one hand, and that of Heaven, on the other hand:

To fathom one's heart-mind is to know one's nature. To know one's nature is to know Heaven. Foster your heart-mind, nurture your nature, for this is serving Heaven. (*Mencius* 7A.1)

盡其心者,知其性也。知其性,則知天矣。存其心,養其性,所以事天也。

As asserted in 6B.2, knowing the nature of water provides aspiring sages with a fundamental insight on the nature of humankind. More exactly, "understanding" what it means that water flows downhill will uncover the innate goodness present within my own heart—mind, i.e., will direct individuals towards the source from where goodness flows. "Nature (xing)" (i.e., what is common to a species) is strategically located between the (individual) heart—mind (xin 心) and the universality of Heaven (tian 天). Commonalities of nature between water and humankind direct the latter towards the appreciation of the propensities found in each of its members, as well as towards the celestial river (tian tian) from which everything originates.

4.2. Progressing with Water in the Mencius

At this point, we need to turn towards an excerpt of the *Mencius* that we have not yet analyzed:

Confucius climbed the Eastern Mountain, and [the State of] Lu became small; he climbed Taishan, and small became the world. Thus, for those who have contemplated the sea, it is difficult to make case of rivers; for those who have traveled to study under a Sage, it is difficult to give importance to speeches. There is an art {shu ffi) in observing water; we must observe its undulations: when the sun and the moon shine, the rays that [these undulations] necessarily receive penetrate them. When flowing, water is made in such away (hat it cannot move forward without first filling the pits. As for the path [the way] on which a gentleman has set his mind, if it is not fulfilled at each stage, it cannot attain completion. (*Mencius* 7A24: Translation Vermander 2022b, p. 26)

孔子登東山而小魯,登太山而小天下。故觀於海者難為水,遊於聖人之門者難為 言。觀水有術,必觀其瀾。日月有明,容光必照焉。流水之為物也,不盈科不行; 君子之志於道也,不成章不達。

Vermander (2022b) highlights the spring present in this short narrative and relates it to the water metaphor located at its center:

At the center of our paragraph: the art of observing water. If water is difficult to see, it reveals itself to us through its manifestations, its movements. The commentaries specify that, in this context, 'to observe water' means first to gauge its depth. Mencius's idea appears to be that the play of ripples and rays stealthily reveals the objects that water conceals, thus allowing the observer to gauge the bottom, while still water remains impenetrable. One may infer that studying under a Sage is akin to engage into interaction, and that the Sage's inner depth will be revealed from his reactions, his moves, the sudden glimpses he offers. The

third proposition then explains both how water works and why the person who engages fully in study resembles the one who observes water. [. . .] One learns from water the way one learns from the Sage: one learns to 'dive' as deep as it is possible. The 'height' referred to in the first proposition is literally reversed: it is none other than that of the pit where one has to descend, rather than spreading oneself over the surface. (Vermander 2022b, p. 28)

This analysis illustrates the fact that water provides Mengzi not with exact (static) metaphors, but rather with parables (dynamic), i.e., with micro-narratives:⁴ "Water flows downhill." "Water flows towards the sea." "Yu controlled water by letting it having its way." "Water cannot move forward without first filling the pits." We are provided not only an image, but also with a displacement of a narrative nature. Considered in this light, the whole body of "knowledge" about water dispersed throughout the *Mencius* can be read as a meta-narrative that reveals to us both what constitutes the heart–mind and what it means to know and serve Heaven.⁵ The cycle of water propels a narrative cycle that is at the same time knowledge of the human heart and of the heavenly principle: everything that can be said for water can be said of human nature and can be proved right through the attentive examination of one's heart; as to the heavenly principle, it sets up a unique standard and an original reference to all spheres of reality—natural, human, and social.

It may well be that the macro-narrative structure of the *Mencius* expresses such cycle through several rhetorical devices, the study of which goes beyond the scope of this contribution. For instance, Vermander notes that, if the flood myth is found twice in the *Mencius*—as already noted by Boltz (2005, p. 63—see *Mencius* 3A.4 and 3B.9)—, the purpose of the narrative differs from one passage to another: the focus of the first occurrence is on the division of work between the rulers and the ones they rule over, and the emphasis of the second occurrence is on the principle of alternance between times of peace and times of trouble (Vermander 2022a, p. 202).⁶ Similarly, You Min Jung has highlighted the interest shown by the Korean scholars of the Joseon period in the circular textual patterns found in the *Mencius*. This rhetorical focus was, it seems, part of their understanding of the Confucian canon as sacred scriptures (You 2022). It would be interesting to study in detail whether circular rhetorical patterns and reliance on water parables mutually reinforce the significance of each of these features.

4.3. What Water Accomplishes

Let us pay attention of the previously quoted second part of the sentence found in Mencius 7A.1: "To fathom one's heart-mind is to know one's nature. To know one's nature is to know Heaven. Foster your heart-mind, nurture your nature, for this is serving Heaven." This second sentence is an extension to the ethical realm of the gnoseological principle stated in the preceding sentence. In other words, true knowledge is necessarily transformative. When duly exercised, "the art of observing water", detailed in Mencius 7A24, transforms not only the perception, but also the behavior of the practitioner. As shown by the same fragment, "observing water" means to descend from the "heights" to the "hollows"; it makes one go downward, entering the depths of the innermost heart, in a movement that reproduces that of water running downhill. Turning our attention (guan 觀) towards the nature of water leads us not only to realize the propensities of our own nature, but also to make these same propensities become effective by the very fact of choosing goodness and serving Heaven. In other words, the sentence, "The goodness of human nature is like the downhill movement of water (人性之善也,猶水之就下也)" is more than a constative statement. As far as it makes one incline towards goodness by apprizing and appropriating the downward movement of water, the sentence indeed constitutes a performative parable; it makes the disciple or the reader perform the movement it describes, becoming herself "like water" (youshui 猶水 [Mencius 4A.1, 6A.2]).

5. Conclusions

The *Mencius*' statements about water should be understood in light of the sacred aura that, in ancient China, surrounds water: water is the bearer of life and death, the first of the five elements, the image and companion of the Great One, and (as such an approach became more theorized) the perfect parable of the Way. Moreover, the teaching of Mengzi is by nature performative, as it tries to remodel the student's psyche through transformative experiences. The knowledge derived from the observation of water thus bears on the nexus of correlations that make all dimensions of reality a completed whole, and it necessarily renews and reshapes the disciple who has wholeheartedly engaged in attentive observations. The water narrative is meant to be appropriated and retold as the story of the transformative process undertaken by seekers who have "engaged into study in order to find their lost heart-mind" (*Mencius* 6A.11)⁸ and turned towards the source from which rightful conduct necessarily originates.

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Notes

- ¹ I will refer to the thinker by the name Mengzi and to the eponymous book by the title *Mencius*.
- When it comes to the debates regarding the chronology of yin-yang correlative thinking, see, i.e., Puett (2000).
- As I will emphazise below, there is only one reservation to make in regards to the remarkable analysis developed in Allan (1997): early Chinese references to water sometimes do not explicitly apply to the Dao, but rather to some celestial features (that will be related by latter-day thinkers to what the Dao is meant to be). In other words, water metaphors go beyond a focus on the notion of Dao as a philosophical notion.
- I emphasize here the narrative dimension of a parable, even when the narrative is extremely condensed. A parable sketches a plot. An extended story would develop the same plot at leisure. I resonate here with the stress on "emplotment" found in other contributions of the special issue of *Religions*, i.e., "Plots and Rhetorical Patterns in Religious Narratives", notably Gonzalez (2022), Vermander (2022c), and You (2022). Clearly enough, this stress finds its origin in White (1973), even when transiting from the field of history to the realm of religion.
- Note that story-telling characterizes the pedagogic style of Mengzi in its entirety.
- Vermander (2021) criticizes the theories that make such repetitions the mere result of a hazardous editorial process. The same contribution aims at articulating the principles of the Chinese structural rhetoric, one of them being the dynamic reappraisal of a former proposition (deuteronomic principle), preparing the closing of a textual ring. You (2022) demonstrates that Joseon Korean thinkers were sensitive to the presence of such patterning in the *Mencius*.
- Commenting upon Mengzi's educational methods, Vermander (2022a, p. 151) highlights their experiential characteristics, quoting *Mencius* 6B16 where Mengzi declares that he provides education to an applicant he just rejected by the very fact that he did not accept him among his students. In this particular case, the Master intuits that the fact of being rejected might induce the student to engage in self-improvement.
- ⁸ "Entering into apprenticeship has no other goal: to find the heart that you have lost—and that is all (學問之道無他,求其放心而已矣)" (*Mencius* 6A.11).

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Article

The Reading of the *Mencius* by Korean Confucian Scholars: Rhetorical Exegesis and the *Dao*

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Abstract: When Joseon Korea scholars were interpreting the *Mencius* (孟子: K. Maengja or Mengzi), they were focusing on its content and on its rhetorical elements at the same time. For a given commentator, selecting various rhetorical features (such as grammatical and lexical specificities) meant to read the *dao* 道 (K. *do*) of the *Mencius* in a fashion different from the one expounded by other scholars. In this article, I examine the relationship these commentators were establishing between the textual patterns of the *Mencius* and the encompassing reality, *dao*, as understood by this latter work. Specifically, I focus upon the works of two Joseon scholars—Yi Hwang 李滉's *Maengja seogui* 孟子釋義 and Wi Baekgyu 魏伯珪's *Maengja chaui* 孟子箚義. Through their reading, I notably attempt to (a) describe how rhetorically oriented exegeses had been maturing throughout this era; and to (b) elucidate how Korean commentators, through their rhetorical commentaries, put forward interpretations that differed from the ones propounded by the orthodox tradition as exemplified by Zhu Xi.

Keywords: Mencius; rhetorical exegesis; dao; Confucianism; Joseon Korea; Yi Hwang; Wi Baekgyu



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1. Introduction

Just as the Christian Bible in the West was both a sacred scriptural body and a model for literary inspiration and patterns, in pre-modern East Asia the reading of the Confucian Classics focused on their spiritual truths as well as on their stylistic elements (Jiang and Jiang 2011, p. 213). To an even greater extent than the other Classics, the *Mencius* (孟子: K. Maengja or Mengzi) was read not only as a sacred text containing various metaphysical arguments, but also as narrative prose consisting of dynamic persuasive techniques and diverse literary ornamentations: Mencius was regarded as having been not only a Sage but also a *vir bonus dicendi peritus* (a good man skilled in the art of speaking).

Since the canonical *Mencius* may prove to be artfully composed, with coherent passages designed to convey particular messages to the reader, the stylistic elements of the text serve to uncover the Sage's plot hidden in the text. Readers can easily notice what appear to be conflicting truths within the same sentence, often rendering the text highly obscure. This difficulty has led interpreters to attempt to elucidate the text's teachings of the *dao* 道 (K. *do*) through explaining Mengzi's art of argumentation.

A rhetorically oriented exegesis is a reading that interprets the Classics based on their "fundamental textual features" (K. *munui* 文義; literally, the textual meaning). It approaches a piece of writing through its literary style—the oratory, sentence usage, structure of sections, etc., or it examines their *topoi* or *loci* through the art of embellishment and/or persuasion. Such rhetorically oriented exegeses are found throughout the exegetical traditions of East Asia, just as literary criticism has existed as a hermeneutic methodology for the Bible in those of the West. Although terminological differences exist in the recent scholarship, recognizing "rhetoric" as a hermeneutic methodology for interpreting the Classics in the Sinographic Cosmopolis, including Joseon Korea, has gradually gained more scholarly attention both in the East and the West (Denecke 2010; Dong 1997; Gong 2008; Li 2011; Rusk 2012; You 2019; Zhang 2017).

In the Sinographic sphere, the three parts of rhetoric are: (1) K. eose 語勢, the term referring to both an aesthetic element and to the "mood" of the text; (2) K. eobeop 語法, a structuring element of the text; (3) K. eoui 語義, the intention, emotion, and perception of the writer (You 2018, p. 513). Reading the Mencius, the scholars of Joseon Korea paid more attention to the third, eoui, than scholars of Qing China and Edo Japan. They had a greater tendency to interpret the spiritual and ideological implications of the text though its rhetorical elements, etc., rather than just providing the appreciation of its expressions or analysis of its structural aspects.

This hermeneutic feature can be viewed as a result of the fact that "the Joseon dynasty is the first and only East Asian regime to be established under exclusive neo-Confucian auspices (Kalton et al. 1994, p. xix)". Neo-Confucians tend to read the Classics from a moral and philosophical perspective; "Neo-Confucians were not greatly interested in history or literature, except to the extent that they could put them in service of their own program of moral cultivation (Bol 2018, p. 2)". That is to say, the Neo-Confucians of Joseon, by and large, looked at the stylistic elements of the text insofar as they were revelatory of the author's thought and spiritual outlook.

Rhetoric and philosophy are clearly interconnected, but there are no a priori answers to the question of which of them comes first. The purpose of this article is to evaluate the intertwining of these two disciplines within the exegetical tradition of pre-modern Korea.

For that purpose, I will firstly investigate how Joseon scholars found in the ancient expression susaibgiseong 修辭立其誠 ("Refining one's word/establishing one's sincerity" see below) the ground upon which to develop a Korean concept of rhetoric (Part 2). Next, I will examine the rhetorically oriented exegeses of the *Mencius* propounded by the two Joseon scholars—Yi Hwang 李滉 (1502-1571)'s Maengja seogui 孟子釋義 and Wi Baekgyu 魏伯珪 (1727–1798)'s *Maengja chaui* 孟子箚義. I will notably scrutinize how they read the dao of Confucianism via the unearthing of stylistic elements of the text. Yi Hwang is a representative Confucian scholar of the early Joseon dynasty. His thoughts on Confucianism greatly influenced contemporary scholars, throughout the Joseon period. His Maengja seogui is considered the first Korean midrash on the Mencius, and includes a uniquely Korean-style gloss, the so-called K. gugyeol 口諭 (literally, oral edicts). Wi Baekgyu is a Confucian scholar of the late Joseon dynasty. His interpretation of the Classics was centering on the rhetorical features of the text to a greater extent than other scholars of Joseon had been doing. His Maengja chaui is regarded as the most comprehensive rhetorically oriented exegesis of the Mencius in the exegetical tradition of Korea (Part 3). Last but not least, I will uncover how rhetorical interpretations took distance from the "orthodox" tradition, comparing Wi Baekgyu and Zhu Xi's commentaries (Part 4). By describing how rhetorically oriented exegeses of the Joseon matured, how differences in the thinking of the commentators made them emphasize contrasted rhetorical strategies, this article contextualizes rhetorically oriented exegesis within the interplay between rhetoric and thought: it highlights how the two dimensions were mutually shaping each other in the exegetical tradition proper to the Joseon period.

2. The Intertwining of Rhetoric and Philosophy—Joseon Scholars' Reading of Susaibgiseong 修辭立其誠

The English word *rhetoric* derives from ancient Greek and is defined in various ways. Lu (1998, p. 2) writes that the term most commonly refers to the artistic use of oral and written expressions; in 21st century East Asia, it generally only applies to the art of textual ornamentation.² However, in the Sinographic sphere, the traditional meaning of *rhetoric* encompasses both persuasive skills and techniques of embellishment.³

The first occurrence of a Sinographic term roughly conterminous with "rhetoric", namely K. *susa* 修辭 (Ch. *xiuci*; literally, "refined words") can be found in the *Book of Changes* (Yijing 易經):⁴

The superior man (K. *gunja*, Ch. *junzi* 君子) advances in virtue, and cultivates everything within the sphere of his duty. His whole-heartedness and good faith

are the way by which he advances in virtue. He refines his words (K. *susa*, Ch. *xiuci* 修辭) and establishes his sincerity (K. *ibgiseong*, Ch. *liqicheng* 立其誠), and thus dwells in the sphere of his duty.⁵

The connection between rhetoric and philosophy has been discussed since ancient times both in the East and the West. In the case of the West, starting with Cicero (B.C.106–B.C.43) and down to the recent work of Paul de Man (1919–1983) and beyond, scholars have argued that rhetorical patterns and ideas are inextricably linked. In the case of the East, it is unlikely that there is a systematic account on the relation between rhetoric and philosophy. As the Confucian teachings, however, place a greater emphasis on the moral impact of speech, the aforementioned passage "K. susaibgiseong 修辭立其誠" of the Book of Changes has provided thinkers with a basis for theorizing the connection between these two dimensions.

Broadly speaking, the interpretations of the expression <code>susaibgiseong</code>, can be divided into two lines. Line (1): the section "refining words (<code>susa</code> 修辭)" and the one "establishing his sincerity (<code>ibgiseong</code> 立其誠)" are in a <code>parallel</code> relationship. Line (2): the section "refining words" and the one "establishing his sincerity" are in a <code>causal</code> relationship. That is to say, perceptions differ as to the relationship between artfulness and thought depending on whether the passage is read as "refining words and establishing his sincerity" or as "after establishing his sincerity, he is able to refine his words".

In a sense, both the former and the latter readings are similar in that "establishing one's sincerity" is interconnected with "refining words". Line (1), however, suggests that the purpose of refining words is to establish one's sincerity, indicating that "refining words" is useless if such operation does not illuminate the *dao* of Confucianism. On the other hand, Line (2) considers that establishing one's sincerity is a prerequisite for refining words, meaning that the one who cultivates his heart-mind will naturally improve his compositional skills. In this view, even though the writers do not focus on stylistic techniques, as long as they understand and practice the *dao* of Confucianism they will be able to convey to the reader what they do intend to convey. In the latter interpretation, philosophy influences rhetoric to a greater extent than it is the case in the former.

In pre-modern China, the latter interpretation—understanding the relationship between philosophy and rhetoric as causal—prevailed over the former (Zhou 2014, pp. 3–21). A clear representative of this tendency is Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200-K. Ju Hui-, a Chinese scholar who eventually defined orthodox Neo-Confucian thought in East Asia). Zhu Xi notably said that "if you fully understand things and affairs and have a peaceful mind, you can be good at speech". In Joseon Korea, reading philosophy and rhetoric as a causal relationship was also dominant. For example, Gwon Geun 權近 (1352–1409) interprets the phrase <code>susaibgiseong</code> in the following way:

"Guarding against depravity, he preserves his sincerity" expresses things in terms of the heart-mind; "By attention to one's words, one establishes one's sincerity" expresses things in terms of [external] realities and affairs. In doing so, the inner and the outer mutually cultivate each other. If someone expresses things in terms of the heart-mind, real patterned-principle will be securely retained. And so, the original text, thus says "chon 存" (preserve). If someone expresses things in terms of [external] realities and affairs, real virtue will be applied in the right place. And so, the original text, thus says "lip 立" (establish). One who 'preserves' follows [his] inherent nature (bonyeon 本然) and maintains it; One who 'establishes' achieves what is appropriate (dangyeon 當然) and extends it. (Gwon 1995, vol. 87, p. 12)⁷

Gwon Geun contributed to the embedding of Neo-Confucianism in Joseon, and his interpretation of the Classics was widely referred to by many scholars of that period. Among the existing sources, his work *Juyeok cheongyeollok* 周易淺見錄 is the oldest midrash on the *Book of Changes* in Korea (Yim 2021, p. 46). In his annotations on *susaibgiseong*, we find Gwon Geun's understanding of the two traditional concepts of "rhetoric": First,

Gwon Geun sheds light on "establishing sincerity" rather than on "refining words", which means that the main purpose of writing is not to display artfulness but rather to deliver the Confucian truth. Second, Gwon Geun argues that stylistic techniques are closely related to self-cultivation. This means that writing is an expression of what is in one's mind, so once one has achieved spiritual maturity one's compositional skills will naturally be advanced. Through these two dimensions, Gwon Geun stresses the centrality of conveying the omnipresent Confucian truth (in other words, the dao) in writing rather than perusing the colorful ornaments of the text. In his commentary on the Book of Changes, Yi Seeung $\not\cong$ total means that the early Joseon) also argues that establishing sincerity is a prerequisite for stylistic techniques (Yi 1995, vol. 87, p. 572).

When the English word *rhetoric* was translated into the Sinographic term *susa*, Yi Taejun 李泰俊 (1904–?; a novelist of Joseon) described the traditional concept of rhetoric as follows:

There have already been compositional techniques from the ancient times. Originally, both Eastern and Western concepts of rhetoric are derived from persuasive skills, not techniques of embellishment. Since language came before writing and eloquence was developed before the invention of a printing machine, both the Sinographic term *susa* and the English term rhetoric started with the meaning of persuasive skills. (Yi 1998, p. 23)⁹

Yi Taejun stressed the fact that rhetoric began in ancient East Asia as a set of "persuasive skills" rather than of "techniques of embellishment". Yi's point was that rhetoric fundamentally started from logical, persuasive ideas, not artful ornamentations. In a similar vein, during the late 19th and early 20th century, Sinographic terms such as *susa nonbyeon* 修辭論辯 and *byeollon* 辯論 were also applied as translations of the English term *rhetoric* in Joseon Korea. That is to say, the traditional Korean concept of rhetoric contains the idea that the author's plot/concerns are indwelling in a specific pattern of rhetoric, indicating that rhetoric and philosophy are closely interconnected.

Artful expression is derived from the intention of conveying and establishing belief; logical expression stems from one's true belief. Additionally, one's true belief leads to establish one's sincerity through continuous effort. Rhetoric and true belief, thus, are not separated but closely intertwined. This conviction was even firmer in pre-modern Joseon Korea, where the Neo-Confucian literary idea that the aim of literature is to transmit the dao (K. Muni jaedo, Ch. Wenyi zaidao 文以載道) was more predominant than in other East Asian countries.

For Joseon Confucians, the *dao* is indwelling in the rhetorical patterns of the Classics. They believe that achieving the Confucian truth is more important than enhancing artful writing skills. Influenced by this view, many scholars of the Joseon period have attempted to define Sagehood through an analysis of the stylistic elements of the *Mencius*.

3. Explaining the *Dao* of *Mencius* with a Rhetorical Perspective—The Cases of Yi Hwang and Wi Baekgyu

In the previous section, we uncovered the traditional Korean concept of rhetoric, which encompasses both persuasive skills and techniques of embellishment, indicating that this concept closely intertwines rhetoric and philosophy. Influenced by this view, the Joseon scholars tried to read the *dao* of the Classics from their stylistic patterns. In this section, we will further examine the connections and the tension between rhetoric and philosophy through the prism of the rhetorical annotations on the *Mencius* made by two scholars—Yi Hwang and Wi Baekgyu. In this way, we will be able to perceive how the rhetorically oriented exegeses of the Joseon progressively matured.

3.1. Yi Hwang's Maengja Seogui

Among the existing sources, Yi Hwang's *Maengja seogui* is the oldest midrash on the *Mencius* in Korea (Ham 2017, pp. 119–20). The *Maengja seogui* played a pivotal role in the publication of "the Vernacularized Classics—*Maengja* (K. Maengja eonhaebon 孟子諺解

本, translation by Park 2019)". This work is one of the state-created Korean editions of the Confucian Classics. These editions mightily contributed to the fact that Confucianism became the state religious ideology of the dynasty, as they were supplying definitive vernacularized Korean annotations (called "vernacularization" by Kornicki (2018) and Pollock (2006)).¹⁰

In the *Maengja seogui*, Yi Hwang internalizes the existing Korean vernacular readings and annotations of his predecessors, including Zhu Xi, and suggests his own interpretations of the *Mencius*. The *Maengja seogui* consists of two parts:

- (1) The original text with Korean gloss—so-called K. "gugyeol": Gugyeol is a hangul grammatical glossing that provides a vernacular paraphrase of the Sinitic original. This part shows the existing vernacular readings of phrases in the *Mencius*.
- (2) Yi Hwang's annotations written in literary Sinitic: Yi Hwang first presents how he understands the *gugyeol* of that time and sketches textual meaning of the passage. He then explains Mencius's spiritual thought as connoted in the original text and provides his extratextual interpretations in order to deepen the comprehension of his readers.

As Park (2019, p. 145) has noted, *gugyeol* is one of the unique tools for vernacular reading of Sinitic texts in pre-modern Korea: "The term *gugyeol* refers both to a system of vernacular reading by gloss and also to the glosses themselves (the term is sometimes used interchangeably with *to*). As a system of vernacular reading, *gugyeol* uses a grammatical transcoding algorithm that shows the reader how to parse a literary Sinitic text in the Korean language. It is comparable to Old English interlinear glossing that helps readers rearrange the word order of a Latin text into English".

Gugyeol, for the most part, hinges on grammatical analysis of the Sinitic sentence. The cultural and linguistic habitus of the time was reflected in this Korean-gloss reading of literary Sinitic: quite naturally, Korean scholars were making use of self-effecting language in order to recontextualize Sinitic texts through their vernacular language. Accordingly, Yi Hwang's analysis on the *gugyeol* of that time unravels the structural elements of the original sentences and decipher Mencius's purpose and the teaching of Confucianism.

His commentary work on the *Mencius* consists of 195 sections. Among them, twenty sections include his rhetorically oriented exegeses—there are ten sections on [K] *eose* (i.e., on the aesthetic elements or the mood of the text); four sections on *eobeop* (the structuring element of the text); and six sections on *eoui* (the intentions, emotions and perceptions of Mencius). In fact, Yi Hwang was giving the term *eose* a meaning similar to the one of the term *eoui*. On the whole, one may estimate that most of his exegeses interprets the *Mencius* though its stylistic elements. In this section, we will examine three representative examples to unveil how Yi Hwang evaluates Zhu Xi's commentary as well as the existing *gugyeol* of the Joseon period on the basis of the emphasis he puts upon the "mood" of the text.¹¹

First, in *Mencius* 2A2, which explains how to nourish the "vast, flowing *qi*" (K. *hoyeon-jigi* 浩然之氣), Mencius says: "[Such *qi*] is born from the accumulation of righteousness; incidental acts aren't enough. [Author's translation]" (是集義所生者, 非義襲而取之也 K. *sijipuisosaengja, biuiseubichwijiya*) The *gugyeol* of the time interprets "*sijipui* 是集義" of this passage as "it is produced by the accumulated righteousness. 是 〕義 〕集章、야"¹² Yi Hwang goes against this *gugyeol* by developing the following argument:

Now looking at the text, we should change the existing <code>gugyeol</code> into a new <code>gugyeol</code> "義曼集章 "(accumulating righteousness). It is impossible that those who nourish <code>gi</code> 氣 (vital energy) firstly have the accumulation of this <code>ui</code> (righteousness) and naturally emanate the heart-mind of the vast, flowing <code>gi</code> (hoyeonjigi 浩然之氣). The two words "<code>jipui</code> 集義" truly refer to the state of the accumulation of purposeful practice. How can righteousness be naturally accumulated on its own without any effort? Without looking back on the stylistic features and the intended meanings of the original text, many scholars of the day are so afraid of

being entangled with the selfishness of comparisons and expectations that they insist on the above aforementioned *gugyeol*. (Yi 1989, vol. 35, p. 6)¹³

In Yi Hwang's time, the existing gugyeol interprets the word "jip 集" as a past tense "accumulated (moyeo 모여)". Yi Hwang criticizes this gugyeol for not looking carefully at the "mood" of the writing. He argues that, if we follow this reading, it will mislead readers into thinking that righteousness (ui 義) can be accumulated without any individual effort and then naturally move on to the next/or final stage, achieving vast, flowing qi. Yi Hwang suggests that the word "jip" refers to a present-progressive tense "accumulating (moa 모아)", and "jipui 集義" should be interpreted as "accumulating righteousness". His reading indicates that righteousness is not achieved suddenly or spontaneously but is the result of constant full-fledged effort.

Gaozi 告子 (ca. 420–ca. 350 BCE, K. Goja, a controversial thinker who debated with Mencius) argues that righteousness exists in the external world. Yi Hwang, however, emphasizes that righteousness exists not in the external but is imbedded in our inner nature, and that the original intention of Mencius is to encourages us to cultivate this disposition through constant practice. He argues that righteousness is not acquired through social learning; rather, our innate nature guides us along the way.

The second example derives from the debate about the lines of *Mencius* 4A1 (上無道揆也,下無法守也 K. *sangmudogyuya*, *hamubeopsuya*), interpreted by the *gugyeol* of that time as meaning: "If the upper [level] [i.e., the prince] has no principles by which he examines [his administration], *then* the lower [level] [i.e., the ministers] has no laws by which they keep themselves [in order]. 上이道로揆티아니っ 면下 法으로守티이니っ "" Yi Hwang disagrees with this *gugyeol* for the following reasons:

Now looking at the text, if we are grounded in the textual mood of the *Collected Commentaries on the Mencius* (K. *Maengja jipju* 孟子集註), we will follow the interpretation of this *gugyeol*. Reading such a passage, however, we should not adhere to the *Collected Commentaries*. We should smoothly follow the stylistic features of the original text and interpret it as meaning: "the upper has no principles by which he examines, *and* the lower has no laws by which they keep themselves. 上이道로揆홈이업人、中下(法으로守홈이업서". (Yi 1989, vol. 35, p. 11)¹⁴

The existing <code>gugyeol</code> regards the section "the upper has no principles by which he examines 上無道揆也" and the section "the lower has no laws by which they keep themselves 下無法守也" as describing a cause-and-effect relation, interpreting it as a "If (...) then (...) 上이道로揆티아니ㅎ '면下 「法으로守티이니ㅎ '야" Challenging this annotation, Yi Hwang points out that this <code>gugyeol</code> is born from Zhu Xi's interpretation: "Since there are no principles by which the upper examines, there are no laws by which the lower keep themselves. (Zhu 1983, vol. 7, p. 276)", rather than from the original.¹⁵

Following the hints that the stylistic elements of the original text provide us with, Yi Hwang argues that the phrase "the upper has no principles by which he examines" and the phrase "the lower has no laws by which they keep themselves" are separate events and describe a "parallel relationship". That is to say, since there is no grammatical connection between these two phrases, there is no ground to regard these two events in terms of "causality". Yi Hwang's viewpoint recognizes that the lower is an independent *subject* in the practice of the *dao*, while Zhu Xi's causal view indicates that the lower is just an *object* influenced by the moral behavior of the upper level. Zhu Xi's interpretation expressed the socio-political belief that the moral competence of an individual is determined by his/her social status. Conversely, Yi Hwang's understanding of the Confucian truth implies that everyone possesses equal moral capacity regardless of his/her social status.

As a third example, let us consider the lines of *Mencius* 4B19 (由仁義行. 非行仁義也 K. *yuinuihaeng. bihaenginuiya*), which the existing *gugyeol* was interpreting as meaning: "[Shun] walked along the path of benevolence and righteousness, he did not pursue and

practice benevolence and righteousness. 義 自由 등 야 行 등 교 및 트리라 義 를 行 등 및 교 및 프리아니라" Yi Hwang criticizes this *gugyeol* in the following way:

Now, looking at the text, since recent scholars are unwilling to engage in purposeful practice, the existing *gugyeol* interprets in this way and just follows the natural meaning. Not only does this not capture the inversion of the text but it is also inadequate in regard to the principle of morally proper conduct (uiri 義理). We should interpret these lines as "he pursued benevolence and righteousness and took action. 仁義로由호 야行호 신디라" The Collected Commentaries on the Mencius says that "benevolence and righteousness are already rooted in the heartmind, 仁義已根於心" which means that the heart-mind of the Sage is benevolent and righteous by nature. It also says that "all actions emanate from this. 所行皆由 此出" The word "this (*cha* 此)" in the expression "from this (*yucha* 由此)" refers to benevolence and righteousness. Since benevolence and righteousness are in our heart-mind by nature, all actions are pursued and come from benevolence and righteousness. Just as our body has ears and eyes by nature, so after the ears and eyes come in contact with all the things and affairs, we can see and hear them. Thus, if someone says "yuimogisicheong 由耳目而視聽", we should interpret it as "through/owing to the ears and eyes, we see and hear. 耳目으로말ㅁ 「아마視聽" How can this be read as "the ears and eyes see and hear? 耳目이말□ \이아마視聽" (...) If someone says "benevolence and righteousness come forth, 由仁義而出" it is just like saying "the ears and eyes pursue it, 耳目이由之" which means that there is something other than the ears and eyes, through which someone sees and hears. In a similar vein, if someone says "benevolence and righteousness pursue it, 仁義 l由之" it means that there is something other than benevolence and righteousness, through which someone practices. The initial intention of the existing gugyeol was to prevent [the readers] from being averse to having a mind [turned towards] purposeful practice, but conversely, it dismisses [the existence of] benevolence and righteousness and says these are [just] what the Sage does. Is this permissible? All those of the present age who wish to clarify their teachings are like this; so, we must look at it carefully. (Yi 1989, vol. 35, p. 12–13)¹⁶

Saying it otherwise: the <code>gugyeol</code> of that time was understanding the syntax of the sentence "<code>yuinuihaeng</code> 由仁義行" in <code>Mencius</code> 4B19 by positing that the doublet "benevolence and righteousness [Ch. <code>renyi</code> 仁義]" is the subject of the sentence and that there is no object in it. Such <code>gugyeol</code>, is likely to lead to misunderstandings, as the object—i.e., what benevolence and righteousness pursue and practice—is obscure. Pointing out that the existing <code>gugyeol</code> misjudges the mood of the original text, Yi Hwang says, that the two words "benevolence and righteousness" serve as objects, not as subject, and thus the phrase "<code>yuinuihaeng</code> 由仁義行" should be interpreted as "he pursued benevolence and righteousness and took action. 仁義로由京、今行市、신디라" In addition, working from the textual features of the sentence, Yi Hwang preaches the Confucian doctrine that benevolence and righteousness are inherent in our heart-mind, and that human beings are the subject who practice these two virtues. That is to say (and as was stressed already by the preceding example), benevolence and righteousness are not obtained by social learning; rather, we are born with them, and we continuously cultivate our original nature by ourselves.

3.2. Wi Baekgyu's Maengja Chaui

Wi Baekgyu's *Maengja chaui* is a work representative of the thought and method of the author. It interprets Confucian truths through textual rhetorical features—such as dictions, sentence structures, and the mood of the original text: reading the *Mencius*, Wi recontextualizes the author's intention through the structural elements and/or mood of the text.¹⁷ Yi Hwang was already displaying a similar approach in his commentary of *Mencius*, Wi, however, shows a greater awareness of the literary aspects of the *Mencius* and he elucidates the intertwining of the rhetorical patterns and of the author's argument to a

much greater extent than his predecessor was doing. This will now be shown by looking at three examples.

First, Wi Baekgyu uncovers the intertwining between the notions of familial affection (K. *chinchin* 親親) and the idea that benevolence is innate through the study of the rhetorical patterns of the original text.

What King [Xuan] of Qi needed to do was simply to extend [the realm of] the benevolence (in 仁) that our heart-minds innately possess. Earlier, Mencius followed up by a saying, "How does one do this...?" (hayeo 何與) so as to move the King to question thoroughly [his purported inability to act benevolently toward his people]; he then talks about extending benevolence (chuin 推仁). Since nothing is closer to benevolence than revering one's family members and loving one's children, he could not but use this [propensity] as a way to guide the king towards understanding. Mencius could have chosen many other metaphors about the relative ease or difficulty to complement the one he uses ("holding a mountain under one's arm and leaping over the sea" 挾山超海) but his choice of "bowing to an elder" (or "breaking kindling for an elder") 爲長者折枝 is truly a surprise. The level of reverence needed in order to easily bow to an elder is something that our heart-minds innately possess (...) After saying "[I] treat [my] elders as elders should be treated [in order to extend this to the elders of others]" 老老 and "[I] treat [my] child as the children should be treated [in order to extend this to the [treatment of] children outside one's family]" 幼幼 he goes on to say that "[King Wen's] example set an example for his wife" 刑妻 to fully illustrate in which way he was able to enlighten those living nearby him—and yet the root of bringing peace and order [to the entire world] is nothing more than this. (Wi 2000, vol. 9, p. 185b)¹⁸

Here, Wi Baekgyu comments on the opening and closing lines of one of Mencius's arguments in *Mencius* 1A7: "Your kindness is sufficient to reach animals, and yet no benefits are extended to the people. How is this permissible? (...) Now, your kindness is sufficient to reach animals, and yet no benefits are extended to the people. How is this permissible?" ¹⁹

Wi Baekgyu interprets the mood of the original text in relationship with various types of rhetorical devices—such as questions, illustrative examples, rhetorical metaphors, and quotations—and he insists on the fact that the devices used in this paragraph indicate Mencius' intention: to explain to the king of Qi the notions of inherent benevolence and familial affection. These notions, as discussed by Wi, had been elaborated by Neo-Confucian thinkers.

Wi Baekgyu pays attention to the words "hayeo 何與 (How is this?)". Since benevolence is inherent in human nature, Wi argues that Mencius induces the king of Qi to be aware of his innate benevolence by repeatedly asking "How is this?". "How is this" is a rhetorical question that makes a point instead of eliciting a direct answer; it leads the listener to examine her/his true mind. Additionally, Wi Baekgyu claims that Mencius employs these rhetorical devices in order to inspire the king to better understand Confucian teachings. That is to say, the example provided by the sentence "to treat [my] elders as elders should be treated and to treat [my] child as children should be treated", the metaphor of "breaking kindling for an elder", and the quotation of the Book of Song (Shijing 詩經), all are drawn from the intention of Mencius to teach the king of Qi the Confucian belief that practicing benevolence begins and expands from the "nearest family".

Second, Wi Baekgyu explains the notions of inherent heavenly pattern-principle (K. *cheolli* 天理) and the naturalness of human desire (K. *inyok* 人慾) through the stress he puts over the tone of the writing:

After saying the word "chu 推" (extending), Mencius elucidates the method of extending. The word "gwon 權" (weighing) and the word "tak 度" (measuring) are key for extending. Mencius asks the king of Qi to consider this, but how would the benighted king notice it in a flash? So, Mencius subsequently coolly

and calmly explains; in particular, he uses the word "eok 抑" (perhaps) as his auxiliary word to continue. Prior to the phrase "I beg your Majesty to measure it 王請度之", Mencius proves that the heavenly pattern-principle is inherent in the king's heart-mind; below the phrase "Perhaps your Majesty 抑王", Mencius identifies and rejects the human desires that are covering and blocking the king's heart-mind. He employs the words "heung 舆" (raging), "wi 危" (endangering), and "gu 構" (exciting) to frighten the king; he uses the word "kwae 快" (pleasant) in order to encourage and arouse the king and to ignite his original feelings. This is how a judge interrogates bandits. (Wi 2000, vol. 9, p. 186a) 20

In this passage, Wi Baekgyu comments on the following lines of *Mencius* 1A7: "By weighing, we know what things are light and which ones are heavy. By measuring, we know what things are long and which ones are short. This is true of all things, and especially so with the heart-mind. I beg your Majesty to measure your own heart-mind. Or perhaps your heart would be filled with delight only after you raise armies, endanger your subjects, and excite the resentment of the other princes?"²¹

Wi Baekgyu claims that the oratory of Mencius not only exhorts but also excites the mind of the king of Qi. First of all, Wi asserts that Mencius uses a smooth tone to encourage the king of Qi to recognize the heavenly pattern-principle in his heart-mind. Second, like an arrow shooting a tiger, Mencius utilizes a succinct tone to stimulates the listener, the king of Qi, to recognize his initial feelings, the original human desire in his heart-mind. In other words, the two phrases "I beg your Majesty to measure it" and "Perhaps your Majesty" includes the writer's plot to uncover the natures of heavenly pattern-principle and human desire. To sum up, through his stress on stylistic patterns, Wi Baekgyu illuminates the Neo-Confucian belief that the heavenly pattern-principle is inherent in human beings and human desire is a natural feeling.

Third and last examples: Wi Baekgyu carefully discloses the structural elements of the text, such as diction, explaining that feelings have a tendency toward goodness, the so-called K. *jeonggyeonghyang seol* 情傾向說:

Mencius says that "From the feelings [he can experience], a man is capable of becoming good. 其情則可以爲善" This is an apt remark. Even the tyrants Jie and Zhou 桀紂 know how to love when their sons are born, how to feel pain when they cut their skin, and how to feel sorrow when someone dies. If they sincerely extend this heart-mind, they will be able to fully achieve benevolence. This is the meaning of "the feelings can be good". Mencius does not say "the human nature is good (seongseon 性善)", but says "the feelings (gijeong 其情);" he does not say "the feelings are good (gijeongseon 其情善)", but firmly says "the feelings then (jeongjeuk 情則)" and "can (gai 可以)" [become good]. Mencius speaks in a euphemism and quotes roundly to awaken everyone to the fact that there is a thread of goodness of the heaven-conferred nature (cheonseong 天性) within us. Mencius's initial intention is not to strongly argue that the nature of the two tyrants is good. (Wi 2000, vol. 16, p. 353a)²²

Wi Baekgyu is commenting here on the following lines of *Mencius* 6A6: "From the feelings [he can experience], a man is capable of becoming good. This is what I mean in saying that human nature is good".²³

In Zhu Xi's view, the passage "From the feelings [he can experience], a man is capable of becoming good (乃若) 其情則可以爲善" grounds the theory of the goodness of human nature (*seongseon seol* 性善說). Zhu asserts that "feelings are the movements of human nature (*seong* 性). Such human feelings can only be good and cannot be malicious, and from this we can see that human nature is originally good. (Zhu 1983, vol. 11, p. 328)"²⁴ What we need to keep in mind is that this opinion is derived from Zhu Xi's metaphysical beliefs, not from the stylistic patterns of the original text.

On the other hand, Wi Baekgyu argues that this passage expounds the theory of a *tendency* towards goodness deduced by the observation of human feelings, not the theory

of the goodness of human nature. The ground of his claim is in the "diction", the oratory of the original text. What Wi argues is that the words "gijeong 其情" (one's feelings) and "gai 可以" (can) imply that feelings have a tendency toward goodness. He points out, in detail, that if Mencius wanted to insist that "human nature is good", he would have said "human nature (giseong 其性)" instead of "the feelings (gijeong 其情)"; if Mencius wanted to express a definitive meaning rather than an inconclusive meaning, he would have said "the feelings are good (gijeongseon 其情善)". This is how Wi suggests a view opposite to the one propounded by Zhu Xi through the textual elements of Mencius.

4. One Eternal Text, Two Contradictory Truths

In the previous section, we examined Yi and Wi's rhetorical commentaries, depicting how these interpreters decipher the stylistic features of the original text in order to explain Confucian truths. Through this, we observed how, from Yi of the early Joseon to Wi of the late Joseon, the rhetorically oriented exegeses had intensified and matured.

As mentioned in the preface of his work (Wi 2000, vol. 9, p. 186b),²⁵ it is likely that his relentless focus upon the fundamental textual features, so-called, *munui*, led Wi Baekgyu to illuminate the principle of morally proper conduct, so-called *uiri*, through its rhetorical elements more than any other Joseon scholars: "I shed light on the textual reading of the text to unravel the encompassing reality, the *dao*".

Though there are slight differences in the text from one version to another, the canonized *Mencius* is treated as the original, eternal text. It is intriguing that rhetorical commentaries capture different stylistic elements from the same sentence for extracting from the text contradictory truths. Likely, rhetorical patterns affect the reading of the interpreter; however, at the same time, the interpreter's own plotting devices also affect the decoding of the rhetorical patterns as he expounds his own beliefs about the truth he means to unveil.

In this section, we will have a look at the rhetorical commentaries of Wi Baekgyu and Zhu Xi to see how their spiritual thought is engaged in their reading of the rhetorical patterns of the *Mencius*. Wi suggests views on the Confucian truth that differ from the orthodox interpretation of Zhu Xi by analyzing the stylistic patterns of the text:

Because in the beginning of the passage the king mentioned profit (yi 利), at the end of this passage, Mencius holds up benevolence and righteousness (inui 仁義). He then repeats the phrase "Why must your Majesty speak of profit?" Again, Mencius's excellent eloquence surprisingly enlightens the listener (...) Mencius's main achievement is making clear [the nature of] righteousness and profit, thereby bringing salvation of the Warring State period. To do this, Mencius mentions, in the first chapter, "Why must your Majesty speak of 'profit?' My only topics are benevolence and righteousness". (Wi 2000, vol. 9, p. 183a)²⁶

Wi Baekgyu is here commenting on the following lines of *Mencius* 1A1: "Why must your Majesty speak of 'profit?' My only topics are benevolence and righteousness (...) Let your Majesty also say, 'Benevolence and righteousness, and let these be your only themes.' Why must your Majesty speak of 'profit?'"²⁷ He sheds light on why Mencius mentions the keywords "benevolence and righteousness". Over the same lines, Zhu Xi highlights a different rhetorical pattern as to why Mencius asks the king not to speak of "profit". (Zhu 1983, vol. 1, p. 202)²⁸ Wi Baekgyu and Zhu Xi highlight different grammatical and lexical aspects of the same sentence, and their respective views about profit and human desire inspire their different rhetorical annotations.

Wi Baekgyu positively evaluates profits as follows:

The distinction between a gentleman, a petty person, and a hegemon is only a distinction between righteousness and profit; nevertheless, "profit" is not something external to the heavenly pattern-principle. The scent and flavor of ear, eye, mouth, and nose, the comfort of body, the wealth of goods, the prestige of the position, and the longevity of the descendants all belong to profit, which is the nature of the heavenly pattern-principle. (Wi 2000, vol. 9, p. 182b)²⁹

Wi Baekgyu claims that human desires belong to the heavenly pattern-principle so that seeking profit is part of the nature of human beings. In contrast, Zhu Xi warns that it is harmful to seek profit since it goes against the heavenly pattern-principle (Zhu 1983, vol. 1, p. 202).³⁰ Additionally, Wi Baekgyu says that the core content of *Mencius* is about illuminating the meaning of benevolence, righteousness, and profit (Wi 2000, vol. 9, p. 183a–83b),³¹ while Zhu Xi asserts that the main content of *Mencius* is about preserving the heavenly pattern-principle and eliminating human desire. Wi Baekgyu has a relatively neutral perspective on profit, which departs from the orthodox Neo-Confucian notion that seeking profit should be avoided since it is harmful to human beings.

Considering the Neo-Confucian notion that "benevolence and righteousness originate from the heavenly pattern-principle, and seeking for profit stems from human desire", Wi Baekgyu's attitude as to looking for profit is derived from his thoughts on human desire. Wi does not consider human desire as inherently bad since he understands "desire" in terms of "wishes", as differentiating the word "yok 欲" [wish] from the word "yok 欲" [desire].³² In the same token, he regards the mouth's love of food and the nose's love of appealing scents not as inherently bad but as expressions of the nature of human beings. In contrast, Zhu Xi considers human desire as intrinsically evil. According to Zhu, human desires, such as the mouth's preference for good tastes, must be regulated, since they can easily become nefarious.³³

Wi Baekgyu says that human desire is included in the heavenly pattern-principle, while Zhu Xi argues that human desire diverges from the heavenly pattern-principle. These contrary views of Wi and Zhu imply that the interpreter's plot is applied to his/her rhetorical annotations. For instance, the interpreter's view leads him to emphasize different grammatical or lexical features of the sentence from *Mencius* 1A1 that we have quoted above.

To be specific, both Wi and Zhu could have pondered over the word "K. ha 何 (why)", intended to cast a doubt, or yet over the words "K. yiyiui 而已矣 (only)", a determiner, or oxymoron, or parallel syntax, or antimetabole, etc. Such questions were touched upon by other scholars: for instance, Niu Yunzhen 牛運震 (1706–1758) of Qing China sheds light on the fact that Mencius repeats these phrases while slightly altering the grammatical order. Hirose Tansō 廣瀬淡窓 (1782–1856) of Edō Japan, on the other hand, focuses his analysis of the same rhetorical pattern on the mere fact that the sentence is uttered twice within one section. The section of the sectio

However, Wi illuminates a rhetorical device that emphasizes the fact that Mencius welcomes "benevolence and righteousness", and Zhu spotlights a rhetorical pattern that makes clear that Mencius rejects "profits". That is to say, the different perspectives on human desire steer the attention of our commentators to different stylistic features of the same sentence. It is not just a matter of syntactic ambiguity. Their beliefs about the truth are reflected in their rhetorical interpretations. This reminds us of the *Book of Changes* sentence according to which "refining rhetoric is derived from establishing one's sincerity" discussed in the previous section. The rhetorical pattern seems to influence the reader's interpretation of the Classics, but the reader's thought also affects her/his reading of the stylistic patterns of the original text.

5. Conclusions

Aside from its complex textuality (it contains critiques, satires, and an early appropriation of ancient East Asian wisdom), the *Mencius* also represents a quantum leap forward in human moral and intellectual understanding. In the Sinographic sphere, there was a belief that textual rhetorical strategies reflect the core thinking of Mencius, an idea based on the ancient idea that rhetorical procedures had to be based on sincerity (K. *susaibgiseong*). Influenced by this view, rather than appreciating *Mencius* as a literary text, Joseon scholars tried to read the rhetorical pattern of the text in such a way as to uncover the fundamental truths of Confucianism. This paper has examined this phenomenon through a rhetorical reading of *Mencius* by two representative scholars—Yi Hwang of the early Joseon and Wi Baekgyu of the late Joseon.

As has been uncovered in this paper, their rhetorical interpretations have two significant features. First, from Yi Hwang to Wi Baekgyu, the analysis of rhetorical patterns has intensified. Yi Hwang mostly mentions the structural elements—e.g., the issues of active or passive voice and causal or parallel relationships. Wi Baekgyu, on the other hand, pays attention not only to the structural elements but also to the mood of the text. He points out more specific rhetorical features such as a rhetorical question and analyzes it in more detail than Yi had done before him.

Second, from Yi Hwang to Wi Baekgyu, the connection between the rhetorical pattern and the interpreter's plot intensified to a greater extent, since Wi displays a full-fledged effort to recontextualize the Sage Mencius's logic and speculation by reading the structural elements and/or mood of the text and providing detailed explanations. That is, Wi Baekgyu reflexively takes the rhetorical approach as a hermeneutic methodology.

Yi Hwang, by and large, deciphers early Confucian notions, such as the intrinsic nature of human beings and the importance of continuous efforts for enacting the Confucian *dao*, through the rhetorical patterns of the *Mencius*. On the other hand, Wi Baekgyu mainly decodes the Neo-Confucian notions, such as the heavenly pattern-principle and human desire, as well as the early Confucian ideas in his rhetorical annotations. At this stage, early Joseon scholarship had begun to recognize the Neo-Confucian notions, while late Joseon scholarship fully grasps them, takes some distance from their traditional understanding, and develops its own Neo-Confucian ideas, showcasing their fertility. In this light, Wi Baekgyu's rhetorical interpretation not only diversifies Neo-Confucian ideas but also frames the discussions happening within the Joseon Confucian landscape.

Another implication of this study is that the stylistic pattern of the Confucian canon guides the reader's interpretation of the text, but, vice versa, an interpreter's plot often influences his reading of rhetorical patterns. We examined this issue by contrasting the rhetorical commentaries of Wi Baekgyu and Zhu Xi. Wi and Zhu are attentive to different rhetorical aspects of the same sentence of *Mencius* 1A1. They both pretend to be merely shedding light on the fundamental textual features of the text (rather than developing their own views) when reading *Mencius*. However, their rhetorically oriented exegeses resonate with their thought and with the context in which their writing was occurring. For instance, in the days of Wi Baekgyu, the Korean reality-focused School (the so-called *silhak* 實學 intellectual current) was prevailing, which made Wi more receptive to human desire in its concreteness than Zhu Xi could have been.

In a sense, rhetorical commentaries are conceived and written from within the reader's spiritual orbit. Interpreters reflect their beliefs in their reading, and are not strictly bound by the sources. Their interpretations can always be criticized for their subjectivity, as being driven by their own beliefs about what they perceive as the ultimate truth unveiled by the text. Still, the dynamics exhibited by rhetorical interpretations was derived from a syntactic unity—the very text of the *Mencius*—a fact that refers to a fundamental and often debated question: Can an absolutely objective, unintended reading of a textual source ever take place? At the very least, the attentive reading of our Korean commentators has shown how subtle the interplay between a text's rhetorical patterns and its reinterpretations can be.

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Notes

- For the concept of "Sinographic Cosmopolis", see (King 2015).
- (1) Korea—National Institute of Korean Language (Gungnip gugeowon 국립국어원).
 Available online: https://stdict.korean.go.kr/search/searchView.do (archived on 24 August 2022)
 (2) China—Baidu.
 - Available online: https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E4%BF%AE%E8%BE%9E/175591?fr=aladdin (archived on 7 August 2022) (3) Japan—Weblio.
 - Available online: https://www.weblio.jp/content/%E3%81%97%E3%82%85%E3%81%86%E3%81%98 (archived on 7 August 2022).
- Applying the Western concept of rhetoric to non-Western texts is a controversial issue. Indraccolo (2014) argues that it is possible to apply the concept of rhetoric only if we keep the meaning of rhetoric fluid. If so, as Weber (2014) insists, though Western scholarship has long tried to provide a clear definition of the term *rhetoric*, a broader and more abstract definition is needed for cross-cultural research. Moreover, we need to determine originary concepts of rhetoric as developed in the Sinographic Cosmopolis, because there was no single Sinitic term that exactly matches up with the Greek (or English) word *rhetoric*. By analyzing the etymology and previous interpretations of *susa*, Jeong (2006) and Kim (2004) claim that the traditional meaning of *susa* encompasses both embellishment techniques and persuasive skills. Further discussion may be needed, but this is the traditional concept of rhetoric I employ in this article (You 2019, p. 505).
- ⁴ For the etymology, previous interpretations and three elements of the traditional concept susa, refer to (You 2019, pp. 36–43).
- 5 君子, 進德修業. 忠信, 所以進德也, 修辭立其誠, 所以居業也. Translation of Book of Changes from (Legge 2015) with modifications.
- 6 事理通達, 而心氣和平, 故能言 (Zhu 1983, vol. 8, pp. 173-74).
- 8 立誠爲修辭之本,則聖人之戒愼乎.
- 9 문장작법은 이미 있었다. 동양의 수사나 서양의 레토릭은 애초부터 문장작법은 아니요 변론법에 있었다. 문장보다는 언어가 먼저 있었고 출판술 이전에 변론술이 먼저 발달되었으니, 수사법이니 레토릭이니 다 말하는 기술로서 시작한 것이다.
- For the concept of "vernacularization", see (Kornicki 2018, pp. 28–33; Pollock 2006, pp. 19–30).
- For more examples of Yi's rhetorical commentaries on the *Mencius*, refer to (You 2019, pp. 157–81).
- 12 Translation of *Mencius* from (Legge 1960) with modifications.
- ¹³ 今按, 當云"義 皇集 う、야". 養氣者, 固不可先有集合此義, 以生浩氣之心. 然"集義"二字, 實是積累工夫之處, 豈都不容着工, 而義自然來集乎? 正緣諸先生怕渉計較期待之私, 故不顧文勢義意, 而爲此說耳.
- ¹⁴ 今按,據《註》文勢,則似當如此. 然此等處,不可太拘《註》文,當平順本文語勢, 云"上이道로揆홈이업入、中下〕法으로守홈이업서".
- 15 由上無道揆,故下無法守.
- 9按,此亦畏渉工夫,故如此釋以就自然之意,不顧文勢之倒置義理之乖舛也.當云"仁義로由る、야行る、신口라".盖《集註》"仁義根於心"云者,乃先言聖人之心仁義本具之意,而係之曰"所行皆由此出",是"由此"之"此"字,正指仁義而言.惟其仁義本具於心,故所行皆由仁義而出,猶耳目本具於身,故所接皆由耳目而視聽也.故如說"由耳目而視聽",當曰"耳目으로말^{ロ、〕}아마視聽"矣,豈可曰"耳目이말^{ロ、〕}아마視聽"乎?(...)曰"仁義〕由之",則是所由以行者,別有他物,而非仁義也.然則爲此說者,本欲務避有心工夫之嫌,而反去仁義而言聖人之所行,其可乎?近世諸公欲精訓說者,每如此,不可不察.
- For details of Wi's rhetorical commentaries on the *Mencius*, refer to (You 2018, pp. 509–18; You 2019, pp. 208–23).
- 18 齊王所當爲, 只是推吾心固有之仁而已, 上文連說"何與", 使王十分喫疑, 將說與"推仁". 而仁莫近於敬親愛子, 則不可不以老老幼幼, 爲自牖之約. 凡事物可與挟山超海, 輕重對擧者, 不啻多矣, 而必以爲長者折枝爲言, 誠是意外也. 盖爲長折枝之易, 是吾心固有之敬也 (...) 旣言"老老幼幼", 又繼以刑妻, 儘切己曉人. 而治平之本, 元不外此.
- 9 今, 恩足以及禽獸. 而功不至於百姓者, 獨何與? (...) 今, 恩足以及禽獸, 而功不至於百姓者, 獨何與?
- 20 既說出"推"字,因曉以推之之法,"權""度"卽推之訣也.雖請度之,昏王豈能豁然省悟.遂拖出一端冷說話,忒將"抑"字爲發語辭,【"王請度之"以上,證曉王心固有之天理,"抑王"以下,抉斥王心蔽固之人慾.】"興"字"危"字"構"字,令人心悚,"快"字勒激齊王,使輸本情.便是治盜官決案問目.
- 21 權然後,知輕重,度然後,知長短.物皆然,心爲甚,王請度之.抑王,與甲兵,危士臣,構怨於諸侯然後,快於心與.
- 22 孟子曰: "其情則可以爲善", 儘名言也. 雖桀紂生子則知愛, 抉膚則知痛, 當死則知哀, 苟推是心, 仁不可勝用也. 是其情可以爲善者也. 不直曰"性善"而已, 而曰"其情", 不直曰"其情善", 而必曰"情則", 又必曰"可以", 宛轉立言, 回護惹引, 使人人回認腔子中有天性一線之善也, 初非梗把桀紂之性壓喚爲善也.
- 23 乃若其情則可以爲善矣,乃所謂善也.
- 24 情者, 性之動也. 人之情, 本但可以爲善, 而不可以爲惡, 則性之本善, 可知矣.
- 25 但今讀者不解文義,徒誦音釋,不達於文者,烏能知義理哉.欲救今日之弊,先諭以文義,使讀者玩味悅繹.
- ²⁶ 起頭因王言而先舉利, 結尾因己言而先舉仁義. 仍以何必利翻蹴了. 口氣英爽—, 令人悚悟 (...) 明義利、救戰國,子輿之大功. 故以"何必利"·"有仁義"爲《孟》書首章.
- 27 王何必曰利? 亦有仁義而已矣 (...) 王亦曰仁義而已矣. 何必曰利?

- 28 夫子罕言利,常防其源也(...)故孟子言仁義而不言利,所以拔本塞源而救其弊,此聖賢之心也.
- ²⁹ 君子小人王霸之分,只是義利之分,而利字亦非天理外事也.耳目口鼻之得臭味,身體之得安逸,財貨之富厚,位望之尊榮,子孫之長久,即所謂利,而天理之當然也.
- 30 此章言, 仁義, 根於人心之固有, 天理之公也, 利心, 生於物我之相形, 人欲之私也. 循天理, 則不求利而自無不利, 徇人欲, 則求利未得而害已隨之, 所謂毫釐之差千里之繆.
- 31 明義利救戰國,子輿之大功. 故以何必利有仁義,爲孟書首章. 此兩書記載者之深意也.
- 32 賢人君子讀經典而窮理盡性,希聖知天,欲之眞而大之者也. 其次爲文章立名立言,欲歿世不朽者,雖小之矣,而猶非妄也. 漢唐以下文士大家皆是也. 末至科第之欲,墊人情性,則遂擧世僥倖而爲妄矣. 讀書者初不體察聖賢所欲之本旨,但摘句掇字,以爲時文而已,則其欲加之心而爲慾. 遂爲僇身悖俗之情,而聖人經典,還爲無用之物矣(Wi 2000, vol. 5, p. 2).
- 世路無如人欲險, 幾人到此誤平生 (Zhu 1781, vol. 123, p. 436); 伏願陛下自今以往, 一念之萌, 則必謹而察之, 此爲天理耶? 爲人欲耶? 果天理也, 則敬以擴之, 而不使其少有壅闕 (Zhu 1781, vol. 123, p. 684). Both Wi Baekgyu and Zhu Xi acknowledge the existence of human desires, but they differ in that Wi does not think that human desire should be regulated. For a detailed analysis on Zhu Xi's view on human desire, see (Ōhama 1983, pp. 222–30).
- 34 倒轉作結,妙極斬截. ○突然轉關,突然收住,文勢盤旋飛動 (Niu 1803, vol. 1, p. 1b).
- 35 倒用前句. 呼應有法 (Hirose 1925–1927, vol. 1, p. 1).

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