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The Influence of China/Asia on the West

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The Influence of China/Asia on the West

Introduction

Although Asia and Europe inhabit the same natural, single, whole landmass that continuously stretches westward from the coastline of the Pacific Ocean to that of the Atlantic Ocean, they represent two separate continental entities and develop into two distinctly different civilizations: the East and the West. When human beings inhabiting other continents were confined in isolation, the Eurasian continent as a unity was an exciting and dynamic show stage and the performance of settlements and migrations, cultural clashes and interactions, military conquests and religious fights, and empires' expansions and their collapse have never stopped.

The Bronze Age materials reveal that palpable communication and connections across-continental can be traced back to the Mesopotamian world (Goody 1996: 250).¹ Later in Greco-Roman antiquity, China and India started to be imagined in philosophers' and historians' fascinating anecdotes as a land of wonder that produced "Sere" (Greek for silk) and China was first referenced as a country "Thin" in the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* (40-70AD).² From ancient times until industrialization in the nineteenth century, the East had created an advanced and leading position in the global economy and global communications network and the West was always fascinated by the richness and complexity of the East civilization, particularly China, during that period (Hobson 2004: 2).³ The Eastern ideas, materials, and technologies diffused to the West through global networks and were assimilated into the Western social and cultural apparatus in pursuit of its higher goals and better interests, which profoundly helped construct Western self-awareness and accelerated Western prosperity and ascendancy. The influence of China and other Asian countries on the West reflects both a process and a destination. To obtain a more complete understanding of such a process and destination, it is better to first outline the historical passages in the global network that naturally undertook the responsibilities of transferring Asian technologies, materials, and ideas to the West.

Archaeology Discoveries in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, the People's Republic of China

In 1970s, human bones excavated in Köchi River in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, the People's Republic of China, were proven to be the earliest Europoid remains discovered in the East by that time, which evidenced Europoid people's activities in Asian around 3,800 BCE. Then in 1980s, 21 Mongoloid and eight Europoid skeletons, dated 1300 BCE, were discovered in the same excavation in Hami area in eastern Xinjiang. For more information, see *A Discussion of Sino-Western Cultural Contacts and Exchanges in the Second Millennium B.C. Based on Recent Archaeological Discoveries*, by Li Shuicheng, 1999

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Historical Passages in the Global Network

Silk Roads

Initially conceptualized and articulated by the German geographer Baron Ferdinand von Richthofen (1833-1905), Silk Roads summarize a networked system of multiple trade routes that connected East Asia, the India subcontinent and Southern Europe by way of Central Asia (see Plate 1). This network had its seed in prehistoric human connectivity, reached its golden time during China's Tang Dynasty (618-907) and declined with the fall of the Mongol Empire (1206-1368). Silk, adding a layer of romantic aura because of its beauty, light weight and high value, however, was not the only commodity carried on the roads; others included chemicals, ceramics, exotic spices, precious metals and gems, glass, paper, livestock, and even disease (Christian 2000: 2).⁴In addition, technologies and ideas, belief and religions, linguistics and documents, styles and fashion, and genes and heritages were also transmitted along with travelers, merchants, soldiers, envoys, monks, and pilgrims (Hansen 2012: 4-5).⁵Propelled either by mission, dream or thirst for treasure regardless of the hostility presented by climates and landscapes, those commuters on the Silk Roads served as middle men, bringing new things to where they couldn't be found or acted as cultural bees, like Sogdians, "cross-pollinating ideas and traditions from one civilization to another" (Foltz 2010: 14).⁶

The Arab-Islamic Empire Bridge

The Arab-Islamic Empire was established in 632 and ended with the seizure of Baghdad by the Mongol Khan Hulagu in 1258. The Arab-Islamic Empire was a unique political, social, cultural and geographic entity on the Silk Roads. The empire stretched from the borders of China and India to the Spanish coast, functioning as a bridge or a mediator between the Far East and the West and enabling the transmission of technology and knowledge between them. While Europe was suffocated by the shadow of the Medieval Ages, the Arab-Islamic Empire created a flourishing civilization and maintained and increased the commercial exchange and cultural communication with the East, particularly China and India (Al-Rodhan 2012: 1-2).⁷It was Arabs who brought China's papermaking technique⁸ and magnetic compass⁹ westward to Europe, albeit arguable.

The Mongol Empire Bridge

Despite its bloody violence and constant wars, the Mongol Empire unprecedentedly unified the Eurasian continent and considerably brought the vast land under the rule of one political administration, legal system and taxation. Mongols tended to be relatively receptive to European travelers and merchants and its efficient mounted highway communication system facilitated transcontinental trades and traveling (Millward 2013: 34-35).¹⁰ Therefore, human mobility across the continent became noticeably less difficult than before and communication between the East and the West grew into direct, personal contacts. In particular, Marco Polo (1254-1324)'s travel accounts that described the fascinating and prosperous urban life of China opened up a window fresh to Europeans and stimulated further adventures and explorations. "The Mongol unification of Eurasia from Korea to Hungary spread military technology as well as aspects of mathematics, astronomy, cartography, agronomy, and other arts and technologies in both directions across the continent." (Millward 2013: 72)¹¹

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Jesuit Missionaries

Following the European merchants during the Mongol Empire, Jesuits or Jesuit missionaries, took the lead in transmitting ideas, knowledge and technologies between the West and the East through their persistence and determination. The Society of Jesus was established in 1534 and the Spanish Jesuit St. Francis Xavier (1506-1552) started the first mission in 1552, attempting to bring Christianity to Asia. He pioneered his trip to India and Japan, but failed in his entry into China. Thirty years later, Italian Jesuit Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) (see Plate 2) came to China and successfully accomplished what Xavier didn't. Jesuit missionaries learned from Ricci and accustomed themselves to Asian culture. Some missionaries, like Johann Adam Schall von Bell (1591-1666) in China, even climbed the political ladder and served as government officials in prominent positions. Jesuit missionaries acted as "knowledge brokers" or "agents of information" between the East and the West in the sixteenth and most of the seventeenth century (Millar 2007: 1).¹² They introduced Western knowledge and Christianity to the East and sent back to Europe detailed, substantive, but personal accounts regarding various aspects of Asian countries, particularly China.

Maritime Silk Road

The Maritime Silk Road (see Plate 1) refers to the ocean route that connects China, India, the Arab Peninsula, and Mediterranean area by way of the South China Sea, Indian Ocean and the Red Sea. India-China maritime trade link can be traced back to the first century BCE (Sen 2006: 421).¹³ During China's Song dynasty (960-1279), shipbuilding techniques advanced and navigational skills improved, resulting in increased ocean trade. During Ming dynasty (1368-1644), admiral Zheng He (1371?-1433) led seven extraordinary expeditions and reached the Arab Peninsula and the east coast of Africa. Their ships were much larger in size than European counterparts and more technologically advanced, equipped with compasses and sternpost rudders (Wei 2014: 26-28).¹⁴ After Vasco da Gama (1460-1524) sailed around the dangerous Arab Peninsula and successfully reached India by sea in 1498, European explorers and royal chartered companies (like Dutch India Company and East India Company) became active agents commuting between the West and the East by way of the Indian Ocean.

The Influences of China/Asia to the West

Technology

Instead of science-based innovation that requires hypothesis testing, controlled experimentation and mathematical proving, China took the lead in experience-based technological inventions and techniques before the seventeenth century due to the size of population (Lin 1995: 276).¹⁵ China demonstrated superb originality and creativity in the art of making things, which resulted in a strong influence on the outside world. Needham listed thirty-six Chinese mechanical inventions and techniques, including gunpowder, the magnetic compass, papermaking, printing technique, porcelain-making, the suspension bridge, the drilling technique for natural gas, the curved iron plough, and the mechanical clock, just to name a few (1954: 242).¹⁶ Some inventions and techniques, such as gunpowder and papermaking, were introduced into the West through the passages described above. Some, like printing technique, appeared later in Europe, suggesting

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subtle inspiration or influence from China, although no concrete, proven or direct linkage has been shown.

The diffusion of ancient Chinese inventions and techniques brought revolution to world civilizations. European sailors and explorers acquired and refined the knowledge of the magnetic compass first invented by China. With newer navigational tools and better ship designs, they became active agents during the Age of Discoveries, bringing back to Europe exotic materials and alien species, bizarre texts, new knowledge, and great wealth. Those objects and artifacts went into the cabinets or showrooms of explorers, merchants or wealthy families, which later inspired the birth of European public museums. The European military revolution (1550-1660) took advantage of gunpowder and Chinese weaponry technological ingredients to develop more advanced guns and cannons (Hobson 2004: 186-189).¹⁷ European knights replaced their knives and shields with guns and cannons, which brought about the collapse of European feudal castles and accelerated the overthrow of aristocratic feudalism (Needham 1981: 122).¹⁸ One of the consequences of the fall of aristocracy is that European royal libraries became national properties and private collections of cultural and natural objects went into public archives and museums. China's papermaking was brought to the West by way of Central Asia and printing technique possibly spread westward through travelers in the Mongol Empire. Indeed, the advent of papermaking and printing techniques significantly transformed European civilization. Publishing multiple affordable copies of books and journals to a wide audience preserved and disseminated both scientific discoveries and popular information. It is honest to say that, without printing technique, the impact of the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Scientific Revolution, the Enlightenment, and the Industrial Revolution would have been significantly weakened or reduced. The alliance between scholars and publishers prompted regularity, uniformity, systemization, standardization, and classification of printed materials, which were taken as norms of modern science, scholarship and publishing (Logan 1986: 192).¹⁹ As the foundation of modern library science, the rules and regulations of describing and classifying printed materials collected in libraries, archives, and museums originated deeply from the regularized communications and practices of early European scholars and publishers.

Society

The Battle of Talas and Paper-Making Technique

It is said that a number of Chinese soldiers of the Tang dynasty (618-907), who had the knowledge of making paper, were captured in 751 by Arab armies in Talas, which is located in southern Kazakhstan. Those Chinese were sent back to Baghdad and, therefore, brought the paper-making technique to Arabic Empire.

Although this battle is anecdotally documented in Chinese historical account, the description about captured soldier papermakers is likely to be legendary, as is argued by Jonathan M. Bloom in his book *Paper before Print: The History and Impact of Paper in the Islamic World* implied that craftsmen in Central Asia "invented rag paper" and the technique was introduced into Islamic world after Central Asia became part of the empire.

Although Central Asia was part of Arabic Empire, but it had established close connection and then frequent communication with China long before that. Zhang Qian (?-114 BCE) explored Central Asia as the official envoy of West Han Dynasty (206 BCE-24 AD) and opened up the ancient Silk Roads. Fragments of raw paper and rolls of textual documents excavated in Central Asia provide concrete evidence how papermaking techniques spread westwards and how marvelously it revolutionized human history.

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In contrast to medieval Europe, China was more of a liberal and open-minded society governed by rulers with virtue and knowledgeable officials who both grounded themselves on the social, cultural, and political foundation called Confucianism. Confucianism went westwards mostly through the indefatigable effort of Jesuit missionaries who lived and disseminated Christianity and Western science in China and other Asian countries during the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries. The well-educated Jesuit missionaries considered themselves as Confucian literati from Europe in terms of education and social status. They took accommodating into Chinese culture as a point of access to Chinese society and ruling classes and considered building close ties with the Confucian scholar officials as a breakthrough both in Christian conversion and spread of Western knowledge. Therefore, they presented Confucius to Europeans as an extraordinary philosopher and a teacher in Jesuits' reports brought back to Europe (see Plate 3). Such preference perfectly met the Europeans' craving for fresh philosophies that would give more humane concern and it remarkably appealed to their attempts for admirable models which were absent in European sociopolitical practices and thoughts.

Enlightenment thinkers embraced China and Chinese culture and they were particularly attracted to "Confucian philosophy of atheism, political thought of virtue-governing, economic thought of advocating agriculture but belittling business, and ethics that amalgamates politics and virtue." (Yu 2009: 14)²⁰ The influence of Confucianism went deep into European society as European thinkers' philosophical endeavor progressed and advanced. In Germany, Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz (1646-1716) and his contemporaries demonstrated intimate acquaintances with and synthesis of Chinese philosophies, Neo-Confucianism in particular, and presented a more systematic development of the monad theory and dynamic metaphysics (Davis 1983: 536).²¹ In France, Voltaire (1694-1778) drew upon Chinese thoughts on politics, philosophy and religion and strove to bring about changes to Europe through the advocacy for a government that was rational, deistic, and humanitarian. In his writing, he praised Chinese rulers for their canonization of Confucius' human-based theory and emphasis of agricultural productivity. He showed a high regard for the Spring Plowing Ceremony held by Chinese emperors in honor of the generosity and kindness bestowed by nature, which was even taken as a model by the French monarch Louis XV in 1756 (Mungello 2005: 102).²² Chinese rulers believed that less arbitrary interference from government would lead to more agricultural success and they allowed farmers and peasants to pay a smaller portion as tax from the whole harvest out of a piece of land. European Physiocrats, such as François Quesnay (1694-1774), were influenced by the simplicity and efficiency of China's taxation system, and they attempted to put it in advocacy and practice. Le Maréchal de Vauban (1633-1707) strongly supported a universally equitable tax system and even recommended an annual census for France as China did (Millar 2010: 733).²³ His proposal was dismissed but ironically it was the inefficiency of French taxation system that triggered the financial crisis, which eventually led to the French Revolution. As Elisseeff-Poisle summarized, "Thus China was one of the foundation stones in the edifice of new ideas which instigated, at the end of century, an upheaval in the old French order" (1991: 157).²⁴

Admiration of Confucianism reflected the limits or inadequacies of European political, theological and moral capacities. Apparently, China was purposefully set up as a mirror by European society to diagnose its own deficiency for improvements. After China penetrated deep into Europeans' hearts as a political utopia, India came to be enshrined in the realm of spirit (Clarke 1997: 56).²⁵ China, by Enlightenment thinkers, was seen as an older and wiser man; India

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by Romantic intellectuals, like Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1829) and Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), was embraced as a child of purity and innocence. Schlegel considered Europe as a decayed and fragmented society, which could be nourished and healed by Indian religions and thoughts that attached importance to a holistic understanding of the world (Dusche 2011: 2).²⁶ Indian philosophies, religions, and literature were absorbed as a dominant source of inspiration by European Romantic thinkers, seeking the construction of a culturally, politically, and religiously unified European community. Although none of these European thinkers actually had been in China or India and their understanding and interpretation of Asian civilization heavily relied on secondhand information supplied by explorers, Jesuit missionaries, or merchants, such absence, on the contrary, proves how deep Asian civilization made its way into the European societies in pre-industrial times.

Art

As contacts and communication between the East and the West increased in the sixteenth century and onwards, Asian art started to exercise a profound influence on European art. From exuberant chinoiserie paintings in British royal palaces, luxurious textiles with chintz motifs that blended the taste of India, Persia and China in European elites' houses, and Chinese pagodas in French baroque gardens, to decorative porcelains, bronze wares, metals, ivories, and jades collected in the wonder rooms of elite classes, each piece spoke its splendid Asian origin and creativity. Without them, the image of whole Western art history wouldn't be complete.

Ledderose made an explicit remark that "the higher the status of an art in China, the less influence it exerted in Europe." (1991:221)²⁷ Chinese calligraphy and paintings, which were highly regarded by traditional Chinese literati, were hardly accepted and appreciated by Europeans. On the contrary, artistic products and techniques by Chinese artisans who were good at making things were admired and cherished, such as porcelains and ceramics, textiles, bronze wares, lacquer wares, furniture, theatre dancing, and even garden design. The "natural wildness" and "beauty without order" of Chinese garden and landscape design even created significant, although arguable, impact on the formation of Romanticism's mind (Lovejoy 1933: 1-3).²⁸

Europeans studied and reinterpreted Asian artistic styles and blended them into a new hybrid artistic fashion trend that the French later called word "chinoiserie." Johan Nieuhof (1618-1672)'s 150 widespread illustrations accomplished after his travel in China,²⁹ (Mungello: 100-101), European dancers' upright index finger gesture on the stage, (Mouat and Mouat, 2013: 50)³⁰ and Anglo-Chinese gardens the upright of Chinese pagodas and pavilions (Jacques 1990: 189)³¹ demonstrated that how deeply chinoiserie went into a variety of European art forms ranging from decorative arts to theater and landscape design. Closely related to chinoiserie is the Rococo style that was initiated in eighteenth century in France and later spread to other European countries. Rococo was characterized by light, lovely, elegant, and luxury themes and it contained Asian elements with the overwhelming use of curved shapes in design and ornamentation. Although chinoiserie and Rococo altered Europeans' aesthetic tastes, they had short life spans and were criticized by artists who believed both styles embodied superficiality and excessiveness. William Alexander (1767-1816), a painter, illustrator, and engraver, traveled to China and captured the authenticity of Chinese culture. He produced thousands of sketches and drawings, which were later translated into watercolors and engravings and his vivid visual representation

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added balance to chinoiserie's extravagance and exuberance (Sloboda 2008: 28-29).³²In the mid-nineteenth century, Japan reestablished its international trading with Western countries and its cultural and artistic works, for example, ceramics, woodcuts, paper fans, and paintings, flourished in Europe and later in the United States. The French term "japonisme" emerged as a representation of the fashion trend that Western artworks incorporated Japanese aesthetic principals and artistic elements. Japanese art, especially the woodcuts, inspired quite a number of Western Impressionism and post-Impressionism artists in the 1860s (Park West Gallery 2017).³³

It is also important to note that, as a matter of fact, the influence of the Chinese art of crafting and making things on the West had gone beyond the art discipline. Europeans' persistent inquiry into the secret formula of Chinese porcelain-making, including the composition of raw materials, firing temperature and the formation of glaze coating resulted in valuable benefits to the discipline of modern chemistry (Pollard 2015: 50-71).³⁴ European's attempt of imitating Chinese porcelains' mass production so as to meet the need of global market actually added valuable ingredients to the initiation of the British Industrial Revolution.

Medicine

Asia had the world's most advanced medicine before the arrival of European Renaissance and the diffused medical achievements from Arabia, India, Persia, and China significantly contributed to forming the foundation of modern European medicine (Ho & Lisowski 1997: 3).³⁵In addition to formulas, diagnostic methods and healing techniques, Asian medical books were translated into various European languages and decorated with beautiful illustrations of Asian plants, animals, minerals, and geographies, serving as an encyclopedic gateway that guided European lay readers into the wonders of Asian lands. Michał Boym's (1612-1659) *Flora Sinensis* is a typical example.

China and India had a reciprocal influence on each other's medicine theory and practices, which penetrated westwards together along the Silk Roads and reached Europe through Arabs, Jesuits and other messengers. Ancient Indian medicine was intimately associated with magico-religious activities during the Vedic period (1500-600 BCE) and then evolved into rational, systematic and therapeutic Ayurveda with a holistic approach, which was absent in European medical practices, to examine the achievement of equilibrium or harmony between human mind, body and nature (Saini 2016: 254-258).³⁶ With its origin dating back 5,000 years, traditional Chinese medicine absorbed Buddhism theory, Taoism principals and Confucian ideas and added them into its philosophical base and developed extraordinary knowledge in herbal healing, acupuncture, massage, meditation and disease prevention. Acupuncture was first reported in European documents in the late seventeenth century through the effort of Jesuits and physicians of Dutch East India (Lu and Needham 1980:).³⁷ It was first practiced in Europe by the French physician Louis Berlioz (1803-1869) in the treatment of a neurotic patient (Ho & Lisowski 1993: 48).³⁸ Two hundred years before vaccination came into Europeans' view through Edward Jenner (1749-1823), the prevention of smallpox had already appeared in a Chinese medical text and the practice of inoculation caught Europeans' attention through Turkey in the seventeenth century, adding valuable and nutritious ingredients to the birth of modern immunology (Ho & Lisowski: 38).³⁹ Sir John Fryer (1649-1734) emphasized ancient Chinese medicine in this book *Pulse-*

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Watch, which led to the invention of the modern pulse-watch in medical examination (Szczesniak 1954: 156).⁴⁰

The traditional medicines of both China and India emphasized the active interconnectedness between human bodies, nature and society and they treated dysfunctions and illnesses under holistic and ecological framework that prompted a system interrelated by wholeness and oneness instead of isolated mechanistic elements. However, Europeans did not give much positive reaction at the initial contact with the knowledge of Chinese and Indian medicine because they believed both of them demonstrated close linkage with religious and spiritual perceptions and activities. As time went by, their values have been significantly revisited in the recognition of Western medicine's inadequacy since the beginning of the twentieth century.

Influences of China/Asia and its relation with libraries, archives and museums

Europe's interaction and communication with China and other Asian countries in the pre-industrial times opened an exciting and refreshing chapter in its own history. The westward mobility of materials, techniques, ideas, and thoughts helped build a transcontinental bridge that fundamentally linked the West and the East; the diffusion and assimilation of them played a vital role in enabling the rise of the "oriental West," a concept which recognizes the fields that had been pioneered by Easterners between 500-1800 and significantly contributed to the development and prosperity of Western civilization (Hobson 2004: 2).⁴¹ Associated with the application of materials, advancement of techniques, dissemination of ideas and the spread of thoughts were the emergence of a new knowledge discipline known as "sinology," the insertion of Asian collections into the assemblage of Western cultural institutions—libraries, archives, and museums, and the challenge imposed by those collections in terms of description and organization.

Sinology

Generally speaking, sinology refers to the Western academic discipline that studies China, particularly its language, culture and history. Europeans' intellectual curiosity toward China can be traced to the study of reports

James Legge (1815-1897)

Quite a number of sinologists emerged as communication between China and Europe was drastically increased at the end of nineteenth century and the beginning of twentieth century. James Legge (1815-1897) was one of the most important ones. His scholarly, prodigious translation *Chinese Classics* won the first International Stanislas Julien Prize of Chinese Literature in 1875.

While in China, Western missionaries tended to build their private libraries and collect Chinese books. Some even collected pamphlets published by Taiping Rebellion (1851-1864). After the rebellion were put down, its publications were burnt into ashes by the Qing government (1644-1912). The surviving ones, brought back to their home countries by missionaries, became invaluable materials to study this historical event. James Legge had a private library of such. It was put up for sale after he passed away and part of it is currently held by New York Public Library, comprising a major part of the Chinese Rare Books Collection.

When Western missionaries, like James Legge, who worked in China returned to their home countries and looked back those days spent in China, they probably realized that this experience had themselves transformed. They were actually travelling on a highway of two directions: giving the image of China to the West and at the same time bringing the idea of the West to China.

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generated by Jesuit missionaries. For instance, in Athanasius Kircher's book *China Illustrata* (1667), the illustrations and descriptions of plants and animals in China heavily relies on *Flora Sinensis* (1656) produced by Polish Jesuit missionary Michał Boym. Boym's *Specimen medicinae Sinicae* is the first book that introduced Chinese traditional medicine to Europe. Étienne Fourmont (1683-1745)'s dictionary for Chinese language *Linguae Sinarum mandarinicae hieroglyphicae grammatical duplex* was largely founded on the Dominican missionary Francisco Varo's (1627-1687) work *Arte de la lengua mandarina*. During the Enlightenment, Europeans' interest in China was critically expanded and intellectually upgraded, producing a wide variety of works concerning many aspects of Chinese civilization. Meanwhile, Europeans' communication with Asian countries, China in particular, was increasingly growing, which required well-trained professionals to handle linguistic needs and assistance for economic and political gains. The appearance of *Dictionnaire mandchou-français* directed by Joseph Amoit (1718-1793) and *Dictionnaire chinois, français latin* by Guignes Fils (1749-1845) attempted to meet this need. The compilation of French-Chinese dictionaries helped pioneer and professionalize the study of Chinese written and spoken language and built a profound knowledge base for sinology that began to emerge in the beginning of the nineteenth century. In 1814, Jean-Pierre Abel-Rémusat (1788-1832) was nominated as the first Professor of Chinese Studies in the Collège de France where he taught Chinese language and classics, which officially inaugurated and established sinology as an academic discipline in the Western knowledge domain. In England, James Legge (1815-1897) became the first Professor of Chinese at Oxford University in 1876, devoting more than 20 years to teaching Chinese language and literature, as well as accomplishing his "monumental translation" (Mungello 2013: 160)⁴² of Chinese classics. It is also important but will not be discussed due to the content limit of this chapter that indology, the studies of South Asian history, culture and language, also became an academic discipline in European universities during the nineteenth century, too.

Asian Collections in Western Libraries, Archives and Museums

Associated with the conception, birth, and rise of sinology and indology was the generating of both written documents and printed publications related to Asian civilization and the collecting of Asian cultural artifacts. In this aspect, Jesuit missionaries took the lead. Based on Wang's study of European libraries and archives, Jesuit missionaries produced 69 publications related to China during the period of 1552-1687: religious disputes constituted 24.6%, history 15.9%, and language 13.0%; from 1687 to 1773, works on China by Jesuit missionaries drastically increased to 353 pieces, largely because of the active participation of French Jesuits.⁴³ The total number 422 only includes works written by Jesuits in Western languages. European intellectuals' works based on Jesuits' reports was not taken into the statistics account; otherwise, the number would be much larger.

Eventually, those textual and pictorial materials and cultural objects were collected and preserved in Western cultural institutions—libraries, archives and museums, serving as the means of recovering Sino-European distant memories and reconstructing the trajectory and moment of history between the East and the West. Original correspondences and manuscripts from Jesuit missionaries, including renowned Ferdinand Verbiest (1623-1688) and Anthoine Thomas, SJ (1644-1709), are preserved in the Roman Archives of the Society of Jesuits and some publications are collected by European academic libraries. The prominence of Asian

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materials in the Western libraries, archives, and museums in pre-industrial times cannot be separated from private collectors' contributions, either. After Sir Hans Sloane (1660-1753) passed away, his private collections, which included Chinese and South Asian language manuscripts and printed books, were transferred to the British Museum and British Library. Intellectual and artistic creations, materials and objects, and specimens considered at that time to be ordinary turned out to be irreplaceable items due to their rarity and well-preserved conditions. Ancient Chinese books purchased by Sir Thomas Bodley (1545-1613) from European merchants and later collected in the Bodley Library at the University of Oxford now became invaluable materials for scholarly studies. In the Royal Museums of Art and History of Belgium, over thousands of chinoiserie style export Chinese porcelains, as well as Japanese Meiji (1868-1912) artifacts, display the Eastern creativities and tastes. Nowadays, most Asian textual materials have been recataloged, digitized, and made internationally freely accessible in digital repositories of libraries, archives, and museum. Some ongoing digitization initiatives, like Dunhuang Project at the British Library, call for international collaboration and cross-disciplinary efforts. In the United States, the Oregon College of Oriental Medicine in Portland is going to build an online archive that deposits digitized Chinese medical texts and artifacts originally stored at the Kam Wah Chung Historical Site, a Chinese clinic with its history can be traced back to 1860s.⁴⁴

Romanization

The European discovery of China's high antiquity and other Asian peoples and their languages presented an intellectual challenge to Christendom's perception of "world" history and biblical proliferation of tongues (Mungello: 86-89).⁴⁵ On the one hand, Europeans, like Italian Jesuit missionary Martino Martini and English architect and scholar John Webb (1611-1672), attempted to revise Christian chronology to maintain "Noah's universal patrimony."⁴⁶ On the other hand, Europeans strove to convert Chinese people and turn their logographic writing into one with a Western outlook. Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), known to Chinese as "the Master from the West," made the earliest attempt that transcribed Chinese characters by using Latin alphabet. Inspired by Ricci's trial, Jesuit missionary Nicolas Trigault (1577-1628) created the first systematic approach to Romanize Chinese characters. The first widely recognized Romanization system is Wade-Giles, developed by British scholar and diplomat Thomas Francis Wade (1818-1895) and later refined by another British diplomat Herbert Allen Giles (1845-1935). Wade-Giles maintained its dominant position as Romanization rule in global cultural institutions for decades and gradually gave its way to *pinyin*, which was created by mainland China in 1958 and accepted by International Organization for Standardization in 1982. Chinese language is not the only Asian language that went through the Romanization process. Others include Korean, Japanese, Thai, Lao, Hebrew, and Arabic, etc.

Cho, Lu, and Chiu conducted a worldwide interview that involved 38 librarians who manage Asian language collections. This amazing project concluded that one of the significant technical challenges imposed by Asian materials is that "librarians, archivists and curators are coping with their own limitations in current and archaic language, scripts and cultural knowledge when overseeing these collections and providing access."⁴⁷ (2017: 416). Since the very beginning when Asian language materials were acquired by libraries, archives, and museums, their different outlooks in the assemblage of Western Roman scripts make it very difficult to find the right approach to classify, describe and provide access. Local classification schemes, various

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Romanization rules, and different cataloging practices with the absence of subject headings and authority control prevailed in cultural institutions for a long time until the application of the Anglo-American Cataloging Rules II (AACRII), which was widely adopted as a national cataloging standard (Wu 2014: 166).⁴⁸ The unification of various cataloging rules, including Romanization, greatly helps achieve consistency in terms of information description and retrieval in libraries, archives, and museums. However, in terms of classification schemes, some cultural institutions have to continue the “workable” one, instead of converting to a widely-recognized “popular” one. For instance, the New York Public Library gives preference to the Billings system to classify Asian language materials largely due to the unmeasurable and unnecessary cost.

Conclusion

This chapter offers an overview, but definitely not comprehensive in terms of geographic coverage and disciplines, of the diffusion and influence of Asian civilization to the West through various global routes. Examining the cultural exchange and communications between the West and the East in such a historical context remind us that both Easterners and Westerners were and have always been creative and talented doers, thinkers and innovators. Acknowledgement of cross-cultural contributions will encourage an attitude that treats history in an inclusive, empathic, and respectful mindset. History to human beings is as memory is to individuals. Just as how much one remembers depends on how much is deposited in one’s brain, so, too, how much our history can be kept and recovered largely relies on how well our heritages are collected and preserved in cultural institutions—libraries, archives, and museums, both individually and collectively. Either East or West, human histories are one history and human civilizations are one civilization.

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