

Kapitel 11

Mapping the Ambiguous—Intercultural Encounters in Matteo Ricci’s World Map *Kunyu Wanguo Quantu*



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11.1 A Room of Encounters: The *Kunyu Wanguo Quantu*

In 1584 Wang Pan, the prefect of the city of Zhaoqing, was one of the numerous visitors Matteo Ricci and his Jesuit confrères received in their recently built reception hall. It was the prefect himself who had granted the Jesuits their first official permit to reside permanently in Ming China about a year before, proclaiming that the missionaries were staying with the consent of the authorities.¹ In doing so Wang Pan had made the Jesuit residence as well as its inhabitants and objects inside it an attraction for curious citizens. But while the building was filled with a plethora of objects the ‘Men of the Great Western Country’ (*daxiguoren*) had brought with them, including books, astrolabes, and clocks, it was a world map mounted on the wall that aroused the prefect’s interest, resulting in his entreaty to “make [the] map speak Chinese”.² This seemingly simple request led to the production over a period of two and a half decades of not one but four editions of what are nowadays often called Ricci’s world maps. These maps were revised and added to each time they went into print and each edition was published under a different title and in a different format. Although the aforementioned first edition from 1584 is now lost, the third edition called *Kunyu wanguo quantu* (‘Complete Geographical Map of Ten Thousand Countries’) has survived in three

¹ See Fontana (2011), p. 51.

² Ricci and Trigault (1953), p. 166. See also Zhang (2015), p. 45.

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to four extant copies, one of them held in the Vatican archives. This third edition from 1603 has been the subject of numerous studies in the 20th century and has more recently once again occupied a prominent place in research surrounding the early Jesuit mission in China. They started to take inspiration from the ideas surrounding a cultural and translational turn.³ Until then, it had primarily been interpreted as a reflection of certain power relations, which were first and foremost an expression of Jesuit agency. Translation studies have opened up new perspectives, allowing the map and its production to be examined in more complex ways, since translations or translation processes reveal a multitude of actors who often stand in ambiguous power relationships to each other. These ambiguities will be the focal point of this essay. Regarding the map's specific context, intercultural translations are of special interest, since clear-cut hierarchies between the different actors are not necessarily (re)constructible or even a given in the first place. They overlap and diffuse owing to such translation processes, which can be found in different communicative forms, such as negotiations and accommodation methods.

While an enormous amount has been written on the subject, a significant shift in focus can be observed in the research, changing the basic perception of the map and thus its very nature. The earliest scholarly works, dating back to the turn of the twentieth century, asserted that the *Kunyu wanguo quantu* was a Jesuit production, shaped by the interests of Jesuit missionaries and based solely based on their European knowledge. Such a Eurocentric approach reinforced the dichotomy between a posited superior Western science and its allegedly backward Chinese counterpart, leading to the assumption that every modification or adaptation of knowledge in this one-sided transfer was made deliberately and solely by Ricci and his Jesuits confrères in order to please and gain the trust of the Chinese social elite they sought to convert.⁴ Seen from this perspective, Matteo Ricci had to convey radically new images of the world to his Chinese readers, who could have no place in this history other than that of passive recipients. As a part of this Eurocentric “master narrative”, the map was supposed to be nothing short of a simple merger of Western techniques and knowledge with Chinese style and aesthetics. In a nutshell, it can thus be said that the map, created by one author with the single aim of conversion through accommodation, appears to carry one message and is thus inherently homogenous and unambiguous. But as Chinese sources have become more accessible and a more profound understanding of Chinese science has grown in recent decades, the claim that Jesuit missionaries transferred a superior system of scientific knowledge is being disproven. Although the Jesuits' or Ricci's personal achievements in the creation of the map still figure heavily in most works, recent studies have increasingly started to take Chinese

³For the notion of a translational turn see Bachmann-Medick (2006). For further references see also Triplett (see Chap. 9) and Schrader-Kniffki et al. (see Chap. 4) in this volume.

⁴These works were mostly concerned with locating other authentic copies of the Vatican version, tracing their underlying European source material as well as translating bits and pieces of the Chinese commentaries and annotations. See Day (1995), Baddeley (1917), Giles (1918), Ch'en (1939).

collaborators and their respective motivations as well as their scientific and cultural knowledge into account, creating space for the notion of active Chinese involvement and agency.⁵ This change is closely linked to methodological approaches, which aim to describe and analyse transcultural encounters in which negotiation, communication, and translation processes are deeply entrenched.⁶ In this light, the notion of culture as a process of translation has received increasing attention, framing the accommodation of knowledge in its broadest sense into a translational process between actors from different cultures. On the one hand, it broadens the definition of “translation” to include “Übertragungssituationen”⁷ (‘transmission situations’) alongside purely linguistic and textual translation, locating them not only in language but also in rituals or symbols. On the other hand, when we seek to identify such processes, the different as well as fluid perspectives of the various actors involved, who position themselves in more static cultural structures, become visible.⁸ Returning to recent works dealing with the *Kunyu wanguo quantu*, Qiong Zhang and Angelo Cattaneo are the most notable adherents of these ideas.⁹ Cattaneo examined the religious meaning of Jesuit world maps produced in China and asserted the importance of the imagery and specific semantics in cartographic material as stimuli for evangelization. Moreover, Cattaneo criticized the very term “Matteo Ricci’s maps” as outdated, given the current view of the maps as collaborative productions.¹⁰ Zhang offers an important contribution by presenting maps as “spontaneous products of the contact zone”,¹¹ in which various cultural groups advanced their own understandings of the world and represented it according to their own agendas and aspirations. His in-depth reading of the written legends of the map, which have often been neglected in favour of the overall cartographical aspects, gives new insights into the fascination that “the exotic” increasingly exerted on literati in late Ming China as well as illuminating the function of these legends in the creation of the map itself. These studies reflect the currently most crucial questions and findings concerning the *Kunyu wanguo quantu*, which form the basis for this article. Instead of a purely Jesuit endeavour, the active cooperation between Matteo Ricci and the so-called erudite gentlemen, such as Li Zhizao, who is often taken as a representative figure

⁵ This focus on the scientific nature of maps still remains prevalent in comparison to cultural and religious exchanges and is reflected in current questions about what kind of influence Jesuit mapmaking had on Chinese cartography and whether mapping in China became increasingly ‘scientific’ over time. See, for example, Yee (1994a, 1994c). For a critical stance on this position, see Hostetler (2001).

⁶ See Pratt (1992), Dürr (2017a), Espagne (2003).

⁷ Bachmann-Medick (2006), p. 247.

⁸ See Burke (2005), Lässig (2012), Bachmann-Medick (2006), Chap. 5.

⁹ Zhang (2015), Cattaneo (2014).

¹⁰ See Cattaneo (2014), especially pp. 71–75.

¹¹ Zhang (2015), p. 37.

for this social group of Chinese literati, is emphasized. Seen in this light, the map fuses Jesuit-European and Chinese knowledge traditions and their respective cartographic representations, which is why it should be embedded into both cultural-historical contexts. However, despite a formal acknowledgement of the intercultural production of the map, its various cartographic elements and inputs are often not interpreted as tangent or even contradictory. Yet if one assumes the map was in fact a collaborative effort between partners with incongruent cultural sources and knowledge, the existence of ambiguities or inconsistencies should be viewed as an opportunity to gain further insights rather than being dismissed as mere errors. Translation studies help to reveal not only the complex nature of intercultural cooperation and the entanglements of its actors but also the simultaneous overlap of different knowledge systems and to show how cultural translations are productive and creative endeavours in their own right. So far, insufficient attention has been paid to how the various types of content have been processed as textual and pictorial components of the map and how they may support but also contradict one another.

The questions I aim to answer are therefore how the *Kunyu wanguo quantu* reflects its own collaborative construction process and how it can thus be interpreted as a room of encounters. Other lines of enquiry include the extent to which the map creates a highly ambiguous space that reflects this intercultural context, and what exactly can be deduced from said ambiguities. Analogous to Qiong Zhang's "contact zone" or Nicolas Standaert's notion of "a space of in-between",¹² the goal is to render the translations and translation processes between the different parties in this specific encounter visible. Based on current trends in the history of cartography, most notably the contributions of John Brian Harley, I will analyse the interplay of selected textual and pictorial components of the map.¹³ In doing so, I argue that the reciprocal transfer of knowledge that underlies this map can be (re)constructed through the conjunction of cartographic and epicartographic elements. This is particularly important, since both elements are necessary to understand the map fully and each carries specific knowledge and information but in different forms. Thus, I consider it especially worthwhile and revealing to examine ambiguities in the map. The textual analysis will be based on the translations of Pasquale M. D'Elia because they are still the only comprehensive transcriptions into any European language. I have compared them with more recent and independently compiled translations of single sections into English by Qiong Zhang whenever available.¹⁴ In the following, I will first offer

¹² See Standaert (2010), here pp. 120–121.

¹³ For some more current and important works, see the contributions in Harley and Woodward (1994), Jacob (1996), Schneider (2018).

¹⁴ See D'Elia (1938), Zhang (2015). All the citations which have been rendered into English for the purpose of this article are thus my own translations. The most often used English translations are Giles (1918), here p. 372, Ch'en (1939) but they remain selective, sometimes leaving out entire passages. As Giles states in his translation work, he dismisses three entire prefaces written by Chinese collaborators, because "they are couched in the ultra-elegant and allusive style affected by Chinese literati in this species of composition", seemingly offering no value for the European reader.

some contextual insights into the early Jesuit mission in China and elucidate the particular knowledge traditions of Matteo Ricci and of the Chinese literati in Late Ming China more generally. This overview will serve to highlight the different topics of interest in the production of the *Kunyu wanguo quantu*, such as three-dimensionality, science, and religion as well as the close contact between the parties—even outside the actual production process. By zooming in and out of the map and by playing with different levels of focus, diverging or even opposing notions about the world, its cartographic representation, and perceptions of Self and Other are revealed, in their various modifications, mergers, and adaptations. Resulting ambiguities can thus be identified and analysed, revealing the collaboration of several actors whose views coincide or contradict one another to varying degrees. This serves to underline the specific process of mapmaking as a process of accommodation and cultural translation—a process that always involves multiple agents and does not always have to be successful.

11.2 “To Make a Map Speak Chinese”—Matteo Ricci and the Early Jesuit Mission

The production of the *Kunyu wanguo quantu* can basically be understood from two perspectives, whereby the Jesuit one is somewhat more extensive owing to the larger and more familiar volume of source material. This includes questions about cosmology, its religious implications and accommodation. Concerning the perspective of the Chinese scholars, it is fruitful to ask why they allowed the Jesuits to take up residence at all and why they were so fascinated with European maps that they commissioned several of them.

Matteo Ricci remains one of the most prominent figures in the early stages of the Jesuit mission in China, being the first Jesuit to enter and stay in the Ming capital Beijing, although he was not the first European to set foot on Chinese soil as part of the missionary enterprise. Having joined the Jesuit order in 1572, Ricci had studied natural philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, geography, cartography, and other subjects at the Roman College.¹⁵ At that time cartography or mapmaking was not a field of study in its own right but was taught as part of the mathematical sciences, astronomy, and geography in Jesuit colleges and academies.¹⁶ At the time of Ricci's education, Ptolemy's principles dominated the teaching of mathematics in Europe inside and outside the Jesuit order. In the context of mapmaking, an analysis of this Ptolemaic system included calculating and representing the spherical nature of the Earth based on latitudinal and

¹⁵ Fontana (2011), Chap. 1.

¹⁶ Cosgrove (2010), p. 103. See also Woodward (1987), pp. 7–8, Udías (2015), pp. 116–117; Cormack (1987), p. 630, Chen (2007), p. 521, Saladin (2020), pp. 45–46.

longitudinal lines and drawing different projections to represent a spherical Earth on a flat surface.¹⁷ At the same time, throughout Central and Western Europe the momentum of this mathematical approach was intertwined with efforts to explore and understand the world and nature as a means to discover God.¹⁸ Cartography was therefore closely connected with religion, and indeed the study of mathematics itself was considered necessary to understand nature and heaven “by visualization and sensibility”¹⁹—a philosophical means to a religious end rooted in Aristotelian natural philosophy, which established a direct link between spirituality and the observation of nature.²⁰ Traced back to the Spiritual Exercises of the founder of the *Societas Jesu* Ignatius of Loyola, visualization is described as one central feature in religious contemplation, leading to a knowledge of God by locating him in all living beings and even in human actions.²¹ All these aspects came together in Jesuit world maps, which “were not only a visual image of geographical configuration but [...] paved the way towards the comprehension of the Creator’s significance”.²² The imagination and visualization of spaces as well as people and their experiences were therefore considered crucial for understanding Jesuit maps.²³ In accordance with the knowledge traditions in which Jesuits like Matteo Ricci can be squarely placed, cartography combined the linguistic, scientific, and cultural components of an accommodation method promoted by Ricci and others, and could thus ideally be used to open up a dialogue about Christianity and God, through the calculation, depiction, and visualization of the world. Accommodation, or sometimes an accommodation strategy, broadly meant the cultural adaption to and the analysis of a variety of local circumstances, often including an adjustment to the overall life-style of the Chinese elite, especially through language acquisition or the use of “indirect” propagation tools such as science and technology, in order to arouse interest and gain trust.²⁴ Since the Jesuits considered China to be rich in history, culture, and tradition, accommodation was deemed necessary in order to engage the Chinese in a conversation about Christianity and ultimately to fulfil the Jesuit mission of conversion.²⁵ This is why accommodation most essentially includes translation processes, since it is based on literal translations in the form of language

¹⁷ Woodward (1987), pp. 12–15, Cosgrove (2010), pp. 104–107.

¹⁸ See among many others Cosgrove (1987), p. 57.

¹⁹ Chen (2007), p. 517.

²⁰ See Cosgrove (1987), p. 58, Chen (2007), pp. 544–545, 548.

²¹ See Saladin (2020), pp. 40–43, Chen (2007), p. 552, Udías (2015), pp. 237–238.

²² Chen (2007), pp. 537–538.

²³ The term ‘Jesuit maps’ is to be taken literally at this point, in the sense of maps produced by or with the help of a member of the Jesuit order. It does not imply a homogenous group of maps with fixed characteristics. On this point, see Batchelor (2019), p. 2.

²⁴ Von Collani (2004), pp. 105–107, Fontana (2012), p. 24. Standaert (2010) reviews four central aspects of Jesuit accommodation critically.

²⁵ See Dürr (2017b), p. 493, Fontana, (2012), p. 24.

acquisition and cultural translations through accommodation to (knowledge) systems, cultural practices, and the like. This is why it plays an important part in the production of the map. Accordingly, although accommodation was a Jesuit endeavour, it actually leads directly to the Chinese perspective and reveals what it was that the missionaries sought to accommodate themselves to.

For many Jesuits the city of Macao often offered the first direct contact with Chinese language and culture, as can be seen in the case of Matteo Ricci, who spent most of his time studying the spoken and written language of Mandarin as well as gathering some basic information about the political and social structure of the Chinese Empire and its customs.²⁶ Ricci's dedicated approach to learning the Chinese language and becoming familiar with Chinese culture at the very least allowed him to discuss various subjects with the acquaintances he made.²⁷ But in the end, it was Wang Pan, the prefect of Zhaoqing, who first voiced an interest in the maps the Jesuits had brought with them from Europe. He even commissioned the first edition of "Ricci's world maps", called the *Yudi shanhai quantu*, and granted Ricci and his confreres permission to set up the first ever Jesuit residence on the Chinese mainland a year prior to the request.²⁸ Actually, no such permit was granted at all until 1583, despite the Jesuits' avid efforts. And even after Ricci and Ruggieri had been in China for more than ten years, there was still no guarantee that they would be able to settle in any town or province of their choice or to travel freely around the country, as Ricci's energetic and in some cases failed attempts in Nanjing and Beijing show.²⁹ At the same time, it was a Chinese scholar who would commission and actively shape the *Kunyu wanguo quantu* later on. To explain why despite all the hardships Ricci and Ruggieri succeeded in establishing the Jesuit mission in China, a change of perspective is needed. This should also shed some light on why a member of the Chinese elite such as Wang Pan would have extended such a privilege to them. Contrary to the notion of Chinese scientific and cultural isolation, recent scholarship suggests not only a resurgent interest of the Chinese literati in the "exotic"—in which the Jesuits themselves but also the objects they carried with them must surely have been included—but also an intellectual shift in the knowledge discourse between

²⁶ On the difficulties of language learning see Fontana (2011), pp. 34–37. Brockey argues similarly, using the example of Michele Ruggieri, cf. Brockey (2007), pp. 30–32.

²⁷ See, for example, Fontana (2012), p. 26. The considerable number of visitors the Jesuits received in their dwellings has been a common focus of all analyses of the early Jesuit mission in China. In this case, Ricci is considered to be a prime example of a person who formed various long-term acquaintances and friendships, devoting much attention to them, even at inconvenient times. Cf. Fontana (2011), p. 271.

²⁸ Brockey (2007), p. 41; Hsia (2010), pp. 78–81, 87, Zhang (2015), p. 45, Cattaneo (2014), p. 73.

²⁹ See, for example, Fontana (2011), Chap. 7 on Nanjing and Chaps. 13 and 14 on Beijing.

scholars that coincided with the arrival of the Jesuits. These *bowu junzi* or “erudite gentlemen” “investigated [...] primarily strange and rare objects [...] [and] were no longer satisfied with merely reading about such things in books but wished to investigate them in situ, interview eyewitnesses, and, if possible, collect such objects for display”.³⁰ In this manner, knowledge about a variety of exotica would be re-examined in a practice-oriented way, depending on individual interests or tastes.³¹ Mapmaking was one part of this trend of evidential research (*kaozheng*), together with other aspects of Chinese (visual) culture, such as astronomy, geography, and philosophy, which were likewise central fields of interest.

Whether knowingly or not, the Jesuits offered these erudite gentlemen an opportunity for a first-hand encounter with the “strange and exotic”—an interest which they shared and tried, in turn, to use to their advantage. One of the erudite gentlemen they worked with was a scholar by the name of Li Zhizao, whom Ricci met after his arrival in the capital Beijing in 1601.³² In Ricci’s preface to the *Kunyu wanguo quantu*, Li is described as having had a particular interest in geography, even before his encounter with Ricci, having for example published a map of China’s fifteen provinces together with geographical descriptions.³³ His avid interest in both cartography and geography sparked an intensive relationship with the Jesuit, especially over the course of the following year. According to Ricci, Li spent ‘a whole year conducting a thorough, painstaking, diligent, and uninterrupted examination’,³⁴ after the former had taught the Chinese literati about the spherical nature of the Earth. The collaborative studies of Li and Ricci, which included the subjects of mathematics and astronomy, led most notably to the production of the *Kunyu wanguo quantu*. Once again one of “Ricci’s maps” was produced at the behest of a member of the Chinese elite, but this time quite literally on a much larger scale.³⁵

³⁰Zhang (2015), p. 39. Zhang also argues that this fascination was not new, but rather part of a longstanding discourse about the exotic. Cf. Zhang (2015), pp. 41–43. See also Standaert (2010), p. 115.

³¹See Zhang (2015), pp. 39–43.

³²Cf. Liu (2011).

³³Cf. D’Elia (1938), Tavola XVIII: “Il Signor Lingozzuen, addetto al Ministero [dei Lavori Pubblici], il quale già prima si era consacrato allo studio della geografia ed aveva da se stesso composto un libro per gli alunni [...]” See also Liu (2015), p. 150.

³⁴D’Elia (1938), Tavola XVIII: “Dopo un anno intero di esame, approfondito, minuzioso, diligente e ininterrotto [della mia carta] [i.e. Li, M.K.], disgustato della piccolezza della carta da lui stampata prima [i.e. Li, M.K.], la quale non arrivava nemmeno a un decimo della carta modello che io [Ricci, M.K.] avevo portato dall’Occidente, concepì il disegno di rifarla e di amplificarla [i.e. Li, M.K.]”

³⁵D’Elia (1938), Tavola XVIII; Liu (2015), p. 150.

11.3 Encountering the Ambiguous—An Analysis

11.3.1 *Describing the Map*

Following the current consensus of scholars of the history of cartography, maps should not be considered objective, neutral, and “scientific” in nature, but subjective and selective modes of representation and of conveying information. Recent scholarship has thus distanced itself from a linear progressive model, which was previously applied to early modern maps from Europe as well as China.³⁶ Furthermore, it has been suggested, that rather like texts, cartographic representations can establish an individual semiotic system of meaning, between the symbol, the referent, and the reference. In fact, many if not most early modern maps consist not only of the graphic image but more importantly of textual information, which may either be incorporated into the image itself or else accompany it in the form of textual corpora like a book.³⁷ And even if such a distinction between the visual and the textual cannot be as easily or clearly established as one might suppose, it is the relationship and interplay between these elements which form the map as a whole. Neither should be neglected in favour of the other, as they are both major constituents of the reference system they build, which is fundamentally based on the translation of words, concepts, and their references in the given culture.³⁸ In such a system, graphic signs may not only store this knowledge but also transmit an understanding of it by communicating it to the reader. In order to extract the knowledge the sign holds in relation to its exterior form, it is essential to read signs in their respective cultural and historical context.³⁹ This seems to be especially interesting, since geography and therefore cartography as well were taught as a part of the education in rhetoric that the Jesuits received. As visual and material objects that were not unlike textual corpora, they were positioned in a network of literary and cartographic sources, which were collected, compared, and combined.⁴⁰ A similar observation can be made for Chinese cartographic material. With its focus on the compilation, comparison, and analysis of textual source material, textuality was an important aspect in traditional Chinese cartography, alongside more quantitative

³⁶ See especially Yee (1994a), (1994b), pp. 97–99, 104–106, Sivin and Ledyard (1994), pp. 28–29, Smith (2013), p. 51.

³⁷ Sivin and Ledyard (1994), pp. 27, 29, Smith (2013), pp. 54–55.

³⁸ The difficulty of making a clear distinction is reflected by the ambiguity of the Chinese word for map “*Tu*”, which can also mean picture, diagram, chart, or table. See Sivin and Ledyard (1994), pp. 26–27, Yee (1994b), p. 127.

³⁹ See Bertin (2011), pp. 8–10; Harley (2001), especially pp. 35–37. For the concept of maps as a repository of knowledge see Schneider (2018), pp. 12–18. On the importance of contextualization see Schneider (2018), pp. 7–8.

⁴⁰ Saladin (2020), p. 46.

or observational strategies.⁴¹ This is further reflected by the fact that cartography was not considered to be an isolated endeavour and therefore cartographers were not regarded as professionals per se. Since all these aspects were part of the educational background of the Chinese literati, they were often scholars, painters, or poets.⁴² Cartography was deeply embedded in Chinese visual culture, so contemporary Chinese maps mostly include a larger body of text than their European counterparts.

The *Kunyu wanguo quantu* was published in 1602, printed on woodblocks by the artist Zhang Wentao in Beijing, and sponsored by Li Zhizao.⁴³ The map spans six panels, with a total height of 170 cm and a width of 381 cm, depicting the entire 360 degrees of longitude and 180 degrees of latitude in an oval projection of the Earth. The main layout also includes four single illustrations in each corner of the map. Viewed clockwise from the upper right, they are titled 'Diagram of the Nine Heavens', 'The Armillary Sphere', 'The Image of the Southern Hemisphere', and 'The Image of the Northern Hemisphere'. Moreover, the map includes a variety of textual annotations, ranging from descriptions of different places and their names to individual comments on and prefaces to the more pictorial elements. The legends are written exclusively in Chinese characters and embedded into the map, which means there is no supplementary text accompanying it.

11.3.2 Zooming Out

If one zooms out completely, one of the major features of the *Kunyu wanguo quantu* comes into view: namely, the shape of the Earth. Both the epicartographic and cartographic elements of the map are primarily concerned with the spherical nature of the Earth and they approach this in three different ways. Firstly, the overall projection and its oval form are important, since they are based on the Ptolemaic system the Jesuits introduced to the Chinese, reflecting their attempts at conversion through visualization. Secondly, since the cartographic representation still left room to accommodate or allude to Chinese cartographic traditions, less ambiguous pictorial material was needed. For example, the images of the two hemispheres reinforces more clearly the notion of a global sphere as the Jesuits knew it than the projection alone does. Thirdly, and finally, the textual annotations, which give further information on both aspects, can relativize a reading of the map based on these Ptolemaic-Aristotelian concepts, because they incorporate Chinese interests and their independent (cultural) knowledge system. This entanglement of knowledge and interests results in several ambiguities, which can be interpreted

⁴¹ Yee (1994b), pp. 105, 109, 113, 126.

⁴² Smith (2013), p. 52, Sivin and Ledyard (1994), p. 29.

⁴³ Zhang (2015), p. 47.

with the help of translation studies, or to be more precise, by trying to identify and reconstruct the translation processes behind the map.

Concerning the first of the two aspects, I have already discussed the fact that a central function of the world maps produced by the Jesuits was to visualize the world in order to see the truth of God and therefore of Christianity. These maps were used as a sort of educational tool, introducing potential converts to *tianxue* or ‘heavenly studies’. As these studies centred on the Aristotelian principle of understanding nature through mathematical science, different levels of translation processes can be found: literal, linguistic, but also various forms of cultural translation.⁴⁴ Depicting the world as a globe is thus certainly one of the most fundamental steps towards this goal. In accordance with this approach, the world in the *Kunyu wanguo quantu* is framed in an oval form, in line with the Ptolemaic projection used in its depiction. The use of a graticule to create a grid of lines of longitude and latitude covering the entire map makes this highly visible, even if they only mark every tenth degree rather than every one.⁴⁵ For an Italian Jesuit missionary at the time, Ptolemy’s system was inextricably linked to several assumptions about the world, such as the existence of different time and climate zones and most notably, the spherical shape of the Earth.⁴⁶ Furthermore, the projection itself reflects how mankind might in practice perceive the significance of God, namely by understanding a cartographical representation of the Earth based on mathematical principles. The viewpoint of the reader is orthogonally elevated into a sphere that is usually reserved for the transcendental—in this case the Christian God—and therefore allows man to look upon the Earth with an “Apollonian Gaze”, to behold the entire Earth at one glance without having to move at all.⁴⁷ But to what extent do the cartographic elements contained in the oval frame actually communicate such an understanding of the world to a mainly Chinese readership, which had previously adhered to mapmaking techniques that did not require the use of projections at all? The cultural knowledge needed to connect a given symbol like a latitudinal line with a specific reference and referent, like the curvature of the Earth’s surface, is rooted in a European understanding of the world and how it should be represented. Without additional input or further specification, it does not stand to reason that these connections would be made by Chinese readers, who espoused their own views of the Earth based on their cultural knowledge. On the contrary, according to Ricci, the two-dimensional nature of the plane seems to hold the possibility of “misinterpretation”, as it might well suggest that the Earth is flat. Ricci states explicitly in his preface that ‘it is difficult to understand at first glance why the Earth, which is in fact shaped like a ball, is represented on this map as a flat

⁴⁴ Chen (2007), Zhang (2015), p. 49.

⁴⁵ D’Elia (1938), Tavola IV.

⁴⁶ See, for example, Zhang (2015), p. 93 and chap. 2.1 for further references.

⁴⁷ Cosgrove (2010), p. 114. See also Jacob (1996), p. 193.

surface',⁴⁸ implying that he anticipated problems regarding the graphic depiction of the map.

Turning to the second pictorial aspect, Ricci indirectly alludes in this statement to the prevalence of the “round heaven, square earth” model in the Chinese cartographic discourse of the time. In doing so, he acknowledges that the Chinese have their own methods and concepts of how best to represent the Earth and for what purpose, which strongly influence the way in which the map is understood—not apparently always in the way the Jesuits would have liked it to be. The “round heaven, square earth” model (*tianyuan defang*) was arguably the most important basic theoretical framework for representations of the world and therefore China—not exclusively but especially during the Late Ming—included the subcategories of Vaulted Heaven (*gaitian shuo*) and Spherical Heaven (*huntian shuo*).⁴⁹ In both cases, sphericity is an exclusive attribute of heaven, whether this means covering the Earth like a dome or encompassing it as a circular sphere. In these concepts, the Earth itself was described as a flat surface, surrounded and united by the Four Seas.⁵⁰ As such, rigid geometric calculations and the use of projections were not necessary to transform the shape of the Earth into a two-dimensional plane.⁵¹ And while recent studies have suggested that Chinese cosmological and therefore cartographic traditions cannot simply be reduced to this model, and that these conceptions were also the subject of debate at various times, there is no indication that Chinese mapmakers did in practice consider a “round earth” concept to be a valid approach. Moreover, even if some theories allowed for different readings, as has been argued in the case of a variation of the Spherical Heaven theory attributed to the polymath Zhang Heng, the notion of a flat Earth still remained one plausible option and could still be incorporated. This theory states that “the enveloping heavens are like a chicken egg, and the celestial form is round like a crossbow pellet; *the Earth is like an egg yolk, occupying the centre alone*”.⁵² This does not specify the shape of the Earth and thus leaves room for interpretation.⁵³ In a similar manner, the oval projection in itself may not necessarily have ruled out the “round heaven, square earth” model but rather left enough space to accommodate a two-dimensional, flat terrestrial surface. Furthermore, we should remember that the issue of what shape the Earth is was also embedded in Chinese cultural history and in a cosmological as well as geopolitical discourse about China as an ideal state and the power of its sovereign. According to source material dating back to the early Zhou, the Chinese emperor in Late Ming China

⁴⁸ D’Elia (1938), Tavola IV: “Però è difficile capire a prima vista perchè la terra, che ha difatti la forma di una palla, su questa carta sia rappresentata come sopra una superficie piana.” [Here and in the following transl. M.K.]

⁴⁹ Zhang (2015), pp. 119, 121.

⁵⁰ Smith (2013), p. 53, Yee (1994b), p. 124, Zhang (2015), pp. 119, 121.

⁵¹ Sivin and Ledyard (1994), p. 30, Yee (1994c), p. 171.

⁵² Yee (1994b), p. 118.

⁵³ Yee (1994b), pp. 117–124, especially 124, Zhang (2015), pp. 57–59.

was considered to have received a Mandate of Heaven, that granted him universal sovereignty over his empire. However, the power of the Son of Heaven came with the responsibility of ensuring harmony between the celestial and terrestrial world, which in traditional Chinese cosmological thought were two connected and interacting realms.⁵⁴ Thus, it seems reasonable to argue that the implications of such notions as the Apollonian Gaze may not have been perceived as the Jesuits might have intended. Once more, their argumentation is based on specific cultural knowledge, in this case, the strict separation of heaven and Earth in Christian thought, which would not be apparent to Chinese readers without specific input. Only if one takes other elements like the depiction of the two hemispheres into account does such an interpretation become harder to sustain. In comparison with the cartographic aspects, they do not allow easy reinterpretations concerning the spherical nature of the Earth. Accordingly, Ricci himself mentions in his preface that he ‘made a map of the two hemispheres, of which one contains all that is north of the equator, and the other all that is south of it, the two poles occupying the centre of the circle, in order that the simultaneous view of them may make it a little easier to understand what the true shape of the Earth resembles.’⁵⁵

Finally, it becomes quite clear, that while epicartographic elements such as the drawing of the two hemispheres accord with Ricci’s statement, as they visualize a top and a bottom half of the Earth, complete with a depiction of the North and South Poles, it is in fact mainly the textual legends that convey the notion of its sphericity. For instance, the general introduction explains that, ‘Actually, a globe, confusingly, has neither top nor bottom for if someone is in the celestial [system], what can he look at but the sky? In general, too, everything in the universe on which one sets foot is low, and everything towards which one raises one’s head is high.’⁵⁶ A similar pattern can again be observed in the same introduction, where the aforementioned egg metaphor is adapted: ‘The land and the sea are both spherical. Together they form a single globe situated at the centre of celestial spheres, like the yolk in a hen’s egg which is surrounded by the white.’⁵⁷ These are just two examples in which the written annotations elaborate on the visualized statement that the Earth is a globe and add further information. In his preface, for example, Ricci turns more directly to the importance of visualization, stating that the *Kunyu wanguo quantu* functions for the reader ‘as a tool for travelling while

⁵⁴ Zhang (2015), pp. 108–109.

⁵⁵ D’Elia (1938), Tavola XVIII.

⁵⁶ D’Elia (1938), Tavola IV. Similarly, Zhang (2015), p. 63.

⁵⁷ For the translation see D’Elia (1938), Tavola XVIII; similarly, Zhang (2015), p. 57. Zhang has already extensively shown that the chosen information is not arbitrarily attributed but reflects certain aspects of Chinese cosmological thought, which would arguably have been known to Chinese readers of the map, and was changed to accommodate the Jesuits’ understanding of the world. See Zhang (2015), pp. 57–63.

reclining in one's study.⁵⁸ Immediately afterwards Ricci adds: 'Oh! Travelling through all the realms, without even leaving the room, must be not of little use for the experience.'⁵⁹ He thus stressed how the Jesuits considered the ability to visualize places one has not actually visited before as one of the major tasks of the map. In this case the human vision is central and indispensable for understanding Heaven, underlining that although hearing and the other senses certainly played a part as well, it is the sense of sight that was argued to be the first among the five senses.⁶⁰

The importance of the notion that the Earth is a sphere and the deductions resulting from this is highlighted by the large number of annotations containing geographical and mathematical descriptions or the calculation of natural phenomena, such as solar and lunar eclipses. However, while these texts certainly depend on their readers' ability to reason in order to understand, verify, and apply them, they do not necessarily presuppose an in-depth understanding of Aristotelian logic. In addition, the religious implications derived from physical sciences that Jesuits like Matteo Ricci would have discerned are not inherently deductible without the corresponding cultural background knowledge. Instead, the information provided perfectly complements the potential interests of Chinese collaborators and readers alike, suggesting that they actively shaped the production of the *Kunyu wanguo quantu* as well, guiding and participating in the negotiations over what the map was to convey. For instance, the prediction and calculation of celestial phenomena was considered essential by the Chinese emperor in order to regulate the balance between the world and the universe. Anomalies, like solar or lunar eclipses, had to be accounted for by imperial astronomers, as they might otherwise be regarded as a sign of abuse of political power that could even lead to the loss of the emperor's political authority.⁶¹ The widespread importance of this whole complex was without doubt known to Li Zhizao, who had himself passed the competitive exams and had published several Confucian works over the course of his life.⁶² Combined with his proclaimed avid interest in mapmaking and geography it would certainly be conceivable that he considered the mathematical and scientific annotations to be of interest to Chinese readers, regardless of whether he or they were aware of their spiritual connotations. This idea seems even more plausible if we consider that apart from two citations, which are to be found in Ricci's personal preface, there is only one short phrase in the descriptive paragraph of Europe dedicated to the existence

⁵⁸ D'Elia (1938), Tavola XVIII: "Tutto l'insieme forma sei quadri di gran paravento e può essere considerato come uno strumento per viaggiare, pur restando sdraiato nel proprio gabinetto di studio."

⁵⁹ D'Elia (1938), Tavola XVIII: "Eh! Percorrere tutti i regni, senza nemmeno uscire dalla sala, non deve essere di poca utilità per l'esperienza."

⁶⁰ Chen (2007), p. 552.

⁶¹ Cf. Fontana (2011), p. 60.

⁶² Liu (2015), p. 153.

of a Christian God, mentioning that all Europeans ‘follow the holy faith of the Lord of Heaven.’⁶³ These are also the only instances in which the map explicitly draws a connection between an understanding of the Earth and heaven and the recognition of the Lord of Heaven and the idea that in turning to God, one finds the way towards science.⁶⁴ Otherwise there are no direct or indirect references in the textual legends to the existence of a Christian god. On the one hand this provides further evidence that the religious knowledge required for conversion was practically not accessible without the guidance of a member of the Jesuits but that it was still prevalent from their perspective. On the other hand, the lack of references to Christianity beyond Ricci’s own preface supports the assumption that this specifically European knowledge as introduced by the Jesuits was not in fact needed to read and understand the map and that it was not of primary interest to the Chinese collaborators, who were able instead to include what they deemed important. For example, Ricci’s statement that the map allows the reader to travel around the world and visualize its countries and people could just as easily be attributed to the Chinese intellectuals and their interest in the “exotic” and in learning or studying through experience. There are several annotations that support this argument. In the general introduction to the map, Ricci references the spherical nature of the Earth, but this time he supports his arguments not with calculations but instead with the personal observations he made while sailing round the Cape of Good Hope: ‘Yet when I raised my head, I could only see the sky at the top and could not see it at the bottom. Therefore, to say that the Earth is round and that all over its surface there are men is a proposition worth accepting.’ In other instances, he refers to his travels, describing how he had been requested in Zhaoqing ‘to make a map of all the kingdoms through which [he] had passed, in order to preserve [his] memory for posterity’;⁶⁵ indeed, he even marks his hometown Macerata in Italy, the starting point of his lifelong journey so to speak. Combined with the information provided by the written notes on the customs and products of the various countries, the map captures first-hand accounts of the “exotic” world, among other things, in which erudite gentlemen such as Li Zhizao would have had an avid interest. This is why one can find a retelling of Ricci’s personal experiences in Li’s own preface.⁶⁶

⁶³Translation from D’Elia (1938), Tavola XXIV; Zhang (2015), p. 78. The difficulties of translating Christian terms such as ‘god’ are not specific to the China mission, but certainly apply here as well. See, for example, Dürr (2010), pp. 185–186, Schemmel (2012), p. 255. With regard to the Jesuit mission in China, the question of terminology culminated in the Rites Controversy shortly after Ricci’s death in 1610. See, for example, Von Collani (2004), pp. 118–121.

⁶⁴D’Elia (1938), Tavola XVIII: “La bontà consiste a purificare e ad amputare i cattivi germi, per desiderio di arrivare a Colui che è assolutamente buono. Perciò chi neglige le cose di poca importanza, si affretta ad occuparsi delle grandi e diminuisce la moltitudine [delle ansietà] per far ritorno a Colui che è assolutamente uno, è quasi arrivato alla scienza.”

⁶⁵D’Elia (1938), Tavola IV: “I letterati del Kwangtung mi pregarono di fare la carta di tutti i regni per i quali io ero passato, per tramandarne intatto il ricordo [ai posteri].”

⁶⁶D’Elia (1938), Tavola XII; Tavola X; Tavola XIV.

11.3.3 *Zooming In*

Zooming in on more detailed components of the map, with a focus on the overall positioning and epicartographic as well as cartographic depictions of China and Europe, it becomes even more apparent how the Chinese literati and the source material they provided shaped the representation of the Earth and China's position on it in major ways. Two central conclusions can be drawn: firstly, the pictorial as well as the textual information on China reinforce one another in depicting it as a cultural centre. Its representation is not only the most detailed and densely annotated on the whole map, but the information used to reinforce this perspective either derives from Chinese knowledge or from European knowledge selected, adapted, and accommodated to fit into this narrative. Secondly, Europe is mainly defined through its similarities to China and is portrayed as seeking to create ties between the two through self-adaptation. While the textual description evinces efforts at accommodation, the cartographic representation of Europe stands in stark contrast not only to its annotations but also the visualization of China it tries to mimic. This creates an ambiguous relationship between the textual and pictorial elements, emphasizing once more that the map cannot be reduced to a single reading, since it combines information and interests that are not always easily assignable.

Firstly, one of the aspects of China's representation most frequently mentioned is its position near the centre of the plane. This is achieved by relocating the prime meridian from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific, pushing Europe to the outer left margin of the map and the Americas to the outer right. Scholars have argued that Ricci deliberately repositioned China to accommodate what he perceived to be a Sinocentric perspective prominent in Chinese mapmaking and the Chinese perception of themselves as the Middle Kingdom (*Zhongguo*).⁶⁷ This concept of the Middle Kingdom, which was easily applicable to a flat and square Earth, is actually not compatible with the model of a spherical earth, because the surface of the globe does not possess a centre at all. However, since the Jesuits considered an understanding of the Earth as spherical as central to the task of conversion to Christianity, the geographical position of China needed to be altered if they wanted to retain points of reference for their readership. This seems all the more likely as an identical pattern can be observed in the "Diagram of the Nine Heavens" in the upper left corner of the map, which shows a geocentric system of the universe, which likewise puts China in the middle of the two-dimensional depiction of the globe. What is interesting, however, is something that the cartographic representation of the Middle Kingdom hardly takes into account, namely, that this concept implies much more than just a central geographical position. It is just as much an intrinsic part of Chinese cultural knowledge as the notion of a spherical Earth is of European scientific

⁶⁷Yee (1994c), pp. 171–172, Foss (2016), p. 22, Song (2019), p. 196.

and religious knowledge, which would not necessarily be easily accessible to foreigners and was thus open to misunderstandings. Scholars have argued that the concept of the Middle Kingdom was highly reflective of a Chinese cultural imperative that implied cultural or political centrality and primacy, reflected in the classification of other peoples within and outside China who were all expected to pay tribute to the Son of Heaven.⁶⁸ This specific cultural knowledge would only have been accessible either through the use of Chinese source material or through personal conversations with Chinese intellectuals who had studied the many classical canonical texts. Thus, it is initially understandable when Ricci states that the map had been drawn ‘with the help of the papers and books [he] had brought with [him], and the notes and investigations [he] had accumulated over many years’,⁶⁹ not mentioning any Chinese input at all, as was quite common for European texts at the time. But although scholars were not able to trace all the source materials used, it is certainly clear that the geographical depiction of China in this way would not have been possible without the abundance of Chinese cartographic works and their collected data, as the Jesuits did not embark on the task of land surveying themselves.⁷⁰ Considering how numerous and detailed the representation of coastlines or mountain ranges is—not to mention the depiction of the Great Wall of China, the only landmark on the entire map that is meticulously traced—the influence of the Chinese collaborators can hardly be doubted.

If one zooms in closer onto China itself, it becomes apparent how the epicartographic elements and written textual legends actually underline its cultural importance in congruence to the cartographic representation by adhering to aspects of traditional Chinese mapmaking. The general description of China, for example, stresses its cultural importance quite overtly: ‘China is a kingdom renowned for the splendour of its civilization. [...] The surrounding tributary countries are numerous.’⁷¹ This further supports the assumption that the Middle Kingdom was first and foremost considered to be a cultural centre, a position which could only be established in relation to other countries, more precisely all those who paid tribute to the Son of Heaven. The tributary countries are said to be numerous, emphasizing how far-reaching the Chinese sphere of influence was perceived to be, although they are not all visually marked as such. While this may seem contradictory at first, it is still in line with the argumentation presented so far. The description of China sheds some more light on this issue. It mentions that

⁶⁸Yee (1994c), pp. 171–174, Zhang (2015), pp. 109–113.

⁶⁹D’Elia (1938), Tavola XVIII: “Benchè [la stampa] della carta fosse stata fatta con l’aiuto delle carte e dei libri che avevo portato con me, e con gli appunti e le investigazioni che avevo accumulato durante vari anni, pure come mai la traduzione fattane dell’Incaricato degli stranieri sarebbe stata scevra da ogni errore?”.

⁷⁰Zhang distinguishes the usage of symbolic maps, grid-based maps, and maritime narratives. For an enumeration of Chinese source material see also Zhang (2015), pp. 55–56.

⁷¹D’Elia (1938), Tavola XVI.

‘this General Map contains brief indications of mountains and rivers, provinces, and intendancies; for the remainder, which cannot be found here, see the *Annali Generali* and *Annali Provinciali*’,⁷² reflecting how information on the Middle Kingdom, which also included its tributary states, had already been gathered and collected by the Chinese themselves. The Chinese reader might thus either have already been familiar with those sources or could, as stated, have accessed the information themselves. To tie everything together, in their prefaces Li Zhizao and the other Chinese collaborators all refer either to the atlases, or to the *Annali Generali*, or else to other Chinese cartographic works to explain the differences the *Kunyu wanguo quantu* exhibits, stating that they had not only assumed that the authors and the cited material would be known, but had based their further reflections on an already existing network of sources, which were not simply discarded.⁷³ Thus it is reasonable to assume that, although Chinese self-representation certainly had a place in this space of encounter, the main point of interest was not a detailed repetition of information about China that would already have been known.

China’s specific position on the Earth in relation to other countries is evident from the sheer number of textual annotations placed in and around the country on the map, ranging from general descriptions, to the names of the nine provinces, towns and villages, mountain ranges, and bodies of water. No other country is annotated in so much detail or praised so highly for its culture. On the contrary, in many cases, either no information about the country or region is provided at all apart from its name, or the descriptions of the inhabitants reveal that they were considered “inferior” with respect to certain cultural practices. This applies, for instance, to the written annotations dedicated to North and South America, the very first to be published in cartographical form in China. One common feature of the descriptions of other countries is the assertion that they lack knowledge of agriculture. The people of Peru, for example, supposedly ‘do not know how to cultivate fields, but the inhabitants live off every kind of fruit’.⁷⁴ This must have posed a striking contrast to the self-perception of the Chinese, who in Ming China held agriculture in high esteem.⁷⁵ By describing the Other in this way the map underlined China’s own prosperity and central role to the Chinese reader and its perception of Self. However, one should remember that all the information on the Americas would have been gathered from European source material. Since the Chinese had not known of its existence before, it was the Jesuits who had contributed to this construct. In this way, the selection of information attributed to the Other creates points of reference for Chinese readers while simultaneously

⁷² D’Elia (1938), Tavola XVI.

⁷³ D’Elia (1938), Tavola XII; Tavola X; Tavola XIV.

⁷⁴ D’Elia (1938), Tavola X. Similar observations can be made about the description of Canada and some islands in the Arctic.

⁷⁵ See Yee (1994b), p. 97, Hansen (2015), p. 347.

satisfying their interest in the “exotic”.⁷⁶ Various descriptions of strange lands and people, like the Land of Dwarves or tribal groups to the north of China, with both European and Chinese origins, further support this assumption.⁷⁷ Moreover, by deliberately casting the Other as “exotic”, the relationship between China and Europe is further enhanced.

Secondly, the cartographic and epicartographic representation of Europe cannot be understood in terms of the “exotic”, even though the *Kunyu wanguo quantu* is often described as an “exotic” object itself, having been produced by the Jesuits, who were themselves unknown and curious strangers.⁷⁸ Instead, the representation reflects the creation of a Jesuit Self in the missionary context, which tries to establish Europe as another cultural centre alongside China through the use of cultural translations. For instance, in contrast to the criticism of agricultural standards in the strange and “exotic” lands, Europe is said to produce an abundance of agrarian goods, indicating its wealthy position in the world: ‘The region produces five cereals, five metals, and every kind of fruit.’⁷⁹ Later on, the text states even more explicitly that ‘products are very abundant. Rulers and subjects are powerful and rich’.⁸⁰ These statements about Europe’s economic prosperity highlight two more central aspects deeply embedded in Chinese culture and the connection between them. The annotation links the fortunes of their lands with their knowledge of the Earth and heavens, by adding directly after the enumeration of their agricultural products: ‘All craftsmanship is excellent. Astronomy and philosophy are studied. In everyday life the five relationships are very much adhered to.’⁸¹ In placing the fortunes of the state in such close proximity to an understanding of heaven, this section quite obviously relates back to the information provided by Matteo Ricci on the sphericity of the Earth and the calculation of time zones or celestial phenomena, thus underlining the accuracy and veracity of those theories on the one hand and creating a parallel for their Chinese readership on the other hand. It is striking how the repeated use of the number five in enumerating the various products fuses two separate concepts

⁷⁶ Congruently, a recent study of Jin Cao has shown how the annotations and descriptions of the *Kunyu wanguo quantu* also reflect the interest of Chinese readers in mineral deposits and particularly in silver mines outside China, for example in South America. See Cao (2018).

⁷⁷ Zhang gives a detailed analysis of the written legends describing the strange lands and beings in Zhang (2015), pp. 65–84. Consistent with the argumentation of this paper, he observes: “Ricci followed the Chinese xenological scheme by locating all the savages and subhuman races far away from China, mostly in Africa, the Americas, and on the Eurasian continent in areas around the Caucasus and the Arctic Zone.”, Zhang (2015), p. 78. See also Reichle (2016), pp. XII–XIII, Song (2019), pp. 197–198.

⁷⁸ Cf. Zhang (2015), pp. 38–39, Fontana (2011), p. 51.

⁷⁹ D’Elia (1938), Tavola XXIV; also Zhang (2015), pp. 80–81.

⁸⁰ D’Elia (1938), Tavola XXIV.

⁸¹ D’Elia (1938), Tavola XXIV: “Tutti i lavori sono eccellenti. Si studia l’astronomia e la filosofia.”

about the world in one paragraph. Just as the number four is culturally charged owing to its inseparable link with the concept of the Four Seas, the number five is equally embedded in major Chinese cultural concepts. To name just a few examples: the existence of five elements, the division of All under Heaven into the Five Zones, the Middle Kingdom as the central state surrounded by the Four Barbarians, or the five cardinal relationships in Confucianist thought all mirror the importance of the number in different strands of thought.⁸² In their own way, both explanations illustrate how certain aspects of Chinese culture have been translated into a European context for the purpose of shaping and accommodating a European Self to resemble the Other—namely the Chinese.

Congruently, it can be observed that the Jesuits strove to accommodate Europe as a whole to Chinese knowledge and representational systems. In their visual construction, Western and Central Europe are translated into the notion of a great, uniform “West”. One needs to keep in mind the limited knowledge Chinese scholars had gathered about Europe. As they were not able to travel there themselves and had hardly come into contact with Europeans prior to the arrival of the Jesuits, the only knowledge they had to rely on was the preselected information provided by the latter.⁸³ Since the map does not visually mark the borders of countries or continents such as Europe and Asia, it is fair to suppose that the Chinese reader would not have been able to distinguish easily where exactly the land of the “Men of the Great Western Country” started and ended. Instead, it appears as one huge entity or conglomerate. But if one looks closer, the cartographic representation of Europe stands in stark contrast to what has been analysed so far. I should mention here that the geographical shape of the European continent seemed quite distorted, not only by present-day standards but also by those of a European reader at the time, too.⁸⁴ Alongside the omission of a more Eurocentric perspective designed to accommodate Chinese conceptions of centrality, a large section of the Eurasian continent seems to be elongated, as can be seen, for example, in the cases of Spain and France, or quite noticeably the Caspian Sea, which has lost all of its distinctive vertical shape. On a more general note, whereas China was filled to the brim with depictions of mountain ranges, rivers, and even a man-made landmark, the depiction of Western Europe features hardly any of the above, with the exception of the Alps and the Danube River, leaving large stretches of the map plain white. This seems all the more interesting given that Ricci himself stated that he had used European cartographic source material in the compilation of the *Kunyu wanguo quantu*. In fact, most recent scholars agree that he used works by Christopher Clavius and Alessandro

⁸²The annotations pertaining to the European continent also reference the five relationships: ‘Their customs are simple and honest, and the rules governing the five human relationships are observed in earnest.’ See D’Elia (1938), Tavola XXIV. Cf. Fontana (2011), p. 127, Zhang (2015), pp. 54, 214, Brook (2009), p. 278.

⁸³See Brook (2009), pp. 269–270.

⁸⁴See, for example, Ch’en (1939), p. 378.

Piccolomini for the cosmographic diagrams on the map and publications like *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* by Abraham Ortelius or Gerardus Mercator's and Petrus Plancius's planispheres for the overall cartographic projection and depiction.⁸⁵ Thus, the white plains should be interpreted not as an indication of missing reference material or a simple lack of knowledge but rather as evidence of the influence and (dis-)interest of the Chinese collaborators and cartographers. By the same token, the "inaccurate" depiction of the Italian coastline, for example, seems inexplicable without considering the influence of the Chinese literati, for it is not only one of the most memorable geographical shapes in Europe but also circumscribes the country where Matteo Ricci himself was born and where he joined the Jesuit order. In fact, the representation of Europe as a visually unremarkable form that is nonetheless described as a beacon of civilization creates a highly ambiguous picture. In this way, the cartographic representation of Europe runs very much counter to the one the Jesuits sought to parallel, demonstrating the limits of Jesuit knowledge in the *Kunyu wanguo quantu* as well as the process by which the map came into being and finally how it was to be understood.

11.4 Conclusions

A close study of the interplay between the cartographic and epicartographic elements of the *Kunyu wanguo quantu* has shown how the map is deeply embedded in the respective cultural knowledge of the Chinese and Jesuit collaborators and how it was shaped and formed by the encounter between the two partners. It is through the different actors' interests, negotiations, and efforts at cultural translation that the map creates a space for encounters, intertwining different perceptions and understandings of the world as well as the actors' ideas of Self and Other. In approaching this map as neither an isolated and neutral nor a purely scientific object, but as a highly complex endeavour, I have presented the difficulties and problems of cultural translation of this kind and the ambiguities to which it gives rise.

The *Kunyu wanguo quantu* combines at least two different viewpoints: those of the Jesuit missionaries and those of the Chinese literati, within the larger framework of the early Jesuit mission in China. On the one hand, I have outlined the Jesuits' early attempts at cultural accommodation, describing how Matteo Ricci's first contact with the Chinese eventually led to the production of the *Yudi shanhai quantu* in 1584. Questions about the representation of three-dimensionality and the way in which the Jesuits wanted to construe their own identity in it were based on and adapted from the specifically Christian knowledge Matteo Ricci had brought with him, ranging from the spherical shape of the Earth and its visualization as a spiritual and educational tool to the characterization of Europe

⁸⁵ See Cattaneo (2014), p. 81, Zhang (2015), p. 49 fn. 46, Day (1995), Foss (2016), p. 22.

as a whole. On the other hand, I have analysed the visual representations of some major focal points of the map in order to illustrate the active and leading involvement of Chinese officials and scholars in the process of mapmaking. Their avid interest in the “exotic” and the practice of evidence-based learning, as reflected by the Chinese collaborator Li Zhizao, informed the drawing of the map and heavily influenced the final result. I have shown how the influence of Chinese cosmology and its textual as well as pictorial representations can be detected in the map. As the information included stems from different sources and is also translated in and between the interacting knowledge systems, it forms an ambiguous space, which can only be interpreted if one assumes the active involvement and interest of the Chinese literati alongside that of the Jesuits.

By focussing on the overall cartographic layout and the epicartographic elements included outside the oval projection of the Earth itself, I identified the shape of the Earth as one major common point of interest, albeit one that was approached differently according to cultural preconceptions. My analysis of the projection method, diagrams, and written annotations showed how Ricci and the Chinese scholars each sought ways to accommodate their respective understanding of the world through translation processes. Those reciprocal translation processes are of both a linguistic and cultural nature and it is they that shaped the map into its present ambiguous form. Another major point was the primary interest of Chinese scholars in the calculation of celestial phenomena even though they lacked the specific cultural knowledge needed to decode the religious and philosophical implications of the information and the instructions provided by the Jesuits. Thus, parts of the map could be read and verified according to practice and evidence-based learning, but without necessarily grasping the full extent of these notions. In this section I therefore underlined the difficulties of cultural translation between the actors in this encounter owing to their differing interests in the construction of the map and their respective cultural knowledge. I also proposed that the written annotations in particular provide a more detailed and less ambiguous version of the purely cartographic representation, pointing to a need to read them in conjunction with the map itself for a comprehensive interpretation. Finally, a more detailed analysis of the map revealed that the *Kunyu wanguo quantu* is visually and abstractly constructed as a space for encounters in which such interactions and translation processes can be positioned. Citing the written annotations about China, Europe, and some other regions, I argued that the map primarily unfolds this space through the creation of connections between Self and Other, which are themselves constructs based on their cultural context. In this way, the representation of Europe mirrors and adapts certain aspects of Chinese culture, readjusting the presentation of the Self to create a link between the two collaborators but at the same time creating an oxymoron between the textual and visual components. This link only becomes fully apparent in the construct of the “exotic”, which is influenced by selected Chinese as well as European perceptions of the Other. Only by looking at the map from changing perspectives—literally and figuratively—do these different relationships and attempts to translate as well as the resulting ambiguities become apparent, thereby turning Matteo Ricci into

Li Madou, and the *Kunyu wanguo quantu* from a transmitter of Western scientific knowledge into a collaborative and interactive space for encounters.

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