

東西方的「儀式」與「宇宙觀」：跨文化交流與宇宙觀的詮釋

Rites and Cosmology, East and West: A Study of Cross-Cultural
Transmissions and Interpretations of Religious and Cosmological Traditions

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Project summary

In the late 17th and early 18th centuries, the interpretation of Confucian sacrifices and ancestor worship ceremonies provided by the Jesuits who did not consider these activities as religious activities caused a series of theological debates and political disputes concerning the nature of these rituals. The Jesuits attempted to prove that Chinese worships of ancestors were lay, and not religious, ceremonies. The newly converted Chinese scholars actively participated in this discussion focused on interpretation of the term of “Heaven” (天).

Recently the relationships between religion, science, technology, and medicine drew attention of numerous scholars, yet there are still issues worthy of discussion. How did the Western missionaries identify and reinterpret the nature of traditional rites? Could those rites be considered “religious”? Chinese religious teachings contained elaborated cosmological and cosmographic concepts. The introduction of Catholic religion into China coincided with the development of Western astronomy and cartography, and numerous Jesuit missionaries had outstanding scientific expertise. The project was focused on the interaction between Jesuits and their Chinese counterparts in the fields of cosmology, cartography and cosmography.

Keywords: China, Jesuits, religion, rituals, cosmology, cosmography, cartography

Methodology:

Through translation and analysis of maps and historical documents this project explored cosmological concepts of various traditions. After having conducted a comparative investigation of Oriental and European concepts of space and of respective world maps, we extended the period of investigation and expanded the geographical scope of the project.

Results:

Under the direction of the two authors of this project, the graduate students explored the interplay between religious, cosmological, and cosmographical (cartographical) concepts in East and West. Since this project was a cross-domain and cross-cultural study, it contributed to the development of the research axis of “history of religion, science, technology, and medicine” of the Institute of History. Members of the research team participated in international conferences and organized two international workshops in Taiwan, published or prepared for publication academic papers. Yang Wei-Ting, currently works in the Max Planck Institute (Berlin, Germany) on her PhD thesis on Buddhist cosmology. The project thus helped create a platform for academic exchanges to form a cross-school and cross-disciplinary research community, to achieve the goal of cultivating outstanding history research talents in the future.

