

1. The Project Goal: The overarching goal of our project is to examine the concept of God and its transmission in the Chinese intellectual environment between the Ming and Qing dynasties. Starting from a textual analysis, we will investigate the reflections and existential experiences of early Catholic missionaries and Chinese converts in China during 17th and 18th centuries. We will attempt to evaluate the significance of the first authentic encounter between Christianity and Chinese natural philosophy and theism representing the doctrine of various philosophical and religious schools. These forms of Chinese thought derived philosophical ideas from Neo-Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, for which we will provide a concise account of their significance to elucidate this complex intellectual environment. We will investigate the missionaries' and the converts' understandings of God and of the relationship between soul and body. We will also investigate the converts' adaptation of the belief in God, and the beliefs of the immortality of soul, as well as the resurrection of the body in their philosophical and spiritual ways of life. Accordingly, we will analyze the ways that how the missionaries and the converts found and established their cultural identities as being Catholics who honored Chinese traditions. Furthermore, we will re-evaluate the role played by early modern scientific discoveries in the Christian missions in China from the perspective of the relationship between philosophy and science. In summary, we will present the philosophical development of these crucial conceptual challenges and changes in both European and Chinese thought in the light of the missionaries' and the converts' work and life, as well as their contemporary relevance and value.

2. Description of the Research: Our project will be composed as follows.

- I. We will investigate whether Matteo Ricci's translation of the term of God, from Latin *Deus* to Chinese *Tian zhu* 天主 (the Lord of the Heaven) could fully convey in a pictographic language the nuanced meaning of the concept originally expressed in an alphabetic language. Our hypothesis will be supported by two main arguments: the independent structural nature of Chinese characters and a lacuna of the use of the term *Tian zhu* in Chinese language until Ricci's time. We argue that Ricci's successful translation was not a historical contingency. On the contrary, it was a product of Ricci's creativity and understanding of Chinese classics and culture. We will corroborate our hypothesis with textual evidence from Ricci's catechistic texts and his philosophical works.
- II. First, we will analyze the enrootment of the concept of God in China during the Jesuit evangelization. The missionaries, however, faced immediately a great religious challenge: the traditional Chinese cosmogony was based on an impersonal force (regardless of the influence from Buddhist thought). Conversely, the Christian God has personal relationship with humans, and created the universe out of nothing. Hence, we will analyze the way that how Ricci and other Jesuits promoted Thomistic idea of God, and the connected key evangelical notions that they accommodated and creatively adapted for the Chinese audience. Second, we will analyze the Chinese converts' understanding of the Christian soul-body relationship in contrast to their own culture's perception of the same. We will analyze how Chinese literati and laity understood and reshaped those notions in the framework of the traditional Chinese ideas of the soul and the body.
- III. We will examine the reconciliation between the concept of God promoted by the Jesuits and the Chinese traditional beliefs that were elaborated by Confucian literati in the 17th century. In this case, we will analyze the missionaries and the converts' inner struggles in the context of three main problems: a) The reconciliation of the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the body in Chinese theism; b) The personal identity understood by the converts who lived in Chinese religious society, and c) The cultural identity of the converts who became Catholics, yet who honored Chinese traditional values.
- IV. We will investigate the philosophical importance of early modern European science and philosophy, which were embedded in the introduction of Christianity to 17th-18th century China. We will analyze the function of modern cartography, calendars, and astrology presented by the missionaries, in order to explore the impact of the modern view of the world and the universe on the Chinese minds. Our hypothesis is that the modern maps and other instruments provided a completely new cosmological understanding for the Chinese audience, so that it served as an open door for the evangelization. We will also analyze the function of automata and mechanical clocks presented by the missionaries, as the automata represented a clear, yet complex, symbol of the relationship between the creator and the creatures.

3. Significance of the Research Project: Our research will contribute to 1) The investigation of the early Catholic missionaries' philosophical and theological works in 17th-18th century China concerning the concept of God; 2) The comprehension of the role played by early Catholic missionaries and Chinese converts in the transmission of knowledge across Eurasia, and 3) The new understanding of Sino-Christian exchanges, especially in the matters related to science, technology and philosophy.

4. Expected Results: 1) Publication of four to five articles and one collective monograph; 2) Enhancing the interdisciplinary research in the fields of philosophy, theology, and history concerning the Catholic missionaries' legacy; 3) Enriching the philosophical research of the Catholic missionaries' works in China and Asia; 4) Improving the international cooperation between the Department of Philosophy at John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin and Masaryk University in Brno, Czech Republic, and universities in Hong Kong (Hong Kong Baptist University) and Taiwan (National Taipei University).

Key words: Early Catholic missionaries in China; The concept of God; The soul-body relationship; Belief system; Neo-Confucian philosophy; Comparative philosophy; Evangelization