

Looking at the “Luminous Doctrine” in the Song and Yuan Period from a Theological Standpoint.

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Our understanding today of the “Luminous Doctrine” * of the Yuan Dynasty comes primarily from documents and archaeological findings, ancient sources of information which are unable to speak and yet cannot be overlooked, leaving people of later eras who desire to find answers at the source, hanging by a thread. As later Christians, to use a commonly accepted standard to evaluate Song-Yuan “Luminous Doctrine” can perhaps allow us to sketch out a relatively clear picture of the spread of the “Luminous Doctrine” in the East during this period.

English theologian John Macquarrie wrote in his book *Principles of Christian Theology*: “Theology may be defined as the study which, through participation in and reflection upon a religious faith, seeks to express the content of this faith in the clearest and most coherent language available.”¹ He also uses an open and tolerant attitude to summarize the six elements of theology, which include experience, revelation, scripture, tradition, culture, and reason.”

In the following discussion we use this notion to examine Yuan Dynasty “Luminous Doctrine”, using “Luminous Doctrine” materials available today to compare these several elements, to become orientated into the “Luminous Doctrine” of this period.

Experience

Everyone who participates in a religious group has his own experience. It is perhaps very private, yet this religious experience is extremely important for his faith, because “theology gives evidence to the whole of human experience.”²

Each person’s religious experience is completely different. Arthur Christopher Moule’s book³ recounts the story of the manifestation of God to the parents of the Christian of the “Luminous Doctrine” who travelled to the West, Bar Saoma: “When they were advanced in years, they often prayed to God, entreating Him to give them a son, to carry on their posterity. God sent the spirit of pregnancy to Kuamuta, and she bore a son, naming him Saoma. The couple were very happy, and all their kinsfolk rejoiced with them.

Revelation

Revelation is the main source of theology, and it is also the fundamental category for theological thought. The essence of revelation is this: the things we know through revelation have the quality of being bestowed as a gift. In the experience of revelation, it seems as though the Holy One “rushes in”, the director of movement is from outside of the person to the inside.⁴

The *Duosang Mongol History* says: “This tribe people accepted Christianity at the first years of the eleventh century, when the Nestorian missionaries preached there.” Then the *Duosang* quotes Abufalazhi’s *History of the Eastern Dynasties*: “The Nestorian Archbishop John (Jean, who lived in Baoda [Bagdad] from 1001-1012 as archbishop) received a letter sent by the patriarch of Marou, of Khorasan, Ebad-Yechou, which said: “There is the Kelie (Kerait) tribe, northeast of the Turkish border. Its chief one day went hunting in the mountains of a certain country, and he lost his path in the deep snow and couldn’t find his way out. He saw a sage who told him: “Place your faith in Jesus Christ, and I

* *Jingjiao*, literally “Luminous Doctrine” as it is known in Chinese history, has been erroneously qualified in the Christian world as “Nestorian” until recent historical and theological research has shown that it should be called more accurately the Christian doctrine of “the Church of the East” in China. Cf. Roman Malek ed., *Jingjiao. The Church of the East in China and Central Asia*, Collectanea Serica, Institut Monumenta Serica, Sankt Augustin, Steyler Verlag, 2006, 700 pp.; *Chinese Cross Currents*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (2007), pp. 180-183. (Editor’s note).

¹ John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian theology*, New York, Scribner, 1966, xiv, 477 p. – 约翰·麦奎利, 《基督教神学原理》, Shanghai, Sanlian, 2007, p. 1.

² Macquarrie, *op. cit.*, Chinese edition, p.5.

³ Arthur Christopher Moule (1873-1957), *Christians in China before the year 1550*, New York, Octagon Books, 1977, xvi, 293 p. – 阿克·穆尔, 《一五五0年前的中国基督教史》, 中华书局, 1984年, 第110页。

⁴ Macquarrie, *op. cit.*, Chinese edition, p. 6.

will rescue you from danger and show you the way home.” The Kerait king promised, the sage then sent him out, and after the king arrived back at his tent, he summoned a Christian merchant to inquire about its teachings. Then he learned that until he was baptized, he could not be a Christian, but he took the book of the Gospels, said daily prayers, and sent someone to me asking me to send a priest to his country to baptize him, but the king added, we only eat meat and milk, how can we keep the vegetarian fast? Moreover, he said the country had 250,000 people who all want to believe the doctrine, etc. The archbishop therefore commanded the patriarch to send two priests to carry holy urns to the country and baptize them and teach them the faith, and instruct them not to eat meat on fast days, but milk would still be allowed, because they didn't have anything else to eat. This story in Abufalazhi took place in the year 358 on the Muslim calendar (1007 A.D.), and the Syriac author Mare's account is also the same as that passed down by Archbishop Joseph.⁵ This part of the document recorded the experience of the chieftain of the Kerait leading the whole tribe to believe in the “Luminous Doctrine” in the eleventh century and how the Holy Spirit appeared, leading the whole Kerait tribe to convert to the “Luminous Doctrine”.

Here, revelation is also one form of religious experience, and our experience and instruction with regard to the Holy One also all contain the elements of revelation.⁶

The key in our discussion is the function of scriptures, tradition, and culture in the spread of the “Luminous Doctrine” in China.

Scriptures (The Bible)

Scripture plays a important role in Christianity. John Macquarrie considers that “the Scriptures or written records provided a kind of memory to the community, allowing it to return to its past and recollect its past.”⁷ Because it brings up again and again the things originally revealed, the *Bible* has a kind of stability, even to the extent that it has a certain kind of objectivity that opposes the mutability of individual experience within the community. The scriptures of a community are an important element for preserving its stability, they are also a consciousness that preserves the identity of the community itself. Because of this, we found that the *Bible* became the standard for the theology of a community; together with tradition it resists excessive emphasis on and expression of present-day experiences, and the subjective, impermissible behaviours to which they give rise. In the Christian communities, any theology calling itself Christian theology (distinct from the theology of certain people's private religious philosophies), all must maintain an intimate and positive relationship with the *Bible*.⁸

The “Luminous Doctrine” placed great importance on translating the scriptures. It is now known that in the Tang dynasty the Christians of the “Luminous Doctrine” already possessed seven corpuses of scriptural texts, all coming from Dunhuang, and among them, the *Zun Jing* [the Sūtra of Veneration] records 35 scriptures names. In the last 4 lines of the *Zun Jing* it is written: “Hence it appears to be a catalogue of scriptures, religious scriptures of Da Qin [Eastern Roman Empire], all together 530 volumes, furthermore there are Buddhist psalmodies manuscripts. In the mid-summer of Zhen'guan's ninth year of Emperor Tang Taizong, the Most Virtuous Aloben of the Western Lands sent a memorial to the emperor. Fang Xuanling and Wei Zheng translated the memorial, and afterwards the emperor asked the Most Vertuous Jingjing of the “Luminous Doctrine” to translate 30 of these volumes. The rest of them is still on parchment scrolls, not yet translated.”⁹ From this, we can see that there was an abundance of “Luminous Doctrine” scriptures. The successful spread of the “Luminous Doctrine” throughout Central and East Asia is closely related to the large number of scriptures translations completed by the clergy of the “Luminous Doctrine”.

Until the Song-Yuan period, we did not see any record of the large number of scriptures translations completed by the scholars of the “Luminous Doctrine”, but there are many records of versions of the

⁵ 多桑, 《多桑蒙古史》, 北京, 商务印书馆, 1936年, 44页。

⁶ Macquarrie, *op. cit.*, Chinese edition, p.7.

⁷ Macquarrie, *op. cit.*, Chinese edition, p.8.

⁸ Macquarrie, *op. cit.*, Chinese edition, p.10.

⁹ 引自罗香林《唐元二代之景教》, 香港中国学社, 1966年, 第222页。

Bible. Giovanni da Montecorvino (1246-1328) wrote in a letter to the pope that he himself translated the Bible into Mongolian, but he was of the Catholic faith. In various places have also been unearthed fragments of the Bible that have records of the gospels and of religious teaching. This shows that in many mission dioceses all scriptural texts were translated versions, translated into different languages in different places.

Arthur Christopher Moole records also in his book that a handwritten manuscript of “Luminous Doctrine” hymns written in Syriac was found in Beijing’s Wuchengmen tower, and experts have determined that they were used during the Yuan Dynasty as psalms for prayer in the “Luminous Doctrine” liturgies.¹⁰

The “Luminous Doctrine” documents unearthed in the Xianjiang region mainly date from the ninth to the eleventh centuries. The “Luminous Doctrine” documents discovered in Turpan were mainly arranged and published by German scholar Müller who had arranged and published the Uighur language draft manuscripts of *The Adoration of the Magi* [*Wushi de Chongbai*]. Chinese scholar Li Jingwei, who has researched the Uighur “Luminous Doctrine”, said that this text recorded the most familiar Uighur language fragment related to the travel of the three Magi to Bethlehem to adore the infant Jesus. This text fragment contains similarities in content with the second chapter of Matthew’s Gospel in the *Old and New Testament Bible*. According to reports, Led Coq in June 1905 discovered four pages of Syriac manuscripts near the ancient city of Gaochang; among them were 6 pages of fragments of prayer texts—Zieme published a one-page, two-sided, 36-line Syriac manuscript, the *Uighur Christian Wedding Song Lyrics* [*Uighur Jidutu Hunli Shang de Songci*] which came from the Turpan Kuluteka archaeological site, and three Uighur language “Luminous Doctrine” prayer fragments.¹¹ Artifact number 14 from cave B53 in the northern area of the Dunhuang Mogao Grottoes, unearthed in 1999, is a Syriac text, *Poems* [*Shipian*], which not only increased the quantity of the substantial “Luminous Doctrine” documents, even more importantly, it provided original material for historical research on the religious rites and theological discussions related to the development of the “Luminous Doctrine” in Central Asia and the Dunhuang area.

The “Luminous Doctrine” documents in Sogdian script discovered in China came primarily from Dunhuang and Turpan. Mostly obtained by Western explorers, among the documents on “Luminous Doctrine” are the *New Testament Scripture* [*Xinyue Shengjing*], the *New Testament Gospels* [*Xinyue Fuyin Shu*], the *Martyrdom of St. George* [*Sheng Qiaozhi Shou Nan Ji*], a *Collection of Sacred Sayings* [*Sheng Ju Ji*] and the *Letters of Christians of the “Luminous Doctrine”* [*Jingjiaotu Shuxin*].¹²

In the Yuan Dynasty many tombstones of “Luminous Doctrine” Christians were found in Quanzhou, but no fragment whatsoever of biblical text was ever found. From the many simple Yuan Dynasty tombstones discovered in Quanzhou, we have reasons to believe that as an important place of habitation for the “Luminous Doctrine” Christians of the Yuan Dynasty, biblical texts have certainly appeared there.

Tradition

Catholics believe that the revelation of Christ comes both through scriptures and also through the tradition passed down to us. As St. Paul so clearly explained, even before the earliest scriptures, in fact what became the foundation for the scriptures, was the tradition that was passed down to and received by the original Christian community. Moreover, cherishing the memory of Jesus, recalling Jesus, is not only contained within the scriptures or [known] after scriptures were passed down: it is in the Church’s liturgy, most of all it is precisely in the Holy Eucharist, so clearly designated to “commemorate” Him (1 Corinthians 11:24) that the community in fact decided the canon of the New Testament. Because of this, the Church decided which books could be regarded as authoritative Christian scriptures, and this decision was made on the basis of the Church’s tradition. In the scriptures there is only vague and

¹⁰ Moule, *op. cit.*, Chinese edition, p. 343.

¹¹ 牛汝极, 《文化绿洲——丝路语言与西域文明》, 新疆人民出版社。2006年, 第281-282页。

¹² 牛汝极《20世纪非汉文维吾尔史料和文献整理研究的回顾和展望》, 《中国西北边疆》2002, 第1期。

indistinctly formulated doctrine; it was finally clearly understood after the Church made doctrinal pronouncements (this took several centuries), and so today we are not faced with scriptures that are cold and indecipherable, but we can read and understand them according to tradition.

Scriptures need be supplemented by tradition in order to prevent the privatization of scriptural interpretation, because when reading and comprehending the scriptures, almost anything can enter in, and a certain kind of control should still be exercised, through the Church's thought, within commonly accepted interpretation.¹³

The *Stele of the propagation in China of the Luminous Doctrine from Da Qin* records the "Luminous Doctrine"'s rules and teachings. The Christians of the "Luminous Doctrine" preserved some traditional Christian rules and lessons: for example, they kept baptism as the rite of entry into the faith. Even though the Nestorianism was declared a heresy, the Christians of the "Luminous Doctrine" continued to view baptism as a sacred ceremony, the "sacred rite" being a symbol of a believer's entry into the faith.

Second, the characteristic external feature of Christianity is the cross, and in the "Luminous Doctrine" it is as well.

In the *Da Xing Guo Si Ji*, Liang Xiang records: "The cross is adopted by both mind and body, displayed in rooms, painted in halls, crowned on the head and worn by influential persons. In every place, this is the norm."¹⁴ The cross was extremely important to the Christians of the "Luminous Doctrine", and in two different time periods there were no idols, a fact that shows the continuity in doctrine for the Christians of the "Luminous Doctrine" of both periods. Furthermore the "Luminous Doctrine" preserved continuously the singular tradition of not worshipping idols.

Third, ceremonies had to be performed facing toward the East, and the beating of wood as a hallmark was a rule that the Christians of the "Luminous Doctrine" were required to follow. In the *Zhi Shun Zhen Jiang Zhi*, Volume 9, *Da Xing Guo Si Ji* explains: "[The "Luminous Doctrine"'s] teaching in its rituals focuses on the East, it is different from the Indian teaching of Nirvana, but still it clearly comes from the East: the four seasons begin in the East, all living things are born in the East, the East belongs to the sacred wooden tablets, causing the primal chaos to be divided, the cause of the universe's continuation without end, the cause of the movement of the sun and moon, the cause of the flourishing of man and animals, the path of endless productions. Therefore it is called "Eternal Heaven"."¹⁵ Because Liang Xiang transcribed the ideas of the *Ma Xue Li Ji Si*, with Liang Xiang's own ideas added in, and especially because it was in the Yuan Dynasty, this explains the natural integration that occurred between the "Luminous Doctrine" and the Mongolians' sense of revering the gods. Liang Xiang's understanding of the "Luminous Doctrine" was distinct from that of the Tang Dynasty's *Stele of the propagation in China of the Luminous Doctrine from Da Qin*.

Fourth, the Christians of the "Luminous Doctrine" observed the practices of "grow a beard, shave the top", of not using slaves and maid-servants, using their goods to help the poor and needy, and preserving stillness and cautioning one's thoughts. Mr. Fang Hao points out that the "Luminous Doctrine"'s rite of consecration for priests was established in 502 A.D.¹⁶ And in the Yuan Dynasty, what William of Rubruk recorded about the Christians of the "Luminous Doctrine" in Northern China was that "First, they are usurers and drunkards. They all sell their priestly services, because they don't offer the Holy Communion for free. They take care of old women and children, and thus wholeheartedly become rich, and they pay no attention to matters of faith."¹⁷

¹³ Macquarrie, *op. cit.*, Chinese edition, p. 10-11.

¹⁴ 俞希鲁, 《至顺镇江志》卷九《大兴国寺记》, 江苏古籍出版社, 1999年, 第365页。

¹⁵ 《至顺镇江志》卷九《大兴国寺记》, 第365页。

¹⁶ 方豪《唐代景教考》载《中国史学》, 1936年1期, 另载《西北民族宗教史料文献》新疆分册, 甘肃省图书馆, 1985年印。

¹⁷ 耿昇、何高济译《帕朗嘉宾蒙古行纪 鲁布鲁克东行纪》, 中华书局, 2002年, 第255页。

Fifth, the Christians of the “Luminous Doctrine” recited passages from scriptures seven times a day. A Yuan Dynasty pilgrim to Jerusalem, Laban Saoma, in an audience with the pope, said mass according to the “Luminous Doctrine”’s rites, and the pope invited him to preside over the rite of the Holy Communion; the book said, “they were both very satisfied with the visit, and added, although they spoke different languages, the liturgy was the same.”¹⁸ This illustrates that in this respect the rubrics of the “Luminous Doctrine” and of the Catholic Church were the same and that Yuan Dynasty “Luminous Doctrine” still preserved some of the basic rubrics of Christianity.

The doctrines and rules of the “Luminous Doctrine” received a new explication in Yuan Dynasty China, mixing in elements of the local culture, which is to say that the “Luminous Doctrine” here arrived at a new interpretation. This coincides with our understanding of tradition, because “The function of tradition is interpretation, and interpretation needs to be constantly and repeatedly moving forward, even though it changes the ancient interpretation of the faith that formed the community’s identity.” Of course, John Macquarrie has also considered the factors of time and space in the function of tradition: “These kinds of things, in their language and even their conception, historically are put under constraints, and if they are transmitted by purely mechanical means, they become inert tradition. People of each generation must utilize tradition, and in order to achieve this, they must use their own categories of thought to expound ancient formulas or any other things.”¹⁹

Culture

“Acknowledging the element of culture amounts to acknowledge that there is no ultimate theology. The work of theology must be carried out again and again because its discourse is bound by cultural constraints. Therefore, when cultural patterns change, it must be interpreted anew.”²⁰ The changes of time are like this; if there are changes in space, they necessarily will also produce these kinds of changes.

In the process of being disseminated, the “Luminous Doctrine” was influenced by the cultures of various regions. For example, in the northwestern region, the growing “Luminous Doctrine” was influenced by locally practiced Zoroastrianism and Buddhism, and elements of these were mixed together within it.

Our careful research of the above described Uighur manuscript has found that the Uighur fragment of *The Adoration of the Magi* and the *Bible* are not completely identical. When the original was translated into Uighur, some content from Zoroastrianism was added: “Jesus the Lord of Heaven from the corner of a stone cradle (38) as if pulling a piece of dough, pulled down a stone, (39) gave it to those Magi. After taking the stone, (40) they could not move their own bodies. (41) Placing it on the animals to carry, the animals also could not carry it. (42) Therefore they discussed it, saying: “This stone is extremely (43) heavy. This round stone—(44) what use is it to us? Even the animals (45) cannot carry it, and we cannot carry it away (46).” They spoke this way to one another. Later on, in the original place (47) a well appeared. They moved that stone, (48) threw it into the well, and thus, (49) when they had not gone far, they [turned their heads back] for a look, and from inside that well (50), a huge and terrible light, carrying a burst of fire, (52) was going straight up into the blue sky. And after they (53) had seen this astonishing sign, the Magi (54) understood and then in sincerity and fear they bowed their heads (55) and knelt down in worship. They therefore said, (56) “He (the Lord of Heaven Jesus) gave us a treasure to be revered and honored, yet (57) we did not revere it, (58) but unaware, we threw it into the well”, (59) they said with regret. Because of this situation, up to today (60) such is the origin of the worship of fire by the Magi (61).”²¹ This passage narrates mainly the origin of the worship of the fire, the *Bible* itself does not contain this passage. That the Uighur “Luminous Doctrine” fragments include some content of Zoroastrianism shows a certain phenomenon of blending together the two religions at that time among the Uighur people.

¹⁸ Moule, *op. cit.*, Chinese edition, p. 128.

¹⁹ Macquarrie, *op. cit.*, Chinese edition, p.12.

²⁰ Macquarrie, *op. cit.*, Chinese edition, p.12.

²¹ 李经纬《回鹘文景教文献残卷〈巫师的崇拜〉译释》，《世界宗教研究》1983年2期，第151页，第142页。

Artifact number 14 from cave B53 in the northern area of the Dunhuang Mogao Grottoes is a Syriac text, *Poems* [Shipian], that not only increased the number of the substantial “Luminous Doctrine” documents, even more importantly, it provides original material for historical research on the religious rites and theological discussions related to the development of the “Luminous Doctrine” in Central Asia and the Dunhuang area. What merits attention is the Uighur translation which is added at the end of the Syriac scripture text:

“The three treasures are what kind of things? Listen carefully to what is said, do not serve as a male or female slave, do not neglect silent meditation, do not cry out for help! Except in slavery is good fortune, just except in one's diligent effort. When feeling deeply disturbed and fearful, charitable acts are effective, merits of previous generations are spoken of. I am vexed about evil conduct. Lasting charity is wonderful and is hard to come by in this world. A few acts of charity have also miraculous effect.” *Ba Qian Song Bau Ruo Jing* [The Scripture of 8000 Odes of Wisdom] talks about good and evil being rewarded in kind, all of nature has its law and path.²²

In the “Luminous Doctrine” scriptural text, a note inserts a Buddhist scriptural text, this shows that the Christians of the “Luminous Doctrine” of that time paid also close attention to the other religions.

A Uighur translation of *The Martyrdom of St. George* from Turpan has also been preserved, with one page of the extant fragment stored in Berlin. In describing the prayer of St. George before being tortured, much of the following is put forth: if one is in any need, he only needs to call out the name of St. George and he can have whatever is asked.²³ Obviously this has Buddhist influence. In the Turkic language “Luminous Doctrine” documents transliterated into Syriac, which were obtained at Turpan by the third German “Turpan expedition” in 1905-1907, there is a prayer copied in Uighur and Syriac, inscribed in hand writing at the end, expressing the desire that his charitable deeds be revisited on someone else. This person perhaps is his father. This kind of thought about charitable acts coming back can also be seen in some other documents, for example: at the end of a “Luminous Doctrine” document, a “Luminous Doctrine” benefactor wrote that he wanted some scripture passages to be recited on behalf of the royal family. His way of doing this is rather like in Buddhism, caused by the influence of Buddhism on Uighur “Luminous Doctrine”.

Regarding changes in translations of the *Bible*, whether in the Tang, Song or Yuan Dynasty, changes in spatial location brought about an infusion of elements that had circulated down through the local cultures, and the translation of scriptures, after going through the process of a new interpretation, is infused with new contents, the elements of the local culture inducing directly this change.

Because of the mutual influence and infiltration of each religion, the “Luminous Doctrine” among the Yuan Dynasty Uighurs went through an evolution, both in doctrine and in form. Some Western scholars have found that the *Poems* that came from the central Asian region were numerous. Among the reasons given, one is that these *Poems* were seen as incantations: when the representative of Western Christianity, William of Rubruk arrived in Mongol-controlled Central Asia in the middle of the thirteenth century, he saw wormwood grass divination rites popular in Shamanism, in which the incantations that people read turned out to be the *Poems*.²⁴ Christians living in a religious atmosphere dominated by Shamanist fortune-telling had to adapt to the prevailing environment in order to survive.

The mutual assimilation of the “Luminous Doctrine” with different religions illustrates that the “Luminous Doctrine” in China underwent alterations.

We can also reach a similar conclusion from the culture of the “Luminous Doctrine” in the tombs of different places.

²² 牛汝极《莫高窟北区发现的叙利亚文景教一回鹵文佛教双语写本再研究》《敦煌研究》2002年第2期,第58-59页。

²³ Asimusen, *Yisilanjiao Zhenzheng Xingqi qian Zhong Ya Sute Yuyan he Huihu-Tujueyu de Jidujiao Wenxian*, [Central Asian Sogdian and Uighur Christian Documents before the true rise of Islam-Turkish], p. 22.

²⁴ 转引 Wolfgang Hage, “Religiose Toleranz in der Nestorianischen Asienmission”, in *Glaube und Toleranz*, 1982, p. 106.

In China's inland, in Quanzhou, Yangzhou and other places, unearthed Christian tombs all mixed together Buddhist, Islamic and Chinese traditional cultures: Christian angels wear Buddhist's wide clothing with large sleeves, hats bearing Chinese-style mother-of-pearl inlays; one tombstone is engraved with a cross, a lotus flower, an angel, a peony, and other contents representing different cultures. These "Luminous Doctrine" tombstones that have mixed together different cultures, silently illustrate that the "Luminous Doctrine", as a religious culture in China, underwent completely new interpretations. Here we try another example.

The book *Quanzhou Zongjiao Shike* [Religious stone carvings of Quanzhou] by Wu Wenliang and Wu Youxiong, records the Christian images of angels in local carvings, for instance:

B5 Cross-legged winged angel tombstone: the face of the stone has a relief-carved, cross-legged [in Buddhist style] male angel, full-faced; his head is adorned with a *ruo cao* (a kind of aquatic plant) style crown, with both earlobes hanging down to the shoulders. The angel has a wide-sleeve gown draped over his shoulders and body, open in front, both sleeves fluttering in the wind, both arms and hands not exposed. Both hands in front of the belly, holding a lotus flower in full bloom, with a cross set on top of the flower. There is fine jewelry hanging in front of his chest, behind his shoulders are a pair of open wings, and behind the wings are streamers. The angel sits cross-legged, and from both sides and below clouds rise up around him. If the pair of wings and cross were taken away it would look rather like a Yuan Dynasty stone carving of a sitting Buddha.²⁵ The angel's cross-legged position completely borrows the posture of Buddhist meditation. And *ruo cao* is often used in traditional Chinese architecture to adorn the mountains and flowers on rooftops, where there are wooden "hanging fish" and *ruo cao* : on the one hand, *yu* "fish" and *yu* "surplus" are homophonic, expressing "to have a surplus year after year"; on the other hand, people believe that fish in water and water plants can control fire and protect against natural disasters. Here a *ruo cao* design is used to adorn the angel's crown, and contains a Chinese element within. And propitious clouds in ancient Chinese art were often used to symbolize good luck.

Is this flying angel a Buddhist flying Apsara, or is it a Christian angel? A little of each. The angel's loose and large clothing is similar to that of a Buddhist monk, the face is full, the body is large and firm-fleshed, the arms are exposed, there are circles hanging down below the ears, not at all like the image of the angelic spirits of Christianity, illustrating that the image of flying angels was quite heavily influenced by artistic carvings of Buddhist Apsaras. However, the wings originate completely from the Christian image of an angel, yet there are some which strongly bear the style of the clothing of Persian monks, seeming as if there is some relationship to the dress of the Buddhist monks of the Persian Sassanid Dynasty period. The spiral headdress on top of the monks' hat is also completely in a Chinese style, a streamer angel evolved in China from a legendary angel of ancient Christianity. The carving technique for the angel also bears the characteristics of both Persian and Chinese art. Apart from the two pairs of wings and the cross, the cross-legged winged angel's appearance is rather like Yuan Dynasty carvings of the Sitting Buddha, the flying angels's black gauze cap is a completely Chinese thing. The image of the angel atop the Quanzhou Christian stele fuses together Buddhist, Christian, and Persian cultural influences, while assimilating the art of the local culture.

When the cross and the lotus, the angels (the lotus and flying angels are rich in many kinds of cultural elements), an imperial canopy, dragons, plum blossoms, the peony, the black gauze cap, and other distinctive items from different cultures meet each other, we can see what a process of cultural blending the spread of the "Luminous Doctrine" underwent in China. Moreover within these kinds of regional parameters, whether in Quanzhou or Yangzhou, a great number of them are still those of the ancient lands and the old tribe the Wangs; we can see that all tombs of the Christians of the "Luminous Doctrine" mix together Buddhism, Islam, and other foreign cultural influences with Chinese traditional culture. If it is said that Quanzhou is a place that mixed various religious cultures and has the greatest wealth of different cultural elements, then we will also exclaim that the "Luminous Doctrine" of the

²⁵ 吴文良、吴幼雄的《泉州宗教石刻》，科学出版社，北京，2005年，第367页。

ancient lands of Wangs had also this strong capacity for cultural blending. Perhaps because of the distance of time, we have no way to have richer material to more closely assimilate these, but we can already glimpse on how the “Luminous Doctrine” of that time developed according to its own unique model in China's inland. At the same time as the art on the tombs of the “Luminous Doctrine” of this era preserved its most important features, it assimilated with openness elements from different cultural traditions and formed the type of “Luminous Doctrine” tomb art, rich in cultural meanings, that we now see.

The artwork on the different tombs from various parts of China's inland silently expounded the different understandings of the “Luminous Doctrine”.

The “Luminous Doctrine”'s adaptation to local places also shows the religious rites changes it underwent because of the differences in the places where it was spread:

According to William of Rubruk, because of the Uighurs, the “Luminous Doctrine” mingled local characteristics and experienced many changes in form, with the result that he had difficulty in differentiating the Christian believers among the Uighur people. When writing about the Uighur Christians, he said: they comprise a religious group that is unusual. They all worship facing north, they kneel on the ground and bow with their palms together, placing their foreheads in their palms. The result of this is that the Christians of the “Luminous Doctrine” of these places never bring their palms together when praying. Rather, when they pray they stretch open their hands in front of their chests.²⁶ Through this description, we can see that the Christians of the “Luminous Doctrine” in this place were influenced by Islam and Buddhism.

The Journey of William of Rubruk to the East recorded the changes the “Luminous Doctrine” experienced among the people “as far as the Khitan, Christians of the “Luminous Doctrine”, and the Saracens, who were seen as a different race among them. In Khitan, there are fifteen cities and towns in which the Christians of the “Luminous Doctrine” live. In the city called Xi'an, they have a diocese. — “The Christians of the “Luminous Doctrine” there don't understand anything, in prayer, they have Syriac holy books, but they don't understand the language, so when they chant the psalms they are just like our clergy who don't understand French. They are completely degenerate. First, they are usurers and drunkards, some of them live among the Tartars, even like the Tartars taking several wives. When they enter the church, they wash their lower bodies like the Saracens, they eat meat on Fridays, and they celebrate festivals there like the Saracens. It is difficult for the bishop to visit all these places, only making it about once every fifty years. When he visits, they take all their boys, even if only infants in the cradle, and appoint them to be priests, thus almost all their men are priests. Afterwards they marry, of course violating the laws of their ancestors, and they are bigamists, because as soon as a wife dies, these priests take another one. Then all sell clerical services, because they don't offer the Holy Eucharist for free. They look after old women and children, and therefore wholeheartedly get rich, and pay no attention to faith. In this way, those who have instructed the sons of the Mongolian officials, even though they teach the Gospels and religious doctrine, because of their filthy and greedy lifestyle, have caused the sons and younger brothers to leave the Christian faith.”²⁷

Because of changes in the region during the Yuan Dynasty, the “Luminous Doctrine” strict teachings and rules became extremely lax. The changes the “Luminous Doctrine” went through in the process of spreading were regarded by William of Rubruk as a phenomenon of “degeneration”, it manifested the secularization and diversification of the. The traditions of the “Luminous Doctrine” went through changes in the Yuan Dynasty because of culture; can we or can we not view these changes as a kind of new interpretation? Is such an interpretation excessive? This is the question we will now address.

John Macquarrie said: “Recognizing cultural factors amounts to admitting that there is no ultimate theology. The work of theology must repeatedly progress, because its discourse is subjected to cultural

²⁶ 耿昇、何高济译《帕朗嘉宾蒙古行纪 鲁布鲁克东行纪》中华书局 2002。第 248—249 页。

²⁷ 《帕朗嘉宾蒙古行纪 鲁布鲁克东行纪》，第 255 页。

restrictions, so that when cultural patterns change, it must also be interpreted anew."²⁸ Macquarrie spoke these words in discussing the changes through time; when changes take place in location, is this principle equally valid?

When the “Luminous Doctrine” was being introduced to mainland China, it ran up against the various regional cultures of China's interior. Therefore in its spread, it was necessarily bound to the different regional cultures. In the end it formed a kind of neither Buddhist, neither “Luminous Doctrine”, neither Islamic, but unique Chinese local “Luminous Doctrine” culture that still contained elements of these various cultures.

For example, the “Luminous Doctrine” rites of ancestral sacrifice do not recognize what the Roman school calls “the doctrine of the cleansing of sins after death”, but for sacrifices to the ancestors, the “Luminous Doctrine” Stele had these words: “The liturgy of praise of the seventh hour is a great protection for the living and the dead”. In Quanzhou, the tombstones of the Dai family's twelve concubines all show that the “Luminous Doctrine” in China recognized the traditional Chinese view of ancestral sacrifices. And the notion of ancestral sacrifices was an important Chinese cultural tradition rejected by the pope during the Rites Controversy of the early Qing Dynasty.

Reason

Until now, there is no documented theoretician of the “Luminous Doctrine” of the Song and Yuan period. Perhaps, Aluoben Jing Jing of the Tang Dynasty can be considered, at the time of the propagation of the “Luminous Doctrine”, as scholars who from the “Luminous Doctrine” teachings began to expound a theoretical standpoint, but there is really no such clear theoretical analysis that has been passed down from the Song-Yuan period. John of Montecorvino (1246-1328) is perhaps a theologian who made a contribution, but he was a Catholic missionary, and his documentation has not been passed down. Bar Sauma, as a scholar who had taken an oath in the “Luminous Doctrine”, is possibly able to have a genuine theory and viewpoint on the “Luminous Doctrine”, but there are no documents that have been passed down. For this we can only be full of regret.

Conclusion

Reviewing the above points one by one, we can summarize:

In the course of the spread of the “Luminous Doctrine” in the Yuan Dynasty, there were so-called religious experience, revelation, scriptures translation, the preservation of traditional elements, the introduction of cultural factors and new interpretations; the only thing missing was a theoretical framework for missionary work. Therefore the spread of the “Luminous Doctrine” in the Yuan Dynasty possessed the basic elements of religious propagation, the translation of scriptures added some cultural elements, and the collisions and modifications that occurred between them illustrated precisely the normal situation when different cultural traditions flow into each other. Only if we carefully observe the complicated relationship among them can we then completely understand the condition of Yuan Dynasty “Luminous Doctrine”.

We look back again to see Macquarrie's definition of theology: “Theology can be defined as this kind of knowledge, through participation and introspection a kind of religious belief, striving to use the most clear and most consistent language to express the contents of this belief.”

From a broad perspective, although the Yuan Dynasty does not have any written exposition of the “Luminous Doctrine” theological theory, we perhaps can say that, from the different understandings of the “Luminous Doctrine” coming from various parts of China at the time of the Yuan Dynasty, from the blending together of different cultural elements seen on the ornamentation of the tombstones, from different understandings of the “Luminous Doctrine” in different regions, all of these should have used an other kind of language to express their understanding of the “Luminous Doctrine”; the only thing that is lacking is the expression of the spoken and written language. So the gap between the “Luminous Doctrine” of the Yuan Dynasty and a theologically complete conception is only lacking by one step.

²⁸ Macquarrie, *op. cit.*, Chinese edition, p.12.

In short, the development and the transformation of the “Luminous Doctrine” in the Song-Yuan period are extremely important in the history of the Christian missions in China. Even though it was only spread among the minority populations, yet as a model it touched upon many questions regarding how a new and foreign culture can subsist and develop within a different cultural environment. As John Macquarrie himself said, "In reality, because Christian faith has the ability to interpret itself into even the newest of categories, it expanded enormously in time and space."²⁹ Of course, this hope for Christianity, this kind of confident declaration must necessarily have the same mentality of openness and inclusivity as a prerequisite, and this is what is recognized as the "exchange of cultures".

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²⁹ Macquarrie, *op. cit.*, Chinese edition, p.10.