

# The god of god, gold, and glory: the role of european christian missionaries in c...

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## The “ God” of “ God, Gold, and Glory:” The Role of European Christian missionaries in China from the 16th to the 19th Century

The role of the Europeans Christian missionaries in China has been a difficult encounter even since it began (Ebrey 34). Unlike the Jesuits who were favored and in most cases supported in their evangelism, the European missionaries faced many challenges in their endeavors to win China’s natives to their religion. The European missionaries ‘ marketed’ their ideas on the Christendom in the 19th century during the foreign commercial access imposed by the military force which facilitated their enterprises (Ebrey 34). Their views, in most cases, negatively affected the natives of China and; hence, a rose emotions that saw the judgment of the Imperials change against the missionaries favor. ‘ Cultural Imperialism’ resulted due to the relationships of the different field committees (Protestant missionaries, mission field committees in China, home committees of America and Europe, the diplomats and the Government). This cultural imperialism viewed Christian’s missionaries as exploiters of their foreign values because they ignored the reality that the Chinese were conscious of the foreign influence and evangelism. However, their approach was ineffective since they ignored the native language, both spoken and written character and that they were unacquainted to the natives’ customs and believes.

The Jesuits evangelism can, however, be seen as most successful in influence to the Chinese. Spear headed by Matteo Ricci, the Jesuits evangelism relatively attracted a meager group of believers. Matteo Ricci mission to china was simply an effort to win the religious side of the natives of China. His strategic approach was, in essence, to incorporate China’s

culture and religious acts in his evangelism so as to win them over (Laven 67). The best way the Jesuits considered fit for them to be influential and phenomenally impact on the Chinese culture, political effluence and social elite was indispensably to make themselves figures of curiosity and intellect. This is evident in their service to China, which included mapping the country, others serving as astronomers and diplomats, designing and blessing cannon, painting pictures and the installation of fountains in the imperial gardens. Although it was not as successful, the number of people won over to the Christian religion was relatively meager (Woods 40). This contributed majorly on the cross-cultural effect of the early ages. The Jesuits way of sending their religious message was tailored in their actions; for instance they dressed like Confucian Scholars that suit the local circumstances and encounters and also worked unconditionally to impress their audience with their knowledge and trinkets efforts. Incidentally, they used prisms, clocks, seductive theories, maps among others. More often than not, such actions and efforts were controversial to the natives' culture, especially when they were seen to pollute and threaten the sacred and theological boundaries of the natives, but this did not hinder them in gaining ingenuity and dynamism (Woods 40).

Also, the European missionaries impacted on the Chinese way of education as they introduced higher education in China. The missionaries were also part of the dynamics of the natives. Their goal was not significantly accomplished since they used unorthodox methods to reach the Chinese.

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