

Mitja Saje (ed.): *A. Hallerstein – Liu Songling 刘松龄 – The Multicultural Legacy of Jesuit Wisdom and Piety at the Qing Dynasty Court* 2014, Maribor: Kibla. 380 pages.

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The book *Hallerstein – Liu Songling 刘松龄* is an important contribution to modern Slovene history of international relations, especially to the history of the earliest cultural, ideational, and political contacts between Slovenia and China. It introduces the life and the work of the Slovenian Jesuit missionary Ferdinand Augustin Haller von Hallerstein (1703–1774), who lived and worked in China during the Qing Dynasty from 1739 until his death in 1774. Although until recently almost unknown in Europe and Slovenia, he was an important figure and a relevant cultural link between the two countries. He held a high position in the Chinese court, acting as the head of the Imperial Board of Astronomy and thus contributing in a remarkable way to the introduction and development of Western Science in the late imperial China.

Dr. Mitja Saje, the editor and the chief initiator of this interesting and important monograph, was a Professor of Sinology and one of the founders of the Department of Asian Studies (former Asian and African Studies), which was established at the University of Ljubljana in 1995. Since that time and until his retirement in 2015 he worked continuously at the Department as one of its leading spirits, acting twice as its head, and contributing in an endless number of invaluable ways to its didactic and academic development.

Professor Saje is specialized in traditional and modern Chinese history, politics, and economy. He is among the first Slovene Sinologists that started to raise awareness about the importance of Hallerstein's historical relevance and reveal the vast scope of his immensely important intercultural work to a broader European academic community. In this respect, he has collaborated with several Slovene ethnologists and anthropologists, such as for instance, with Dr. Zmago Šmitek, a renewed Professor of non-European ethnology and cultural anthropology at the University of Ljubljana, who published the first articles on Hallerstein's influence as early as 1986, and with Ralf Čeplak, a cultural ethnologist who discovered Hallerstein's tombstone in Beijing.

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The fact that Hallerstein was almost completely forgotten in Europe has much to do with the historical fact that “he was born in Carniolia, the Austrian province with Slovenian population, which after World War I became part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, later Yugoslavia, which is now a central part of the Republic of Slovenia. It is evident that after the collapse of the Austrian Empire there was not much motivation in Austria to research the activities regarding his missionary work in China. Apart from the Jesuit community and some historians of science, who kept records of his purely scientific achievements, he was almost unknown in European sinology circles” (p. 23).

However, the reason why the present book is of utmost importance is, among other things, the fact, that Hallerstein has not been forgotten only in Slovenia and Europe, but also in China—despite the important position he held at the Chinese court and despite his important role as an intercultural link between China and Europe. There are several reasons for this fact. Due to the growing Manchu absolutism and partly also to the rigid policy of papal Rome, the previously friendly and tolerant attitude of Chinese officials towards Jesuit missionaries drastically changed in the middle of the 18th century. Hence, in that period, the missionary work of European Jesuits became more and more limited and was at certain times even forbidden. As many of his colleagues, Hallerstein thus also started to concentrate upon his scientific work in order to win the favor of Emperor Qianlong, who was the main protector of their innovations, hoping that they would eventually become able again to continue their religious influence.

The second important reason, which caused Hallerstein’s fall into oblivion, was linked to the fact that in the middle of the 18th century, strong competition between the Chinese and foreigners on the Imperial Board of Astronomy emerged at the Chinese court, since the new Chinese scientists started to envy the leading positions held by the foreigners. Hence, they often tried to discredit the actions of the Jesuits missionaries, trying to improve their own positions by doing so.

Taking into consideration all these factors, the importance of the present book is easy to see; even more gratifying is the fact that it was also translated into Chinese at the Beijing College of foreign languages (Beijing waiyu xueyuan 北京外语学院) soon after its publication and published by the Daxiang publishing house in Zhengzhou.

The Association for Culture and Education KIBLA with the Archive of the Republic of Slovenia jointly published the first version of the book. This came to life as a part of a broader intercultural project connecting theoreticians and artists. The leading force and one of the main artistic initiators behind the project was Wang Huiqin, a Chinese visual artist who has been living in Slovenia for several

decades already. The main purpose of the book was to connect Chinese and European culture. Hence, it was first published partly as a translation of a collection in Slovene *Mandarin Hallerstein, Kranjec na Kitajskem dvoru* (*Mandarin Hallerstein, A Carniolan in the Chinese Court*), which was edited by Viljem Marjan Hribar and released in 2003 by the Mengeš Town Museum. The editors obtained permission “to republish photographic material, important letters of Hallerstein’s (to which three newly translated letters were added), an introduction to Hallerstein’s letters by Aleš Maver, and Zmago Šmitek’s text *The Last Great Astronomer at the Chinese Court*” (p. 9). The book is well-structured and contains nine chapters, which mainly introduce various aspects of Hallerstein’s life and work.

The book opens with Aleksandra Kostič’s introduction of the entire project, which was funded by the EU cultural foundation EACEA, the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia, and by the Municipality of Maribor. In the next section, Matevž Košir describes the process of having established and maintaining dialogue on Augustin Hallerstein between the Archives of the Republic of Slovenia and the State Archives Administration of China since the 1990s. This report is followed by an article written by Janez Škrlep, which contains an analysis of the partial translation of the monograph “*Mandarin Hallerstein, a Carniolan in the Chinese Court*” and the exposition of the main results of the symposium that was organized in 2003 in Mengeš to commemorate the tercentennial of Hallerstein’s birth.

Mitja Saje’s chapter, entitled “*Rediscovering Augustin Hallerstein and his Work in Beijing*”, is of central importance, for it offers the entire book’s historical and political framework, enabling the reader to better understand the importance of his influential work and his scientific, as well as ideational contributions to intercultural relations between Europe (especially Slovenia) and China. The author’s central intention was to shed light upon Hallerstein’s “deeds, opinions, and merits in order to place him into historic context next to other famous Jesuits of the Qing dynasty” (p.49).

Mitja Saje’s article is followed by another important contribution, entitled “*The Last Great Astronomer at the Chinese Court: Augustin Hallerstein*”. This article also offers some important insights into Hallerstein’s life and work. At the very beginning, Zmago Šmitek, Professor of ethnology and cultural anthropology and the author of this essay, points out that “the quantity, variety and international characteristics of his work made writing about him a difficult task,” for “the documentary material related to his life and his creative work is dispersed at different locations: in Ljubljana, Vienna, Rome, Lisbon, London, St. Petersburg, Beijing, and possibly elsewhere” (p. 51). However, despite these difficulties, Professor

Šmitek has managed to collect most of these important data and, through his consistent analysis, offer us many important insights into the circumstances that shaped and influenced the intercultural work of this important Slovenian Jesuit astronomer. He concluded that while “Hallerstein’s activities in China began in one of the most splendid periods of the Chinese history, his death symbolically marked the end of the era” (p. 115).

In the next chapter, Stanislav Južnič describes Hallerstein’s most important scientific achievements. In his essay entitled “Vacuum and Electricity for the Chinese Emperor”, the author, who devotes most of his research work to the achievements of the 17th and 18th century Jesuit scientists in physics, describes Hallerstein’s role in the Beijing Jesuits’ electrical and vacuum research. Although it was not that clear as his leading role in research and publications on astronomy, cartography, he aurora borealis, or China demography, it can fairly be supposed that electrical or even the later vacuum experiments could not be accomplished without his participation and input, given the fact that he was the leading Jesuit scientist in Beijing (p. 149).

The next contribution under the title *Liu Songling, Head of the Imperial Board of Astronomy in the Qing Dynasty* was written by Professor Ju Deyuan from the Beijing Language and Culture University, whose work has been recently supported by the researchers of The First Historic Archive in Beijing and several other scholars in China (p. 39). This fact—together, of course, with the already accomplished translation of the present book into Chinese—gives us hope that “eventually a more accurate presentation of Hallerstein’s deeds and his contribution to cultural exchange between Europe and China will appear in Chinese history books” (p. 39). Among others, the author points out the reasons Hallerstein has hitherto been wrongly taken to be German or Austrian for over 200 years in China, exposing that “it is known that northern parts of the former Yugoslavia were ruled by the Austrian Empire, and some peoples’ nationalities and ethnic identities were neglected and changed in that political condition” (p. 165). The author also describes Hallerstein’s contributions to the Chinese astronomy, his geographical achievements, and his diplomatic activities. He also focuses on the importance of Hallerstein’s official statistical report on the Chinese population.

The monograph concludes with an extensive collection of Hallerstein’s letters as translated and interpreted by Aleš Maver. These letters are accompanied by an analysis of his personal characteristics, as well as a wealth of other valuable information that can be obtained from them. This extensive introduction and analysis, drawn from the original sources derived from Hallerstein’s own writing, was also written by Aleš Maver.

Through their meticulous analyses, interpretations, and investigations of Hallerstein's work, the editor and the authors of the present book have provided an innovative approach to the linkage between China and Slovenia. In this framework, they are especially concentrating upon the clarification of his scientific, philosophical and religious, political and even economic aspects of the work of this great Jesuit scientist. These are the main topics that the authors take up in this lively and well-rounded book about the contemporary fate of his important cultural heritage. The book offers a lot of useful and extremely interesting new information for readers from both Europe and China. Concerning the latter, it is therefore by no means coincidental (but nonetheless extremely pleasing) that the book was translated into Chinese and published in 2015.