

A MISSIONARY PERSPECTIVE ON THE ADAGE OF MARCO POLO: “YOU HAVE TO SEE IT TO BELIEVE IT.”

从传教士视角解读马可·波罗格言“眼见为实”

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Abstract

The essay explores the adage of Marco Polo “You have to see it to believe it” from the perspective of missionaries who along with business people and mercenaries were also making significant inroads into other cultures century after century. The 13th century era of Marco Polo was indeed not only marked by a new curiosity about travelling to far away countries but also apparently driven by a new desire to go deeper in the knowledge of other cultures encapsulated in the battle cry: “You have to see it to believe it.” The specific call from the iconic traveler Marco Polo was not just limited to the obvious urge to make profits through business activity or the missionary zeal to save souls but included fascination with the amazing world of new insights to be gained by extensive travels through unknown regions of the world. This paper focuses on travelling as a spiritual journey of genuine encounter with a new culture, as dramatized by the history of the breakthrough of the Franciscan and Dominican orders, twin pillars of a profound reform within the church of the 13th century. Members of these orders embarked from Italy not only to far away Moslem countries but also

摘要

本文从传教士的视角探讨马可·波罗的格言「眼见为实」(You have to see it to believe it)。几个世纪以来,传教士与商人、雇佣兵一同深入其他文化。13世纪马可·波罗的时代不仅激发了人们对远行异国的新好奇,更体现了深入认知其他文化的渴望,这一精神浓缩于「眼见为实」的口号中。这位标志性旅行者的呼唤不仅限于通过商业活动牟利的冲动或拯救灵魂的传教热情,还包含了对通过远行未知地域获取新见解的迷恋。本文以方济会和道明会的历史突破为例——二者是13世纪教会深层改革的双支柱,探讨旅行作为与新文化真实相遇的灵性旅程。这些修会成员从意大利出发,不仅抵达遥远的穆斯林国家,更深入元朝时期的中华腹地北京。这种“传教旅行”的根源何在?与其说是将欧洲元素强加于他文化的殖民行为,不如说他们的旅程创造了克服偏见、真正理解他文化的灵性条件。他们的记忆或是逐步将福音价值植根本地文化智慧传统的关键。

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forged ahead all the way into the heart of the Middle Kingdom: Beijing during the Yuan Dynasty. What is the root of this type of "missionary travelling"? Instead of a misguided colonial effort to impose European elements on other cultures, their journeys yielded spiritual insights which make it possible to overcome prejudices and genuinely open eyes of understanding of other cultures. Their memory could be a key element of a progress in gradually rooting Gospel values within the wisdom traditions of local cultures.

Introduction

What is the exact meaning of "seeing in order to believe it" especially when it relates to dealing with cultures and languages which are completely different from one's own? Special attention must be paid to the multi-faceted aspect of memory on what has been experienced. How can the memory of a specific historic event lead to a better understanding of a complex socio-political reality or, on the contrary, may significantly distort historical facts? Is there any chance to direct the attention to historic facts which tend to be overlooked or to be dismissed?

Given the enormous culture shock experience of stepping into a whole new world it may be inevitable to anticipate that no matter how amazing new insights may appear for those who face them on the spot, there is the risk of remaining purely on the surface of things and most importantly remaining a stranger among strangers. In the worst-case scenario of today's mass tourism which provokes a growing anger among local populations who feel overwhelmed by a kind of barbarian invasion, it remains often an open question how can this type of aggression and the meaningless consumption of various travel packages ever find a more meaningful way to discover and travel that would lead to a respectful encounter with people from other countries.

引言

“眼见为实”在与异文化和语言打交道时的确切含义是什么？——必须关注对已经历事件记忆的多面性：特定历史事件的记忆如何促进对复杂社会政治现实的理解，或反之严重歪曲史实？是否有机会关注那些常被忽视或否定的史实？

面对踏入全新世界的巨大文化冲击，无论新见解多么惊人，风险在于仅停留于表象，且最重要的是始终作为陌生人中的异乡人。当今大众旅游的最坏情形引发当地居民日益愤怒，他们感到被某种野蛮入侵淹没。这种侵略性与无意义的旅行套餐消费能否找到更具意义、导向跨国尊重的旅行方式，仍是未解之谜。

我们反思马可·波罗的持久影响：他从威尼斯启程——这座位于亚得里亚海北端的城市曾是欧洲最富庶强大的中心，也是中世纪与阿拉伯贸易的主要枢纽，并推动了中世纪欧洲其余地区的经济发展与整合。

文化相遇如何催生不仅惠及小众、更对社会产生积极影响的社会创新？马可·波罗的遗产无疑是一种有意义的探索方式。但宗教在此过程中的角色何在？它是否导致对现实的偏见认知？本研究具体考察方济会和道明会的标志性时刻，二者分别受亚西西的方济各(Francis of Assisi)和多明我·德·古斯曼(Dominic de Guzman)启发。每个修会都有定义其身份的典型经历。对方济会而言，这些时刻与“眼见为实”的洞见相关。

What is the root of this type of “missionary travelling”? Instead of a misguided colonial effort to impose European elements on other cultures, their journeys yielded spiritual insights which make it possible to overcome prejudices and genuinely open eyes of understanding of other cultures. Their memory could be a key element of a progress in gradually rooting Gospel values within the wisdom traditions of local cultures.

这种“传教旅行”的根源何在？与其说是将欧洲元素强加于他文化的殖民行为，不如说他们的旅程创造了克服偏见、真正理解他文化的灵性条件。他们的记忆或是逐步将福音价值植根本地文化智慧传统的关键。

As we reflect on the memory of the lasting impact of the traveller Marco Polo who embarked from Venice, situated at the north end of the Adriatic Sea, which used to be the richest and most powerful centre of Europe. Venice was also the major centre of trade with the Arabs during the Middle Ages. It also served as the point of origin for the economic development and integration of the rest of Europe during the Middle Ages.

How can a cultural encounter lead to social innovation which not only benefits restricted circles but will have a positive impact on the larger society? The legacy of Marco Polo is certainly credited as a meaningful way of discovery. But what is the role of religion in this process: does it lead to a biased perception of reality? More specifically the present study looks at the memory of an iconic moment for a number of religious groups, Franciscans and Dominicans, taking their inspiration from Francis of Assisi along with Dominic de Guzman. Each order has some iconic experiences which define its identity. In the case of the Franciscan religious family these iconic moments are related to the insight that you have to see it to believe it.

例如，方济各在格雷乔镇 (Greccio) 引入了马槽中婴孩耶稣的敬礼：不同于将道成肉身的深奥神学问题局限于神职人员、修女和学者的思辨，他通过重现若瑟、玛利亚和婴孩耶稣的马槽场景，并加入牛驴等元素，与所有人分享耶稣幼年的重要片段。这种传遍全球的敬礼远非沉溺于感性情绪，而是植根于与赤裸基督的个人相遇。约800年前，方济各在意大利阿尔维纳山祈祷时，以极其个人的方式遇见了受难与复活的主。

认识论研究需确保此类记忆不被贬为无意义的神话，而应试图把握历史事件记忆的含义——这些事件不仅对亲历非凡现象的个人，也对所有分享并持续传承方济各赴穆斯林国家使命的基本信念产生深远影响。

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Along these lines Francis introduced for example in the town of Greccio the devotion to the baby Jesus in the manger: instead of leaving the complex and erudite matter of incarnation to theological speculation, involving mostly the brain power of the clergy, nuns and educated people Francis, by contrast, recreated the manger with Joseph, Mary and the baby Jesus adding a few items such as the ox and the donkey in order to share an important aspect of the life of Jesus as a child with everyone. Far from dwelling in just sentimental feelings the devotion which spread through the whole world was rooted in a personal encounter with the naked Christ. This was a decisive moment in the life some 800 years ago when Francis of Assisi encountered the Crucified and Risen Lord in a very personal way while praying on the Mount Alverna in Italy.

An epistemological study needs to make sure that such a type of memory cannot be dismissed as an ultimately meaningless myth but attempts to grasp the meaning of the memory of an historical event which had such a significant impact not only on the individual who experienced an extraordinary phenomenon but also on all those who shared and still share the basic convictions and mission of Francis of Assisi journeying to Moslem countries.

The strong drive to reach out to the destitute and poor as Francis' core mission is encapsulated in the phrase: "naked to follow the naked Christ", implies also the concern that understanding the book of wisdom, the Bible, and encountering Jesus Christ would not just be limited to restricted groups of clergy and educated people but could be shared with everyone including the illiterate. In fact, the art of letting everyone enjoy the literal beauty of the Bible is called "*Biblia Pauperum*". Hermeneutics for the poor and illiterate means that everyone who is able to see the paintings will understand the deeper meaning of the art work: through the clarity and

与《圣经》事实和解:

《圣经》之旅

这令人想起《圣经》中一个看似直白的场景（《若望福音》20:24-29）：耶稣受难后，十一使徒声称已「看见」复活的主，而当时不在场的门徒多默（Thomas）却要求实证：「我除非看见他手上的钉孔，用我的指头，探入钉孔；用我的手，探入他的肋膀，我决不信」（《若望福音》20:25）。此论点似乎完全合理：若无证据，何以相信如此难以置信之事？然而，当主再次来到门徒（包括多默）中间，展示刺痕作为确凿证据时，耶稣提醒他那些未见却仍信之人。

记忆的转化焦点

因此，记忆的目的可理解为持续提醒所有分享方济各价值观者：受此经历启发，回应「真实之事」——即与受难主的真实相遇。这不仅限于方济各，更涵盖所有以心理解「被钉十字架之戏剧」者。与受难主的亲密关系似乎是教会灵性复兴的核心，尤其通过方济会和道明会运动——二者以远赴异国（包括中国元朝相对开放的蒙古统治时期1279-1368）的传教为特征。然而，这种跨越多文化、直入中华腹地的划时代旅程，从阿尔维纳山标志性相遇的视角看，似乎植根于以最大肉体痛苦为特征的相遇。这份痛苦中也蕴藏着坚韧所需的巨大力量，让我们能在看似无法逾越的困难与失败中，于未知的水域和境遇里继续前行。我们常常忽视那些可能持续数年、却无成功保证的旅程所伴随的艰辛与险阻。

beauty of art being naturally brought to understand not only a historical fact but engage into the deeper mystical journey. Therefore, the memory of the historic encounter of St. Francis Assisi with the Crucified Lord which happened 800 years ago on 14 September 1224 when the “poor fool of the Lord”, accompanied by a fellow Franciscan brother, retired into a favoured hidden corner on mount Alverna carried a crucial meaning. It captured the union with Jesus Christ which was so overwhelming that St. Francis experienced the wounds of the Crucified on his own body.

Coming to terms with Biblical facts:
the Biblical journey

The matter recalls indeed a scene in the Bible which seems straightforward (John 20: 24-29): while the eleven apostles claim after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ that they have “seen” him as the supposedly Risen Lord one disciple named Thomas who was not present when it occurred challenges his fellow companions with the following argument asking for empirical evidence: “If I do not see the scar from the nails at his hands and if I do not put my finger in the scar of his nails and do not put my hand within his side I will not believe.”(John 20: 25). The argument seems entirely plausible: why believe in such an unbelievable fact without having any proof of evidence? However, when the Lord comes back to the disciples, including Thomas, when Jesus shows him the pierced wounds as compelling evidence, Thomas reminds us of all those who are not given this sight but still believe.

十字架在亚洲文化 中的谜题

13世纪欧洲灵性运动中，欧亚文化交融的原型源于与耶稣基督人性存在的深刻相遇——从其降生至十字架。在华传教史上，人们一直在质疑，坚持使用十字架符号是否会是一种不恰当的殖民强加符号，因为这种符号对亚洲文化来说是陌生的。此论点有其价值：相比之下，耶稣会在亚洲的传教策略有时被视为刻意淡化十字架相关的残酷面向。诚然，始终存在停留于十字架表象的风险，这在亚洲文化中显得不合时宜甚至令人反感。对阿尔维纳山深刻相遇记忆的正确聚焦与培育，服务于深层的认识论目的：即重新发现事件真谛，作为未来行动的灵感，而不是将异质经验强加于他文化，铭记方济各的五伤圣痕可能标志着与主全面合一过程的成熟。此深刻合一拥抱与自身使命迥异之使命的关键焦点。由此个人相遇可生长出克服天然自私驱动、向真实理解与他者（尤其是赤贫与最需帮助者）真诚相遇开放的能力。因此，记忆的重要组分指向相遇的意义——与受苦和贫困者团结相关。此相遇或是解释早期传教士深入中国（包括抵达北京并建立基督教初步基础）的另一主因。

The memory of iconic events in the life of the founder of the Franciscan order, St. Francis of Assisi, such as contemplating Jesus in the town of Greccio as a child in a manger surrounded by an ox and donkey, as well as at the end of his life the mystical encounter with the Crucified Lord on Mount Alverna keeps providing an inspiring example of how a missionary needs to "see" within a contemplative perspective in order to truly believe.

方济会创始人圣方济各生平标志事件的记忆——如在格雷乔镇默观马槽中由牛驴环绕的婴孩耶稣，以及其生命末期在阿尔维纳山与受难主的神秘相遇——持续启发传教士为何需在默观视角中「看见」方能真信。

The transforming focus of a memory

The purpose of the memory can thus be understood as an ongoing reminder to all who share the values of Francis of Assisi to be inspired by this experience and respond to the appeal of "the real thing", i.e., the genuine encounter with the Crucified Lord, which is not limited to Francis but all who with their mind and heart understand the "drama" of getting crucified in such a tangible way. This intimacy with the Crucified Lord seems to be at the core of the spiritual renewal in the church namely through the Franciscan and Dominican movements, which were characterized with a significant missionary outreach to far away countries including China during the relatively open era of the Mongolian interlude of the Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368). However, this epochal outreach cutting across so many cultures and right into the heart of China, from the perspective of the iconic encounter at Mount Alverna seems to be grounded and empowered by the encounter characterized by a maximum of physical pain and suffering. Within this pain lies also the great resource for resilience as a requirement to forge ahead in uncharted waters and contexts despite apparently unsurmountable difficulties and failures. We may often overlook just the discomfort and dangers of travels spanning over several years without the guarantee to reach the desired goals.

直入中华腹地

这种对受难和复活的主的全面拥抱在几代传教士中具有标志性的地位，他们受到彻底追随赤裸主的理想的启发，通过一种不回避这种拥抱的文化交流方式，开始了无数次的接触。

分享主五伤经历的方济各冒险，在山西省找到了最深刻的中国根基之一——该省被史学家视为「中华文化的心脏与灯塔」。不同于其他灵性传统，方济各分享基督教信仰的传统不太聚焦于特定信条的教义理解或《圣经》的透彻知识，而更强调全然奉献于他者的生活榜样，正如圣方济各对受难与复活之主充满炽爱。此炽爱无疑在方济会士初入全新世界时的相遇中产生强烈共鸣。

有时，考虑到主流观点将利玛窦及其追随者的耶稣会冒险列为优先事项，方济会对主的拥抱在中国取得的巨大进展可能并没有得到应有的关注。当然，得出这样的结论可能过于简单，即耶稣会士在传教事业中忽视了十字架的智慧，试图适应一种看似更具文化底蕴的世界观，这种世界观融入更多的是光而不是血。

The enigma of the cross within Asian cultures

An archetypal source of cultural exchange between Europe and other cultures within the spiritual movements of 13th century Europe is found in the intense encounter with Jesus Christ in his human existence from his birth to the cross. In the history of missions to China it has been questioned whether or not an insistence on the symbol of the cross would have been another inappropriate colonial imposition of symbols which would be foreign to Asian cultures. The argument has a valuable point as, by contrast, the tradition of say the Jesuit mission strategy in Asia is sometimes perceived as deliberately downplaying the cruel aspects linked to the cross. Indeed, it may be conceded that there is always a risk of remaining at some superficial aspects of the representation of the cross which seems inadequate or even repulsive in Asian cultures. The proper focus and cultivation of the memory of the profound encounter at Mountain Alverna serves a profound epistemological purpose: namely to rediscover the true meaning of an event as inspiration for action for the future. Far from imposing an alien experience on other cultures, remembering Francis' stigmatisation may indicate the maturation of a process of comprehensive union with the Lord. This profound union is the crucial focal point for embracing missions that are completely different from one's own mission. Out of this personal encounter may grow the ability to overcome a natural selfish drive and becoming open to genuine understanding and genuine encounter with others especially the destitute and most in need of help. An important component of the memory thus points to the meaning of the encounter as related to solidarity with the suffering and destitute. This encounter may ultimately be another major component explaining why early missionaries made significant inroads into China including reaching the capital Beijing and establishing a first groundwork of Christianity.

事实上，我们或许应当提醒自己：与受难基督的共融，是在《神操》（Spiritual Exercises）框架内发生的——这套由圣依纳爵·罗耀拉（St. Ignatius Loyola）设计的避静操练中，所谓关键的「第三周」正是依纳爵灵修的核心。在此类‘神操’的动态过程中，被称为「第一周」的阶段让避静者有机会觉察自身的罪孽；若达成此目标，便进入核心的「第二周」以追随耶稣基督。然而，追随基督的终极考验将在「第三周」呈现——此时避静者已准备好选择谦卑、甚至甘愿在受难基督团契中承受排斥的生活。基于此视角，耶稣会灵修传统进一步发展了圣方济各在拉维纳山的基础性体验。每一位投身传播福音使命的人，都可能面临这样的挑战：是否愿意跨越门槛，成为‘穷人的圣经’般的圣像——即面向贫苦与被弃者传递上帝真言的载体。

Getting right into the heart of China

This holistic embrace of the Crucified and Risen Lord has its iconic place in generations of missionaries who, inspired by the ideal of radically following the naked Lord, have embarked in many encounters informed by a way of cultural exchange which does not shy away from that embrace.

The Franciscan adventure of sharing the experience of the five wounds of the Lord found one of its most impressive Chinese roots in Shanxi province which is considered by historians as the "heart and beacon of Chinese culture". Contrary to other spiritual traditions the Franciscan tradition of sharing the Christian faith does not so much focus on dogmatic understanding of particular articles of faith and thorough knowledge of Holy Scriptures but insists much on the living example of a life totally devoted to the other in the same way that St. Francis was so passionate in love with the Crucified and Risen Lord. This passionate love certainly strongly resonated in these first encounters of Franciscans finding themselves within a totally "new" world.

It may look sometimes that the great inroads of the Franciscan embrace of the Lord in China has perhaps not been given all the attention it truly deserves given the prevailing view which has prioritized the Jesuit adventure with Matteo Ricci and his followers. It may of course be simplistic to conclude that the Jesuits in their missionary enterprise have neglected the wisdom of the cross in an attempt to accommodate to a seemingly more enculturated approach to the world which is more infused by light rather than blood.

结论

本文为从传教士视角解码马可·波罗格言「眼见为实」提供了若干要素。13世纪道明会与方济会修士的灵性旅程，最深根源始于13世纪教会的深刻改革。方济会创始人圣方济各生平标志事件的记忆——如在格雷乔镇默观马槽中由牛驴环绕的婴孩耶稣，以及其生命末期在阿尔维纳山与受难主的神秘相遇——持续启发传教士为何需在默观视角中「看见」方能真信。跨文化相遇因而植根于与受难复活之主的重新相遇。只要与新文化的相遇基于此根基，便以相互倾听与尊重的交流为本。远非强加欧洲异质文化与宗教模式，约800年前事件的记忆旨在重新联结划时代的经验，使人能克服偏见，真正睁眼理解他文化，以逐步细致、带着理解发现另一文化。此改革运动的终极成就，无疑旨在将福音价值植根于本地智慧传统之中。

In fact, it may be proper to remind ourselves that the communion with the Crucified Lord occurs in the framework of the *Spiritual Exercises* which constitute the core of Ignatian spirituality in the so called crucial “third week” of retreat as designed by St. Ignatius Loyola. Within the dynamic of such a “Spiritual Exercise” the so called first week offers the retreatant a chance of becoming aware of his or her sins and, if this is accomplished, it moves into the second core week in order to follow Jesus Christ: however, the ultimate test of following Christ will then be faced in the third week when the retreatant is ready to have a preference for a life in humility and sometimes rejection in the fellowship of the Crucified Lord. Within this perspective the Jesuit spiritual tradition further develops the foundational experience of Francis at Mount Alverna. For each one who embarks on the mission of sharing the Gospel may face the challenge whether or not he or she is willing to cross the threshold towards becoming an icon, “*a Biblia Pauperum*”: a genuine word of God for the poor and outcast.

Conclusion

The essay provides a few elements to decode the adage of Marco Polo “You have to see it to believe it” from a missionary perspective. The spiritual journey of the Dominican and Franciscan friars of the 13th century started in its deepest roots with a profound reform within the church of the 13th century. The memory of iconic events in the life of the founder of the Franciscan order, St. Francis Assisi, such as contemplating Jesus in the town of Greccio as a child in a manger surrounded by an ox and donkey, as well as at the end of his life the mystical encounter with the Crucified Lord in on Mount Alverna keeps providing an inspiring example of how a missionary needs to “see” within a contemplative perspective in order to truly believe. The inter-cultural encounter is thus grounded in a

renewed encounter with the Crucified and Risen Lord. As far as the dialogue with new cultures is grounded on this encounter it is based on a way to communicate with each other which is based on mutual listening and respect. Far thus from imposing alien European cultural and religious patterns the memory of an event which happened some 800 years ago aims to reconnect to an epoch making experience which makes it possible to overcome prejudices and genuinely open eyes of understanding to other cultures in view of a gradual nuanced and informed discovery of another culture. The ultimate achievement of the reform movement was certainly directed to ground Gospel values within local wisdom traditions.