I. China pt 1 – The Arrival of Western Christianity in 16th c. through the 19th c.

A. Western missionary efforts in 16th c. to China were sponsored by Portugal and Spain

1. Francis Xavier, Jesuit missionary to Japan, tried to reach China but was thwarted by Don Alvaro da Gama (son of Vasco da Gama), a Portuguese (Moffett 105).

2. Benefits and obstacles to a missionary effort to China:
   a) China didn’t have an established religion, making it a ripe field since the people embraced various ethical doctrines and simple polytheism (M 105).
   b) Nationalistic backlash in aftermath of the Mongolian conquests of China. The resulting Ming dynasty was feudalistic and discouraged foreign intrusion (M 106).
   c) Bureaucratic feudal structure in contrast to Europe’s military feudal structure. (Made access to preach gospel more complicated since it needed to navigate the various levels of social hierarchy). (Society based on tribal lords’ power and their fiefdoms)

3. 30 years after death of Xavier, Jesuits entered China (1583) preceded by:
   a) Portuguese traders settled colonial enclave (Macao) c. 1557 near Guangzhou (Canton), the imperial center for foreign trade (M106).
   b) Ruggieri, Valignano, and Matteo Ricci – built basis for Catholic missions in China.
   c) Early missionary efforts of Christianity into China:
      (1) Nestorianism from Persia during Tang dynasty of 7th c. (M106).
      (2) Roman Catholic mission to 13th c. Mongol dynasty in China.
      (3) 16th c. missionary efforts during Ming dynasty of the Jesuits realized all traces of earlier missions disappeared (M107).
4. Conclusions of Valignano’s earlier missionary efforts to India that shaped his ministry to China:

   a) He viewed Christianity’s connection to trade as a handicap to evangelism, so he tried to foster independency of the mission from Portuguese state, tried to avoid colonial interference in church affairs.

   b) He prevented his missionaries from using techniques of the Inquisition’s pursuit of heresy which had been introduced to India in 1560.

   c) He emphasized cultural accommodation (adaptation) to Chinese culture.

B. Portuguese were given control of Macao by Chinese govt. in exchange for their promise to restrain pirates on the China Sea. Portuguese traded silver and silk between Japan and China.

C. By 1565, 5000 Chinese Christians (less than 8 years after settling Macao). However, missionaries spent more time focusing on 900 Portuguese in Macao and insisted Chinese converts adopt western dress and take European names (M107).

   1. Valignano brought Ruggiero to reverse the Jesuit missionary approach to accommodate the Chinese, beginning with need to learn Chinese language.

   2. Because of Ruggiero’s respect for Chinese customs, he was allowed to exemption from the rule that prevented nonChinese from staying overnight in Guangzhou (Canton).

   3. Ruggiero gained favor with a Chinese general giving him a watch (M108).

D. The ministry of Matteo Ricci (1583-1610):

   1. In 1583, the Chinese viceroy finally gave permission for Ruggiero and Ricci to live permanently on Chinese soil in the county seat and offered to build them a chapel.

   2. Ricci & Ruggiero decided to wait to baptize Chinese converts.

   3. Ricci’s 2 principles of ministry:

      a) To be open about their faith, but not to emphasize its missionary purpose.

      b) To win attention of Chinese by demonstrating interest in knowledge (such as science), so they taught math & astronomy to Chinese and made a map of the world for them (M108). This opened door to upper class Chinese.
4. First baptismal candidates were a dying poor Chinese man and two men baptized by insensitive priest Father Cabral, who was transferred to China due to his insensitivity in Japan (M109).

5. First Chinese lay brothers admitted to Jesuits by Ricci, who began moving north toward Beijing, the imperial seat after being driven from his earlier village (M109). His second church was built in Chinese architectural style to emphasize his view that Christianity wasn’t bound to western culture.

6. In 1595, Ricci was allowed to cross provincial border. Ricci decided the garb of a Buddhist robe adopted by Ruggiero handicapped his ministry since Buddhist monks were despised by elite who viewed them as superstitious and uneducated, so he switched to clothing of Confucian scholar. M110.

7. Ricci allowed to move mission to the southern capital of Nanjing in 1603 because of his reputation in intellectual circles.

8. Paul Hsu, Chinese convert, was one of 3 pillars of the Chinese church responsible for advance of missionary efforts. 3 men were upperclass converts who communicated gospel using methods designed to accommodate to Confucian principles.

9. Hsu’s way of explaining Christianity:
   a) Service of Shangdi (God) is the fundamental principle.
   b) Other issues of importance: protection of the body, salvation of soul, accomplishments – loyalty, filial piety, compassion, and love; reformation of errors & practice of virtue are initial steps, repentance & purification of sin are prerequisites to personal improvement (M111).
   c) Hsu excelled academically and moved to highest intellectual rank, was first to translate European books into Chinese on math, astronomy etc. (M112)
   d) Chinese understood religious traditions as philosophical and practice resources (Chidester 435).

10. Leon Li, 2nd pillar – demonstrates weakness of accommodation:
   a) Li was a Buddhist, not really interested in Christianity at first, but drawn by Ricci’s maps. He was a polygamist and didn’t want to give up his wives. He was baptized just before Ricci’s death and built the first church in Nanjing (M112).
b) Li – found earlier copy of an old inscription documenting earlier presence of Christianity in China before the Portuguese and Marco Polo.

11. Michael Yang was a Buddhist scholar drawn to Christianity through a discussion about truth, but found the doctrine of the incarnation of an infinite God in a human Christ to be a problem.

12. Ricci’s 3 doctrinal emphases according to Chidester (Moffett 113-4):

a) Tianzhu (Master of Heaven) was same as Shangdi – the Sovereign on High, a Confucian term indicating one who was to be served and respected by humans (Chidester 435). (Chinese understood heavenly sovereign as an impersonal power representing order and vitality of universe (Chid 436), but Ricci said he was also the personal unique creator God (Master of Heaven).

b) Ricci didn't call attention to Yesu, the man who was executed, which was one of the objections of Chinese scholars. Instead, he explained Christ’s incarnation using Confucian principles. He said order of the world became disrupted by self-interest, so the Master of Heaven emitted a thought of compassion and came in person to save the world to awaken beings. This terminology recalled the compassion of the Buddha (the Enlightened One) who came in person (436).

c) Problem w/ Ricci’s doctrine of heaven and hell – since Buddhists, Taoists, and Confucianists believed that conduct only seen as moral if it was done not from self-interest, making the idea of an hell irrelevant. (437-8).

For Further Reading:

