



# Sinology Journal of University Of Würzburg

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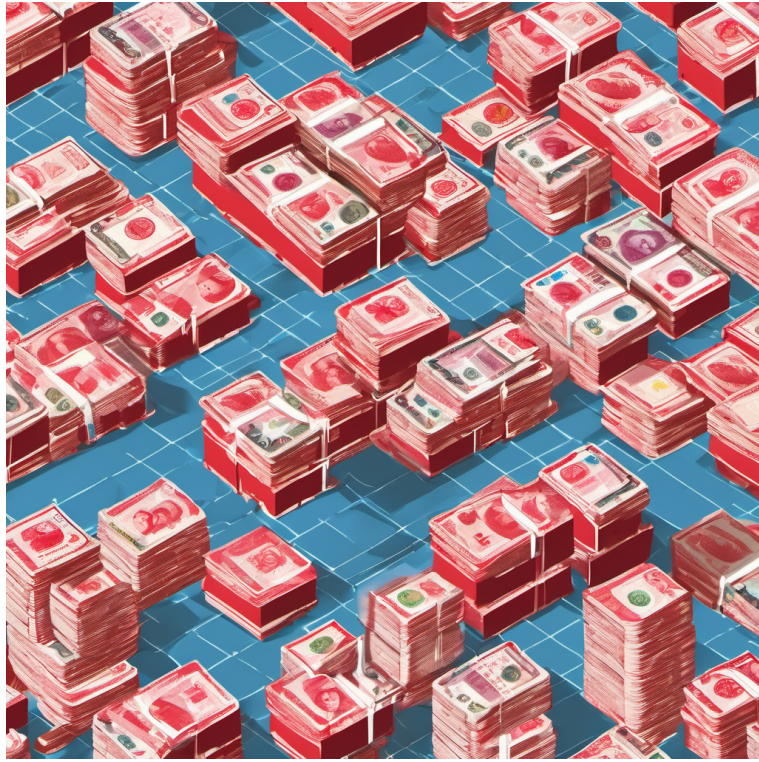
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## Message from the Editor

This is the first issue of Sinology Journal of University of Würzburg. First, I want to express my gratitude to all the editors who worked on this issue, York Frerks, Ariane Kolden, Aleksandra Tuchkova, and Zixian Li, for their hard work and scrupulous editing in every round. Second, I am so grateful to our professors in the Chinese Studies department for all the help and support. Finally, I am grateful to all the authors for their trust in our journal and all the hard work and cooperation with our editors.

It has been a long road, and I am very proud that we realized our ideas regarding this issue, which contains articles on Chinese Economics, Art, and Philosophy. Hopefully this initiative will be just the beginning of a good tradition in our students' society in Würzburg and will see many more articles from all over the world.



# "China and its Role in post-COVID-19 World Governance by the Internationalization of the Yuan and the Global Development Initiative "

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**ABSTRACT:** This article examines the evolving role of China in global governance post-COVID-19, highlighting its strategic moves towards a more significant international presence. Central to this discussion is the internationalization of the yuan and the advancement of the Global Development Initiative. These efforts symbolize China's aspirations for a multipolar world and its commitment to shaping a fairer global order. The analysis offers insights into China's diplomatic and economic strategies that look to reshape international relations and financial systems in the wake of the pandemic.

**KEYWORDS:** China, Global Governance, Internationalization of the Yuan, South-South Cooperation, Global Development Initiative, Global Finance, International Cooperation.

### **Introduction**

China's intensifying role in global governance has been significantly highlighted following the COVID-19 outbreak. When analyzing China's responses to the pandemic and its resulting impact on global governance, it becomes essential to place these developments in a solid theoretical framework. The ensuing discussion clarifies China's evolving role and underscores the crucial importance of theoretical foundations for understanding the complexities of its post-COVID-19 global governance strategies.

This can be proved by its growing influence on international institutions, driving the internationalization of its currency and redefining South-South cooperation. Despite facing criticism and obstacles, China's engagement in global governance has increased significantly, bringing advantages and conflicts to the worldwide order. This article aims to examine how China is strengthening its global influence through initiatives such as the internationalization of the yuan and the Global Development Initiative, analyzing the framework of international governance theory.

***Theoretical framework***

This section of the article will examine the theoretical framework that fits within the various perspectives on global governance and how it applies to the case of China. Liberal Institutionalism asserts that global governance is essential to tackling collective action problems and encouraging collaboration among nations. It highlights the importance of international norms and institutions in promoting cooperation and confronting global problems. Conversely, constructivism argues that global governance is necessary to set up and strengthen standard norms, values, and identities among nations. It highlights how social interactions, ideas, and norms influence state behavior and encourage cooperation.

As Keohane and Martin (1995) point out, institutions are not the only possible coordination mechanism. However, in complex situations involving multiple states, international institutions can intervene to provide "constructed focal points" that highlight cooperative outcomes. This approach highlights the ability of institutions to act as key facilitators in achieving collaborative outcomes in complex international contexts. This perspective supports the idea that, while multiple forms of coordination exist, institutions play a crucial role in supplying reference points that foster outstanding cooperative outcomes.

Although recognizing the importance of global governance, realism interprets it as a reflection of power relations between nations, where states pursue their interests and support international stability through their participation in global governance. We analyzed the definition of transnationalism, emphasizing growing interconnection and interdependence among states and non-state actors and considering global governance vital to addressing transnational challenges.

Wang and Rosenau (2009) define global governance as "the complex of institutions and processes that regulate how things happen in the world," highlighting the dynamic and constantly evolving nature of global governance (Wang and Rosenau 2009, 5). Their explanation that global governance "refers to something less permanently established, more fluid, something that is continually in the process of construction and reconstruction" (Wang and Rosenau 2009, 6) emphasizes the decentralized view of global governance,

which involves the active participation of multiple actors, both states and non-state organizations, in decision-making and policy implementation.

Wang and Rosenau also refer to the four principles of global governance reform in the context of the Chinese global governance vision of "Harmonious World" as an Alternative Norm (Wang and Rosenau 2009, 17). These principles are:

First, it advocates equal participation in international organizations to counter the dominance of Western nations. This reflects China's commitment to a more inclusive and representative international system by underscoring its effort to reshape global dynamics towards a more fair and diverse approach.

Second, it aims to reduce the North-South economic gap by promoting shared development and fair distribution of wealth through economic cooperation. This demonstrates China's clear commitment to global equity and economic collaboration to achieve more fair development globally.

Third, it supports cultural diversity and tolerance, allowing each nation to choose its development path free from a single ideology or cultural model. This principle resonates with China's insistence that each country forge its development destiny, free from ideological impositions or predefined cultural models.

Fourth, the principle suggests using cooperation and multilateral diplomacy to peacefully resolve conflicts, with the help of international mechanisms like the United Nations, for collective security and tackling transnational threats. It shows the Chinese spirit of addressing global challenges through multilateral mechanisms.

China's adoption of these principles shows its efforts toward global governance reform and creating a fair and peaceful world.

On the other hand, China's commitment to global governance reform and the pursuit of a fair and peaceful world is clear through its embrace of key principles, as outlined by Ly (2020). Ly explores diverse definitions of global governance, presenting it as a model for the collective management of international issues. According to Ly, global governance involves formal and informal processes that guide and regulate group activities at the international level. Furthermore, it addresses contradictions within the global system, emphasizing the engagement of all actors in decisive action to solve common problems. This perspective

underscores a shift toward a hierarchical, inter-state, and intergovernmental structure, challenging the traditional dominance of nations and structured international organizations in certain spheres (Ly, 2020). China's endorsement of such principles aligns with its broader efforts to contribute to the evolving global governance landscape.

Global governance could be understood as the collaboration between states, international organizations, and non-state actors that work together to manage global problems and issues. It proves that global rules, norms, and institutions govern the interactions between these actors. Global governance covers international security, trade, finance, development, and environmental concerns. It looks to foster collaboration, synchronization, and joint decision-making to address global problems and achieve shared goals.

### ***China and Global Governance***

The concept of "Global Governance" has gained importance in the Chinese academic environment after it appeared in a report by "Wang Yizhou in a 1995 conference commemorating the 50th anniversary of the UN held at La Trobe University in Melbourne, Australia. Wang Yizhou has reported an impression that the UN was going to be the center of global governance in areas ranging from peacekeeping and peacebuilding to preventive diplomacy." (Wang & Rosenau, 2009, 11).

Chinese interpretations of global governance differ significantly from Western ones. Chinese analysts believe global governance is crucial in solving global issues and recognize the importance of various actors, including governments, NGOs, multinational corporations, and social movements.

However, there is also a critical perspective within China that questions global governance. These analysts argue that sovereign states stay the predominant actors in global politics and view the idea of a "global village" skeptically. They reject that global governance is inherently democratic and view it as neo-liberalism masked as idealism. They reject the imposition of Western governance models in the Global South, as they are perceived as maintaining Western and European superiority. Instead, they advocate independent internal development.



China supports a fair and diverse global system that considers the viewpoints and concerns of underdeveloped nations, stressing the need to respect diverse governance models and avoid a uniform approach. China also believes that global governance reform is necessary to reflect new global trends and empower developing nations with more excellent representation. It has demanded a fair global economic governance system that caters to the interests and concerns of developing nations. This perspective coincides with Wang and Rosenau's (2009, 6) definition of global governance as a system in constant construction and reconstruction that involves the active participation of various actors.

#### China's economic impact and participation in Global Organizations

According to Goh (2019), "China's economic influence on global governance is reshaping the world as we know it." Its emergence as a critical trade center changes global trade regulations, while its ecological impact and energy use affect resource costs and the environment. Furthermore, the Chinese government defends national interests and influences global governance through positions on human rights and climate change.

Under Deng Xiaoping's leadership, China began using international organizations for domestic reforms. China became a member of crucial economic institutions and obtained WTO accession through negotiations. China's open policy improved cultural exchanges and collaborations with other nations on diverse issues, leading to progressive regulatory changes.

Hameiri and Jones (2018) mentioned, "China's participation in global organizations has increased significantly as its economy and integration into the international system strengthened." Chinese analysts suggest that as China's influence increases, its global position needs to be reconsidered since a low-key approach is no longer practical. China's global inclusion is predicted to cause alterations.

Additionally, Goh (2019) mentions, "The yuan internationalization strategy is more than just an economic strategy; it represents a radical change in the norms and practices of global financial governance." This is how China looks to strengthen its economic autonomy by challenging the dollar's hegemony and possibly generating a new, more multipolar financial system in the medium and long term.

On the other hand, the Global Development Initiative (GDI) that China is promoting reflects an approach towards diplomacy focused on collective development and oriented towards the Global South. By focusing on high-impact projects and building cooperation networks for poverty reduction, China is presenting an alternative to traditional Western cooperation models. By focusing on high-impact projects and building cooperation networks for poverty reduction, China is presenting an alternative to traditional Western cooperation models. By emphasizing equality, mutual respect, and non-interference in internal affairs, China looks to improve relations with developing countries by redefining the norms of international cooperation.

The approaches China is taking to bring about an alternative in global governance and economic development raise essential questions about the future of the international order as we know it. The strategies suggest a change in global power dynamics led by the West for more than 200 years and suggest a more distributive and fair governance model. However, Western concerns about China's global ambitions and these policies' sustainability, efficiency, and goals generate much debate and international analysis.

China is looking to transform the world order led by the United States. The Chinese government has implemented several strategies to achieve this goal, marking a change in global governance structures and processes. These strategies gained much more strength after the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the internationalization of the yuan, strengthening of the Belt and Road Initiative, Vaccine Diplomacy, the Global Development Initiative, reforms to the WTO, etc. Each of these strategies would entail extensive analysis and debate; however, in the case of this essay, two of these strategies will be briefly reviewed, which, one can see, are the most current and innovative.

### ***Internationalization of the Yuan***

China aims to enhance its global economic standing and sway by promoting the yuan's internationalization. This process seeks to diminish reliance on the US dollar and reinforce China's influence in global finance. Internationalizing the yuan can boost China's currency usage in global trade and enhance its presence in the international financial markets.

According to Goh (2019), initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) could threaten the US dollar's supremacy in the global trade and finance industries, combining the yuan's internationalization. Also, the yuan's addition to the IMF's currency basket in 2016 was a crucial move toward its global expansion, merging it as a globally recognized reserve currency.

Internationalizing the yuan may help China in multiple ways. China can increase financial autonomy and resilience to external shocks by improving global acceptance of the yuan and reducing dependence on the US dollar. Also, a universally recognized yuan would decrease transaction expenses for Chinese enterprises involved in global commerce by cutting the need for currency conversion. Furthermore, a widely recognized yuan might aid Chinese firms in their foreign investments, boost demand for Chinese products and services globally, and boost China's political influence globally. By positioning it as a reserve currency alongside the dollar, euro, and yen, China is predominant in creating worldwide financial regulations and norms.

In addition, Goh (2019) points out that the internationalization of the yuan is one of China's priorities in its economic and financial strategy. China encourages the use of the yuan in global trade and has currency swap deals with other nations for easier business transactions. Such is the case of bilateral trade between Russia and China, which has seen the yuan surpass the dollar as a commercial transaction currency in recent years.

On the other hand, the BRICS founded the "New Development Bank" (NDB) to replace the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and other multilateral banks by granting loans to its members. NDB promotes the use of the local currencies of each member country in its loans. In an interview published on the website [Geopoliticaconomy.com](https://www.geopoliticaconomy.com) (2023), the new president of the NDB, former president Dilma Rousseff, showed that the primary strategy of the NDB is to supply loans up to 30 % in local currencies from country members. With this initiative, the NDB is combining its strategy to de-dollarize the economy of the BRICs group, promote the use of local currencies, and make the yuan one of the strongest currencies.

### ***Global Development Initiative***

In an article published in the magazine "The Diplomat" (2022), reference is made to the fact that the first time the Global Development Initiative (GDI) was mentioned was during a high-level dialogue when Chinese President Xi Jinping, described it as a new milestone for Global Human Development. This initiative comes with incredibly significant financing, such as an added contribution of \$42 billion to the Assistance Fund for South-South Cooperation, which was initially capitalized with \$3.1 billion. Moreover, there are intentions to change the fund's name to the "Global Development and South-South Cooperation Fund." Likewise, China is committed to supplying a platform for sharing experiences and knowledge on international development issues. This initiative reflects China's commitment to global cooperation and sustainable development, which are crucial aspects of the GDI framework (Akeredolu 2022, 1).

The GDI involves various actors, such as governments, global entities, businesses, and citizens, to collectively address global calamities, improve human well-being, and encourage enduring financial growth. The initiative targets critical areas such as poverty reduction, education, health, infrastructure, environment, gender equality, energy access, and technological innovation. These initiatives aim to address global issues completely and support fair and sustainable advancement worldwide. This cooperation program aligns with the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It devotes special attention to supporting countries in the Global South in achieving the goals set out in the 2030 Development Agenda by strengthening South-South cooperation.

According to the "Progress Report on the Global Development Initiative 2023" published by the Center of International Knowledge on Development (CIKD), among the areas in which GDI is already working on alleviating and reducing poverty is through food security. For this purpose, funds have been distributed to promote South-South cooperation in crucial areas of agriculture by exchanging experiences, seminars, or training and implementing experimentation centers. Much impetus is given to trilateral cooperation between the Government of China, recipient governments, and United Nations Development Agencies.

A specific case of this triangular cooperation that is framed in the GDI can be observed in Ecuador, where the Ministry of Agriculture of China, in collaboration with the Chinese

Academy of Agricultural Sciences, supported by the United Nations World Food Program, is working with the Ministry of Agriculture of Ecuador and small Ecuadorian farmers in the implementation of the "rice – duck" pilot project. The cooperation consists of exchanging experiences on how China has implemented this agricultural project to produce organic rice and ducks. This is the first time this innovative project has been carried out in this South American country.

With a global reach, the GDI is much more ambitious than the BRI. China is the leading partner in completing global development promoted by developing countries for developing countries. Additionally, as the "Progress Report on the Global Development Initiative 2023" mentions:

"Since 2020, COVID-19 has eroded the achievements of global poverty reduction in the past decade. Embracing a people-centered philosophy and responding to people's concerns for the greater good of all, the GDI puts poverty reduction at the top of its priority areas of cooperation. It promotes a poverty-free world and common development through poverty reduction cooperation networks, knowledge sharing and exchanges, and "small but beautiful" livelihood projects" (CIDK, 2023, 15).

The goal is for these projects to have long-term sustainability with a high social impact in the receiving community or country. It is important to mention that all these projects must be previously agreed upon and proposed by the beneficiary country to be considered within the GDI.

### ***Conclusion***

As discussed in this essay, the COVID-19 pandemic has catalyzed a more active and influential role for China in global governance. China is strengthening its global presence, advancing accelerated by strengthening its currency and restructuring South-South collaboration. Despite criticisms and challenges, as mentioned in Goh's (2019) perspective, China's growing role in global governance has been enhanced by the COVID-19 crisis, posing risks and opportunities for the world.

However, the path to greater global inclusion has several obstacles and challenges. China must balance local and global responsibilities amidst limited influence, conflicting

stakeholders, and diverse viewpoints, especially in its relationship with Western democracies. Aligning global and domestic governance standards can aid China's modernization goals, but apprehensions about external sway and political uprising may impede advancements in delicate governance areas.

Despite these obstacles, China stays resolute in global governance, aiming to cement its position in shaping the world order. As seen here, it actively influences global norms instead of just conforming to them. China's global leadership and influence are increasingly visible. Observing and analyzing China's actions and policies will be crucial for understanding the future of global governance evolution.

The need for continued scrutiny and analysis of China's strategies in global governance, as highlighted at the end of this essay, is supported by the importance placed on the internationalization of the yuan and its effects on global financial governance and the balance of economic power. Goh (2019) specifically points out the relevance of the yuan internationalization strategy to the norms and practices of global financial governance, underscoring the importance of continued studies to understand its impact (Goh, 2019). Furthermore, reference to the Global Development Initiative (GDI) and its ongoing analysis reinforces the importance of evaluating China's strategies in the broader context of international cooperation and development aid, supplying a framework to understand China's approach to global cooperation better (Akeredolu, 2022; CIDK, 2023).

Scholars and policymakers must continue to check and analyze China's strategies in global governance. The impact of the internationalization of the yuan on global financial governance and the balance of economic power requires special attention. Furthermore, the GDI deserves continuous analysis and a better understanding of the context intended to be given to development through international cooperation with an emphasis on development aid.

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## On the Ideals of a "Saint" in Confucius' Era and Teachings

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**Abstract:** The term *sheng* 圣/聖 (sacred) in ancient China leading up to Confucius' era has greatly influenced Confucius' ideas on the ideals of a "saint." This concept evolved from a basic idea related to "sound" to a deeper concept connected to divine knowledge and benevolence. Drawing from its meaning, Confucius viewed saints as individuals with exceptional moral standards who benefited the common people. He considered saints rare and sacred figures, even beyond his own attainments. This paper traces the historical evolution of the concept of *sheng* 圣/聖 from its origins in ancient China to the era of Confucius and explores Confucius' perspective on *shengren* 圣人 (saint) and their significance.

**Keywords:** Confucius, saint, ancient China, virtues

This article explores the evolving understanding of the term *sheng* 圣 (sacred) from its origins in ancient China, leading up to the times of Confucius. Additionally, it explores Confucius' perspective on the concept of a *shengren* 圣人 (saint), unravelling the layers of meaning and moral significance associated with this kind of revered figure in Confucian early teachings.

### **Evolution of the Concept of sheng before Confucius**

Confucius (551 - 479 BC), an illustrious figure in ancient China, emerged as a philosopher and teacher within the Spring and Autumn Period (770-481 BC). This epoch, nestled within the broader literary expanse of the Pre-Qin era (spanning the time predating the inception of the Qin Dynasty in 221 BC), profoundly influenced Confucius' intellectual framework. His insights into sacredness and sainthood not only mirrored the philosophical spirit of his era but also played a vital role in shaping it.

In the realm of Pre-Qin philology, the character *sheng* for "sacred" is recognized to have two variants: 聖 and 圣, both pronounced as *sheng*. These variants share a similar meaning of "sacred" and were used interchangeably.

First, an in-depth examination of the first variant, *sheng* 聖, becomes essential to grasp the concept. Three distinct viewpoints converge to provide insights into the interpretation of this character, collectively offering a historical perspective on the evolution of its meaning.

Guo Moruo 郭沫若, an important Chinese historian and archaeologist, sought to grasp the original meaning of this first variation of *sheng* 聖 by interpreting its usage in the Shang Dynasty (1600 - 1046 BC). He proved that the character *sheng* 聖 in its most primitive form, as found in oracle bone inscriptions<sup>1</sup>, was initially composed in its earliest forms only of the words *er* 耳 (ear) and *kou* 口 (mouth). As his research progressed, he unveiled that during the Shang Dynasty, the words *ting* 听 (listen), *sheng* 声 (sound), and *sheng* 聖 (sacred) all consisted of the elements *er* 耳 and *kou* 口, respectively. (GUO 1982, 89)

This suggests that in its earliest stages, the words "listen," "sound," and "sacred" all followed a semantic structure that conveyed the idea that something is first heard by the ear and then spoken from the mouth. Thus, the character *sheng* 聖 represented the process of sound entering through the ear and coming out through the mouth.

Gu Jiegang 顾颉刚, a pioneer in ancient Chinese history and historiography, affirmed this interpretation and explained it as the "emotional response to hearing a sound." (GU 1979, 80-81) In this context, *sheng* 聖 would, therefore, represent the process of sound being heard through the ear and articulated through the mouth, conveying, by extension, the meaning of intelligence or cognition.

Further investigating its development, Li Xiaoding 李孝定, a well-known expert on oracle bone inscriptions, elucidates that over time, *sheng* 聖 expanded its connotations beyond mere intelligence in the realm of knowledge to emphasize the keenness of the sensory organ of hearing, particularly when one listens with devotion, attention, and pleasure. This emphasis led *sheng* 聖 to its extended meaning of *tong* 通, which expressed "connectedness," "going through," "communicating," or "comprehending." In this form, *sheng* 聖 represented the active act of listening with the intention of speaking, acquiring knowledge with the purpose of using it creatively, ultimately culminating in its most significant interpretation in ancient China: "to be enlightened." (LI 2010, 2100)

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<sup>1</sup> Inscriptions on animal bones or plastrons of turtles widely used during that period.

This interpretation aligns with the explanation of the character *sheng* 聖 as found in the latter Eastern Han Dynasty (25 - 220 AD) work *Shuowen jiezi* 说文解字, a classic Chinese dictionary and one of the earliest known comprehensive works on Chinese characters written by Xu Shen 许慎 (58 - 148 AD). A preeminent scholar of his time, Xu Shen, also defined *sheng* 聖 as *tong* 通. (XU 1978, 250) Following this line of thought, according to Li, *sheng* 聖 early on represented "acute auditory perception," then it evolved and took on the meaning of "connectedness." Therefore, beyond its primary meaning of "intelligence," the character also expanded a profound layer of significance, embodying the notion of being enlightened, a state of mind that arises after achieving the *tong* 通 realm of connection.

Building upon the insights from these interpretations, Xu Zhongshu 徐中舒, a prominent historian and paleographer, emphasizes that *sheng* 聖 was closely associated with the concept of *jingtong* 精通 and denoted a high level of proficiency in understanding that is attained only through the practical application of "sacred" knowledge. (XU 1989, 1287) In this context, the concept of "sacredness" embodied in the word *sheng* 聖 takes on its complete meaning since *tong* 通 also includes the meaning of "communication with the divine" as it relates to ancient religious practices. Japanese scholar Shirakawa Shizuka 白川静 suggests that *sheng* 聖 was closely linked to ancient sacrificial activities. (BAI 2014, 12) He interprets the *kou* 口 part of the character as a vessel used for sacrifices, following the line of reasoning that involves *tongshen* 通神 (connection/communication with the divine).

However, Xu Zhongshu also notes that *er* 耳 (ear) has the functions of perceiving and knowing sound while *kou* 口 (mouth) inherently has the function of producing sound. *Tong* 通 (connectedness) represented the entire process of perception/reception of sound and one's reaction to it, from the *er* 耳 (ear) to the *kou* 口 (mouth). (XU 1989, 1287) This perspective underscores that the character *sheng* 聖 symbolizes the process of hearing, understanding, rethinking, and reusing the sound from above in a creative earthly way, a thorough grasp of the knowledge after individuals had formulated their own ideas based on their personal use of what they had heard. In essence, it highlighted the cognitive dimension of acquiring knowledge by listening (learning) and applying (speaking) what has been learned.

Due to the limited available evidence from oracle bone inscriptions, it may be challenging to delve deeper into the precise process of how *sheng* 聖 evolved to embody the full meaning of *tong* 通 (connectedness) or *tongshen* 通神 (connection/communication with the divine). However, it is evident that, at various points in its development, *sheng* 聖 refers to a particular human attribute: the exceptional virtue of the ability to discern facts and phenomena and respond accordingly.

Therefore, from a philological perspective on the character *sheng* 聖, the different viewpoints represent different stages of its development. In the first stage, *sheng* 聖 denoted a very common sensory capability, essentially the ability to hear sounds if they were present. In the second stage, *sheng* 聖 represented the capacity to make judgments about the sounds one heard, recognizing what or who was producing the sound by logical reasoning and value judgments about it. In the final stage, *sheng* 聖 took a broader significance, coming to mean the interactions with the sound and the responses it elicited, reflecting a deeper level of thought regarding the moral and intellectual aspects of the auditory experience.

Deeper into the matter, a look into the second variation of the word "sacred" in ancient China takes us to the character *sheng* 圣, used interchangeably with *sheng* 聖. This version of the concept originated from the combination of *you* 又 (hand) and *tu* 土 (earth) in oracle bone inscriptions, as it remains unchanged to this day.

Some scholars, like Yu Shengwu 于省吾, suggest that in ancient texts, the word *ken* 垦, which meant "reclaim" or "cultivate" the land, was occasionally written as *sheng* 圣. (YU 2010, 41) Therefore, in that context, he interprets *sheng* 圣 as having meaning "the common people" or "ordinary farmers who cultivate the land." In this view, *sheng* 圣 was associated with the common labourers working on the land.

However, Professor Yan Baoping 阎保平 has a different, more suitable interpretation. He explains that while there are indeed records of *sheng* 圣 (sacred) related to daily life in some oracle bone inscriptions, they primarily pertain to the affairs of the most powerful political leaders of the time and are unrelated to land reclamation and labour. In his view, the upper part of the character represented by *you* 又 takes on a higher, sacred meaning, while the lower part represented by *tu* 土 signified ordinary agricultural life. He argues that this form of *sheng* 圣 emphasized distinctions such as *shangxia youbie* 上下有别 (distinction between

the superior and inferior) and *shenren* youbie 神人有别 (the distinction between the divine and human), adding depth to the interpretation of the concept. (YAN 2007, 90-94)

The function of the character *sheng* 圣 to distinguish between the "high" and the "low" is intriguing. Drawing a parallel with the mythological tale of the Shang Dynasty's founding by a mysterious bird's descent from heaven,<sup>2</sup> the character *sheng* 圣 implied the meaning of a "great initiator," a political, sacred figure higher and greater than ordinary people. (ZHOU 2002, 547-548)

Later on, up to Confucius' time (6th - 5th century BC) and persisting through the Warring States Period (475 - 221 BC), the characteristics represented by the word "sacred" evolved to denote individuals who possessed divine-given high moral attributes. Whether formed from *er* 耳 and *kou* 口 (ear and mouth) or *you* 又 and *tu* 土 (hand and land), the word "sacred," over the course of its historical development, evolved to symbolize individuals with the extraordinary ability to creatively apply their acquired knowledge.

Over time, "sacred" or "sacredness" evolved to mean the application of divine knowledge in earthly matters becoming the central characteristic of a person to whom the adjective *sheng* (in its both forms) was attributed.

### **Confucius on the Concept of a "Saint"**

The concept of the *shengren* 圣人, which combines the Chinese words for "sacred" and "person", is often translated as "saint" (though sometimes as "sage" in the Western academic context), held great significance across diverse schools of thought during the Pre-Qin period in ancient China.

Long before Confucius, the term was widely employed in ancient texts that he compiled and edited for posterity, some of which are quoted below in this article. During the compilation and arrangement of these books, the ideas embedded in those ancient texts significantly influenced him and his ideals of the concept of *sheng* 圣/聖 (sacred) and, ultimately, what it meant to be a *shengren* 圣人 (saint).

<sup>2</sup> Text in chinese: 天命玄鸟，降而生商。

For example, in the ancient book *Guoyu* 国语 (known in the West as Discourses of the States),<sup>3</sup> it is noted that "during the ancient era, there was a clear separation between spirits and humans"<sup>4</sup>. (XU 2002, 512) Aiming to overcome this separation, spiritual leaders known as *xi* 覡 (for men) and *wu* 巫 (for women) manifested the essence of *sheng* 圣, a quality of sacredness. (XU 2002, 513) In this role, they served as intermediaries between human and spirits, connecting them, foreseeing the future, and offering guidance in human affairs.

The same concept is evident in the classic *Shangshu* 尚书 (Book of Documents),<sup>5</sup> also known to be one of the texts Confucius himself worked on. However, a nuanced and slightly different use of the concept becomes apparent when encountered in this book. Zheng Xuan 郑玄 (127 - 200 AD), a canonized scholar of the classics, added a note to the book, stating that throughout these documents, *sheng* 圣 was a virtue embodied by those who were "able to communicate in all matters", pointing out an important aspect of the concept.<sup>6</sup> (KONG 2021, 454) In this book, the concept transitioned from the notion of a spiritual leader, a prevailing concept in the Shang Dynasty and one that persisted during Confucius' era, to an individual capable of comprehending a myriad of matters — both spiritual and earthly. It was a virtue to master knowledge that extends beyond the ordinary. This implies that *sheng* 圣 could be manifested in the world not only by spiritual leaders but also by political figures or anyone assuming a role of social influence through moral cultivation.

Having consulted these chapters both as a reference and as part of his personal literary compilation work, Confucius was influenced by the diverse applications of the concept. Although the term *sheng* 圣 appears in The Book of Documents, the term *shengren* 圣人 (saint) is notably absent. To grasp this idea, we must turn elsewhere: the *Shijing* 诗经, the Classic of Poetry,<sup>7</sup> where the term is found twice.

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<sup>3</sup> A collection of speeches attributed to rulers and other influential figures from Confucius' times in the Spring and Autumn period (770 - 481 BC).

<sup>4</sup> Text in chinese: 古者民神不杂.

<sup>5</sup> A compilation of consultations, instructions, announcements, declarations and commands traditionally believed to date back to the end of Shang Dynasty (1600 - 1046 BC) and the Western Zhou Dynasty (1050 - 771 BC).

<sup>6</sup> Text in chinese: 于事无不通谓之圣.

<sup>7</sup> The Classic of Poetry is the oldest existing collection of Chinese poetry, with over 300 poems dating from the 11th to 7th centuries BC and compiled by Confucius himself.

In the poem *Sang rou* 桑柔 (Gentle Mulberry Tree), we find the lines: "Consider such shengren, his views and words resonate to a hundred *li*; Consider that foolish man, engulfed in frenzy, reveling in reckless joy".<sup>8</sup>(Li 1999, 1187) It is evident here that the *shengren* 圣人 perceives and discusses matters with a long-term perspective, while the foolish person only sees the present, unaware of impending calamities, and instead revels in reckless joy. In this context, the term *shengren* 圣人 primally refers to individuals who are intelligent, wise, and possess foresight, differing somewhat from the saints of later times, serving as the starting point for Confucius' ideas on the concept.

In another poem, *Qiao yan* 巧言 (Skillful Words), we read: "Grand and spacious is the ancestral temple, orchestrated by the Sovereign. Wisely arranged are the great plans, determined by the *shengren*".<sup>9</sup>(LI 1999, 757) The term "great plans" in this context refers to the art of governing the country, as pointed out by Zheng Xuan 郑玄. (LI 1999, 757) Here, the term *shengren* 圣人 pertains to individuals capable of formulating rituals and laws to govern, thereby emphasizing their political wisdom and competence.

The concept of the "saint" was used before Confucius, assimilated by him, and it became a subject of discussion among Confucian scholars throughout history, each offering their unique perspectives on the ideal characteristics that defined a saint. Given its significance, it's valuable to explore Confucius' own views on this concept.

We should bear in mind that Confucius himself did not directly provide a definition for the term *shengren* 圣人(saint). We can only construct an image of how Confucius perceived a saint through his discussions with his disciples, as recorded in the Lunyu 论语 (commonly known in the West as Analects of Confucius), written and compiled by Confucianists after Confucius' death. In the dialogues related to the concept, two distinct ideas in Confucius' eyes become quite evident.

First, Confucius envisioned a saint as possessing a well-rounded combination of both inner and outer qualities, an ideal character characterized by the highest moral standards and exceptional achievements, representing the epitome of *daode zhishan*, *renlun jiaohua* 道德至善, 人伦教化 (moral excellence and ethical guidance). (CHANG 2007, 37-40) The second

<sup>8</sup> Text in chinese: 维此圣人，瞻言万里。维彼愚人，覆狂以喜。

<sup>9</sup> Text in chinese: 奕奕寝庙，君子作之。秩秩大猷，圣人莫之。



idea is rooted in the belief that saints are no longer among them, and Confucius did not consider himself one.

For Confucius, a saint was the supreme ideal character. Based on literary records, we can infer the kind of saintly figure he had in mind from two topics he often discussed: *junzi* 君子 (noble person) and *ren* 仁 (benevolence or humaneness).

Regarding the role that the *junzi* 君子 had to imitate as a standard, Confucius stated:

There are three things the *junzi* stands in awe. He stands in awe of the ordinances of Heaven, he stands in awe of great moral figures, he stands in awe of the words of *shengren* (saints). The small man does not know the ordinances of Heaven and consequently does not stand in awe of them. He is disrespectful to great moral figures while scoffing at the words of the *shengren* (saints)<sup>10</sup>. (YANG 1980, 177)

The Confucian tradition revolves around the concept of a *junzi* 君子 (the noble person), which refers to individuals with high moral character and often holds political leadership roles. However, becoming a *junzi* 君子 is no easy work. Confucius believed that a *junzi* 君子 should not only revere heavenly principles and great moral figures (such as parents, elders, and morally wise people) but should also hold in reverence the words of the saints. In Confucius' view, saints possess a certain elevated and mystical quality, even higher in status than a noble person. So, it is advised to his disciples that a person in pursuit of moral superiority should conduct themselves in accordance with the standards set by saints *shengren* 圣人, not by other *junzi* 君子. And that is because Confucius believed that the ideal character of a saint transcended mere moral impeccability.

To better grasp the elevated status that Confucius attributed to saints, we can also observe his emphasis on the realm of *ren* 仁 (benevolence or humaneness) in his teachings:

Zi Gong said: "What would you say of a person who generously donates to help the people and benefits many? Would you call them practitioners of *ren*?" Confucius responded: "Why limit it to *ren*? We can call them *shengren* (saints)! Even Yao and Shun fell short of this.

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<sup>10</sup> Text in chinese: 孔子曰：君子有三畏：畏天命，畏大人，畏圣人之言。小人不知天命而不畏也，狎大人侮圣人之言。

Now, the person acting upon *ren* establishes themselves and the others; enlarge themselves and the others. Being able to understand others by what is high in ourselves - this may be called the practice of *ren*".<sup>11</sup>(YANG 1980, 65)

Among scholars, it is widely recognized that *ren* 仁 is the highest virtue in Confucian philosophy. Throughout the entire Analects, the term is mentioned in fifty-nine chapters, with a total of one hundred and nine occurrences. (LI X 2009, 9) *Ren* 仁 is the paramount moral category in Confucianism, influencing various aspects of human relationships, including ideals like *ren'ai* 仁爱 (benevolent love) and *renzheng* 仁政 (benevolent governance).

However, Confucius believed that if someone could truly be generous to the people and benefit the masses, their moral character would transcend that of a mere *ren* 仁 practitioner and reach the level of a *shengren* 圣人, a saint. In this case, being a saint would be the ultimate achievement for the practices of *ren* 仁.

From this perspective, the status of a saint is even more significant than that of a virtuous person or even a *junzi* 君子, considered by its benevolence and humaneness. It is noted by Confucius that once knowing what *ren* 仁 is, the next obligation of anyone would be to revere and follow saints because that is the essence of *ren* 仁.(YANG 1980, 4-5) This is to say that once a person grasps what it means to be morally outstanding, they should not consider that their ultimate goal. Instead, they should strive for an even greater, more sacred role.

He also outlines a path to achieve this higher, more sacred role by actively pursuing the greater good for the most significant number of people. Individuals should continuously strive to expand their ethical horizons and contribute to the well-being of the broader community, thereby transcending personal moral excellence in favour of the welfare of society as a whole. The virtues Confucius associated with a saint, namely "generously benefiting the people by being able to assist the masses" and "cultivating oneself to bring peace to the people," are examples of this idea.<sup>12</sup> (YANG 1980, 159)

<sup>11</sup> Text in chinese: 子贡曰：如有博施于民而能济众，如何？可谓仁乎？子曰：何事于仁，必也圣乎！尧舜其犹病诸！夫仁者，己欲立而立人，己欲达而达人。能进取譬，可谓仁之方也已。

<sup>12</sup> Text in chinese: 博施于民而能济众 and 修己以安百姓。

These are the external expressions that Confucius discussed in the *Analects* when addressing the requirements for one to be considered a saint. This means that a saint not only is knowledgeable but also puts his knowledge into action. Under the leadership of a saint, the common people will find peace and happiness. This manifestation is the essence of a saint: a person with both moral character and significant accomplishments for the people.

According to Confucius, only individuals who are qualified to bring peace and security to the common people through their own skills in conduct and governance can be called saints. Others have the duty to revere and follow them. Therefore, it can be seen that Confucius ascribed an extremely lofty meaning to the concept of saints. Even a great person who lives his life based on *ren* 仁 (benevolence or humaneness) is not sufficient to reach the level of a saint.

In Confucius' teachings, *ren* 仁 is the prerequisite for *sheng* 圣. While improving one's own cultivation of the self, if one can also stabilize the lives of the common people and provide assistance and relief to the world, then one can reach the level of a saint. *Sainthood* is a higher state than benevolence or humaneness and represents the pinnacle of political sovereignty, with vast achievements and widespread moral influence. It is the embodiment of complete moral and practical perfection. (CHEN 2012, 3) Consequently, saints are embodiments of wisdom, and their authority lies in their capacity for social work, which is the foundation for their "sacredness".

Finally, simplifying Confucius' ideas on "saints," Shen Shunfu 沈顺福 points out that Confucius' concept of a *shengren* 圣人 has three characteristics: they "uphold benevolence and justice," "generously bestow aid to assist others" and are, by rule, "divine and sacred, therefore seldom seen." (SHEN 2014, 105)

Confucius believed that true saints remain rarely to encounter or difficult to find. To illustrate this point, even well-known personalities like Yao 尧 and Shun 舜, foundational figures in Chinese cultural and historical traditions symbolizing the ideal rulers who governed with virtue, benevolence, and wisdom, were viewed by Confucius as not having fully met the standards necessary to achieve sainthood, as discussed previously in his conversation with Zi Gong.

Moreover, Confucius did not consider himself a saint and believed that he had not even fully achieved the realm of *ren* 仁. In his words: "The saints and the benevolents, how

dare I rank myself with them? That I strive to become such without satiety, and teach others without weariness - this much can be said of me".<sup>13</sup>(YANG 1980, 76) He taught that it was no longer possible to meet a saint in person since they existed only in the distant ancient past. (YANG 1980, 73) Even when evaluating himself, all he had achieved was an unwavering commitment to learning and tirelessly teaching others.

Confucius' hesitation to describe himself (or anyone else) as a saint underscores the profound significance he ascribed to the concept in his teachings, philosophy, and literary works. It's worth noting, however, that when Confucius passed away, in addition to his disciples, many officials, neighbours, and people from other states attended his funeral. It is recorded that the occasion was the first time when Confucius was called a *shengren* 圣人, a saint, by those present. (SUN 2012, 227)

His ideals of what it meant to be a saint were greatly shaped by what the word had evolved to become in his time. His humility in refraining from self-designation as a saint reflects the high moral and ethical standards he upheld. It serves as a testament to the veneration he had for the sacredness associated with the idea of sainthood.

## Conclusion

The evolution of the concept of *sheng* 圣, originating from a notion tied to "sound" and gradually transforming into an adjective describing someone "connected to the divine", culminated in its application to figures like Confucius. This represents a paramount theme deserving thorough exploration within Chinese literary history. Since this multifaceted concept encapsulates profound layers of meaning and moral significance, it becomes an essential subject for in-depth analysis and understanding in the context of Chinese culture and philosophy.

The use of the term before Confucius, especially in texts and books that he helped compile and edit himself, demonstrates the influence of the notions of *sheng* 圣 and *shengren* 圣人 on him. It signifies not only a virtue of those who were able to connect the spiritual world with the people but also a characteristic manifested by individuals who held political power to influence the lives of people.

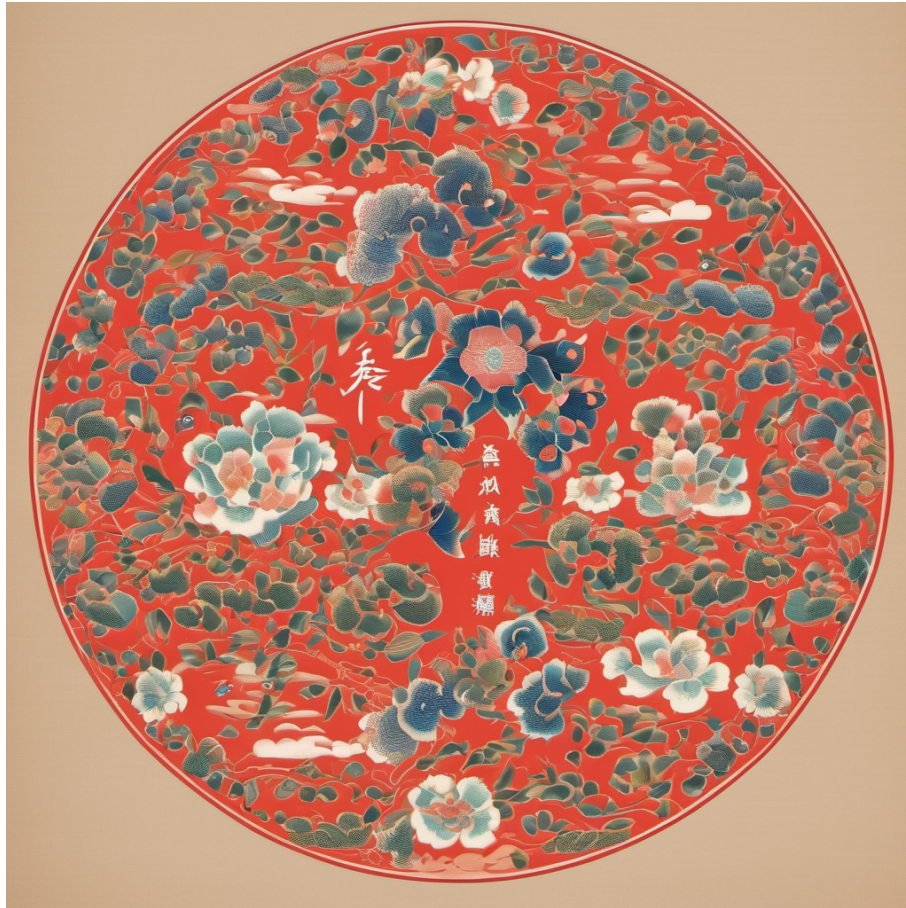
<sup>13</sup> Text in chinese: 子曰：若圣与仁，则吾岂敢？抑为之不厌，诲人不倦，则可谓云尔矣。

For Confucius, the *shengren* 圣人 concept extends far beyond mere possession of exceptional knowledge or exclusive access to the divine realm; rather, it designates an individual endowed not only with profound wisdom but also with the remarkable ability to serve and uplift the common people while creatively applying their acquired knowledge to earthly matters. This prestigious title, which Confucius rarely bestows, resonates throughout his body of work, underscoring its significance and rarity within his teachings.

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## Fashion, Tradition, and Identity: Comparative Analysis of zhigong tu 職貢圖 and European Costume Books

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**ABSTRACT:** This article explores and compares certain examples of *zhigong tu* 職貢圖 (illustrations of tributary states) and its European counterparts, costume books, emphasizing their crucial role in understanding cultural diversity. Both traditions in China and Europe provide valuable sources offering insights into the customs and identities of various regions. Chinese *zhigong tu* document foreign emissaries and tributary states and illuminate China's self-perception in the context of global interactions. European costume books reflect curiosity about new lands and their diverse cultures. The research includes an introduction to the genre and an overview of the corresponding traditions. It analyses how *zhigong tu* and costume books contribute to the comprehension of the cultural identity of a specific country. It culminates in a comparative analysis of Qing dynasty (1644-1912) *zhigong tu* and European costume books of the 19th century.

**Keywords:** costume books, ethnography, cultural identity, art tradition, fashion

### **The genre of costume books**

A costume book can be described as a distinctive album focused on ethnic clothing. It presents hand-painted or printed illustrations (often wood or copperplate engravings), along with descriptions of clothing, fashion, and traditions of different regions, past epochs, and foreign peoples. Because they were often pioneering and precise works, conducted with – as far as possible – encyclopaedical accuracy, they can be perceived as specific ethnographic materials. Illustrated ethnographic albums were utilized not only among entities actively engaged in expansion or geographic discoveries but also among countries not directly involved in such pursuits. These albums depicted individuals from diverse cultures, whether within a single state or beyond, occasionally romanticizing them as primitive or exotic while also portraying them as menacing and dangerous. One of the functions of such pieces of pictorial, literary works is the distinction of "self" versus the "other." The concept of "otherness" explores the sociocultural dichotomy between an in-group and an out-group. It involves the identification of individuals or groups based on shared characteristics, often leading to the perception of an "us" with commonalities and an "other" defined by differences. (Shanley 1997, 165-173) This binary distinction can contribute to the formation of stereotypes, prejudices, and, at times, discriminatory behaviours.



In Chinese *zhigong tu* 職貢圖 (illustrations of tributary states) or costume books, this concept was utilized to underscore China's self-image as a sophisticated empire, differentiating itself from other territories. These books documented the cultural practices of tributary states, thereby establishing a hierarchy with China at the cultural and imperial centre. This not only reflected China's view of itself as a dominant power but also emphasized the perceived cultural distance from these territories. Noteworthy is the portrayal of tributes with occasional errors, underlining the diplomatic nuances of these encounters. This opposition, however, should not be simplified to a dualistic division of "civilized" and "barbarian" since *zhigong tu* developed a system that measured that distance by examining the specifics of others' practices. (Deal and Hostetler 2006, 15) At any rate, the linkage to ruling power is evident.

Conversely, the European tradition can be connected to the discovery of new lands and cultures and can manifest the evolution of fashion trends. In Europe, during the Age of Discovery (15th-16th century) and Western colonialism (15th-20th century), the concept of 'otherness' took a different form. Through their costume books and other artworks, European countries began to define themselves as cultured and civilized in contrast to the societies they encountered and often colonized. This self-perception was reflected in their artistic representations, which often exoticized or simplified the cultures they depicted. Such portrayals played a role in justifying colonial ambitions and reinforced a sense of European cultural superiority. Nevertheless, in terms of artistic representation, paramount importance was placed on detailing, thereby contributing to the broader pool of knowledge of historical fashion and social hierarchy.

### **The costume books tradition in China**

In Chinese history, portraying foreign emissaries who paid tribute at the imperial court emerged as a special tradition. The tribute system began in China around the 3rd century BCE, although this dating is only hypothetical. (Zhang 2013) *Zhigong tu* as an artistic genre arose following the emergence of this system. (Ge 2019, 124-148) It is a testimony not only to Chinese aesthetics and art tradition but also to the Chinese perception of the relationship between China and the outer world. It served as a pioneer visual representation in contrast to the prevalent oral traditions. (Deal and Hostetler 2006, 6-15) In terms of artistic approach, these albums were characterized by their distinct style: subjects, usually in traditional attire, were portrayed against blank backgrounds without the use of three-dimensional perspective, a feature not common in traditional Chinese painting. This aligns with the broader characteristics of Chinese

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portraiture, where facial features were not typically emphasized. The portraits usually presented the subject in a side view rather than frontally, with a focus on standard, familiar representations. This style aimed to create a general, recognizable image of both Chinese and foreigners. In traditional Chinese art, portraiture was not initially as prevalent as in European art. When portraits were created, they were typically of eminent figures such as emperors, scholars, and later, members of the growing merchant class. (Dietrich 1993, 7-26) Chinese portraits contrasted with the more lifelike representations found in European art. The portraits often included the entire body, with the face being smaller, in contrast to European portraits, which focused more on the face and upper body against a uniform background. For Chinese painters, the emphasis was often on capturing the spirit or essence of the subject rather than detailed physical likeness, reflecting the philosophical background of the artistic tradition. (Encyclopaedia Britannica) The beginnings of *zhigong tu* as a literary and artistic genre are associated with the *Liang zhigong tu* 梁職貢圖 (Liang Imperial Illustrations of Tributary People), which, according to the legend was painted by emperor Yuan of the Liang dynasty (Liang Yuandi 梁元帝; r. 552-554). (Hans 2019, 5)

This piece was not merely an artistic creation but also a potent symbol of the era's political and cultural ethos. Its significance lies in its portrayal of tributary envoys, which served as a visual testament to the Liang dynasty's broad influence and diplomatic reach. By illustrating these foreign figures, *Liang zhigong tu* underscored China's central position in East Asian geopolitics and its self-perception as a cultural and political hegemon. As such, the portrayal of foreign emissaries in *zhigong tu* was significant not only for its artistic merit but also for its role in documenting and asserting China's worldview and status.

Moreover, this work established a standard in how foreign subjects were artistically represented, influencing generations of Chinese artists. Its style and thematic focus were replicated and adapted in later dynasties, reflecting the evolving nature of China's interactions with neighbouring states and the broader world. Thus, *Liang zhigong tu* was exceptionally influential not only in shaping the artistic conventions of *zhigong tu* but also in embodying the dynastic identity and foreign policy perspectives of its time.

The *zhigong tu* not only left an enduring imprint on the aesthetic history of China, shaping artistic traditions for generations but also catalysed the emergence of a distinctive intellectual tradition. By depicting foreign emissaries, these artworks effectively communicated China's sense of pride and self-assurance. The deliberate comparison of these emissaries with representations of unfamiliar customs, like

exotic attire, distinct forms of greetings or ceremonial rituals, musical instruments, or dances, served a dual purpose. It not only highlighted China's perceived uniqueness and superiority but also enriched the narrative, presenting the state as an empire at the world's centre, at least from around the 6th century CE. That narrative played a significant role in shaping China's cultural identity and worldview at that time. (Ge 2019, 124)

This tradition experienced an increase during Song dynasty rule (960-1279) and survived uninterrupted until the rule of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911). In the eighteenth century, Qing China, due to a remarkable territorial expansion, developed an interest in different ethnicities and nations, which was manifested in its literary works. (Zhou 2022) For example, *Tongcheng pai* 桐城派 (Tongcheng School) scholars, such as Yuan Mei 袁枚 (1716-1797), demonstrated a cosmopolitan perspective in their poetry and essays, exploring various ethnic groups within and beyond the Qing Empire, evident in his *Suiyuan Shihua* 隨園詩話 ("Poetry Notes of Sui Yuan") (1790). The *zhigong tu* tradition reached its peak at that time, culminating in the *Huang Qing Zhigong tu* 皇清職貢圖 (*Qing Imperial Illustrations of Tributary Peoples*) (1769), an extensive work profiling the diversity of people and places on an unprecedented scale. The album testified to the outstanding achievements of Qing rule. Hence, the self-congratulatory text of the *Kangxi* 康熙 emperor (r. 1662-1722) was included in 1696 in its preamble. In this text, the monarch declares that his state controls *tianxia* 天下 (all under heaven), which pays him tribute. (Ge 2019, 144-145)

Several versions of *Huang Qing Zhigong tu* have been released. The first version was completed in 1759 and was followed by an additional part six years later. (Ulrich 2010) The most elaborate version contains 304 colourful paintings on silk. There are three relatively complete albums held at the National Library of France, the Beijing Palace Museum, and the Taipei Palace Museum. (Ming and Wei 2019) The versions were significantly different. To demonstrate this, below is a comparison of a commoner from the Ryukyu image prepared by Ulrich Theobald.



"Commoner from Ryukyu." In: *Huang Qing Zhigongtu* 皇清職貢圖 luxury edition. (c. 1790).

Portal: *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*. <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b55010283d.item>>. Accessed: 2023-11-27.



"Commoner from Ryukyu." In: *Huang Qing Zhigongtu* 皇清職貢圖 *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 edition. (c. 1790)

Portal: *China Knowledge.de*. <<http://www.chinaknowledge.de/Literature/Science/huangqingzhigongtu.html>>. Accessed: 2023-11-27.

In comparing the depiction of the Ryukyu man, both the *Huang Qing Zhigong tu* luxury edition and the *Siku quanshu* edition showcase a consistent pose and attribute. However, a notable difference emerges in visual richness: the luxury edition, features vibrant colours and intricate details, while the *Siku quanshu* edition is a simpler black-and-white reprint. This difference underscores different intended audiences and purposes: the luxury edition potentially aimed at a more elite viewership, emphasizing the empire's grandeur, while the *Siku quanshu* edition served a more utilitarian and educational role.

Therefore, from an alternative perspective, *zhigong tu* was addressed to the travellers and provided a means for them to observe and categorize diverse peoples and cultures. (Deal and Hostetler 2006, 10)

*Huang Qing Zhigong tu* all contained illustrations (not always in colour), most often of a woman and a man during traditional activities. As a third element, a culture-specific attribute like a weapon or musical instrument was often added. Items such as jugs, spears, staffs, or stringed boxes were recurrent motifs, adding layers of cultural and symbolic significance to the illustrations. For example, *Dougou* and other *Fanmin* people are depicted with the teapot (woman) and the curved sword (man), which shows the gender roles and positions in that society. The teapot could symbolize domesticity, nurturing, or the role of caretaker. It might suggest that women in that society are primarily responsible for household tasks, hospitality, or nurturing relationships. The sword, on the other hand, symbolizes strength, protection, or authority, suggesting that men in society are primarily associated with defence, leadership, and safeguarding the community. Another interpretation could be that this kind of sword represents tools used in farming or agriculture, implying that men also play a significant role in agricultural activities and land cultivation.



*Xining xiantu* 西寧縣土 "Xining County." In: *Qing Imperial Illustrations of Tributary Peoples (Huang Qing Zhigongtu)*. (Leiden, NL : Koninklijke Brill NV, 2022), p. 340-341.

Importantly, each graphic in *Qing Imperial Illustrations of Tributary Peoples* was provided with a basic description, usually with simplified geographical and cultural features, written in classical Chinese. (Deal and Hostetler 2006, 6) It consists of 9 *juan* 卷 ("scroll" or "fascicle") and has more than 600 illustrations in total. The author of the illustrations was the painter *Jin Tingbiao* 金廷標 (?-1767). The creation of the book was overseen by *Fuheng* 傅恒 (1720-1770) – a significant Qing dynasty official. (Ulrich 2010)

Texts of such albums were based on local gazetteers, which were regularly revised and expanded from the sixteenth through the mid-eighteenth centuries. Works were mostly anonymous. Instances where authorship, specifically the acknowledgment of the artist's and calligrapher's names, was infrequently signified and meant the creators' pride in their work. Popular topics of albums texts were marriage, courtship, death, and diet rituals. (Deal and Hostetler 2006, 6-15)

Primarily, the *zhigong tu* served utilitarian purposes with the overarching goal of glorifying the dynasty and the emperor's reign. The *zhigong tu* were intended to function as a representation of the order established by the empire, simultaneously justifying and preserving the relationships between the dynasty and its tributaries. There are also examples of albums devoted especially to minority ethnic groups from frontier regions under imperial Chinese control, like *Miaoren tu* 苗人圖 (Miao People Illustrations) (c. 1800), also called *Bai Miao tu* 百苗圖 (Hundred Miao Illustrations). The term "Miao" here broadly covers various minority groups in China's southwest, beyond just the self-identified Miao (Hmong) or those labelled as such by the Han majority. Albums featuring illustrations, writing, and poetry started becoming popular in the 18th century as a form of art. The *Miaoren tu*, commissioned for Manchu and Han elites, depicted ethnic minorities from China's southern and southwestern frontiers during the late imperial era. These albums reflect ethnic awareness and statecraft and provide anthropologists, geographers, and historians with perspectives on China's frontier populations. They are also prized by art collectors. (Deal and Hostetler 2006, 6-15)

### **Chinese costume books tradition compared with European**

Chinese and European costume books share similarities but also have distinct differences. Both traditions focus on artistic expression and serve to document the cultural diversity of their regions. They

feature detailed illustrations that showcase the intricacies of clothing, offering insight into various cultures and their fashion styles. Chinese costume books illustrated the customs of various ethnic groups, e.g., *Huang Qing Zhigong tu* depicted people from Korea, Ryukyu, Annam, Siam, and foreign emissaries. European costume books depicted the regional clothing styles within Europe as well as the traditional clothes of autochthons encountered during geographical discoveries and colonial rule. (Qing Imperial Illustrations of Tributary People 2022)

Since Chinese costume books date back to the 6th century BCE, they are significantly older than the first European examples. On the European continent, costume books emerged during the Renaissance (14th-16th century) in the 16th century. In the spirit of the era, a human being became the centre and measure of all things, while interest in foreign cultures was reinforced by European geographical discoveries. (Cartwright 2020) The first costume book was Francois Desprez's (1530-1580/1587) *Le recueil de la diversité des habits qui sont de present en usage tant es pays d'Europe, Asie, Affrique et Isles sauvages* ("The collection of the diversity of clothes which are now in use in the countries of Europe, Asia, Africa, and Wild Isles"), published in Paris in 1562 by Richard Breton. Costume engravings by the Italian engraver Enea Vico (1523-1567) served as models for costume illustrations. The most popular costume books were Hans Weigl's (1549-1578) *Habitus praecipuorum populorum* ("The attitude of the principal peoples," 1577), Jost Amman's (c. 1539-1591) *Gynaeceum* (1586) and Ceasare Vecellio's (c. 1521 – c. 1601) *Degli habitantichi* ("Ancient habits," 1590). (Mielnik 2008, 32) The popularity of these publications, as Rolf Walther argues, was caused by the great accuracy and meticulousness to the clothes' details. (Women's costume book by Anton Möller and its predecessors in the 16<sup>th</sup> century 1963, 452) Worth noticing that Vecellio's work was published four times. (Iwanoyko 1960, 312)

The purposes of these Chinese and European traditions differ significantly. Chinese costume books aimed to convey China's sense of pride and self-confidence, using representations of foreign customs as a foil for China's image as a universal empire. On the other hand, European costume books were often created to document and preserve changing fashion trends, as well as the exotic traditions of inhabitants of the New Land, frequently including moralizing elements from religious texts, such as the Bible. (Mielnik 2008, 37) While highlighting costumes in diverse states and ways of wearing, the album may also possess a moralizing function, aligning with contemporary clothing regulations and societal calls for modesty. (Mielnik 2008, 20.42)

It is noteworthy to acknowledge that Chinese albums were not immune to inaccuracies. Within the pages of *Huang Qing Zhigong tu*, notable errors are apparent, including the information that France, before adopting Catholicism, was initially a Buddhist state, or the conflation of France and Portugal as a single nation, and depicting Polish people with Mongolian face features. (Hosteler and Xuemei Wu 2022) However, as previously mentioned in the article, the genre of portraiture was not as common in China as it was in Europe. Therefore, these inaccuracies could indeed be attributed to differences in tradition rather than solely to inaccuracies. Therefore, one could infer that, for China, the crucial aspect lay in the mere fact that people from distant lands visited and engaged in trade with China rather than the individuals themselves being of primary importance. It would also imply China's perspective and a sense of pride in the tribute and homage paid by tributary states and envoys to the emperor. However, it is also applicable to Europeans who, by showing the primitive nature of the autochthons, emphasized their superiority. At the same time, some can argue that those details can prove European scientific and ethnographic motivation, which is lacking in the Chinese examples.

Artistic styles distinguish the two traditions. European depictions showcase individuals often accompanied by partial backgrounds and with the presence of light and shadow. In contrast, the Chinese illustrations, exemplified by the attached examples from *Huang Qing Zhigong tu*, do not utilize backgrounds and light. It is worth noting that group depictions were likely more commonly seen in European costume books.

As an example, can serve depictions below:



Matejko, Jan. „Noblemen 1697-1795” in: *Ubiory w Polsce 1200-1795*, Cracow, 1875.



The illustration below is from Jan Matejko's (1838-1893) *Clothes in Poland 1200-1795*, a 19th-century album. It showcases the history of Polish attire through lithographic illustrations across various centuries and social classes, with editions published in 1860 and 1875. The work is patriotic and historical in nature, aiming to preserve the culture and tradition. (Czajka 2016, 123) It is seen as the most prominent example of a Polish costume book with accuracy depicting fashion details and social hierarchy. The "Noblemen 1697-1795" reflects the social status and cultural identity of the Polish nobility. Matejko's attention to detail in the fabrics, colours, and accessories of noblemen offers a vivid insight into the period's sartorial elegance.



Polish man in *Qing Imperial Illustrations of Tributary Peoples (Huang Qing Zhigongtu)*. (Leiden, NL : Koninklijke Brill NV, 2022), p. 63.

The illustration in *Huang Qing Zhigong tu* depicts a Polish nobleman with some inaccuracies. Firstly, the Pole also has an Asian face. He wears a high cap with fur, a Chinese-style tassel, and a simple brown-maroon coat called *żupan* without the ornate patterns typical of noble attire. The outfit includes a narrow

belt, non-traditional shoes, and a sabre but lacks the distinctive eagle-headed handle of a Polish *karabela* (sabre). These elements suggest a blend of Polish and Asian influences, deviating from authentic Polish noble fashion. The overall presentation of the nobleman contains several historical errors.

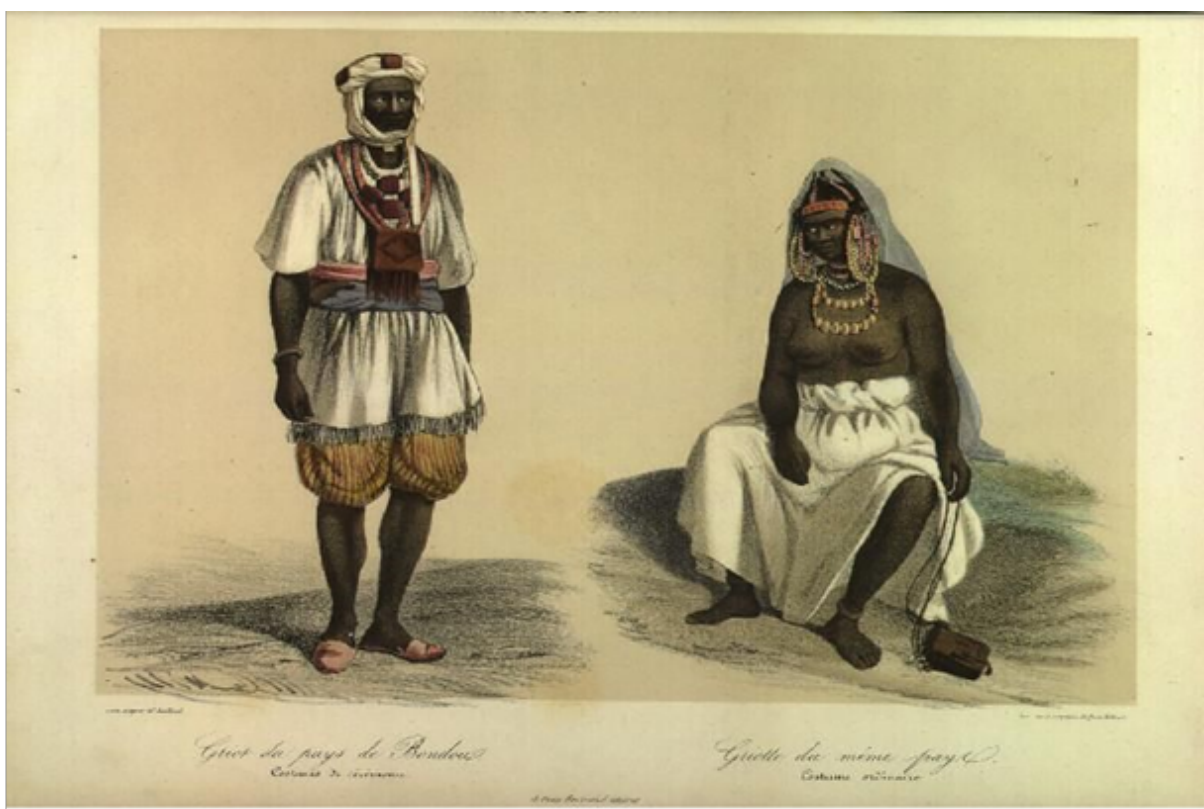
Jan Matejko's "Noblemen 1697-1795" and the Qing's "Illustrations of Tributary Peoples" offer contrasting ethnographic insights. Matejko's work focuses on the detailed representation of Polish nobility, highlighting European fashion and social structures. The Qing illustration, however, depicts a diverse range of groups, including a Polish man, emphasizing the empire's extensive influence. Both serve as historical ethnographic documents but with differing scopes: Matejko's showcases a specific European class, and the Qing's offers a unique perspective on how a foreign culture was viewed.

The illustration's portrayal of a Polish nobleman incorporates a blend of traditional Polish elements and foreign influences, reflecting both accuracy and historical deviations. The cap and attire, while reminiscent of Polish styles, incorporate details suggestive of Chinese influences. The depiction of garments and accessories, including the sabre, differs from authentic Polish fashion of the period, showcasing a mix of cultural elements.



Daxiyanguo hei monu 大西洋國黑魔奴 (Black Demon Slaves) in: *Qing Imperial Illustrations of Tributary Peoples (Huang Qing Zhigongtu): A Cultural Cartography of Empire*. (Leiden, NL : Koninklijke Brill NV, 2022), p. 64.

The illustration "Black Demon Slaves" shows figures in vivid, contrasting colours with a stylized, almost caricature-like execution, indicative of an external perspective on the portrayed subjects. Socially, the depiction of the individuals in red clothing with simplified facial expressions can reflect the Qing dynasty's perception of these individuals as 'exotic' or 'other.' The title "Black Demon Slaves" itself suggests a dangerous, dehumanizing perspective. The simplified facial expressions and intensive colours could also reduce them to caricatures.



Raffenel, Anne. *Illustrations of a Voyage in Western Africa: Understanding the exploration of Senegal in 1843 and 1844*. Paris, 1846.

Raffenel's "Illustrations of a Voyage in Western Africa" (1846) employs a naturalistic style with background, capturing the figures with attention to detail and a sense of individual personality. The woman's seated posture and the man's upright stance suggest a social hierarchy or division of roles. The clothing and adornments are depicted with details, emphasizing their cultural significance and the era's interest in ethnographic detail.

Some may argue that the European portrayal offers a detailed, naturalistic representation of West African individuals, suggesting a focus on ethnographic interest and likely cultural authenticity of othered, when the Qing illustration titled "Black Demon Slaves" employs exaggerated features and vibrant colours to emphasize the otherness.

The concept of otherness played a significant role in both Chinese and European costume books, albeit in different ways. China distinguished itself from the other territories by emphasizing its cultural and political hegemony, showcasing the diverse customs of tributary states as a foil for its own image. In contrast, European costume books during the Age of Discovery and colonial period often depicted non-European peoples as exotic and othered. These representations were influenced by the prevailing Eurocentric worldview, which viewed European cultures as inherently superior to those encountered in the New World and other regions. The depiction of autochthons and inhabitants of colonized territories as primitive or uncivilized served to reinforce European notions of cultural and racial superiority. European costume books often included moralizing elements, drawing on religious texts that could also justify colonial expansion and the subjugation of indigenous peoples.

The differing perspectives on otherness in Chinese and European costume books reflect broader cultural and historical differences between the two traditions. While Chinese costume books aimed to glorify the empire and assert its central position in the world – as those "others" came to China; European costume books show what "others" they encountered during territorial gains. It often served as tools of colonial "propaganda", reinforcing European perspective of their hegemony position and justifying colonial exploitation.

It is essential to note that drawing definitive conclusions about the entire artistic tradition of each culture based on a few examples from each tradition is not warranted. Additionally, it is crucial to differentiate between artistic tradition and historical perspectives. While the European depiction may imply a focus on individual features and ethnographic detail, it does not necessarily imply the absence of othering within European society. Therefore, while the artistic styles may differ, both pieces serve as visual records of the cultural and societal views of their respective periods, requiring further examination to fully comprehend the complexities of each tradition's representations of foreign cultures.

## Conclusion

Costume books had a great influence on the fields of art and ethnography and offered insights into the identities of various regions. Chinese costume books, rooted in the history of documenting foreign emissaries and tributary states, provide a unique lens into China's self-image as the empire and global interactions emphasized by tributes. European costume books, originating during the Renaissance, reflect a period of exploration and curiosity about new lands and their cultures.

Both parallels and distinctions between the Chinese and European costume book traditions can be seen. Irrespective of the continent, costume books emphasize artistic expression and document cultural diversity with visually appealing illustrations capturing clothing details. While Chinese costume books depict foreign emissaries and diverse cultures, European counterparts mainly feature regional European clothing styles and traditional attire from non-European regions.

These traditions ultimately reflect how both Chinese and European societies projected their identity and asserted a sense of superiority. Behind the sole idea, China showcased its position through the tribute paid by foreign states, when Europe demonstrated its dominance by depicting conquered "primitive" cultures. That is the dichotomy – there were "others" who came to visit and assert the superiority of China, while Europeans needed to travel to encounter them. In terms of illustrations, some may argue that the lack of personalized depictions, details, and backgrounds in Chinese depictions suggests that what mattered most was that someone came and paid tribute – the individual was not as significant as the symbol and the gesture. Conversely, for Europeans, it might have been important to depict that the new territories were inhabited by specific and most importantly – conquered people.

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