

# **“Found in Translation” Matteo Ricci’s lexicographic inheritance is alive**

## **“Grand Ricci”, Matteo Ricci and Xu Guangqi, Guests of Honor in Shanghai**

- On May 11, 2010, the digital edition of the *Grand Ricci*, the largest Chinese-foreign language dictionary in the world, will be unveiled in Shanghai.
- This event will take place on the date of the four hundredth anniversary of the death of Matteo Ricci (May 11, 1610), pioneer of cultural interaction between China and the West.
- Scholars invited to address the newly founded “Xu Guangqi-Matteo Ricci Dialogue Institute” at Fudan University will join the “Association Ricci” for the May 11 event, celebrating a new era of intercultural dialogue founded on the mutual appreciation of the diversity of our tongues and traditions.

### **A Story that Reaches across Time and Space**

Communication between cultures does not mean giving up one’s mother tongue or traditions. Rather, a sincere effort at cross-cultural communication leads to a renewed appreciation of our own heritage and that of our cultural counterparts. Encyclopedic dictionaries play a major role in cultural dialogue, as they are the repository of the wisdom and memories enshrined in our languages, and allow us to navigate from one world of thought to another. The *Grand Ricci*, a Chinese-French Encyclopedic Dictionary is the most impressive expression of such a vision.

The *Grand Ricci* was authored by the Ricci Institute of Paris and Taipei. Its paper edition was published in 2001, but its roots go back to lexicographic research started in Shanghai and Hebei around 1880, and its actual editing started in 1949. With the unveiling of its DVD edition on May 11, cultural interaction between China and the West enters a new phase.

The unveiling of the DVD and the corresponding event are the fruit of the efforts pursued since 2002 by the “Association Ricci”, a not-for-profit network of Sinologists, entrepreneurs and volunteers dedicated to making the Grand Ricci a cultural bridge between China and the West.

### **Overture of Sino-Western Communication 400 Years ago**

More than 400 years ago, Matteo Ricci, a scholar from the Italian Renaissance, came to China, showing great interest and respect for Chinese culture. His legendary friendship with Xu Guangqi, a high ranking Chinese Official and a respected scientist from Shanghai, created a bridge for cultural exchanges between China and the West in the fields of astronomy, cartography, mathematics and philosophy, among others.

Western science and ideas imported to China by Matteo Ricci stimulated Xu Guangqi’s scientific passion and made him the leader of Western Learning in the late Ming Dynasty. Likewise, with the help of Xu Guangqi, Ricci succeeded in becoming a most respected figure in Chinese language and culture. Their works are at the forefront of today’s scientific and cultural communication. This is why the four hundredth anniversary of the departure of Matteo Ricci and his friendship with Xu Guangqi well deserve to be celebrated in Shanghai.

## The Grand Ricci From Shanghai to Shanghai

In the last years of the 16th century, Matteo Ricci began working on a Portuguese-Chinese dictionary. From then on, the Europeans' passion for Chinese culture, language and literature manifested itself through lexicographic endeavors.

In the late 17th century, Louis XIV, King of France, sent several missions to China, created a whole new path to Sinology and strengthened the relationship between China and Europe.

In accordance with Matteo Ricci's mission and spirit, for over 50 years the "Ricci Institutes" persisted in the work of researching, compiling and revising lexicographic material. Building directly on the extensive lexicographic research and publications conducted by Jesuits from 1880 to around 1937, especially in the famous Zikawei (Xujiahui) compound, in Shanghai, they started the Grand Ricci's editing work in 1949. The Ricci Institutes are the direct heirs of this tradition.

During the Sino-Japanese war (1937-1945), Father Zsamar, a Hungarian lexicographer, formed an ambitious project – to compile a Chinese encyclopedic dictionary in five languages: Hungarian, English, French, Spanish and Latin.

In the summer of 1952, the research group went to Macao and began the original compiling work, soon transferred to Taichung and then Taipei (Taiwan). For a few years, there were more than 30 foreign researchers and 20 researchers whose mother tongue was Chinese working hard on the project. The first task was to make index cards according to information they had collected. They compiled around 2,000,000 cards kept in boxes. However, the revision process took much longer than was originally planned...

The interaction between different teams of specialists allowed for a continuous enrichment of the material. But the departure of elder researchers and the lack of financial resources made it difficult to go on. Under the leadership of Father Yves Raguin, a renowned Sinologist, the Chinese-French Dictionary team was the steadiest one; it was able to publish an abridged version of the original project, the *Petit Ricci*, in 1976, and continued its research, doing pioneering work on Chinese characters' etymology.

At the end of 1980's, the Ricci Institutes in Paris and Taipei turned to computing and setting up a large lexicographic database. Over 200 specialists were mobilized for final revision. Finally in 2001, the *Grand Ricci* was published in Paris. The Association Ricci has also signed a partnership with the Beijing Commercial Press to publish a Mainland Chinese Edition of the Grand Ricci in 2012.

## The Grand Ricci A Chinese Encyclopedia in French

The *Grand Ricci* is like a luxuriant tree, with its two giant roots penetrating into the fertile soil of French and Chinese languages respectively. It integrates both the diversity of Chinese and the accuracy of French. It pays close attention to the history of both languages and to their cultural references.

There are up to 13,500 characters and 330,000 words included in the seven volumes of this encyclopedic dictionary. Each character has a rich array of translations, showing how meaning evolves with time. For all characters the level of language is indicated (colloquial or formal usage, literary form or epistolary style), for ease of use by every reader. The vocabulary has been compiled, revised and classified into 200 specialized subjects (astronomy, Buddhism, medicine, finance...). Not only characters and expressions representing Chinese cultures are included, but also those translated from western arts and science.

And to meet the demands of different users, a specialized volume of the Grand Ricci was edited for easy retrieval: users are offered different options (pinyin, bushou, entry word...) to facilitate their search. And characters are also arranged by 420 different pronunciation parts. Every part begins with a check list of characters with the same pronunciation.

The Grand Ricci is more than a dictionary - it is an encyclopedic database that covers all fields of knowledge and all aspects of Chinese culture.

## **A new chapter in a 400 years-long story: the Grand Ricci DVD Unveiling Event on May 11<sup>th</sup> 2010 in the Shanghai Museum**

On May 11th 2010, the day of the 400th anniversary of Matteo Ricci's death, in presence of Mr. Thierry Mathou, Consul General of France in Shanghai and Mr. Massimo Roscigno, Consul General of Italy in Shanghai, the DVD Unveiling Event will mark another milestone of cultural and scientific exchange between China and the West.

The Grand Ricci DVD weighs only 16 grams, but contains the 9,000 pages of the paper version, which weighs 16 kilograms. The digital Grand Ricci will provide faster and user-friendlier search options to find the characters according to individual practices. Thus sciences and technology contribute to facilitate the understanding of one of the most ancient Chinese esthetical traditions : Writing.

300 guests will be invited to the event, including corporate sponsors of the Grand Ricci, prominent personalities from the cultural and economic spheres, officials, as well as local and international media. After the presentation of the DVD, music will be played on a rare instrument, the Cristal-Baschet. Guests may also view the "Matteo Ricci Exhibition" organized by the Italian Marches Region in the Shanghai Museum.

## **Giving a New Meaning to the Xu-Ricci Encounter**

During the event, guests of the "Xu-Ricci Dialogue Institute", Fudan University, School of Philosophy, will join us. The newly founded Institute holds its initial encounter on this same anniversary day. Initiated by friends and actors of the *Grand Ricci* endeavor, it aims to explore new models of interaction between cultural and spiritual tradition, and to give a renewed meaning to the term "Dialogue" through international encounters and research projects. Prominent scholars from Europe and the United States will gather at Fudan with foremost Chinese academics from Shanghai, Beijing, Nanjing and Canton.

Our reunion will be a testimony to the way cultural dialogue today implies continuous attention to the riches of our languages, the creativity of our thought model and the interaction between all the actors of the "economy of knowledge", to give meaning and direction to the global community that together we are shaping.

## **The May 11 event will**

- **showcase the richness of the Grand Ricci digital edition**
- **make its mark as a cultural and musical event in Shanghai**
- **allow for a gathering of prominent friends of the Grand Ricci endeavor and major proponents of cultural and scientific interchange between China and the West.**

We are not “lost in translation”: the true spirit of translation is to love and understand other countries’ languages and cultures, thus permanently enriching and reviving the flux of intercultural communication. This is what we will together testify to when gathering on the evening of May 11<sup>th</sup>.

## **Sponsors of the Grand Ricci DVD**

We warm-heartedly thank the following institutions that have made this endeavor possible and thank in advance our future sponsors.

- Année de la France en Chine
- Assemblée nationale (Réserve parlementaire)
- Centre national du livre
- Compagnie de Jésus, Province de France
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