Il mappamondo cinese di Giulio Aleni (Brescia, 1582 – Yanping 1649)

Chinese World Map by Giulio Aleni (Brescia 1582 – Yanping 1649) – 艾儒略 (布雷西亚 1582 – 明朝灭亡 1649) – 万国全图

Claire Dong YU, Huizhong LU (C), Roberto RANZI (C)

UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI BRESCIA – Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia – Dipartimento di Storia dell’Antichità e dell’Età moderna – Studio dell’Asia Orientale

The two world maps made by Fr. Giulio Aleni, S.I. are preserved in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana in the Vatican Library. One of them is the new world map published in 1623, was inspired and influenced by the famous world map of Matteo Ricci, which was printed in several successive editions starting from the end of the sixteenth century. In 1623, Aleni’s world map was presented in a later edition. This world map represents a unique cartographic masterwork that is unique to all the world, since it was the first map of the then known world which was colored in two different colors. It is a testament to Aleni’s cartographic skills in the field of combined geographical knowledge from both China and the West, the map affords a relatively rich depiction of the world, including some exceptions, which are depicted, as in Matteo Ricci’s world map, from a non-zero center point of view.


The postulate that Aleni was a missionary in China is based on the evidence provided by the fact that Aleni received a substantial sum of money from the Roman Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith (1619), which was intended to support missions in China. The fact that Aleni was a missionary in China is further supported by the evidence that Aleni was able to publish two books in Chinese.

The two world maps kept in the Vatican Apostolic Library. During his 38 years in China, Aleni made many contributions to the world of science, art, and philosophy. He also contributed to the foundation of modern Chinese education and science.

The second world map (1623) is the first edition of the world map, while the first edition was published in 1624. The second world map is the first world map to be published in Chinese and is considered to be the first world map to be published in any language other than Latin.

In conclusion, the two world maps made by Fr. Giulio Aleni, S.I. are important contributions to the world of science, art, and philosophy. They are also important contributions to the foundation of modern Chinese education and science.