

The Reversed Castle

A fascinating story that of the Northern Italian, not Marco Polo, but the Jesuit Matteo Ricci sent to Christianized the last emperor of the Ming dynasty and 17th century China overall. Only slowly and after many years where he rose the emperor's curiosity by displaying his knowledge, the Italian Jesuit, defined by a contemporary Chinese poet a phoenix, only after decades he was allowed into the castle, the prohibited city, as a Kafka character that at last is closed to pursue his goal of reaching his master but in fact never thus. Other than the story which wants the knowledgeable Jesuit to be at last allowed to be buried in China, the biggest privileged for a dead foreigner who would have normally be sent home to be buried, we shall instead look at his rather unusual non-western strategy of knowledge infiltration.

The most interesting aspect of Matteo Ricci's strategy to divulge Christianity, facing an empire that equaled that of the West, was that of learning their language, their culture and similarities, finding at last a great similarity between Christianity and Confucianism, at that time threatened by Buddhism. We have here then the example of an establishment which the missionary tries to affect not via the traditional means of for instance critic and so forth, but by coming himself an establishment, by emulating the production taken place within the Forbidden City, to which, like a Kafka character, he has no access nor hope to influence. His strategy is at last successful and for the first time the emperor is to place the two hemispheres of the world provided by Ricci (or "Li Madou" as he was named) on each side of his throne, making only physically China the empire in between and initiating its awareness towards other civilizations.

Now it seems that, after the Forbidden city of Aristocracy have been finally penetrated and taken over by the people, it seems that many a forbidden cities are rising within and around human societies. Meaning that several aristocratic platforms tends to be created and are created however without being named aristocracies. They tend to reflect the same level of hierarchy and the same level of intrigues of a court, whether Eastern or Western with the various nuances. One could say that in fact the new Western implicit aristocracy, for instance the European one, much reflects the older Chinese, an aristocratic establishment not based on war but very much dominates by eunuchs intellectuals, as somewhat the gayish and lesbianish intellectuals dominating the European political scene.

As the European aristocracy rises however, it is not really the intellectual who is left to direct it, but more technical people whose religion is really a production aimed to

stabilize if not to boast the finance of the continent. Everyone seems to have to commit to it, this by necessity, by being indebted with the financial elite, not too directly however, but again through the facade of the establishment. In this process the intellectual loses much of his weight and his establishment, that has for long become a form of old aristocracy with professors being like counts and so forth, academia is also forced to comply to the new regime, this with much resistance.

Knowledge production is thus forced to show off its products which however has little of nothing in common with the real productions occurring in the actual Forbidden Cities beholding the power. It is somewhat of a detached and fake Forbidden city with little of no effect on the actual Forbidden cities, a merge of political power together with the new military power of finance. If we have to learn from Matteo Ricci's example, the knowledge producer than should pick up the semblances of the actual forbidden city mimicking its production, becoming in itself a little establishment, not of academic publications but of publications that reflect the new regime of things, publications which utilizes a bit of the same content and media form than these adopted within the forbidden city of the new hierarchs who are progressively dismantling all social infrastructures. In other words then, not resisting, or fighting back, but make use of their stronger energy to provide a new sort of regulation, human but above all spiritual, which would oppose the too worldly focus of the current governing society.

Nonetheless it seems that if the "land surveyor", the technical expert who beholds with his mapping technology the real understanding of the surrounding, once this land surveyor manages in fact, contrary to Kafka's last novel, to enter one of the forbidden cities, the castle where such a mapping is instead carried out not by land, but via a mediated and sedentary technology such as that of the magnifying glass, if the kafkian land surveyor in fact manages to enter, this at a time of the crisis of such a castle, once its credibility is falling apart, then as he presents his method and such a method gets underestimated by the arrogance of those whom, from their apparently high position, can look out, then something most interesting occurs: the land surveyor utilizes the same technology of mapping he has adopted out in nature, to map inside such a castle, thus creating a balanced representation of both the natural and the artificial environment, a representation that is, to conclude, the key to provoke a reconsideration of the materialistic strategies adopted by the governing powers.