

The "Art of Memory" in the Jesuit Missions in Peru and China in the Late 16th Century

Ana Carolina Hosne

Volume 76, 2012

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/mcr76art02>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

National Museums of Canada

ISSN

0316-1854 (print)

0000-0000 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Hosne, A. C. (2012). The "Art of Memory" in the Jesuit Missions in Peru and China in the Late 16th Century. *Material Culture Review*, 76, 30–40.

Article abstract

Abstract This article focuses on the "art of memory" in the Jesuit missions in colonial Peru and Ming China, especially through the works of José de Acosta (1540-1600) and Matteo Ricci (1552-1610). Jesuit education promoted training on how to enhance artificial memory in the colleges, and this interest in memory also circulated among the missions outside Europe. The Jesuits in Peru allowed and actually encouraged the use of the pre-Hispanic quipus—knotted-string devices—for memorization of doctrine and for confession. In turn, in the China mission, Ricci addressed the Chinese literati, presenting the Western Method of Memory or Xiguo Jifa (1596) as an ars memorativa from the West, especially when ars memorativa was intended as preparation for passing the civil examinations required to hold official posts in the Ming Empire. The purpose of this article is to answer why and how these Jesuits resorted to memory, and memory rules and techniques in these missions.

ANA CAROLINA HOSNE

The “Art of Memory” in the Jesuit Missions in Peru and China in the Late 16th Century

Résumé

Cet article porte sur « l'art de la mémoire » dans les missions jésuites du Pérou et de la Chine à l'époque coloniale, en particulier à travers les travaux de José de Acosta (1540-1600) et de Matteo Ricci (1552-1610). L'enseignement dans les collèges jésuites mettait l'accent sur l'entraînement de la mémoire artificielle, et cet intérêt pour la mémoire se diffusait également dans les missions hors d'Europe. Les jésuites du Pérou autorisèrent, et même encouragèrent, l'usage du quipu préhispanique—ficelles portant des successions de nœuds fixées à une corde—pour la mémorisation de la doctrine et la confession. À son tour, dans la mission chinoise, Ricci présenta aux lettrés chinois son traité venu de l'ouest, la Méthode occidentale de la mémoire, ou Xiguo Jifa (1596), en particulier parce que l'ars memorativa avait pour fonction de se préparer aux examens civils requis pour l'obtention de postes officiels dans l'empire Ming. Cet article cherche à savoir pourquoi et comment les jésuites ont eu recours à la mémoire, et s'intéresse également aux règles et aux techniques de celle-ci dans ces missions.

Abstract

This article focuses on the “art of memory” in the Jesuit missions in colonial Peru and Ming China, especially through the works of José de Acosta (1540-1600) and Matteo Ricci (1552-1610). Jesuit education promoted training on how to enhance artificial memory in the colleges, and this interest in memory also circulated among the missions outside Europe. The Jesuits in Peru allowed and actually encouraged the use of the pre-Hispanic quipus—knotted-string devices—for memorization of doctrine and for confession. In turn, in the China mission, Ricci addressed the Chinese literati, presenting the Western Method of Memory or Xiguo Jifa (1596) as an ars memorativa from the West, especially when ars memorativa was intended as preparation for passing the civil examinations required to hold official posts in the Ming Empire. The purpose of this article is to answer why and how these Jesuits resorted to memory, and memory rules and techniques in these missions.

The art of memory, at its core, was an aid to rhetoric, a technique with which an orator could improve his memory, thus enabling him to deliver long speeches with unfailing accuracy. In ca. 86-82 BCE, an unknown teacher of rhetoric in Rome compiled a now famous practical textbook, *Ad Herennium*, in which the author establishes that there are two kinds of memory: natural and artificial. Natural memory is born simultane-

ously with thought and engrafted in our minds. Artificial memory is a memory strengthened or confirmed by training. A good natural memory can be improved by this discipline, and persons less well endowed can have their weak memories improved by the art (Yates 1974: 4). In Cicero's *De Oratore*, in a dialogue between Crassus and Antonius, the latter makes some references to the subject of memory and the science of mnemonics.

Antonio tells a story about how Simonides of Ceos—said to be the inventor of the science of mnemonics—discovered that memory consists of an orderly arrangement. The story begins at a banquet to which Simonides was invited. He is called outside to meet two men at the door who requested that he come out, and, while he is outside, the roof falls in, killing all the people at the banquet. But thanks to his recollection of the layout of the place, Simonides is able to identify the victims, for their friends want to bury them. As a result of this incident, Simonides infers that people desiring to train the faculty of memory need to select locations, form mental images of the facts they wish to remember and store those images in various locations, with the result that the arrangement of these locations will preserve the order of the facts, and the images of the facts will designate the facts themselves. Simonides also discovered that the most complete pictures formed in our mind are of things conveyed and imprinted by the senses, with sight being the keenest of all the senses. As for the orator, memory is his special skill—things can be imprinted in the mind by an artful arrangement of the several masks that represent them, so that one may grasp ideas by means of images, and their order by means of locations (Cicero 1996, vol. 2: 350-63).

In the 16th century, the art of memory saw its moment of great splendour as it became part of a quest to revive the ideal of finding a universal key to access knowledge—a quest to find a new way of ordering and visualizing knowledge (Bolzoni 2001: xvii). In early modern Europe, the members of the Society of Jesus soon attracted the cultural elite and their male offspring to study in their schools, and they also provided space for the study of rhetoric. *De Arte Rethorica* by the Portuguese humanist Cyprianus Soares (1524-1593) was part of the humanities studies in the Jesuit colleges in Europe and included lessons for enhancing artificial memory since the more memory is exercised, the more it develops, especially at a young age (Orlandini 1901: 515). Soon afterward, some Jesuits in the missions outside Europe expressed their interest in memory techniques, an interest that led to unexpected developments. This article investigates the art and uses of mnemonic techniques in the Jesuit missions in colonial Peru

and late Ming China, in particular through the works of the Jesuits José de Acosta (1540-1600), a Spanish missionary in Peru, and Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), an Italian in China. These two outstanding and well-learned Jesuits both focused on memory, memory rules and mnemonic devices in their respective mission spaces. In particular, the article aims to analyze the contrasting roles of memory in a colonial mission space, like Peru, and a non-colonial one, like China.

When the Jesuit missionaries Michele Ruggieri (1543-1607) and Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) managed to enter China in 1583, they found a prosperous country whose achievements in culture, education and the arts, as well as its developments in urban and commercial life, were remarkable. Additionally, features that would usually be considered essential components of the spread of the European Renaissance, like the printing press, did not need to be introduced into China since there was already a widely available printing system (Standaert 2002: 2). According to Matteo Ricci, the uniqueness of China resided in the key role that letters played in the kingdom: “if philosophers are not kings, it is true that kings are governed by philosophers” (Ricci 1942-1949: 36). Many of these “philosophers” succeeded in the civil service examination and obtained official posts within the empire. The examination system was designed to test the merits of young men, most of whom came from literati or merchant backgrounds. The learning process began with long hours of rote memorization during childhood, specifically by children aged three to eight. Matteo Ricci set down what he learned about this training, in *Xiguo Jifa* or *Occidental Method of Memory* (1596), his second work in Chinese. He also taught them that the most usual mnemonic place system according to Western tradition was the architectural type, which Ricci represented to the Chinese as a memory palace (Spence 1985: 5). As for the general principles of the mnemonic art, the first step was to imprint in memory a series of *loci* or places, which Ricci referred to in his native Italian as *memoria locale*. Just like Cicero, Ricci told the Chinese how Simonides—*Ximonide*—created a method of memory based on images and places, providing specific rules for places throughout his treatise (Ricci 1965 [1596]: 17).

José de Acosta in Peru also concerned himself with memory, but he took a different tack from that of Ricci. An interest in their memory systems can be seen in his typology of *naciones de barbarous*—barbaric nations—in the *Proemio* of his *De Procuranda Indorum Salute* (1588). The presence or lack of a writing system became a key element for categorizing “barbarians” into three main groups. The first category of *barbaros* comprised the Chinese and Japanese; the second comprised the Mexicans and Peruvians—*mejicanos y peruanos*. Acosta states that the Indians had replaced writing with signs of their own invention named *quipus*: knotted-string devices, one of the few pre-Columbian memory techniques still accepted for public use when Acosta was in Peru. They used quipus to keep a record of their history, laws and genealogies, as well as to record accounting and numbers (1954a: 392). The material used for making standard Inca quipus was cotton; rarer quipus were made with alpaca. Touch came into play when the performer moved his or her hands over, in, below and through the knots and cords of the quipu (R. Ascher 2002: 112). However, the sequence of quipu construction was the major clue to the development of its information sequence. Quipu messages have still not been fully deciphered (M. Ascher 2002).

In the *Historia Natural y Moral de las Indias* (1590), Acosta alludes to what the natives of Peru themselves related about their origin and history. He refers to what learned—Spanish—men had previously claimed, namely that lacking books and writing, which they replaced with quipus, the Indians could go back up to 400 years, but no more, since before that everything was sheer confusion and darkness (1954b: 38-39). However, not all Acosta’s references connect memory to quipus in Peru, for he also draws attention to the *taquíes* (dances) and the oral memory they contained. These “arts” of memory were practised by specialists such as the *quipucamayocs*, experts on the knotted-string devices, and the *taquicamayocs*, who specialized in ritual chants as a means of transmitting oral memory. Last but not least, Acosta expresses his concern about drinking and, more specifically, drunkenness as, according to Pliny, it erased memory (Abercrombie 1998: 260). This article will focus exclusively on Acosta’s references to quipus in the Peru mission.

The question that arises here is why Acosta and Ricci focused on memory in their respective missions in Peru and China. The attempt to answer this question leads to the hypothesis that the missionaries regarded memory as a useful and effective tool for the conversion and Christianization of the “heathens.” Out of this hypothesis, two more questions arise: how and why did memory become an effective tool in the missions in Peru and China? This article aims to find answers to these questions. A section is dedicated to the Peru mission, where quipus became an effective tool for the indoctrination and confession of the Indians in the Jesuit *doctrinas* (Indian parishes). A second section focuses on the China mission, where Matteo Ricci’s *Xiguo Jifa* was part of his attempt to address and impress the Chinese literati by transmitting a field of knowledge from the West in a Chinese shell.

José de Acosta in Peru: The Effectiveness of Quipus in the Peru Mission

The Society of Jesus in Peru was summoned by Philip II to impose Tridentine Catholicism, independently of Rome, a task that entailed compliance with the colonial authorities’ demands. In 1568 Philip II imposed a reorganization of all the aspects of the mission: political, economic, religious and ecclesiastical, among others. Sent by the king to implement all these reforms, Viceroy Toledo (1569-1581) played a key role in this new stage in the colonization of Peru after the conquest. After arriving in Peru in 1569, together with the Society of Jesus and members of the Inquisition, the vast colonial enterprise was now in Toledo’s hands. Philip II had entrusted the Society of Jesus with the task of redirecting evangelization in the Andes, as he was not satisfied with the Dominicans, Franciscans, Mercedarians and Augustines who had preceded the Jesuits.

As the theologian of the mission, Acosta played a key role in adapting the Catholic doctrine to Andean soil. Before Acosta’s arrival, Philip II had imposed the decrees of the Council of Trent (1545-1563) as the unquestionable law for the colonies, which meant the imposition of Counter-Reformation norms for standardized

and universal catechesis. From the first years after the conquest, around the 1540s, the Spaniards had begun to write down statistical information—e.g., census data, tribute lists—that the administrators of the vanquished Inca Empire had registered with their quipus in pre-Hispanic times. Current interpretation distinguishes between two kinds of quipus in the Inca Empire: the accounting quipu and the historical, memory or rhetorical quipu. The accounting quipu registers only numbers, but these quipus were nonetheless endowed with signs that appeared in the form of subsidiary strings attached to either the primary cord or the pendant strings that modified aspects of the items and numbers registered. The accounting quipu was used to fulfil accounting functions from Cuzco down to the smallest groups in a lordship. The historical quipu also had “signs” in the strings (subsidiary strings attached to either the primary cord or the pendant strings), but the European sources emphasized the “technical memory” of the team trained to reproduce a reading of these historical quipus. Unfortunately, many of these quipus were lost with the European invasion, when the Spaniards killed the *quipucamayocs* and burned their quipus. The new colonial dominion resulted in two contradictory perspectives and responses regarding the quipus. On the one hand, it needed to retain the accounting for a certain period of time in order to colonize the newly subjugated people. On the other hand, the colonial order was obliged to suppress the dangerous historical-ideological “official records”—memory quipus (Assadourian 2002: 122-34).

The general inspections (*visitas*) ordered in 1549 by Pedro de La Gasca, the president of the Real Audiencia, the court of appeals in Lima, precipitated an episode of systematic transcription of statistical data from quipus to written Spanish documents. The Toledan inspection procedures called for a more systematic collection of historical information than had been carried out up to the 1570s, and the documents produced as a result of these new rounds of inspection visits grew in profusion. Furthermore, they reflect the key role played by local *quipucamayocs* in supplying Spanish officials with statistical information, on the basis of which the newly reorganized colonial state began to take shape. However, the Toledan investigations represent the heightened

tensions and conflicts between the quipus and the written records. In short, the interaction between Andean and Spanish records and record keepers was by no means always amicable, especially when the central issue became who—natives or Spaniards—would be in control of public records in the colony. Since the quipu system was too distant from European modes of expression, the Toledan reforms of the 1570s had aimed at replacing quipus with alphabetic records, but they were not very successful in this respect (Durstun 2007: 69).

We will now look at the role played by the quipus, whose use was allowed—and encouraged—by the Jesuits in the doctrinas. In an annual letter to General Mercurian of 1577, José de Acosta relates:

I forgot to say how in these boys [in the doctrina of Juli] who learn the doctrine I find much more skill than I thought. In just one week some of them know how to cross themselves and also the Our Father, Hail Mary and the Creed and the Salve in the language [Spanish] so they all sang it during the procession on Sunday; and many men and women and boys and girls are all day with their *quipos*,¹ like students repeating a lesson. (Egaña 1958: 276)

In this same annual letter, Acosta states that in the morning, when the Indians gather in the main square in front of the church, and are divided into groups of twelve and fifteen, they recite the prayers and doctrine. In effect, they are indoctrinated, but they use their quipus so that, according to Acosta, “they remember what they are taught, as we do in writing” (Egaña 1958: 280). Clearly, the quipus were related to learning and especially remembering the doctrine. Acosta in particular relates recollection to writing. The Andeans, on the contrary, recorded their lives through the tactile and visual world connected to orality, as they were not inclined to write or use images accompanying texts to express themselves (Cummins 1998: 95).

In more general terms, the missionaries in Peru made use of pre-Hispanic Andean notation. Before the Jesuits, the Mercedarian Diego de Porres recommended using the Andean quipus so that each village could have both the resolutions of the First Lima Council in 1551 and the list of the commandments. Moreover, when the Jesuits replaced the Dominicans in Chucuito, where

the doctrina of Juli was located, they might have allowed the use of quipus as an inherited custom from the Dominicans, then expelled by the royal representatives (Estenssoro 2003: 217).

The Third Lima Council made an old dream come true: one of imposing an authoritative catechism embodying a unified doctrine in colonial Peru, as well as in the suffragan dioceses. Indeed, this general catechetical corpus translated from Spanish into Quechua and Aymara for all the provinces. The *Greater Catechism* (*Catecismo mayor*) and *Brief Catechism* (*Catecismo breve*), both approved by archbishop Toribio de Mogrovejo in 1583 and printed in 1584, were later complemented by the addition of the *Third Catechism, by Sermons—Tercero catecismo por sermones* (1585), which was made up of a series of sermons in Spanish, also translated into Quechua and Aymara. Learning of the *Third Catechism*, unlike the other two catechisms, was not compulsory.

There are two issues to be stressed before moving to the second use of the quipus in the Peru mission. First, it is important to keep in mind that the Society of Jesus imposed the administration of the sacraments in Peru, reinforcing confession and incorporating communion to consolidate an evangelization grounded on positive theology. This is one of the main contrasts we find with the previous religious orders, such as the Dominicans, who were in favour of minimum doctrinal contents for the Indians, who had to embrace Christianity gradually, saving such complex dogma like the mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation for later. And they confined themselves to administering the sacraments of baptism, marriage and, occasionally, confirmation. Second, the *Third Catechism by Sermons* sets a strong anti-idolatrous tone in the Third Lima Council corpus, the *Doctrina christiana para la instrucción de los indios* (Duviols 1977: 175). It contains sermons that specifically denounce Indian “idolatry,” such as the eighteenth, which explicitly focuses on breaching the first of the Ten Commandments, idolatry, mainly expressed in the worship of *guacas*.² The nineteenth sermon encourages reprimanding the devil’s ministers, the *hechiceros* (sorcerers) and their superstitions and vain rites. It prevents Indians from celebrating the *Raymi*, the Festival of the Sun, for instance, or any other celebration of their ancestors, since

they worshiped the devil. The twenty-third sermon is against *borracheras*, drunkenness, itself a mortal sin and the principal means of destroying faith and preserving superstition and idolatry: “Drunkenness brings the man closer to a beast and, even worse than a beast, he is deprived of judgement, which is the light of his soul” (Pereña 1986: 629). It is also harmful because “it kills the faith in Jesus Christ and nurtures idolatries and devilish sects of the infidels and the devil” (637).

This being said, we can now focus on those few relics of a pre-Hispanic past that were allowed to remain. In sermon twelve, on how Indians should confess their sins in order to be forgiven, it is recommended that they record their sins with quipus. The sermon addresses them by saying:

For your confession to be good, and please God, the first thing you have to do, my son, is to make a *quipu*, just like you make them when you are a *tambo camayo*, of what you give and what people owe you. So you make a *quipu* of what you have done against God and against others, and how many times, if many or a few. And not only is it about deeds, but also about your thoughts ... if you desired to commit sin with a woman and you looked at her with that purpose, if you want to steal a blanket or someone’s ram. (Pereña 1986: 482)

Indeed, it was regarding confession that the Third Lima Council corpus placed stress on the use of quipus, making of their manufacturing a *sine qua non* for a thorough confession. But only a Christian usage of the quipus was allowed, with none other that might serve their superstitions (Castillo Arroyo 1966: 91; Vargas Ugarte 1951: 358). In this regard, the catechetical corpus went in an opposite direction to that established by the Third Lima Council (1582-1583), specifically chapter thirty-seven of the third section, in which the quipus were classified as idolatrous objects and were ordered to be destroyed:

Ban all the books that narrate or intentionally teach lecherous and obscene matters, for not only faith should be considered but also those customs that become easily corrupted.... Punish all the bishops who are in possession of these books.... And, as among the Indians, ignorant of letters, there are certain signs with different strings instead of books, that they call *quipos*, which contain a considerable number of testimonies of ancient superstition in which they

keep the secrets of their rites, ceremonies and laws, the bishops must be sure to destroy them completely, for they are pernicious instruments. (Lisi 1990: 191)

Approximately thirty years later, regarding a religious use of quipus, the chronicler Guaman Poma de Ayala also suggested that for the holy sacrament of confession the fathers make the penitent examine their soul and conscience for a week, and that they make a quipu recording their sins (Poma de Ayala 1980: 585). To conclude, even though the Third Lima Council and its catechetical corpus meant a watershed in the doctrinal, theological and disciplinary aspects of the Catholic world in Peru, the quipus proved to be effective—in the missionaries' eyes—for the Indians to both record their sins and remember doctrine. Although the Jesuits did not directly appropriate a local memory technique, they did so indirectly by allowing and even encouraging its use for religious purposes in the doctrines, as can be observed in Acosta's statements. From the missionaries' point of view and expectations, the quipus are certainly understood to be effective. As for confession, Indians did not seek confession on their own; it was mandatory, and the moment they touched the knots and strings was one of anxiety, as they had to recite their sins in front of the priest (Harrison 2002: 282).

Matteo Ricci's *Xiguo Jifa*: Failing to Impose Western Memory Rules

Soon after his arrival in China, Matteo Ricci described the three "sects"—Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism—always presenting them as three watertight categories. Ricci distinguished Confucianism from the other two, for, in his view, it was not idolatrous. The non-idolatrous gentility Ricci implicitly ascribes to the Confucians was also a response to his idea of Confucianism as a moral system that served to govern the Empire wisely but was lacking in metaphysical or supernatural foundations. This is the basis of the synthesis he constructed between Christianity and Confucianism, as they, simply put, were compatible at a moral and ethical level, and Christianity would provide Confucianism with a supernatural base. Ricci's interpretation

was the result of his study of *The Four Books* (*Sishu*) toward the end of the 1580s, which he then translated into Latin; they were all basic books in the education of scholars trained to hold imperial posts. Together with *The Four Books*, *The Five Classics* forms a compendium that was the cornerstone of Confucian education.³ Ricci regarded Confucius, the Sage, as "another Seneca" (*un altro Seneca*) and *The Four Books* as "good moral works" (Tacchi Venturi 1911-1913, vol. 2: 117). This perception served as an impulse for the Jesuit to compose humanistic writings proclaiming wisdom from the West.

In imperial China, the oral and the written went together in the examination regime, enhancing both literacy and memory. A written tradition of compositions was rehearsed orally by candidates to recall classical texts verbatim. For those without photographic memory, instruction in mnemonic skills was part of the classical teaching repertoire in imperial China, where oral recitation was aided by rhyming characters, four character jingles, and the technique of writing antithetical pairs of characters (*shu dui*). Many educators in the Ming period made the memorization of these two-character phrases a major building block of a classical memory (Elman 2000: 261-63).

In a letter to General Acquaviva from Nanchang, dated November 4, 1595, Ricci says he started to teach the "memory of places" (*memoria locale*) to some of his visitors (Tacchi Venturi 1911-1913, vol. 2: 211). Indeed, when it became known that Matteo Ricci had a prodigious memory, and that he had mastered a Western art of memory based on remembering the order of things, the Jesuit received invitations to present his art to the literati world of the late Ming. For instance, the governor of Jiangxi province invited Ricci to teach his memory-enhancing techniques to his three sons, then preparing for the civil examinations. According to Ricci, the Chinese there soon learned that Ricci "knew an art of memory, something unprecedented for them, and being a city full of students and literati there could not be anything more welcome than this" (Tacchi Venturi 1911-1913, vol. 2: 235). But the composition of the *Xiguo Jifa* also responded to Ricci's awareness of the importance and power of the written word in China, of which

he made good use. Indeed, as he himself said, books could get to the places the Jesuits could not reach (Ricci 1942-1949, vol. 1: 198). Ricci shared with the Chinese literati a love of books and printing. All the Western books, material exponents of Renaissance culture, that the Jesuits had taken with them to China for their personal use became one of the most effective ways of gaining recognition from the Chinese literati (Standaert 2003: 371).

Before analyzing some aspects of Ricci's treatise itself, let us now consider how different scholars have conceived the *Xiguo Jifa* so far. They tend to disagree when it comes to defining how Ricci's *Xiguo Jifa* represented European culture and, more specifically, how imbued it was with humanistic culture. The translator of this treatise into German, the scholar Michael Lackner, claims that even though Ricci's *Xiguo Jifa* is one of the most important documents of the adaptation of a speciality of occidental civilization to a Chinese context, it is anachronistic, since it deals with a conventional medieval, Lullian, *ars memorativa*. Ricci probably knew Lullian *ars magna*, or at least some of its formal models: in his catechism, the *Tianzhu Shiyi*, usually translated as True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven, which he finished in 1596, he includes a diagram, an *arbor porphyrii*, used in the Western medieval tradition.⁴ This does not mean that Ricci knew Lull's method in particular. However that may be, according to Lackner, by Ricci's lifetime, European humanism had already transformed the old art of memory in a most creative way (Lackner 1986: 201-219). Some years ago, in a co-authored article, Howard Goodman and Anthony Grafton explored the connection between memory, figuration, spatiality and pictorial representation, concluding that if Ricci had mastered Lullian science he could have recognized several tools also used in the *Book of Changes* (Goodman and Grafton 1990: 145). Another work relating to Ricci's *Xiguo Jifa* is Jonathan Spence's *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci*, which, despite its name, says little about the treatise itself, instead providing a thorough narrative of Ricci's life (Spence 1985).⁵

The *Xiguo Jifa* is a six-chapter treatise. In the first chapter there is a notion of human memory as a storehouse in which men can store what they remember, ready to be used whenever

they want. In sum, it is about storing knowledge, and not just about remembering; but storage requires a method (*jifa*). The second chapter relates how this art of *memoria locale* (memory places) was born, and here Ricci reproduces Cicero and the story of how Simonides created this method (Ricci 1965 [1596]: 17-18). From the third chapter on, Ricci introduces the details of his memory method through images. In the third chapter, he explains that there are different sizes of the architectural structures in which to place the images (i.e., large, medium and small, in an orderly fashion) (Ricci 1965 [1596]: 20). There are also different sizes of images, as well as other characteristics—i.e., whether they refer to abstract or concrete things, their brightness, etc.—to be considered.

The fourth chapter delves into the history of Chinese characters. Ricci refers to the theory of the formation of “six categories,” the six formation methods in people's common everyday language described in the Origin of Chinese Characters (*Shuowen jiezi*) composed by Xu Shen: pictographic characters, indicative characters, associative compounds, phonograms, phonetic loan characters and mutually explanatory characters (Ricci 1965 [1596]: 29). In introducing these categories and analyzing the forms and structures of Chinese characters, Ricci explains how different images can be made. The last two chapters provide examples of all the different possibilities for creating Chinese characters. Undoubtedly, Ricci saw much potential to use the Chinese characters as images that stand for the things to be memorized, to be placed in the storehouse, a memory palace or whatever the structure, in an orderly fashion. Indeed, what Ricci discovered in China, and added to this European art of memory, is that the Chinese characters themselves were, in his view, ideal images for a memory palace.

Ricci seems to ignore local mnemonic techniques and how they worked, or at least he does not mention any of them. The use of diagrams (*tu*) for mnemonic purposes was a rather common phenomenon in China. During the Song Dynasty (960-1279 AD), and especially in the Neo-Confucian tradition, diagrams could be a visual support for textual analysis. In short, these diagrams were based on a text or a corpus

of texts. The diagram was meant to give an analytical overview of the structure of the text and was also a visual aid for memorizing it (Lackner 1996: 210–12). In this regard, the popularization of woodblock printing had opened up new opportunities for writers of different subjects like cosmology, mathematics, medicine and architecture, among others, and thus developed richer forms of communication through the use of diagrams, charts and illustrations (Bray 2007: 522–23). However, as Michael Lackner points out, Ricci does not include a text for which images could act as a visual aid for its memorization (Lackner 1996: 211). And here we may encounter a major reason to explain the low impact of Ricci's treatise, at least as a tool and aid for the Chinese candidates when preparing for the civil service examinations, one of the main challenges being the student's ability to recall verbatim a classical text. Ricci focused on one of the core aspects of the Western art of memory—that is, the way it constructs its images in internal mental spaces, which are connected by a dense network of relationships to images created both by words and images, especially those produced by the figurative arts (Bolzoni 2001:182). But, from the Chinese point of view, it is likely that Ricci's method did not offer a text that could act as an anchorage for that dense network of images, thus rendering it too abstract as a method to recall a classical text. Last but not least, Ricci's use of the Chinese characters as ideal images for a memory palace may not have worked for the Chinese readership. For one, the Chinese character allows for a more direct access to what is meant (the signified) than is the case in alphabetic writing systems, which take a more roundabout way to the signified (Lackner 1996: 212). Therefore, one possible question to be asked here is how the Chinese characters as images could become central elements to communicate meaning and narrative to the Chinese (Rasmussen 2012: 33).

Memory in the Jesuit Missions: A Matter of “Efficiency”

This article has focused on how memory as an art learned in the European Jesuit colleges for perfecting oratory skills was used in the China

and Peru missions for different purposes. It has analyzed the Indian quipus and Ricci's *Xiguo Jifa*, the former a local memory technique, the latter an “exported” *ars memoriae* to the China mission. In the case of Peru, the Jesuits were maybe not the first ones to realize the efficacy of quipus for remembering doctrine and recording sins before confession, but they allowed and actually encouraged their use. Even though the Third Lima Council corpus, with Acosta's imprint, harshly attacked Indian idolatry, it was forgiving and encouraging regarding the religious use of quipus. The Jesuits—and Acosta in particular—might have been tolerant simply because, in this particular aspect, they were practical: if they wanted the Indians to not repeat doctrine in parrot fashion and to be thorough when recording all their sins, time proved that quipus were effective. And this was not just because the missionaries had to discard alphabetical writing as a tool when indoctrinating the Indians. Let us remember that in early modern Europe, the Jesuits were accustomed to preaching doctrine in rural areas where the congregation was not precisely literate. In the 16th century in Europe and later, writing was not considered the sole expression of humans' essential capacity to create memory; the same power was attributed to painted or sculpted images and to the spoken word. Writing could enter into the equation, though only in the form of public readings, since most of the preacher's audience was illiterate, and unmediated written texts, printed or handwritten, proved completely useless (Bouza 2004: 3–16).

Matteo Ricci in the China mission told the Chinese that the method presented in his treatise was currently and widely in use in the West, and that it was very efficient (Ricci 1965 [1596]: 16). He wanted and needed to seduce the scholar-officials in the Ming Empire, with the Emperor at their apex, for the Jesuits in China were in their hands and they would decide whether they could stay or not. As a scholar from the West, Matteo Ricci took part in enlightened debates in the academies, becoming part of a network of educated male literati who were expected to master the Confucian learning and to pass the official examinations to advance a career in the bureaucratic world. But all these efforts never diverted Ricci from his main goal of conversion of

the Chinese literati, an aspect that many scholars have more than once overlooked, letting the humanist and scholar overshadow the missionary that Ricci was. Now we are more than certain that Ricci was a scholar, a humanist and, above all, a missionary. That is why one cannot help but notice that the *Xiguo Jifa* is probably the only one among Ricci's works in which there is no mention of the Christian God in the Chinese version (the Lord of Heaven [*Tianzhu*] or the Lord on High [*Shang di*]). Indeed, even though the *Xiguo Jifa* was meant to be a treatise containing a tool for the candidates for the civil examinations, Ricci learned very well how to slip in certain religious notions, something he did right from the beginning in his first treatise in Chinese, *On Friendship*, which is not a doctrinal text. So we may conclude that in his *Xiguo Jifa* Ricci took a different tack, an indirect way of reaching the Chinese literati, by helping them to remember

their "sacred" texts through a Western method. It was, however, a Western method focusing on aspects of the Chinese language that may not have been useful to the Chinese themselves.

To conclude, the goals in these distant mission spaces, Peru and China, were the same: conversion, indoctrination and confession of the "gentiles." Both Acosta and Ricci conceived of memory as an art, a technique, local or "exported," and a means to achieve these goals, without preconceptions of which techniques might be most efficient. This might explain why, in the colonial context of the Andes, the religious use of local memory techniques was not only not condemned as idolatrous, but actually encouraged by Acosta, when in the China mission, a paradigmatic case of Jesuit accommodation to Chinese culture, Ricci's first impulse was to circulate a memory method with a Western core.

Notes

1. *Quipu* is a modern Spanish transliteration of *quipu*, and so that spelling has been retained when quoting Spanish sources. All translations of source material are my own.
2. In general terms, *guaca* refers to regional Andean deities. The *guacas* could be natural stone forms, mountains, shrines, ancestors' bodies (*malquis*) or burial sites, to mention some of their varied forms. A *guaca* was connected with ancestors and/or protectors, and—being sacred—it was always worshipped and deserved reverence.
3. *The Four Books* or *Si shu* include the *Analects*, the *Invariable Mean*, the *Great Learning* and the *Mencius*. The *Analects* and the *Invariable Mean* are attributed to Confucius; the *Great Learning* has been attributed to Confucius's disciple Zeng zi (ca. 505-436 BCE); while the *Mencius* comprises the dialogues of Mencius, disciple of Confucius. They were so grouped by the thinker Zhu Xi (1130-1200) during the Song dynasty in the 11th century. *The Five Classics* are the *Book of Odes*, the *Book of Documents*, the *Book of Rites* (originally one text to which two others were eventually added), the *Book of Changes* and the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. Tradition speaks of a Music classic, but if it ever existed it has been lost or incorporated into one of the three Rites classics (Nylan 2001: 8).
4. This kind of diagram branches top to bottom, from the general to the specific, presenting an Aristotelian system of classification.
5. Goodman and Grafton's article presents a critical review of Jonathan Spence's book as, in their opinion, it stops short of providing the full analysis of textual interpretation and textual negotiations that yielded Ricci's versions of Western scholarship and that determined the Chinese reactions to them (Goodman and Grafton 1990: 117).

References

- Abercrombie, Thomas A. 1998. *Pathways of Memory and Power: Ethnography and History Among an Andean People*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Acosta, José de. 1954a. *De Procuranda Indorum Salute, Obras del P. José de Acosta*. Ed. P. Francisco Mateos. Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Españoles.
- . 1954b. *Historia Natural y Moral de las Indias. Obras del P. José de Acosta*. Ed. P. Francisco Mateos. Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Españoles.
- Ascher, Marcia. 2002. Reading Khipu: Labels, Structure and Format. In *Narrative Threads: Accounting and Recounting in Andean Khipu*, 87-102. Ed. Jeffrey Quilter and Gary Urton. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Ascher, Robert. 2002. Inka Writing. In *Narrative Threads: Accounting and Recounting in Andean Khipu*, 103-115. Ed. Jeffrey Quilter and Gary Urton. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Assadourian, Carlos Sempat. 2002. Native Accounting and Memory According to the Colonial Sources. In *Narrative Threads: Accounting and Recounting in Andean Khipu*, 119-50. Ed. Jeffrey Quilter and Gary Urton. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Bolzoni, Lina. 2001. *The Gallery of Memory: Literary and Iconographic Models in the Age of the Printing Press*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Bouza, Fernando. 2004. *Communication, Knowledge, and Memory in Early Modern Spain*. Trans. Sonia López and Michael Agnew. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Bray, Francesca. 2007. Agricultural Illustrations: Blueprint or Icon? In *Graphics and Text in the Production of Technical Knowledge in China: The Warp and the Weft*, 521-67. Ed. Francesca Bray, Vera Dorofeeva-Lichtmann and Georges Métaillie. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.
- Castillo Arroyo, Javier. 1966. *Catecismos peruanos en el siglo XVI*. Centro Intercultural de Documentación.
- Cicero. 1996. *De Oratore*. Vol. 1-2. Trans. E. W. Sutton. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Cummins, Tom. 1998. Let me see! Reading Is For Them: Colonial Andean Images and Objects “como es costumbre tener los caciques Señores.” In *Native Traditions in the Postconquest World*, 91-148. Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection.
- Durston, Alan. 2007. *Pastoral Quechua. The History of Christian Translation in Colonial Peru, 1550-1650*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Duviols, Pierre. 1977. *La destrucción de las religiones andinas. Conquista y colonia*. México: UNAM, Dirección de publicaciones.
- Egaña, Antonio S. I. 1958. *Monumenta Peruana II (1576-1580)*. Vol 13. Rome: Monumenta Missionum Societatis Iesu.
- Elman, Benjamin. 2000. *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Estenssoro, Juan Carlos. 2003. *Del Paganismo a la santidad. La incorporación de los indios del Perú al catolicismo, 1532-1750*. Lima: IFEA.
- Goodman, Howard L. and Anthony Grafton. 1990. Ricci, the Chinese, and the Toolkits of Textualists. *Asia Major*. 3rd ser. 3 (2): 95-148.
- Harrison, Regina. 2002. Pérez Bocanegra's *Ritual formulario: Khipu, Knots and Confession*. In *Narrative Threads: Accounting and Recounting in Andean Khipu*, 266-92. Ed. Jeffrey Quilter and Gary Urton. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Lackner, Michael. 1986. *Das Vergessene Gedächtnis: Die Jesuitische mnemotechnische Abhandlung "Xiguo Jifa"*. Vol. 42 of *Münchener Ostasiatische Studien*. Stuttgart, Germany: Franz Steiner.
- . 1996. Jesuit Memoria, Chinese Xinfu: Some Preliminary Remarks on the Organisation of Memory. In *Western Humanistic Culture Presented to China by Jesuit Missionaries (XVII-XVIII Centuries): Proceedings of the Conference Held in Rome, October 25-27, 1993*, 201-19. Ed. Federico Masini, Marina Battaglini and Jesuit Historical Institute. Rome: Institutum Historicum S. I.
- Lisi, Francesco. 1990. *El Tercer Concilio Limense y la aculturación de los indígenas sudamericanos*. Salamanca: Acta Salmanticensia, Estudios filológicos 233.
- Nylan, Michael. 2001. *The Five "Confucian" Classics*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Orlandini, Nicolaus S. I. 1901. *Ordine delle Scuole per il Collegio di Napoli, Ad annum 1582-83*. Rome: Monumenta paedagogica Societatis Iesu (1582-1586).
- Pereña, Luciano, ed. 1986. *Doctrina Christiana y catecismo para instrucción de indios*. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas.
- Poma de Ayala, Felipe Guaman. 1980. *El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno*. Ed. John V. Murra and Rolena Adorno. México: Siglo XXI.
- Rasmussen, Birgit B. 2012. *Queequeg's Coffin: Indigenous Literacies and Early American Literature*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Ricci, Matteo. 1942-1949. *Storia dell'introduzione del Cristianesimo in Cina*. 2 vols. Ed. Pasquale M. D'Elia. Rome: La Libreria dello Stato.

———. *Xiguo Jifa*. 1965 [1596]. *Tianzhujiào dōngchuan wénxiàn*. Taipei, Taiwan: Taiwan xuesheng shuju.

Spence, Jonathan. 1985. *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci*. New York: Penguin Books.

Standaert, Nicolas. 2002. Methodology in View of Contact Between Cultures: The China Case in the 17th Century. CSRCS Occasional Paper no. 11. Hong Kong: Centre for the Study of Religion and Chinese Society, The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

———. 2003. The Transmission of Renaissance Culture in Seventeenth-Century China. *Renaissance Studies* 17 (3): 367-91.

Tacchi Venturi, Pietro S. J. 1911-1913. *Opere Storiche del P. Matteo Ricci S.I.* 2 vol. Macerata: F. Giorgetti.

Vargas Ugarte, Rubén S J. 1951. *Concilios limenses (1551-1772)*. Lima: Tip. Peruana.

Yates, Frances A. 1974. *The Art of Memory*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.