

Gao Bo

The Choice between Dragon and Snake: the Chinese Royal Image and its cultural metaphor in the XVI Century's Europe

For five centuries, *The History of the Kingdom of China* has always had an essential influence in international academic circles. The book was written in 1585 by the Spanish politician, scholar and missionary, Juan González de Mendoza (1545-1618) in Spanish and the first edition was published in Rome in the same year. Mendoza was appointed as ambassador in 1581 and left from Spain to China to meet the emperor Wanli in the Ming Dynasty, but finally, the mission was suspended and he never got to China by all his life. He wrote this book on the journey back to Spain via Mexico with rich references of Chinese histories collected there, as Mexico is a necessary transfer station between China and Spain in that period. It is an encyclopedia about China, where he constructed a complete image of China from the material to the spiritual level for the XVI Century's Europe. Moreover, the image was followed by entire Europe as a model for the next 200 years to describe China. Among different Chinese images in his book, Mendoza used "serpiente"(spanish) instead of "dragon" to build the Chinese supreme imperial image. It makes the author a strong interest in exploring the following three questions in this article: First, how did Mendoza use the snake totem to construct the Chinese emperor image? Second, did it present a positive or negative image? Third, Why did Mendoza use "serpiente" instead of "Dragon" to build China's image? The author dated back to the XVI Century to reconstruct the relationship between knowledge, discourse and power in the rationalization of the Golden Snake kingship image, and to interpret its cultural metaphor in the XVI century's Europe. The article has conducted an in-depth discussion on these three issues based on two ancient books with significant academic value, ignored for a long time by investigators: the original Spanish edition of Mendoza's book published in 1586 in Madrid, recognized as the best edition by the same Mendoza and the world's first Spanish dictionary published in 1611.

Information about the author

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