

The Book “Conversations in the Assembly of Angels” (天神会课) by N. Bichurin as the First Experience of Creating an Orthodox Religious Text in Chinese

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Abstract: This paper presents a survey of the first Orthodox book in Chinese, issued in 1811 in China by member of the 9th Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Beijing (1807-1821)-Nikita Bichurin. Five copies of this book are held in the Oriental department of the Scientific Library in St. Petersburg State University. The author examines bibliographical characteristics of these copies, discusses some circumstances of the book's creation, including its purposes and textual basis, structure and language features. The main stress is put on the specific ways and methods used by Bichurin for introducing Christian terminology to Chinese people.

Key words: Hyacinth, Catechism, Orthodox missionaries, Brancati, translation issues

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I . Bibliographical Characteristics of the Copies of “Conversations in the Assembly of Angels” Collected in St. Petersburg University

In this paper the author will deal with a book found by him in the Fund of Rare Oriental Books at the Oriental Department of the Maxim Gorky Scientific Library of St. Petersburg State University. Usually the Department is simply known as the “The Oriental Faculty's Library at SPbSU” or “The Library of the Faculty of Asian and African Studies at SPbSU”. In the paper we may occasionally use each of these names.

The book's name according to its title page is “Tian shen hui ke” (天神会课, “Conversations in the Assembly of Angels”). It is available in five exemplars in the Library and each exemplar has biographical

characteristics as follows^[1]. The book is located under three Library Position Codes: 1) BY-212 (a, b, c); 2) Xyl. 134; 3) Xyl. 1031. The letters “a”, “b” and “c” in the first code indicate that the book in the place “BY212” is stored in three exemplars. The book is written in Chinese. It’s author is also mentioned on the title page, where we can read such words: “Respectfully engraved by the Great Father Hyacinth” (originally “Da shen fu yi a qin te jing ke” 大神父乙阿钦特敬刻). There are no signs of the place and time of publishing on the book. Obviously, the method of its publication is woodcut block print-this can be seen due to the traces of wood fiber on the color. The book’s size is 27,4 cm in height and 17 cm in width. One exemplar is without cover, one has a cover of thin pink paper, and the last three have a cover made of loose yellow paper. Each exemplar is stitched with a thin black thread in twelve places and consists of 28 sheets. The paper of sheets is rice thin Chinese. Each sheet is doubled as it was usual for Chinese xylographs and each one has a frame. The frame’s size is 18 cm X 26 cm. One side of a sheet has eight strokes of Chinese characters; the strokes are divided by black lines. One stroke has place enough for 16 characters. In the place of folding of the sheets there are indications of the book’s title, as well as a turned down black fish tail, titles of the chapters and sheet numbers. Seven half sheets contain different pictures with black images of flowers. Three exemplars belongs to the Chinese books collection of Russian sinologist and academician Vasily P. Vasiliev (Chinese name is Wangxili, 王西里, 1818-1900), stored separately in the Library. This book is also available in 129 exemplars in the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts by Russian Academy of Science at St. Petersburg (the book’s Position Numbers are: D598, E122, E211, E974, E986)^[2] and one exemplar can be found in the Russian State Library in Moscow (with the Position Cipher: 3B2-4-145-0).

II. “Tian shen hui ke” and Its Historical Backgrounds

“Tian shen hui ke” is supposed to be the earliest Orthodox Catechism, written in the Chinese language. Some materials about the Catechism are discussed in works by Russian researchers Inna P. Karezina (Карезина И. П.)^[3] and Alexander N. Khokhlov (Хохлов А. Н., 1929)^[4]. In this paper we would like to put together all the information, which is related to the Catechism and which is available. Exactly we would

[1] The description of the book is available in Russian and Chinese. See: Завидовская Е. А., Маяцкий Д. И. Описание собрания китайских книг академика В. П. Васильева в фондах Восточного отдела Научной библиотеки Санкт-Петербургского государственного университета. С.-Петербург: Студия НП-Принт, 2012. 314 с. (Yekaterina A. Zavidovskaya, Dmitri I. Maiatckii, Catalog of the collection of Chinese books by Academician V. P. Vasiliev in the funds of the Oriental Department of the Scientific Library by the St. Petersburg State University, (St. Petersburg: Studio NP-Print, 2012), p. 314).

[2] See: Каталог фонда китайских ксилографов Института Востоковедения АН СССР. Т. 1-3. Москва: Восточная литература, 1973. Т. 2. С. 424-425 (Catalog of Chinese xylograph fund in the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences USSR, vol. 2, (Moscow: Oriental Literature, 1973), p. 424-425).

[3] See: Карезина И. П. Тянь-шэнь хуй кэ // Духовная культура Китая: энциклопедия; в 5 т. Т. 2. Мифология. Религия. Под ред. М. Л. Титаренко и др. - Москва: Восточная литература, 2007. С. 621-622 (Inna P. Karezina, Tian shen hui ke; Spiritual culture of China, Encyclopedia in 5 volumes, vol. 2, Mythology. Religion, Ed. by Titarenko M. L. and others, (Moscow: Oriental literature, 2007), pp. 621-622); Inna P. Karezina, Conversation of the Angels, http://www.orthodox.cn/catechesis/tianshenhuike/index_en.html, 22. 10. 2017; Inna P. Karezina, Chinese Catechism of Fr. Francesco Brancato as a source of catechesis of Archimandrite Iakinf (Bichurin), http://www.orthodox.cn/catechesis/tianshenhuike/20060926historycatech_en.htm, 22. 10. 2017.

[4] See: Хохлов А. Н. Российская православная миссия в Пекине и китайские переводы христианских книг // Китайское языкознание. VIII Международная конференция. Москва: Институт языкознания РАН, 1996. С. 160-164 (Aleksander N. Khokhlov, Russian Orthodox Mission in Beijing and the Chinese translations of Christian books; Chinese linguistics, VIII International Conference, (Moscow: Institute of linguistics, Russian Academy of Science, 1996), pp. 160-164).

like to examine the historical background of the book’s appearance, to investigate its text and to understand the method of Bichurin for explanation of Orthodox Christianity by the means of the Chinese language.

As we already mentioned above, the book “Tian shen hui ke” was prepared by Nikita Yakovlevich Bichurin (Russian name: Никита Яковлевич Бичурин; Chinese name^[5]: Nijita Yakefulieweiqi Biqulinq 尼基塔·雅科夫列维奇·比丘林, 1777-1853). This man is better known as Archimandrite Hyacinth, or Iakinf (Russian: Иакинф; Chinese: Yiaqinte 乙阿钦特/ Yajing 雅经). He was the head of the 9th Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Beijing (1807-1821) and is regarded in Russia as one of fathers of Russian sinology.

There are a lot of monographs and papers devoted to Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Beijing (1685-1954). Mainly they are in Russian, but there are also some materials in English^[6]. Russian sinologist and historian of the mission, Professor Ksenia Kepping (1937-2002), who was a niece of the 20th leader of the Mission in Beijing Victor Sviatin (о. Виктор, Леонид Викторович Святин, 1893-1966), says that the Russian missionaries themselves considered the year of 1685 to be the starting point for their history in China^[7]. That year more than hundred of Russian prisoners of war (“Albazinians”) were trapped to China during military conflicts between China and Russia in the Amur region in the 1680s. Among them there was an Orthodox priest Maksim Leontiev (? -1711/1712). These people were settled near Dongzhimen in Beijing and included into the guard of Kangxi emperor. After the death of Maksim Leontiev Russian government reached with the Chinese government an agreement to sent Orthodox Missions to China regularly. The Missions were obliged to provide religious services for descendants of Albazinians. At the same time their members were instructed to study the Chinese and Manchurian languages, as well as different spheres of Chinese life.

Russian missionaries, unlike the Catholic ones, till the second half of nineteenth century did not spread the Christianity among the Chinese and the Manchus, especially since they did not participate in court intrigues. The organizer of the Missions Peter the Great (1682-1725) once wrote instructions in his letter to the missionaries: “Just for God’s sake be careful do not anger both the Chinese authorities and the Jesuits, who already have their own nest there for a long time”^[8]. The Mission was limited only to maintaining the faith among the Albazinians, carrying out diplomatic assignments of the Russian government, giving shelter and assisting Russian merchant caravans, studying Chinese and Manchu languages. Due to these features, the Qing government treated it with loyalty. The Orthodox Mission has escaped the persecution by the Chinese authorities against Christians.

Even in the 19th century, the missionaries themselves did not believe that China would ever become a

[5] This and two following Chinese names are mentioned in the paper “俄国汉语研究概况 Eguo hanxue yanjiu gaikuang”, issued by Irina F. Popova (See: 波波娃 Irina F. Popova, “俄国汉语研究概况” Eguo hanyu yanjiu gaikuo [General situation in the study of China in Russia]; 东亚文化交涉研究 Higashi ajia bunka ko;sho;ken’kyu; [Cultural communication in East Asia], Vol. 8 (大阪 Osaka; 関西大学文化交渉学教育研究拠点 Kansai daigaku bunka ko;sho;gaku kyo;iku ken’kyu;kyo ten [Kansai University Cultural Interaction Studies Education Research Base], 2012), p. 160.

[6] For the first period of the Mission see: Eric Widmer, *The Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Peking During the Eighteenth Century*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 262 p.

[7] See: Кепинг К. Судьба Российской Духовной миссии в Китае. Последние статьи и документы. С. -Петербург: Омега, 2003. С. 242 (Ksenia Kepping, *The Fate of the Russian Orthodox Mission in China, The last papers and documents*, (St. Petersburg: Omega, 2003), p. 242).

[8] See: Краткая история российской духовной миссии в Китае. М., СПб, 2006. С. 13-14 (Bei-guan. *A brief History of Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in China*, (Moscow and St. Petersburg: Alliance-Archeo, 2006), p. 13-14).

Christian state. Service in Beijing for them was looked upon as a heavy duty or exile^[9]. The missionaries still were rejecting the methods of active preaching used by Western missionaries and believed that Orthodoxy's "peculiarity is not to impose moral chains upon the souls of people to bind them to church"^[10].

A member of the 16th and 17th Missions (1879-1896) Father Alexiy Vinogradov (Александр Николаевич Виноградов, 1845-1919) characterized remarkably the specifics of Russian missionaries in comparison with Western participants: "The English and American Missionaries are greatly concerned with preaching, teaching, organizing schools, distribution of all sorts of books and manuals among the people. . . But the Russians, placed in the position of Missionaries among the Chinese, focus on Church Service, the performance of the sacraments. . ." ^[11]. He also noted: "... a great obstacle to acquaintance with the activities of foreign Missionaries is the ignorance of their languages by the Russian Missionaries, as well as foreign Missionary magazines and books devoted to the study of China and other countries of the East"^[12].

According to the opinion of many specialists in the history of Russian Missions in Beijing, the reasons of low activity in preaching Christianity in China also had the deep ties with the special tasks determined by Russian government and was also influenced by poor financing of the Mission. Russian historian Vladimir Datsishen wrote about the 11th Mission: "Despite the formal status of a missionary institutions, the main tasks assigned to them in St. Petersburg were 'facilitating with the help of them relations with Beijing, to maintain and consolidate existing with China peaceful and trade relations and to averse all that could damage the benefits and interests of Russia in its affairs in that region' ..."^[13]. In fact the same applies to all other missions. For example, Vladimir Datsishen notes that the chief of the 13th Mission Archimandrite Palladiy Kafarov (о. Палладий, Петр Иванович Кафаров, 1817-1878), mainly dealt with political issues^[14]. In the end, it turns out that the government only used the mission for its own purposes, and the Holy Synod, which also obeyed the authorities, was also not particularly interested in missionary activity. This situation gives the right to some modern authors^[15] to assert that the Russian missionaries did not preach at all^[16], but that is not entirely justified, since they spiritually nourishing their flock, translated religious literature, including liturgical books and the Bible. And when in 19th century the missionaries started their active translation work the flock begun to grow gradually, especially by the beginning of the 20th century. According to historians the quantity of flock during the 18th century decreased till 35 people (figure for the year of 1810^[17]). On the

[9] Дацьшен В. Г. История Российской духовной миссии в Китае. Гонконг: Православное Братство святых Первоверховных апостолов Петра и Павла, 2010. С. 108 (Vladimir Datsishen, History of Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in China, (Xianggang: Orthodox Brotherhood of Saints Apostles Peter and Paul, 2010), p. 108.

[10] Ibid., 213.

[11] Ibid., 215.

[12] Ibid., 215.

[13] Ibid., 177.

[14] Ibid., 184.

[15] For example, Petr Scatchkov and Zhang Sui. See: Скачков П. Е. Очерки истории русского китаеведения. М.: Наука, 1977 (Petr Ye. Scatchkov, Essays on the history of Russian sinology, (Moscow: Science, 1977); 张绥 Zhang Sui, 《东正教和东正教在中国》 Dongzhengjiao he dongzhengjiao zai Zhongguo [Orthodox and Orthodox Church in China], (上海 Shanghai: 学林出版社 Xueshu chubanshe [Science Press], 1986). Chinese authors usually has the same point of view as Zhang Sui.

[16] We should also to note, that the preaching of Christianity was strictly prohibited till 1858. Catholics and Protestants by their activities violated Chinese laws. Russian missionaries did not.

[17] Скачков П. Е. Очерки истории русского китаеведения. Москва: Наука, 1977. С. 91 (Petr Ye. Scatchkov, Essays on the history of Russian sinology, (Moscow: Science, 1977), p. 91.

other side by the year of 1900 the number of parishioners increased up to 450 persons^[18]. This change was related with translation activities of Guriy Karpov (1814-1882) and his followers.

Nevertheless Russian people made some attempts to translate Orthodox books into Manchurian or Chinese several decades before Guriy Karpov. The first translator of Russian Orthodox book in China was participant of the 8th mission - Stepan Lipovtsev (1772-1841). He since 1794 till 1808 carried out the translation of the New Testament into the Manchurian language^[19]. However, he did this without official permission of the Holy Synod. Nevertheless, the translation was adopted and published by the British and Foreign Biblical Society. Subsequently, this book was used by Protestant missionaries in their schools and for preaching in Manchuria^[20].

"Tian shen hui ke" by N. Bichurin, as we mentioned above, was chronologically the first experience of creating an Orthodox religious text by Russian missionaries in Chinese.

By the time of Bichurin's arriving at Beijing the descendants of Albazinians already did not know the Russian language and had a very simple understanding of the Orthodox teaching^[21]. Historian of Orthodox Missions father Nikolay Adoratskiy (1849-1896) wrote that these people gradually assimilated with Chinese people and even began to practice Chinese believes. For the needs of the flock still keeping connections with the Mission, Archimandrite Iakinf compiled the short catechism "Tian shen hui ke" in Chinese and published it in 1810 in 400 copies^[22]. Later this book was translated into Russian in the College of Foreign Affairs by S. V. Lipovtsov (1770-1841) for submission to the Holy Synod (1814). The title of the translation is "Orthodox teaching" (《Православное учение》) and it is stored now in the Russian National Library (Department of Manuscripts, Fund 1457, № 24)^[23].

According to reports by Iakinf, during 1808-1809, in addition to translating the brief catechism, the

[18] Дмитренко А. А. Перевод духовной литературы как основа проповеди христианства в Китае / Проблемы литератур Дальнего Востока. Сборник материалов VII Международной научной конференции. 29 июня-3 июля 2016. С. -Петербург: Студия НП-Принт, 2016. Т. 2. С. 32. (Alexander A. Dmitrenko, Translation of Cathetical Literature as Basis for Preaching Christianity in China: Issues of Far Eastern Literatures. Book of papers of the 7th International scientific conference. June 29-July 3, 2016, vol. 2 (St. Petersburg: Studio NP-Print, 2016), p. 32).

[19] Виноградов А. Китайская библиотека и ученые труды членов Императорской Российской Духовной и Дипломатической миссии в г. Пекине, или Бэй-Цзине (в Китае). С приложением каталога, чертежей и рисунков. С. -Петербург: Типография братьев Пантелеевых, 1889. С. 26 (Aleksiy Vinogradov, Chinese library and scholarly works of members of the Imperial Russian Ecclesiastical and Diplomatic Mission in Beijing, or Beijing (in China). With the application of the catalog, drawings and drawings, (St. Petersburg: Pantelev brothers Press, 1889), p. 29).

[20] Поздняев Д. Актуальность переводов православной литературы на китайский язык (D. Pzdniev, The urgency of translating orthodox literature into Chinese, <https://pravoslavie.fm/articles/aktualnost-perevodov-pravoslavnoy-literaturi-na-kitayskii-yazik/>, 15. 11. 2017.

[21] Адоратский Н. Отец Иакинф Бичурин (Исторический этюд) // Православный собеседник, 1886. С. 166. (Adoratskiy N., Father Iakinf Bichurin (Historical sketch); Orthodox interlocutor, (Kazan, 1886), p. 166).

[22] See: Карезина И. П. Тянь-шэнь хуй кэ // Духовная культура Китая: энциклопедия; в 5 т. Т. 2. Мифология. Религия. Под ред. М. Л. Титаренко и др. - Москва: Восточная литература, 2007. С. 621-622 (Inna P. Karezina, Tian shen hui ke; Spiritual culture of China, Encyclopedia in 5 volumes, vol. 2, Mythology. Religion, Ed. by Titarenko M. L. and others, (Moscow: Oriental literature, 2007), pp. 621-622); Inna P. Karezina, Conversation of the Angels, http://www.orthodox.cn/catechesis/tianshenhuike/index_en.html, 22. 10. 2017; Inna P. Karezina, Chinese Catechism of Fr. Francesco Brancato as a source of catechesis of Archimandrite Iakinf (Bichurin), http://www.orthodox.cn/catechesis/tianshenhuike/20060926historycatech_en.htm, 22. 10. 2017; Хохлов А. Н. Российская православная миссия в Пекине и китайские переводы христианских книг // Китайское языкознание. VIII Международная конференция. Москва: Иститут языкознания РАН, 1996. С. 160-164 (Aleksander N. Khokhlov, Russian Orthodox Mission in Beijing and the Chinese translations of Christian books; Chinese linguistics, VIII International Conference, (Moscow: Institute of linguistics, Russian Academy of Science, 1996), p. 161).

[23] The translation was published in: Архив российской китаистики. Сост. А. И. Кобзев. Т. III. М., 2016. С. 311-364 (Archive of Russian sinology, compiled by Artem I. Kobzev, vol. 3 (Moscow: Institute of Oriental Studies at Russian academy of Sciences, 2016), p. 311-364).

Archimandrite was also engaged in translating the Greek-Russian Orthodox teaching, a brief sacred history and “some peaces from the liturgy into Chinese, so as to gradually introduce these materials by the mean of local language, which is necessary for the education of the Albazinian descendants, who sincerely wished to become Christian”^[24].

III. Source Basis of “Tian shen hui ke” by Bichurin

Inna Karezina and Alexander Dmitrenko wrote in their works, the Catechism by N. Bichurin was prepared on the basis of the catechism with the same title-“Tian shen hui ke” (天神会课, “Conversations in the Assembly of Angels”) by the Jesuit missionary Francesco Brancati (Chinese name Fan Guoguang 潘国光, 1607-1671)^[25].

Francesco Brancati preached in Suzhou, Songjiang and Shanghai. During his service in Shanghai issued several catechisms, including “Tian shen hui ke” (1661) for children. Later this catechism was published again in Beijing (1739)^[26]. The text of the second edition was partly translated into Russian by Alexey L. Leontiev (Алексей Леонтьевич Леонтьев, 1716-1786)-the book was issued in 1781 in St. Petersburg by the Russian Academy of Science under the Russian title 《Тянь шинь ко, то есть Ангельская беседа》 (“Tian shen ke, or the Angel’s Conversation”). This book is available in the Library of the Faculty of Asian and African Studies (Book Position number is: CII-1150).

Why did Iakinf use the Catechism by catholic monk? There could be some reasons. The first reason was by the beginning of the 19th century the Catholic Mission had got reach experience in popularizing of Christianity in China. The famous historian of the Bichurin’s life professor Petr V. Denisov wrote in his book that N. Bichurin was instructed to establish contacts with the Catholics and to study their preaching methods^[27]. As a result the Russian Archimandrite made friends with the rector of the Southern Monastery of the Portuguese mission Ribeiro and his companion father Constant Pereira. Thanks to them he got access to the library of the Portuguese mission^[28]. There he could read many works by European sinologists. Maybe he chose the book by Brancati, because its language does not contain complicated religious terms. The book is comparatively easy for understanding by non-Christian people as it was adopted for children. Moreover, after

[24] Ibid., 59.

[25] See: Карезина И. П. Тянь-шэнь хуй кэ // Духовная культура Китая: энциклопедия; в 5 т. Т. 2. Мифология. Религия. Под ред. М. Л. Титаренко и др. - Москва: Восточная литература, 2007. С. 621-622 (Inna P. Karezina, Tian shen hui ke; Spiritual culture of China, Encyclopedia in 5 volumes, vol. 2, Mythology. Religion, Ed. by Titarenko M. L. and others, (Moscow: Oriental literature, 2007), pp. 621-622); Inna P. Karezina, Conversation of the Angels, http://www.orthodox.cn/catechesis/tianshenhuike/index_en.html, 22. 10. 2017; Inna P. Karezina, Chinese Catechism of Fr. Francesco Brancati as a source of catechesis of Archimandrite Iakinf (Bichurin), http://www.orthodox.cn/catechesis/tianshenhuike/20060926historycatech_en.htm, 22. 10. 2017; Дмитренко А. А. Перевод духовной литературы как основа проповеди христианства в Китае // Проблемы литератур Дальнего Востока. Сборник материалов VII Международной научной конференции. 29 июня-3 июля 2016. С. -Петербург: Студия НП-Принт, 2016. Т. 2. С. 32 (Alexander A. Dmitrenko, Translation of Cathetical Literature as Basis for Preaching Christianity in China; Issues of Far Eastern Literatures. Book of papers of the 7th International scientific conference, June 29-July 3, 2016, vol. 2 (St. Petersburg: Studio NP-Print, 2016), p. 32).

[26] This book is stored in two copies in the Oriental Department of the SPbSU Library. One is xylograph (Xyl. 133), another one is manuscript (Xyl. 912).

[27] See: Денисов П. В. Слово о монахе Бичурине. Чебоксары, 2007. С. 51 (Petr V. Denisov, About father Bichurin (Seboksary, 2007), p. 51).

[28] Ibid., 78.

two years of living in China Bichurin could still did not have enough knowledge in Chinese. Russian missionaries did not have good dictionaries of Chinese that time. Only by the time of finishing his mission Bichurin prepared the fullest dictionary.

Maybe because N. Bichurin used the book of Jesuits and published it under the same title (“Tian shen hui ke”), it was soon prohibited by the Chinese government^[29]. The information about this accident is depicted in two sources. First of all, one of the exemplars of Bichurin’s Catechism stored in the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts at St. Petersburg contains a handmade writing in Russian: “Orthodox Catechism in Chinese, organized in questions and answers. Printed in 1810 or 1811 in Beijing by hieromonk Iakin. Was prohibited and withdrawn by the local authorities”. On the other hand the same information was written on a copy of Catechism available in Rome. In 2002 a monk Albert Chan published a catalogue “Chinese books and documents in the Jesuit Archives in Rome; descriptive catalogue” (罗马耶稣会档案处藏汉和图书文献 Luoma Yesuhui danganchu cang Hanhe tushu wenxian: 目录提要 Mulu tiyao), where he describes Chinese books and manuscripts in the Jesuits collection. Albert Chan mentions there the book by Bichurin (Book’s number: II, 170) and gives the inscription made in French on the cover of the book: 《Catéchisme de la / Religion Grecque / publié à Pekin par / l’Archimandrite Russe / Hyacinthe / Les planches de cet ouvrage / ont été détruites par ordre / de gouvernement chinois》 (The Catechism of the Greek Confession, published by Russian Archimandrite Iakin. Printed boards of this work were destroyed by order of the Chinese government)^[30].

IV. Features of Structure and Christian Text in “Tian shen hui ke” by N. Bichurin

The Catechism by N. Bichurin consists of “Contents” (Page 1b) and five chapters: “Sheng jiao yao li liu duan” (圣教要理六端, English: “The six essential doctrines of the Church”, Pages 2a-3b), “Sheng jiao yao li wen da” (圣教要理问答, English: “Questions and answers on the essence of the Church’s doctrine”, Pages 4a-14b), “Tian zhu shi jie wen da” (天主十诫问答, English: “Questions and answers on the Ten Commandments of the Lord”, Pages 15a-19b), “Tian zhu jing jie” (天主经解, English: “Explanation of the Lord’s Prayer”, Pages 20a-23a) and “Tian shen hui gui”^[31] (天神会规, English: “Precepts of the Church with explanation”, Pages 24a-28b). If we compare this structure with the Contents in Brancati’s book, we will find that two parts in it are of absolutely the same title (Chapter 1 “Sheng jiao yao li liu duan” 圣教要理六端 and Chapter 7 “Tian zhu jing jie” 天主经解) and two parts are of similar titles (Chapter 10 “Tian zhu shi jie jie” 天主十诫解 and Chapter 11 “Sheng jiao si gui jie” 圣教四规解). Generally speaking the manner of questions and answers was borrowed by Father Iakin too.

[29] The Catholic Church was banned since 1724 till 1844. See: Ломанов А. В. Христианство и китайская культура. М., 2002. С. 247 (Lomanov A. V., Christianity and Chinese culture (Moscow: Oriental literature, 2002), p. 247).

[30] Chan, Albert, Chinese books and documents in the Jesuit Archives in Rome; descriptive catalogue (罗马耶稣会档案处藏汉和图书文献 Luoma Yesuhui danganchu cang Hanhe tushu wenxian: 目录提要 Mulu tiyao), (New York, London: Sharpe, 2002), p. 461. See pdf of this book on the Google-Books; https://books.google.ru/books?id=yP0vCgAAQBAJ&pg=PT667&lpg=PT667&dq=%E4%B9%99%E9%98%BF%E6%AC%BD%E7%89%B9+%E5%A4%A9%E7%A5%9E%E6%9C%83%E8%AA%B2&source=bl&ots=ZQLRsEi8HK&sig=RjFlzci4Q8iTOChqYRyLPjeWIEM&hl=ru&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjB3Jnlrt_WAhXBQpoKHYCeA44Q6AEINDAC#v=onepage&q&f=false, 22. 10. 2017).

[31] On the 24th page (side “a”) the chapter has a different title-“Sheng jiao hui ding gui jie” (圣教会定规解, “Explanation of the main principles of the Holy Church”).

German orientalists Julius Heinrich Klaproth (1783-1835) in 1831 published an article “Note sur le catéchisme chinois intitulé Thian chin hoei kho” (“Some notes on the Chinese catechism entitled Tian shen hui ke”)^[32], where he asserts, that the text by N. Bichurin was in fact compiled on the basis of two Chinese-language catechisms of Catholic authors. Particularly, chapters 1, 3-5 are the variations of Brancati’s Catechism^[33]. While writing the second chapter, the author used the “Petit Catéchisme des missionnaires catholiques de Péking”^[34] (Brief Catechism of Catholic Missionaries in Beijing), which probably was lost.

Let’s have a look at the first chapter of the book by Bichurin. It deals with the six principles of the fundamental dogmas in the Christian religion. The first and second of these principles were word for word taken from the work by Brancati. For the third one, text of the Sicilian Jesuit and that of the Russian Archimandrite are almost the same. The only difference is Bichurin used the words “**圣父 Shengfu**” (“The Holy Father”), “**圣子 Shengzi**” (“The Holy Son”) and “**圣神 Shengshen**” (The Holy Spirit) instead of “**罢德肋 Badele**” (Latin “Patrem”, or “Father”), “**费略 Feilue**” (Latin “Filius”, or “Son”) and “**斯彼利多三多 Sibiliduosanduo**” (“Spiritus Sanctus”, or “Saint Spirit”), that transcribed original Latin word in Chinese characters. These words are replaced in the whole Catechism by N. Bichurin.

We can see, Iakinf attached great importance to terminology. Catholic preachers preferred to transcribe the basic concepts of the Christian faith. Bichurin, believing that this would lead to a distortion of the teaching, insisted on the preferability of the translation. There is another example of such his strategy—the concept of “Church” is given in Brancati’s book by hieroglyphs “厄格勒西亚”^[35] (Ecclesia), but Iakinf uses a term “**圣教会 Sheng jiaohui**” (“Christian assembly”).

The fifth and sixth principles are completely identical, as will be seen from the following passages, demonstrating. For the readers convenient we will select similar words in bold in both of the passages. The words replaced by Bichurin are highlighted in color.

Text by N. Bichurin:

圣教要理六端

人欲进天主圣教先该明圣教要理六端

第一该明未有天地之先有一大主宰从无而生天地万物又恒保护所生之物令各得其所而常为之主宰

第二该明天主赏善罚恶审判生死者

第三该明一个天主有三位曰圣父曰圣子曰圣神三位共是一性一体无大小先后之别

第四该明第二位圣子降生为人为救我万民自甘受难被钉十字架死第三日复活第四十日升天

第五该明人灵魂有始无终常在不灭人得天主宠祐在生为善身后天主赐其升天堂享无穷之福不得天主宠祐在生为恶身后天主罚其下地狱受无穷之苦

[32] Klaproth J., Note sur l’abrégé du catéchisme chinoise intitulé Thian chin hoei kho, publié à Peking par l’archimandrite Hyacinthe Bitchourin; Nouveau journal asiatique, ou Recueil de Memoires, D’Extraits et de Notices, tome 8 (Paris, 1831), p. 66-80. See the whole text of this book on the Google-Books: <https://books.google.ru/books?id=uumzFCxleVMC&pg=PA72&lpg=PA72&dq=Petit+Cat%C3%A9chisme+des+missionnaires+catholiques+de+P%C3%A9king&source=bl&ots=SiqRLEqig2&sig=MlefxUyHJ7CbYXABMcoGZ-uXayE&hl=ru&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjE14WM9ubWAhWLO5oKHd3LAUcQ6AEIKDAA#v=onepage&q=Petit%20Cat%C3%A9chisme%20des%20missionnaires%20catholiques%20de%20P%C3%A9king&f=false>.

[33] Ibid., 72.

[34] Ibid., 73.

[35] 见 See: 潘国光 Pan Guoguang 1739:《天神会课》Tianshen huikē [Conversations in the Assembly of Angels], 第 26 页。

第六该明天下设教者最多惟天主教至公至正能使人得天上之福免地狱之苦所以天下万民皆当奉事真主以救己灵魂若恃自己力量必不能为善立功不能上升必致下坠所以凡人必须天主宠佑又须自己勉行^[36]

Text by F. Brancati:

圣教要理六端

问:人欲进天主教。该行何礼。

答:先该明白圣教要理。后该读熟。圣教经言。

问:圣教经言。有几种。

答:当紧者。有七种。(一)圣号经。(二)天主经。(三)圣母经。(四)信经。(五)悔罪经。(六)天主十诫。(七)圣教四规。

问:圣教要理。该明几端。

答:该明六端。

第一。该明未有天地之先。有一大主宰。从无而生天地万物。又恒保护所生之物。令各得其所。而常为之主宰。

第二。该明天主赏善罚恶。审判生死者。

第三。该明一个天主。有三位。曰罢德肋。曰费略。曰斯彼利多三多。三位共是一性一体。无大小先后之别。

第四。该明第二位费略。降生为人。为救我万民。自其受难。被钉十字架死。第三日复活。第四十日升天。

第五。该明人灵魂。有始无终。常在不灭。人得天主宠佑。在生为善。身后。天主赐其升天堂。享无穷之福。不得天主宠佑。在生为恶。身后。天主罚其下地狱。受无穷之苦。

第六。该明天下设教者最多。惟天主教。至公至正。能使人得天上之福。免地狱之苦。所以天下万民。皆当奉事天主。以救己灵魂。若恃自己力量。必能为善立功。不能上升。必致下坠。所以凡人必须天主宠佑。又须自己勉行。^[37]

[36] 见 See:乙阿钦特 Yiaqinte 1810:《天神会课》Tianshen huike [Conversations in the Assembly of Angels],北京 Beijing,第2-3页.

[37] 见 See:潘国光 Pan Guoguang 1739:《天神会课》Tianshen huike [Conversations in the Assembly of Angels],第1-2页.

In the third Chapter Bichurin, while copying the Decalogue of Fr. Brancati, changed some word and commandments :

N. Bichurin;	Fr. Brancati;
一 钦崇一天主万物之上 You shall serve to the single Lord, who is above all the things in the world	一。钦崇一天主万有之上。 You shall serve to the single Lord, who is above all the things existing in the world
二 毋拜土木之像 You shall not make for yourself a graven image	二。毋呼天主圣名以发虚誓。 You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain
三 毋呼天主名以设发虚誓 You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain	三。守贍礼之日。 Keep holy the day of rituals
四 守贍礼之日 Keep holy the day of rituals	四。孝敬父母。 Honor your father and your mother
五 孝敬父母 Honor your father and your mother	五。毋杀人。 You shall not kill
六 毋杀人 You shall not kill	六。毋行邪淫。 You shall not commit adultery
七 毋行邪淫 You shall not commit adultery	七。毋偷盗。 You shall not steal
八 毋偷盗 You shall not steal	八。毋妄证。 You shall not testify falsely
九 毋妄证 You shall not testify falsely	九。毋愿他人妻。 You shall not covet your neighbor's wife
十 毋愿他人妻亦毋贪他人财物 You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or anything that is your neighbor's	十。毋贪他人财物。 You shall not covet your neighbor's property

The numbering of the Decalogue's commandments is brought into line with the Orthodox tradition. In the interpretation of the second commandment, Bichurin, like Brancati, claims that a fortune-telling practice breaks this commandment.

In the first statement Bichurin put the word 物 (things of the world) instead of 有 (existing things). In the second one he insert a new statement (毋拜土木之像), missing in the Brancati's Decalogue. For this reason the following sequence of commandments is subsequently shifted in numbering. In the third statement Bichurin inserts a new word 设 (to establish). In the seventh he changes a character 淫 yin into 媼 yao of the similar sense. Finally, he divides the tenth Brancati's commandment into two parts.

In other chapters N. Bichurin significantly reduced the text by Brancati and brought it into line with the Orthodox tradition. The Orthodox missionary did not need to make corrections of a dogmatic nature, since the text intended for children was not overloaded with theological provisions. For the explanation of Faith Brancati used not the Nicene-Constantinople' Creed, but the Apostles' Creed. The last one does not contain the dogmas of consubstantiality, of the procession of the Holy Spirit etc. Bichurin, if possible, tried to bring the text closer to the Nike-Constantinople exposition.

Thus, in the 5th Article of the Creed, the Archimandrite deemed it necessary to omit the Descent into Hell, since it is not mentioned in the Nicene-Constantinople symbol of the Faith. In the ninth Article, for the same reason, "effective communication of the saints" is omitted. In the tenth Article, the Archimandrite adds the mention of baptism, which is not mentioned in the text of the Apostles' Creed.

V. Conclusion

The examples we used above shows us the book by N. Bichurin was indeed written mainly on the basis of the Brancati’s book. Bichurin borrowed some structure organization and pieces of text. But he did few changes, when they were related to different approaches in Catholic and Orthodox Church. At the same time N. Bichurin tried not to transcribe Christian terms as the Jesuits did, but was seeking for language equivalents, supposed by him to fit more.

Maybe the Russian Holy Synod approved the Bichurin’s practice of processing the texts by Catholic missionaries and recommended it for further works. The terms of the Bichurin’s Catechism, which were borrowed from Brancati or found by Russian author, appear in the later catechisms and Christian books issued by the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission-especially by Father Guriy Карпов (Григорий Платонович Карпов, 1814-1882).

中文题目:

比丘林的《天神会课》——东正教传教士用中文创造宗教文本的初次经历

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提要:本文探讨俄罗斯东正教第九届北京传道团的成员比丘林与一八一一年在北京出版的东正教文本的最早的中文翻译。该书的五分藏在圣彼得堡大学的东方系图书馆。笔者对此书进行书目描述。再研究有关本书的各种问题,包括创造情况、书的基础结构与术语翻译的特点。笔者着重研究译者运用什么样的方法表达东正教大意。

关键词:乙阿钦特、教理问答、东正教传教士、潘国光、翻译研究