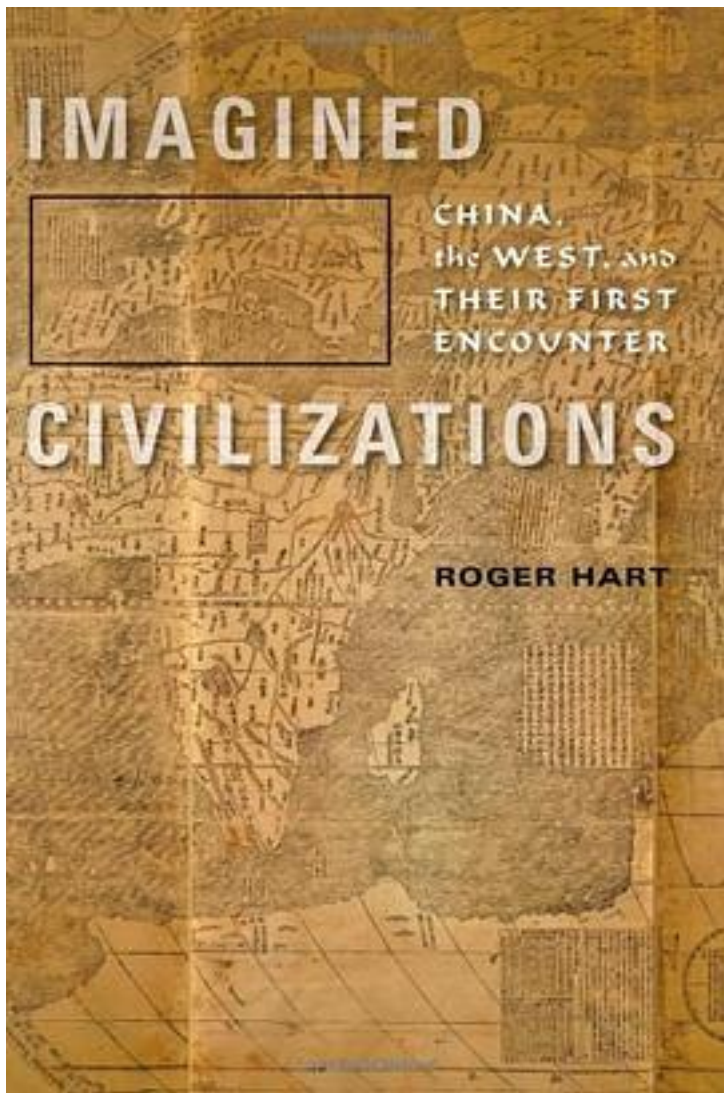# Imagined Civilizations

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Accounts of the seventeenth-century Jesuit Mission to China have often celebrated it as the great encounter of two civilizations. The Jesuits portrayed themselves as wise men from the West who used mathematics and science in service of their mission. Chinese literati-official Xu Guangqi (1562–1633), who collaborated with the Italian Jesuit Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) to translate Euclid's Elements into Chinese, reportedly recognized the superiority of Western mathematics and science and converted to Christianity. The writings relegate Xu and the Chinese to subsidiary roles as the Jesuits' translators, followers, and converts. Imagined Civilizations tells the story from the Chinese point of view.

Using Chinese primary sources, Roger Hart focuses in particular on Xu, who was in a position of considerable power over Ricci. The result is a perspective startlingly different from that found in previous studies. Hart analyzes Chinese mathematical treatises of the period, revealing that Xu and his collaborators could not have believed their declaration of the superiority of Western mathematics. Imagined Civilizations explains how Xu's West served as a crucial resource. While the Jesuits claimed Xu as a convert, he presented the Jesuits as men from afar who had traveled from the West to China to serve the emperor.

作者介绍:

Roger Hart is visiting professor and fellow, Templeton Science and Religion in East Asia Project, Science Culture Research Center, Seoul National University. He is the recipient of NEH, ACLS, and Mellon fellowships. His previous appointments include Stanford, Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, University of Chicago, and University of Texas. He is author of The Chinese Roots of Linear Algebra, also published by Johns Hopkins University Press.

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标签

科学史

海外中国研究

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STS

Jesuits

EarlyModernEurope

EarlyModernChina

评论

还原明代数学水平的部分好像花了蛮大功夫（虽然我都略过了…）。关于徐光启纯为个人仕途利用了耶稣会士的说法完全没有说服力。认为徐和耶稣会士创造了有一个符合上古理想的"想象中的西方"的论点还算有理。

并不情愿的重读。强词夺理，影响心情。Floris Cohen的书评说他读得"progressively more annoyed," 可以理解。

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书评

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