

SULLA VIA DEL CATAI

Rivista semestrale sulle relazioni
culturali tra Europa e Cina



Maggio 2022

Anno XV - Numero 26

Animalia

Ideas, images and descriptions of “real and unreal”
animals between China and the West.

Edited by Victoria Almonte and Paolo De Troia



CENTRO STUDI MARTINO MARTINI

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Panel with a phoenix and birds in a rock garden, Ming dynasty, late 16th-early 17th century, silk and metallic thread tapestry (*kesi*), New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art

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Abstract: Il qilin 麒麟 è un animale chimerico della tradizione cinese, spesso associato ad altri animali mitici come il drago e la fenice. Nelle descrizioni che ne fanno i *Classici* ha delle sembianze a metà tra un drago e un cervo ma è caratterizzato dalla presenza di un unico corno, ecco perché in Occidente viene spesso identificato con l'unicorno. Tradizionalmente la sua comparsa è di buon auspicio e la sua uccisione simbolo di sventura. Nella *Sinicae Historiae Decas Prima* di M. Martini si trova un lungo passaggio che descrive l'incontro tra Confucio e un qilin, che viene catturato e poi ucciso, e che l'autore interpreta come presagio dell'incarnazione e sacrificio del Cristo. Il qilin diventa quindi metafora strumentale che sostituisce l'Agnello (termine che a detta di Martini non era gradito ai cinesi) in quel processo di adattamento e sintesi del pensiero tradizionale cinese di matrice confuciana al messaggio cristiano, portato avanti dai gesuiti in Cina nel XVII secolo.

Introduction

The *qilin* 麒麟 is a chimeric animal belonging to the Chinese mythological tradition. In the *Book of Rites* (*Liji* 礼记) it is listed among the four sacred animals (*si ling* 四灵), together with the dragon (*long* 龙), the phoenix (*fenghuang* 凤凰) and the turtle (*gui* 龟).¹ From its physical descriptions in the *Classics* and its figurative representations in paintings and sculptures, it is possible to find a resemblance to a dragon and a deer, but (more often than not) it is depicted with just one horn, that is why it is usually associated with the unicorn in the West. Traditionally, its appearance is an auspicious sign, while its killing is a bad omen. In Martino Martini's (1614-1661) *Sinicae Historiae Decas Prima* (Monaco 1658), there is a long passage describing Confucius' grief over the capture and killing of a *qilin*, taken from Chinese historical sources. The author reads these events as a presage of Christ's incarnation and sacrifice. The *qilin* thus becomes instrumental in replacing the “Lamb”, the traditional Western metaphor for the in-

nocent Jesus Christ, that was not suitable to the Chinese context, as Martini himself writes. The episode also portrays Confucius as a prophet who foresees the coming of the Son of God.

The present study, after a presentation of the *qilin* in the Chinese culture, its physical and moral traits, its symbolic meaning and its association with other real or mythological animals, will analyze the excerpt on the encounter between Confucius and the beast as in the *Sinicae Historiae*, and Martini's Christian interpretation of it, highlighting how this reading was one of the key steps in the wider project of accommodation and synthesis of the traditional Confucian thought with the Christian message, carried on by most of the China Jesuits in the 17th century.

The *qilin* 麒麟

The term *qilin* 麒麟, also sometimes written with the radical of horse, refers to a mythological animal of the Chinese cultural tradition whose origins are still debated. The disyllabic compound is already attested in the pre-Qin classics, but the animal is also often referred to as just *lin* 麟 (rarely only as *qi* 麒). From a phonetical point of view, *qilin* [tʃihilin] goes back to the earlier (*)*kilin* of Late Middle Chinese (8th-11th centuries). This form was exported to the neighboring languages becoming *kirin* in Japanese, *girin* or *kirin* in Korean, *ky lan* in Vietnamese, *kilin* in Manchu. Together with the word, the iconography and legends around this chimeric animal were transmitted as well.²

The first occurrence of the *qilin* 麒麟 in the Chinese classical literature is attested in the *Book of Odes* (*Shijing* 诗经), a collection of poems dated between the 11th and the 7th century BC. Here, it is called only *lin* 麟 and appears in one of the songs of the *Guofeng* 国风 section, the *Lin zhi zhi* 麟之趾 “The hooves of the *lin*”:



Qilin statue in the Forbidden City in Beijing, Qing dynasty, 18th century, gilt bronze



Shen Du (text), Xiao Kai, *Ruiying Qilin Song*, Ming dynasty, hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, Taipei, National Palace Museum

麟之趾，振振公子，于嗟麟兮。
 麟之定，振振公姓，于嗟麟兮。
 麟之角，振振公族，于嗟麟兮！

The hooves of the *lin*:
 The noble sons of our Prince,
 Ah! they are the *lin*!

The forehead of the *lin*:
 The noble grandsons of our Prince,
 Ah! they are the *lin*!

The horn of the *lin*:
 The noble kindred of our Prince,
 Ah! they are the *lin*!³

The text wishes that the descendants of the prince will be prosperous and outstanding, like the wonderful *lin* with its magic features. Therefore, it is possible to already find the *qilin* celebrated as a noble animal with positive connotations.⁴

In later sources, including the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu* 春秋, 5th century BC), the *Master of Huainan* (*Huainanzi* 淮南子, 2nd century BC), the *Discussive Weighing* (*Lun Heng* 论衡, ca. 80 AD), the *Book of the Later Han* (*Hou Hanshu* 后汉书, 5th century AD) etc.,⁵ several accounts of apparition or capture of a *qilin* are recorded. These episodes all suggest that the supernatural animal always appeared during the reign of a righteous emperor. As a matter of fact, in the dictionary *Shuowen jiezi* 说文解字 (100 AD) and other texts, the *qilin* is described as a felicitous, benevolent beast (*qilin ren shou ye* 麒麟仁兽也), sent by God as a reward for a good sovereign.⁶

Aside from being a political symbol, the *qilin* was popularly believed to be able to secure a male heir. In this sense, a very widespread legend tells that on the night of the birth of Confucius a *qilin* was seen by his house, coughing up a jade scroll with an engraving stating that Confucius would have the virtue of an emperor, though not the status.⁷

While there is a generalized agreement

in the historical sources linking the *qilin* to an auspicious sign, his appearance and resemblance with other animals is not univocal.

Concerning its physical traits, the analyses of literary sources and figurative representations of the *qilin* prove that its depiction has changed in people's imaginary over the centuries. Almost all its portrayals show a basic resemblance with an animal of the deer family. However, peculiar traits were added to distinguish a *qilin* from a real deer, due to its inclusion among the sacred animals, its link with political auspices and cult.⁸

From the above-mentioned poem in the *Book of Odes*, the *qilin* is portrayed with hooves and horns (at least one). In the *Xiao-jing wei* 孝经纬 of the Han period, there is a record of Confucius seeing an animal that has some resemblance to an elk, has got a goat head and horns padded with flesh (*ru mi, yang tou, tou shang you jiao, qi mo you rou* 如麋, 羊头, 头上有角, 其末有肉). In the already mentioned *Shuowen*, the *qilin* is described as an elk, but with the tail of an ox and one horn (*mi shen, niu wei, yi jiao* 麋身, 牛尾, 一角). In the *Caomu shu* 草木疏, compiled during the Eastern Jin dynasty (265-316 AD), the record is more detailed: the *qilin* has the body of a muntjac, the tail of an ox, the feet of a horse with round hooves, it is yellow and has one horn at the end of which there is flesh (*jun shen, niu wei, ma zu, huangse, yuan ti, yi jiao, jiao duan you rou* 麋身, 牛尾, 马足, 黄色, 圆蹄, 一角, 角端有肉).⁹ In the dictionary *Eryayi* 尔雅翼, compiled between 1174-1270, we read that, aside from the above mentioned characteristics, it has wings to fly with (*you yi neng fei* 有翼能飞).¹⁰

As for the *qilin*'s representation in paintings and sculptures, during the Han period, two steles in Shanyang, the *Qilin bei* 麒麟碑 and the *Lin Feng bei* 麟凤碑, show that it was a four-legged animal similar to a deer, with cloven hooves and just one horn.¹¹ Several stone carvings of the same period,



Statue of a Qilin, Qing dynasty, Kangxi period (1661-1722), cloisonné enamel, Private collection

located in different Chinese provinces, confirm these main traits with few differences: one straight horn ending with a round or triangular lump, in carvings found in Jiangsu and Sichuan province; long elegant stylized feathers on the back, as in a carving in Sichuan; a horse body and a deer head in a carving of Shandong; the horn not placed at the top of the head but in the middle of the face, as in a carving in Nanyang.¹²

During the Tang dynasty (618-907), the *qilin* looked more like something between an ox and a horse, as it can be seen in the stone *qilin* placed in front of the tomb of empress Wu Zetian 武则天 (624-705)'s mother: it has one crooked and very decorated horn, two wings enriched with a pattern of curly clouds, horse feet, and a hanging tail. The general resemblance is that of a vigorous though composed, docile animal.

From the Song dynasty onward, the *qilin* began to resemble more and more to a dragon. Its head has all the characteristics of a dragon's, the body is partially or totally covered with fish scales and wreathed in flames or smoke. The stone *qilin* in front of the Gate of Compassion and Tranquility (*Cining men* 慈宁门) in Beijing's "Forbidden City" is an example, although it has two horns.¹³

Aside from the different portrayals of the *qilin* over the centuries, the animal has been associated with other real or mythological animals both in China and in the West.

The qilin as a giraffe

In 1414 a live giraffe was brought to China for the first time by Zheng He 郑和 (1371-1433), a Chinese explorer, diplomat and fleet admiral in Southeast Asia, India, Horn of Africa and Arabia. The animal was an offer from the Sultan of Bengal and was presented as a *qilin* to the Ming Emperor Yongle 永乐 (1360-1424).¹⁴ The emperor was jubilant, taking this as a proof of the Mandate of Heaven upon his reign (he ac-

tually was a usurper). He ordered the court historiographer Shen Du 沈度 (1357-1434) to write a poem to remember the event: the *Ode to the Auspicious Qilin* (*Ruiying qilin song* 瑞应麒麟颂). In addition, Yongle ordered the court painter to inscribe the poem together with a portrait of the animal in what became famous as the *Ruiying qilin tu* 瑞应麒麟图, today preserved in the National Palace Museum of Taipei. Other similar paintings were made in those years and in all of them the giraffe was referred to as *qilin*.

For this reason, a few scholars have debated on whether the *qilin* had always been referring to a giraffe in Chinese accounts, or that the word referred to a giraffe at least from the 15th century and until the modern term *changjinglu* 长颈鹿 (literally 'deer with a long neck') came into use.¹⁵ Some of them concluded that giraffes might have already been present in ancient China. However, a simple look at the early descriptions and representations of the *qilin* easily proves that it lacks some of the most outstanding features of a giraffe, e.g. very tall, very long neck and legs, two short ossicones on top of the head. More likely, the giraffe was presented as a *qilin* simply because of the prosperous political meaning attached to the mythological animal.¹⁶

The qilin as a unicorn

The word '*qilin*' is usually translated as 'unicorn' and identified with it because of the many characteristics the two mythological animals share: they are hoofed and winged, have an equine appearance and one horn on the forehead. Finally, in both the Western and Chinese tradition they are positive symbols associated with good omens.

In Borges' bestiary (I ed. 1957), for example, there is an entry dedicated to the "Chinese Unicorn", stating that: "The Chinese unicorn or *k'i-lin* is one of the four auspicious animals [...]. The unicorn is the first of the quadruped animals; it has the body



Dish with a Qilin decoration, Qing dynasty, Kangxi period (1661-1722), blue and white porcelain, Private collection

of a deer, the tail of an ox and the head of a horse; the horn on his forehead is made of flesh [...] it does not step on green pasture and does not harm any creature [...]. It naturally lives for one thousand years.”¹⁷

However, as already mentioned, the depiction of the *qilin* is very varied and has changed over the centuries, therefore, specialized scholars write about an “entire unicorn fauna” in China.¹⁸ The link between the *qilin* and the unicorn motif of India and Europe has also been questioned and the differences between the two have been pointed out. For example, Jeannie T. Parker’s recent work tries to demonstrate how the actual counterpart of the Western unicorn is not the *qilin* but another Chinese mythological animal, the *zhi* 麩, a one-horned female goat-like beast symbolizing justice. According to her, the myth of the unicorn originated in China and then spread to other parts of Asia and Europe.¹⁹ In another study, Li and Yan highlight that what the *qilin* and the unicorn truly represent is quite different: the *qilin* symbolizes good reign, prosperity, offspring. The unicorn’s symbology, instead, is a mixture of classical religious and pagan literature: it can be an allegory for wisdom, purity and healing.²⁰

The first mention of a one-horned animal in the West can be found in the work *Indika* of the Greek historiographer Ctesias (440? BC-397? BC). Reporting travelers’ accounts, Ctesias writes about a wild ass-type animal living in India that is as big as a horse or bigger. It has a single tricolored, eighteen-inch-long horn between its eyes. It has a white body, purple head, and dark blue eyes. Drinking from a cup made of its horn protects a person from diseases and poisons.²¹

A few references to a unicorn can be found in the *Septuagint*, the Greek translation of the Old Testament made in the II century BC from a previous Hebrew version. Here the Hebrew word *re'em*, referring mainly to a wild ox, was mistranslated as *μονόκερω*

(*monoceros*, unicorn). From the descriptions of the unicorn in the Bible, especially in the Psalms, as a symbol of strength and power, the Church Fathers began to identify the unicorn with Jesus Christ.²²

Also, following a pre-Christian myth, the unicorn was said to be attracted by the purity of young maidens and only a virgin could tame it. This was probably the origin of the Christological-Mariological interpretation of the unicorn-virgin relationship developed in the Syriac version of the *Physiologus* (early 4th century), a text describing fifty different animals, plants and other elements with a moral interpretation. According to this work, in order to catch a unicorn, the hunters had to present a young virgin to it. The beast would approach her docilely and lay its head on her lap. At this point she would grasp its horn and the hunters could capture it. The unicorn’s horn is also reported to have the power of purifying poisoned water. The *Physiologus* explains this dynamic as an allegory of the incarnation of Jesus in Virgin Mary’s blessed womb. As Ehrmans writes: “By the fourteenth century, the unicorn hunt theme will be allegorically depicted as the Annunciation with the Virgin Mary in an enclosed garden. Christ the unicorn reaches into her lap, with the Archangel Gabriel blowing a horn”.²³

However, the unicorn also was charged with other, negative, meanings, as for example in Leonardo Da Vinci’s bestiary (1494), where it explicitly symbolizes intemperance: “The unicorn through its lack of temperance, and because it does not know how to control itself for the delight that it has for young maidens, forgets its ferocity and wildness; and laying aside all fear it approaches to the seated maiden and goes to sleep in her lap, and in this way the hunters take it.”²⁴

Although the usage of this kind of symbols had been condemned by the Council of Trent (1545-1563), decreeing that sacred art had to be free of superstition, of sensual appeal, of the profane and unseem-



Above: À *mon seul désir* (La Dame à la licorne), Toulouse, 1484-1500, polychrome tapestry, Paris, Musée de Cluny

Bottom: Illustration from the Northumberland Bestiary, ms. 100, fol. 11, 1250-1260, miniature on parchment, Los Angeles, John Paul Getty Museum

ly,²⁵ later on, the unicorn was still used to symbolize chastity and the taming of desire. This can be seen, for example, in one of the naves of St. Peter's Basil in Rome, where there is an Allegory Statue of a partly naked lady holding a unicorn horn, carved by Nicolò Menghini in 1647.

Over time, and up to today, the western unicorn has been given several other symbolic connotations including gaiety and freedom, which go beyond the scope of this paper. Here it is interesting to note that one century after the Council of Trent, the "Chinese unicorn" *qilin* was, consciously or not, once more taken as a symbol for Christ by the China Jesuit Martino Martini.

The qilin as "the Lamb" in Martini's Sinicae Historiae

In Martino Martini's *Sinicae Historiae Decas Prima*, there is a long passage describing Confucius' grief over the capture and killing of a *qilin*, taken as a presage of Christ's incarnation and sacrifice.

Martino Martini was a China Jesuit missionary from Trento (Italy), who highly contributed to the knowledge of Chinese history, geography and language in Europe. His historical masterpiece, *Sinicae Historiae Decas Prima*, was the first history of ancient China written in a western language, namely Latin. The book was published in Munich in 1658 after several years of work. In compiling the *Sinicae Historiae Decas Prima*, Martini's main goal was to narrate the history of China from its mythological origins until the birth of Christ. The structure he had chosen was that of Livy (Titus Livius 69 BC-17 AD)'s history of Rome, *Ab Urbe Condita*, which narrated the events in groups of ten books (*decas*). Trying to offer an exact chronology of the events, and given the difference of the calendar system, Martini probably began from the ascertained and most recent events and, with a backward calculation, was then able to date the oldest ones, even the reign

of the first Chinese sovereign around 2952 BC. This, however, contradicted the Biblical chronology, which dated the universal deluge around 2349 BC. Thus, Martini, to avoid troubles, found a parallel of the universal deluge in another similar event narrated in the Chinese sources, collocating everything before it in the myth.

As a matter of fact, one of the cornerstones of the Jesuit missionary strategy in China was the accommodation of the Christian religion to the local cultural tradition based on the Confucian philosophy.²⁶ For this reason, the Jesuits had studied the Confucian classics in depth and found similarities with the Christian message, thus establishing that the two traditions were compatible.

In the *Sinicae Historiae*, Martini's attempt at finding a complete accordance between the Christian and Confucian morals reaches its apex when, in Book IV, he writes about Confucius, stating that:

"[...] very likely he knew the real God, because at that time the Chinese did not adore idols, did not have ministers for their cult but venerated the Sky only".²⁷

In the following pages, Martini substantiates his claim by writing:

"[...] a Chinese philosopher, who was a Christian convert, with my pleasure and surprise, made me notice that in the last part of the Confucian book called *Chun-cien* (*Chunqiu* 春秋), Confucius predicted that the Word would become flesh and precisely in which year of the Chinese cycle."²⁸

Actually, in the *Chunqiu Zuo-zhuan* there is only a short passage on the capture of a *qilin* reporting Confucius' surprise in seeing it.²⁹ The episode as told by Martini can be found in one of his main sources for the annals of Chinese history: the *Zizhi tongjian qianbian* 資治通鑑前編 (Previous supple-



Rank badge with Qilin, Qing dynasty, 19th century, silk and metallic thread embroidery on silk satin, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art

ment to the *Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Government*), written by Jin Lüxiang 金履祥 (1232–1303) in 1264.³⁰ The passage reads as follows:

“Emperor Jingus (Jing 敬) had been reigning for 39 years and the 37th cycle was at the 57th year, called *kengxin* (*geng shen* 庚申), when, outside the Western Gate the hunters of the king of Lu 魯 captured and killed a rare animal, called *kilin* (*qilin* 麒麟), known only in China. It was always said that, when this animal appeared, a most pure hero would come to announce the happiest times to the world. When Confucius knew about that, he beat his chest and with a deep sigh said: - Oh *kilin*, who said you would come? [...] now my teaching is going to end, because you have come. - After these words, he turned his face towards the walls and cried incessantly. It must be said that the Chinese call *kilin* a very docile and tame animal, that does not hurt anybody and is not able to defend itself from those who want to kill him.”³¹

Upon the suggestion of the Christian convert, Martini gives the above passage a Christian interpretation, where the *qilin* is seen as the Lamb of God, its killing as Jesus Christ’s sacrifice, and Confucius as a prophet who foresees the coming of the Saviour:

“That Christian philosopher told me that the words “Lamb of God” in Chinese language can be rendered as *kilin*. The Chinese dislike the word “Lamb” because in their language there is no difference between lamb and goat. The fact that the characters of *kengxin*, the name of the year in which the *kilin* was killed, are the same of the year in which, 475 years later, our Savior was born, leads us to think that Confucius had had a presage and that his tears were a manifestation of joy for the arrival of the Saint of the Saints, of which the *kilin* was a symbol. In the following years, Confucius stopped writing, did not finish his book on the admonitions for the kings and said

he had concluded his teaching; these are the signs that he knew of the arrival of who would bring the real laws, would halt all the wars and before whom all the philosophers would withdraw, closing their schools. The death of the *kilin* appears to be a presage for the death of the Savior, because this beast was killed at the Western Gate, just like Jesus Christ who, like a lamb, was carried out the Western Gate to be conducted to sacrifice, was crucified to save the human beings and faced immediate death.”³²

As to justify himself for having pushed the reasoning a bit far, Martini concludes:

“This was told to me by the Chinese philosopher, and I let the reader judge [its truth].”

Martini apparently was not aware that the *qilin* could be associated with a “unicorn” and we do not know whether he enquired on its appearance. He had been told that the beast was meek and tame and that its appearance was a positive omen. Also, learning that the common Western metaphor of the “lamb” to refer to the Son of God was not well received among the Chinese, Martini thought that it could be easily replaced by the *qilin*, in order to render the Christian message as close and familiar as possible to the local cultural tradition.

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Notes

¹ Yoshihiko Izushi, “A study of the Origin of the Ch’i-lin 麒麟 and the Feng-Huang 凤凰”, *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko* (The Oriental Library) 9 (1937), p. 80.

² Juha Janhunen, “Unicorn, Mammoth, Whale. Mythological and Etymological Connections of Zoonyms in North and East Asia”, In T. Osada, H. Endo (eds.), *Linguistics, Archaeology and the Human Past, Occasional Paper* 12 (2011), p. 196.

³ Adapted from James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. IV, part I, p. 19-XI (also online: <https://ctext.org/book-of-poetry/odes-of-zhou-and-the-south>).

⁴ See: Gu Yifan 顾一凡, “*Lun Shijing zhong de Si Ling Chongbai Xianxiang* 论《诗经》中的“四灵崇拜现象 (The Worship to Four Creatures in the *Book of Odes*)”, *Huabei Dianli Daxue Xuebao (shehui kexueban)* 华北电力大学学报 (社会科学版) 2 (2017), p. 106.

⁵ For the entire list of texts see: Izushi, “A study of the Origin of the Ch’i-lin”, pp. 87-88.

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ Zhou Qian 周乾, “*Gugong Gujianzhu Yishou Wenhua Yanjiu* 故宫古建筑异兽文化研究 (A Cultural Research on Mythical Animal Statues in the Palace Museum)”, *Bai-cheng Shifan Xueyuan Xuebao* 白城师范学院

学报 33.9 (2019), p. 22.

⁸ Izushi, “A study of the Origin of the Ch’i-lin”, pp. 94-95.

⁹ Zhou Qian, “Gugong Gujianzhu Yishou Wenhua Yanjiu”, p. 21.

¹⁰ Izushi, “A study of the Origin of the Ch’i-lin”, pp. 81-82

¹¹ Ibid., p.94.

¹² Hu Bing 胡冰, Yuan Zuqing 袁祖庆, “Dui yi fu Nanyang Han huaxiangshi de kaocha 对一幅南阳汉画像石的考察 (The Image of Kirin in the Stone-carving of Han Dynasty)”, *Nanyang Ligong Xueyuan Xuebao* 南阳理工学院学报 11.5 (2019), pp. 126-127.

¹³ Zhou, “Gugong Gujianzhu Yishou Wenhua Yanjiu”, p. 22.

¹⁴ The Arabian traders had been importing animals from Africa already since the 10th century, see: Yu-chih Lai, “Domesticating the Global and Materializing the Unknown. A Study of the *Album of Beasts* at the Qianlong Court”, in A. Grasskamp, M. Juneja (eds.), *EurAsian Matters: China, Europe, and the Transcultural Object, 1600-1800* (Cham, Springer, 2018), p. 150.

¹⁵ While in China a new word was created, this did not happen in Japan and Korea, where the word for giraffe is still:

kirin キリン in Japanese and *girin*.

¹⁶ Izushi, “A study of the Origin of the Ch’i-lin”, pp. 84-85; Zhou, “Gugong Gujianzhu Yishou Wenhua Yanjiu”, p. 22.

¹⁷ Jorge Luis Borges, *Manuale di zoologia fantastica* (Turin, Einaudi, 2015), *sub vocem*.

¹⁸ Janhunen, “Unicorn, Mammoth, Whale”, p. 191.

¹⁹ Jeannie T. Parker, *The Mythic Chinese Unicorn* (Victoria, Friesen Press, 2018) (2nd ed.), pp. 2-7,

²⁰ See Li Xiaohua 李小华, Yan Hui 延辉, “跨文化交流中文化符号的翻译 - 从龙、凤凰、麒麟的英译说起 (Translation of Cultural Symbols in Intercultural Communications - starting from the English translation of Long, Fenghuang and Qilin)”, *Qingdao Keji Daxue Xuebao (Shehui Kex-*

ue ban) 青岛科技大学学报 (社会科学版) 23.3 (2007), pp. 113-114.

²¹ Pietro Li Casusi, “L’asino indiano da Ctesia ad Aristotele: I primi passi dell’unicorno nel mondo della “realtà”, *Classico Contemporaneo-Oriente* 5 (2019), pp. 20-21.

²² Terrence Ehrman, “Horn of Salvation and Symbol of Chastity: Unicorns in Catholic Churches”, *Sacred Architecture* 37 (2020), pp. 23-24.

²³ Ehrman, “Horn of Salvation”, p. 24.

²⁴ Leonardo Da Vinci, *Bestiario*, Ms. H, f. 11r.

²⁵ Ehrman, “Horn of Salvation”, pp. 25-26.

²⁶ On the Jesuits’ accommodation policy there is a vast literature, see for example: David E. Mungello, *Curious Land. Jesuit Accommodation and the Origins of Sinology* (Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1985); Lionel M. Jensen, *Manufacturing Confucianism, Chinese Traditions and Universal Civilization* (USA, Duke University Press, 1997).

²⁷ Martino Martini, *Sinicae Historiae Decas Prima*, Typis Lucae Straubii, Munich 1658, p. 131. For the annotated critical edition in Italian see: in Masini, Federico – Paternicò, Luisa M. (eds.), *Martino Martini S.J., Opera Omnia, vol. IV, Sinicae Historiae Decas Prima* (Trento, Università degli Studi di Trento, 2010), p. 352.

²⁸ *Id.*

²⁹ The *Chunqiu* 春秋 itself reports only on the capture of a *qilin*. In the *Chunqiu Zuozhuan*, *Ai Gong shidi nian* 春秋左傳 哀公十四年 (Beijing, Zhonghua shuju, 2006), p. 1680, we also learn of Confucius’ surprise at seeing that: 十四年春，西狩于大野，叔孙氏之车子鉏商获麟，以为不祥，以赐虞人。仲尼观之，曰“麟也”，然后取之。 See also: Hou Yangjun 侯仰军, “*Cong zhenshi dao chuanshuo: qilin de gushi* 从真实到传说：麒麟的故事 (From Facts to Fantasy: The Story of the Qilin)”, *Minjian wenhua luntan* 民间文化论坛 6 (2012), pp. 40-45.

³⁰ Jin Lüxiang 金履祥, *Zizhi tongjian*

qianbian 資治通鑑前編, *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書, 第 332 册, j. 18, p. 1.

³¹ Martini, *Sinicae Historiae*, pp. 131-132 and Masini, Paternicò, *Sinicae Historiae Decas Prima*, pp. 352-353. The English trans-

lation in the text has been made by the au-

thor.
³² Martini, *Sinicae Historiae*, p. 132. Masini, Paternicò, *Sinicae Historiae Decas Prima*, pp. 353-354.



Jan van Eyck, *The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb*. Central panel: *The Fountain of Life* (detail), 1425-1432, oil on panel, Ghent, St. Bavo's Cathedral

thor. The English translation in the text has been made by the au-