

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many persons have directly or indirectly contributed to the preparation of this book. I shall venture to mention some names, while acknowledging that my indebtedness extends to many others also, whose names may not appear.

First of all, I would like to mention my parents and my brothers Florent, Thomas and Bruno, even though no words are adequate to express my gratitude for their untiring encouragement and support, which facilitated the work in so many ways. I want to express my gratitude to the Staff of the Sinological Institute in Leiden (the Netherlands) who in various ways has given me the benefit of their help and advice. I would like to thank Professor E. Zürcher for permitting to avail myself of his profound insight and extensive learning and for cheering encouragement throughout numerous drafts of this dissertation. His insistence on studying the cultural contacts between East and West from a Chinese perspective has deeply influenced me. For stimulating scholarly comments, I am grateful especially to Professor A. Camps O.F.M. and Professor W.L. Idema. For generously giving their time to criticize the dissertation as members of the examination committee, I express my deep appreciation to Professors J.C. Heesterman, J. Kerkhofs S.J., U. Libbrecht, G.H.M. Posthumus Meyjes and M. Spindler. J. Kerkhofs deserves special mention for encouraging me from the beginning of my studies. I also owe gratitude to H. Zurndorfer and M. Übelhör for commenting the manuscript and for the many hours of discussion devoted to Ming history and Neo-Confucianism. Grateful recognition is especially due to many scholars in China. Among the teachers of the Fudan University (Shanghai), I am deeply indebted to Professor Pan Fu'en 潘富恩. I also want to thank the researchers of the Study Centre for the History of Chinese Foreign Relations of the Academy of Social Sciences (Beijing), and Professor Zhang Guangda 張廣達 (Beida) and his wife Professor Xu Tingyun 徐庭雲 for their help in many respects. Finally my warm thanks are due to M. Miłčinski, K. Stappers, I. Kern, B.J.ter Haar and so many other friends and commilitones for all the sincere encouragement and sympathy I received from them.

The mistakes, however, of information and interpretation, should be attributed solely to me, and not to any of these kind persons. All kinds of comments and criticisms are friendly welcomed.

Antwerpen, January 1985

N.S.