Wu-Wei in Europe
A study of Eurasian Economic thought
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Abstract
This present paper focuses on the diffusion of wu-wei (an ancient Chinese concept of political economy) throughout Europe, between 1648 and 1848. It argues that at the core of this diffusion process were three major developments; firstly the importation and active transmission of wu-wei by the Low Countries, during the seventeenth century. It is revealed that the details of Chinese expertise entered Europe via the textual diffusion of Jesuit texts and the visual diffusion of million of so-called minben-images, during the ceramic boom of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Thus, the hypothesis is advanced that the diffusion of wu-wei, co-evolved with the inner-European laissez-faire principle, the Libaniusian model.

In the second part it is shown that the intellectual foundation of Europe's first economic school, Physiocracy, is a direct replica of the imported Chinese economic, agrarian craftsmanship of wu-wei; subsequently it is denied that the indigenous European Libaniusian ideology can be considered the intellectual master-model of Physiocracy and his founder Quesnay.

Thirdly, it is argued that Switzerland can be identified as the first European paradigm state of wu-wei. The crystallization process of wu-wei inside Europe ultimately ended with the economic-political reorganization of the new Eidgenossenschaft in 1848, in which Chinese agrarian wu-wei was institutionally combined with the traditional Swiss „commercial wu-wei". In due course, this alpine paradigm enabled the endogenous Libaniusian model to verify and reflect upon its own theory of commercial society. Additionally, this third focus also demonstrates that the later development of Europe's laissez-faire doctrine has to be seen as a Eurasian co-production – without wu-wei, Europe's pro-commercial ideology would have never sufficiently matured.

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