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Apostolic Vicar in the Midst of Conquest: The Manchu Annexation of Taiwan in Thomas Dunin Szpot's *Historiae Sinarum Imperii*

Wikariusz apostolski w obliczu podboju: zajęcie Tajwanu przez Mandżurów w *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* Tomasza Dunina Szpota

Abstract

This article analyzes Tomasz Dunin Szpot's accounts of two events in 1683: the Qing conquest of the Zheng regime in Taiwan and the accidental landing of Bishop François Pallu on the island. Although the collapse of the Zheng kingdom marked the beginning of Qing imperial rule over Taiwan, Szpot treated it only briefly and with notable inaccuracies, omitting key battles and compressing several years of developments into a simplified episode. By contrast, he devoted considerable attention to Pallu's arrival, since it was closely connected to disputes over missionary authority and the Chinese Rites Controversy. Szpot's narrative priorities reflected his role as a historian of Catholic missions in China rather than as an observer of Chinese political history. His perspective was shaped by Jesuit networks centered in Peking, as well as by rivalries with the Dominicans and the Paris Foreign Missions Society. In his work, Taiwan appears as a remote

and marginal space "beyond the seas," consistent with contemporary Qing geographical imagination. His maps and descriptions emphasized missionary sites rather than strategically significant maritime locations such as the Penghu Islands. This imbalance in Szpot's narrative reveals how missionary concerns, spatial perceptions, and ecclesiastical disputes shaped early European knowledge of China, often obscuring major political transformations while foregrounding internal Church conflicts.

Keywords: Taiwan, Manchu conquest, Zheng domain, geographic imagery, François Pallu.

Abstrakt

Artykuł analizuje relacje Tomasza Dunina Szpota dotyczące dwóch wydarzeń z 1683 roku: podboju państwa Zhengów na Tajwanie przez dynastię Qing oraz przypadkowego przybycia biskupa François Pallu na wyspę. Choć upadek królestwa Zhengów oznaczał początek panowania imperium Qing nad Tajwanem, Szpot potraktował to wydarzenie jedynie skrótowo i z wyraźnymi nieścisłościami, pomijając kluczowe bitwy i sprowadzając kilka lat wydarzeń do uproszczonego epizodu. W przeciwieństwie do tego poświęcił znaczną uwagę przybyciu Pallu, ponieważ zdarzenie to było ściśle związane ze sporami o jurysdykcję misyjną oraz z kontrowersją wokół rytów chińskich. Priorytety narracyjne Szpota odzwierciedlały jego rolę jako historyka katolickich misji w Chinach, a nie obserwatora chińskiej historii politycznej. Jego perspektywa była kształtowana przez sieci jezuickie skupione w Pekinie, a także przez rywalizację z dominikanami oraz z Towarzystwem Misji Zagranicznych w Paryżu. W jego dziele Tajwan jawi się jako odległa i peryferyjna przestrzeń „za morzami", co odpowiadało ówczesnej wyobraźni geograficznej epoki Qing. Mapy i opisy Szpota akcentowały ośrodki misyjne, a nie strategicznie istotne lokalizacje morskie, takie jak Wyspy Penghu.
Ta dysproporcja w narracji Szpota ukazuje, w jaki sposób troski misyjne, wyobrażenia przestrzenne oraz spory kościelne kształtowały wczesnoeuropejską wiedzę o Chinach, często przesłaniając zasadnicze przemiany polityczne, a uwypuklając wewnętrzne konflikty Kościoła.

Słowa klucze: Tajwan, podbój mandżurski, państwo Zhengów, wyobrażenia geograficzne, François Pallu.

Three important historical events took place in 1683. The Polish king John III Sobieski won the Battle of Vienna and repelled the last Ottoman invasion of Europe. The Chinese admiral Shi Lang won the Battle of Penghu and conquered the Kingdom of Dongning. Meanwhile, the French bishop François Pallu boarded a ship in Siam intending to reach

China, but landed in Taiwan instead. The first of these events is widely known and lies beyond the scope of this article. The second is well known to historians of Taiwan, as it fundamentally altered the fate of the island and its inhabitants. The third, however, is familiar only to a small group of scholars specializing in the history of Catholic missions in China.

This article analyzes the descriptions of these two events in *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* by Tomasz Dunin Szpot SJ.[1] As a historian of China, the Polish Jesuit had little professional interest in Sobieski's exploits. By contrast, Pallu's arrival was directly connected to the fate of the Catholic missions in China and, more specifically, to the Chinese Rites Controversy – issues of particular importance to the author. He therefore devoted considerable attention to this episode. Meanwhile, Shi Lang's conquest – an event that proved far more significant in the broader political perspective – was treated with relative indifference.[2]

1 Tomasz Dunin Szpot (1644/1645–1713), a Polish-Lithuanian historiographer of the Jesuit missions in China, never traveled to China and, unfortunately, never published the results of his inquiries. His manuscripts are preserved in the Archivum Romanum Iesu (ARSI) in Rome and have recently become the focus of research by a team led by Janusz Smołucha of Ignatianum University in Cracow. The most important outcome of their work has been the publication of a transcription of the original text of Historiae Sinarum Imperii. The published transcription of the manuscript is available online at: https://historiasinarum.ignatianum.edu.pl/rekopis-historia-sinarum.htm (accessed on: 20.02.2026). R. Danieluk, Ł. Burkiewicz, and A. Wadas have presented an overview of Szpot's life and works. The topics examined in his writings so far include such diverse subjects as the Grand Canal, the Jewish community in China, and the history of the Nestorian Stele of Xi'an. See Robert Danieluk, "Konfesjonał i pióro: Tomasz Ignacy Szpot Dunin, polski historiograf jezuickiej misji w Chinach", in *Iesuitae in Polonia – Poloni Iesuitae. Piśmiennictwo łacińskie czasów nowożytnych*, ed. Jarosław Nowaszczuk (Szczecin: "Volumina.pl," 2017), 75–108; Łukasz Burkiewicz, Andrzej Wadas, "Życie i dzieło Tomasza Ignacego Dunina Szpota SJ (1644/1645–1713) oraz jego wkład w etnografię nowożytnych Chin", *Perspektywy Kultury* 49/2 (2025): 337–358; Łukasz Burkiewicz, "Polityczna, gospodarcza i kulturowa rola Wielkiego Kanału Chińskiego w kontekście *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* Tomasza Szpota Dunina", *Rocznik Filozoficzny Ignatianum* 29/4 (2023): 39–58; Janusz Smołucha, "Powstanie, status i znaczenie społeczności żydowskiej w Państwie Środka według relacji polskiego jezuity Tomasza Szpota Dunina zawartych w dziele *Historiae Sinarum Imperii*, *Perspektywy Kultury* 44/1 (2024): 519–530; Hanna Wadas, "Odkrycie i znaczenie steli z Xi'an dla misji jezuickich w Chinach w XVII w. w ujęciu *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* Tomasza Szpota Dunina SJ (1644–1713)", *Rocznik Filozoficzny Ignatianum* 29/4 (2023): 75–88.

2 The present article is the first in a series that I intend to devote to Szpot's account of the House of Zheng, and it offers only an initial inquiry into this aspect of his work.

From piracy to kingdom

The story of the Zheng family and their state in Taiwan, known as the Kingdom of Dongning, begins with Zheng Zhilong (1604–1661). The son of a low-ranking official, he went to sea and became a merchant apprentice in Macau, where he was baptized as Nicholas Gaspard. While conducting business in Japan, he encountered Li Dan, an extraordinarily wealthy merchant-pirate. He eventually succeeded him and built a formidable naval power whose activities encompassed – depending on time and circumstance – trade, smuggling, piracy, racketeering, and mediation among Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese, Dutch, and English merchants, officials, and military commanders.[3]

In 1644, China's Ming dynasty collapsed, and the Manchus, who had risen in the northeast, established a new imperial dynasty, the Qing. In the south, several Ming princes continued to resist the Manchus. One of them, the Longwu Emperor, appointed Zheng Zhilong as his chief supporter and bestowed upon him the hereditary title of Prince of Yanping. The Manchus were able to capture, imprison, and eventually execute Zheng Zhilong, but the command of his forces passed to his son, Zheng Chenggong (1624–1662), who continued the struggle. Known to Europeans as Koxinga, he remained loyal to the Ming. Facing relentless Manchu pressure, he sought to establish a new base and, in 1661, attacked and seized the Dutch colony on Taiwan. He is perhaps the only historical figure venerated as a hero and immortalized in monumental statues on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, albeit for diametrically different reasons. In China, he is celebrated as an anti-imperialist who liberated the Chinese people from Dutch colonial rule; in Taiwan, he is regarded as the founder of an independent state, distinct from the political authority of the mainland.[4]

Koxinga died in 1662 and was succeeded by his son Zheng Jing (1642–1681), who expanded the Kingdom of Dongning's territories across the coastal plains of Taiwan,[5] but lost the remaining mainland possessions

3 John E. Wills, "Yiguan's Origins Clues from Chinese, Japanese, Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese, and Latin Sources", in *Sea Rovers, Silver, and Samurai: Maritime East Asia in Global History, 1550–1700*, ed. Tonio Andrade, Xing Hang, Perspectives on the Global Past (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2016), 114–140.

4 John E. Wills, *Mountain of Fame: Portraits in Chinese History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 216–231

5 Wen-hsiung Hsu, "From Aboriginal Island to Chinese Frontier: The Development of Taiwan before 1683", in *China's Island Frontier: Studies in the Historical Geography of Taiwan*, ed. Ronald G. Knapp (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1980), 3–28; John

to the Qing. After several years of uneasy truce and negotiations with the new Manchu emperor, Kangxi, in 1676 Zheng Jing decided to join the powerful anti-Manchu revolt of the Three Feudatories,[6] which had erupted in southern China in 1673. Following initial successes, he was ultimately defeated and forced to withdraw to Taiwan in 1680. The Qing finally crushed the rebellion in 1681 and two years later launched a final offensive against the Zheng regime under the command of admiral Shi Lang.[7]

This summary necessarily leaves aside the intricate political and commercial relations that extended across and beyond China. Within this broader framework, the Japanese, the Dutch East India Company (VOC), the Spanish operating from the Philippines, and the Portuguese based in Macau played leading roles, while Siam, Vietnam, various Southeast Asian rulers, and English merchants assumed more secondary positions.[8] Missionaries, too, were deeply enmeshed in these dynamics. They were subjects of different European monarchs and were divided among rival ecclesiastical jurisdictions and religious orders, even as the Holy See sought to impose a new administrative framework through the appointment of apostolic vicars.

Szpot divided his narrative of the Zheng house into several parts. In Part I, Book II, he devoted Section XI to the story of Zheng Zhilong, whose name he romanized as Chinchilung. In Sections XV and XVI, he turned to the activities of Zheng Chenggong, or Koxinga – whom he referred to as Quesingus – in his account. In the latter, he described the capture of the Dutch colony on the "island of Taheu·kieu, called Formosa by the Europeans", Koxinga's subsequent death, and the accession of Zheng Jing (Xinkim). In the first three sections of Book III, Szpot discussed the Revolt of the Three Feudatories. Finally, in Section IV, he described their last days:

> It was therefore resolved to attack the now-weakened Xinkimus [Zheng Jing – B.Z.] with a fleet of four hundred ships on the very island of Formosa;

Robert Shepherd, *Statecraft and Political Economy on the Taiwan Frontier, 1600–1800* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 91–103.

6 One of the three was Wu Sangui – his description by Szpot was analysed by Paweł F. Nowakowski, "Wu Sangui (Usanqueius) – dowódca i buntownik na kartach *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* Tomasza Szpota Dunina", *Rocznik Filozoficzny Ignatianum* 29/4 (2023): 89–100.

7 Xing Hang, "Bridging the Bipolar: Zheng Jing's Decade on Taiwan, 1663–1673", in *Sea Rovers, Silver, and Samurai: Maritime East Asia in Global History, 1550–1700*, ed. Tonio Andrade, Xing Hang (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2016), 238–259.

8 Andrade, Hang, *Sea Rovers, Silver, and Samurai*.

> for, having been deprived of the forces which his grandfather and father had once possessed, he had withdrawn from the sea to the island. When the imperial fleet accordingly arrived and occupied on the island various positions suitable for the siege of the fortification until recently held by the Dutch, in which Xinkimius had shut himself up with his followers, he, at length besieged, either – as some relate – despairing of his cause and lest he should fall alive into the hands of his enemies, put an end to his life by voluntary hanging, or else perished from a violent illness brought on by grief of mind and continual gnawing anxieties. A youthful son being left, and being unable to defend himself, he, trusting in the emperor's clemency, surrendered himself and the entire island, together with its most strongly fortified citadel and all his naval forces, to him. Thus at last, without much bloodshed, the island of Formosa, once neglected by the emperors of China, passed into the hands of Emperor Camhi [Kangxi – B.Z.], who, assigning to it fifty thousand soldiers, granted to the youthful son of Xinkimius the city of Yempin [Yanping – B.Z.] in the province of Fokien with its territory, and ordered that he be prince there [trans. Andrzej Wadas].[9]

Davidson's classic – if now somewhat outdated – *The Island of Formosa: Its Past and Present* recounts the last days of Zheng Jing quite differently:

> Cheng Ching [Zheng Jing – B.Z] with his kingdom in a prosperous condition and having abandoned warlike expeditions against the Tartars, devoted his last days to teaching Cheng Ko-tsang (Zheng Kezang – B.Z), an illegitimate son of whom he was very fond, the duties of the high office which at his father's death would descend to him. In 1682 Cheng Ching died at the age of 39 respected and honored by all his subjects, a powerful

9 Ita debilitatum Xinkimium classe quadringentarum Navium in ipsa Insula Formosa aggredi libuit: qui cum iam iis viribus, quas olim Avus suus et Pater habuerant, destitutus fuisset, receperat se ex mari in Insulam. Eò igitur postquam classis imperialis appulit, et in ipsa Insula diversa loca commoda obsidioni Munitionis nuper Batavicae, cui se Xinkimius cum suis incluserat, occupavit: ubi demum obsessus Xinkimius, sive, ut nonnulli memorant, desperatis suis rebus, ne vivus in hostium manus veniret, voluntario suspendio se interfecit, sive ex dolore animi, continuisque mordacibus curis orto violento morbo interiit. Relictus Filius adolescens, cùm se tueri non valeret, clementiae Imperatoris confisus, se, totamque insulam cum munitissima Arce suisque omnibus navalibus copiis ipsi reddidit. Ita demum absque multo sanguine Insula Formosa, olim neglecta ab Imperatoribus Sinis venit in manus Camhi Imperatoris: qui datis illi pro praesidio quinquaginta millibus pugnatorum Filio Xinkimii adolescenti contulit in Provincia Fokien Urbem Yempin cum suo Territorio, et in illa Principem eum esse iussit. ARSI, Jap. Sin. 103, ff. 40v-41r. See also: ARSI, Jap. Sin. 104, f. 346 r.

> enemy of the Tartars for nineteen years, having begun his career, which included many battles great and small, by his father's side when but a lad.[10]

Both portrayals, whether as a desperate wretch or as a beloved hero, are equally misleading. I therefore present Davidson's more celebratory account here as an instructive counterpoint. The events leading to the fall of the Zheng regime in Taiwan unfolded over several years. In 1680, the Zhengs lost their last mainland stronghold and withdrew to Taiwan. There Zheng Jing did indeed die in a state of disillusionment, though in circumstances less dramatic than Szpot suggests. In March 1681, after a prolonged period of heavy drinking and dissipation, he died, leaving power to his son Kezang, who had already been acting as his de facto regent. Kezang was almost immediately killed in a coup, and his adolescent half-brother Keshang was installed as the new ruler. Nearly two further years passed, marked by political manoeuvring in both Taiwan and on the mainland, where the Manchus prepared their forces. In July 1683, the Qing fleet attacked the Penghu archipelago and, in a series of bloody engagements, destroyed the Zheng navy. Defenceless, Zheng Keshuang capitulated to the Qing.[11]

As can be seen, Szpot telescoped several years of events into a single episode, omitted a crucial naval battle, and described an invasion and a siege that in fact never took place. Zheng Keshuang did indeed surrender to the Kangxi Emperor, but the latter did not bestow upon him the title of Prince of Yanping; on the contrary, he deprived him of it. My purpose is not to dwell on Szpot's inaccuracies, which are understandable given the limitations of his sources and the general state of European knowledge about China in his time. Rather, I seek to consider why such a momentous transformation in East Asian history – the incorporation of Taiwan into the Qing imperial sphere-was treated in so cursory a manner, with little regard for detail or factual precision. It marked the beginning of sustained imperial rule over the island and initiated processes of Sinicization, assimilation, and the partial displacement of Taiwan's Indigenous peoples, the consequences of which continue to shape the region today.

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10 James Wheeler Davidson, *The Island of Formosa, Past and Present: History, People, Resources, and Commercial Prospects. Tea, Camphor, Sugar, Gold, Coal, Sulphur, Economical Plants, and Other Productions* (London–New York: Macmillan; Kelly & Walsh, 1903), 60.

11 Young-tsu Wong, *China's Conquest of Taiwan in the Seventeenth Century* (Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2017); Hang, "Bridging the Bipolar: Zheng Jing's Decade on Taiwan, 1663–1673".

The geopolitics of Taiwan and the view from the north

Geopolitics, particularly in the early decades of the twenty-first century, has become a fashionable term, accompanied by a proliferation of experts, both established and self-styled, eager to offer their views to a wide audience. Yet Taiwan had long been regarded as one of the world's principal geopolitical hotspots well before the term itself gained renewed prominence.[12] The geography has not changed radically over the past four centuries, and the basic patterns of trade continue to follow the same routes. Ships still sail from the Straits of Malacca through the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait to the ports of central and northern China and Japan, though they now carry oil and electronic goods rather than silk and porcelain. It might therefore seem natural to assume that an island lying opposite the densely populated provinces of Fujian and Zhejiang, and serving as an important waypoint on the route to Japan, would command considerable attention. The coastal regions through which missionaries gained access to the Celestial Empire might likewise be expected to occupy a central place in the historiography of the missions.[13] This expectation would seem particularly applicable to a historian such as Tomasz Dunin Szpot. Yet the text of the *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* suggests otherwise. To some extent, such an omission is understandable. Even if Szpot took an interest in the coasts of China, he had good reason to overlook Taiwan, for in his time the island was emphatically not regarded as part of the "Chinese coast." It was considered "an island beyond the seas," one that the empire did not view as forming part of its territorial domain. Nor was it imagined to be a Chinese island in the way that, for example, Hainan was. It required nearly two centuries of Chinese rule and colonisation to draw Taiwan conceptually closer to the mainland, as Emma Teng has persuasively demonstrated.[14] Even when, to quote Szpot once more, "the Island of Formosa, once neglected by the Emperors of China, fell into the hands of Emperor Kangxi",[15] the emperor

12 See for example John Franklin Copper, *Playing with Fire: The Looming War with China over Taiwan* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2006); Steve Tsang (ed.), *Peace and Security Across the Taiwan Strait* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2004).

13 For the development of Chinese Christians communities in the period see Nicolas Standaert (ed.), *Handbook of Christianity in China*, vol. 1: *635–1800* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 534–555; map on p. 553 shows the extent of fast-growing Christianity in the coasts of Fujian in the 1630s.

14 Emma Teng, *Taiwan's Imagined Geography: Chinese Colonial Travel Writing and Pictures, 1683–1895* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center 2004).

15 ARSI, Jap. Sin. 102, f. 41r.

seriously contemplated evacuating and abandoning what he famously described as a "little ball of mud".[16]

Szpot offered further examples of this geographical imagery. In his brief geographical description in Part I, Book I, Section I of *Historiae Sinarum Imperii*, China was said to border, in the west, the kingdom of Tibet; in the north-east, the Bohai Gulf, beyond which lay Korea, separated by broad waters; and in the south-east, an immense and turbulent ocean. No lands were mentioned beyond this "immense ocean," whether belonging to China or to foreign powers. In this portion of the narrative, Taiwan lay so far "beyond the seas" as to be effectively absent from view. Such a perspective closely corresponded to the contemporary outlook from Peking, especially considering that its rulers were the Manchus – originally nomadic horsemen of the North Asian plains rather than a traditionally seafaring people.[17]

Another insight into Szpot's geographical imagination is provided by the hand-drawn maps he attached to his *Collectanea Historiae Sinensis*[18] and *Collectanea pro Historia Sinica*.[19] At first glance, they appear to be of mediocre quality – better maps of China had already been published nearly half a century earlier by Martino Martini in his *Novus Atlas Sinensis* of 1655.[20] However, two of the maps included in the *Relatio* were signed as copies after maps by Antoine Thomas (1644–1709), a skilled mathematician and cartographer. Almost exactly Szpot's contemporary, in 1688 he became head of the Beijing Jesuit mission after the death of Ferdinand Verbiest, and also took the latter's position as Kangxi's court astronomer, accompanying him on several expeditions and drawing maps along the way.[21] In fact, the maps from Szpot's collection are

16 Emma Teng, *Taiwan's Imagined Geography*, 34.

17 ARSI, Jap. Sin. 102, f. 1 r. If the Manchus were land-based, so too was Szpot, who came from the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, a predominantly continental power with limited maritime traditions.

18 About the maps in Szpot: Robert Danieluk, S.J., *From Manuscript to Print: At the Origin of Early Jesuit Missionary Strategies and Communication*, in: *Reimagining the Globe and the Cultural Exchange. The East Asian Legacies of Matteo Ricci's World Map*, ed. Laura Hostetler (Leiden–Boston: Brill), 45–81; ARSI, Jap. Sin. 105-I, f.1r; ARSI, Jap. Sin. 105-I, f.6r; ARSI, Jap. Sin. 105–I, f. 98r; Jap. Sin. 105–I, f. 227r.

19 ARSI, Jap. Sin. 110 (folio sine numero).

20 Martino Martini, SJ, *Novus atlas sinensis: Le mappe dell'atlante della Cina commentate*, ed. Riccardo Scarezzini (Trento: Università degli Studi di Trento, 2003).

21 Nöel Golvers, „Thomas, Antoine". *Conimbricenses.org Encyclopedia*, ed. Mário Santiago de Carvalho, Simone Guidi, https://www.conimbricenses.org/encyclopedia/thomas-antoine/ (accessed on: 01.02.2025).

important for documenting the attempt to map the trans-Siberian route to Europe.[22]

The presence of maps attributed to Antoine Thomas (1644–1709) in Szpot's manuscripts demonstrates that he drew on information obtained from the northern Jesuit mission, including Thomas himself. The maps present a distinctly northern, continental, and missionary perspective. A case in point is Hainan Island, which Szpot describes as the southernmost point of the empire and thus as possessing a certain symbolic importance. In the main map of *Imperium Sinicum*,[23] the island is cut in half and its southernmost portion is not depicted; only the northern part is visible, marked with a small church denoting a mission. Taiwan (Insula Formosa) is correctly positioned, but the Ryukyu Islands are neither accurately placed nor properly identified, despite constituting at the time a separate kingdom, an important commercial partner, and a tributary state of the Chinese empire. By contrast, the Zhoushan archipelago is disproportionately enlarged and explicitly named, reflecting its importance in the eyes of the Jesuit missionary-cartographer: several mission stations were located there, as shown in a separate map of the islands.[24]

Near the northern entrance to the Taiwan Strait, a single island is depicted between the mouth of the Min River – on whose shore the city of Fuzhou is marked – and what is most likely the estuary forming Quanzhou Bay, where the port of the same name is located. If this identification is correct, the island in question can be identified as Pingtan; this would imply that the Penghu Islands, known historically as the Pescadores, are not depicted at all.

Control of this largely barren coral archipelago ensures strategic dominance of the Taiwan Strait. For this reason, the Penghu Islands were regarded as an important imperial outpost, and a naval station was

22 Anthony Florovsky, "Maps of the Siberian Route of the Belgian Jesuit, A. Thomas (1690)", *Imago Mundi* 8 (1951): 103–108; Burkiewicz and Wadas treated these maps as works by Szpot, but the extent of his "authorial input" needs to be carefully checked – in this case he might have been just a copist, or these were originals sent from Peking. Burkiewicz, Wadas, "Życie i dzieło Tomasza Ignacego Dunina Szpota SJ (1644/1645–1713)", 352.

23 ARSI, Jap. Sin. 105, f. 1r.

24 Also included among other maps in the *Collectanea…* are quite detailed plans of Shangchuan Island, which is of little importance, save for the fact, that Jesuit saint Francis Xavier died and is buried there. See Robert Danieluk, "From Manuscript to Print: At the Origins of Early Jesuit Missionary Strategies of Communication", in *Reimagining the Globe and Cultural Exchange: The East Asian Legacies of Matteo Ricci's World Map*, ed. Laura Hostetler (Leiden: Brill, 2024) for more about maps in Szpot's manuscripts (this author also considers Szpot to be their author).

established there during the Yuan dynasty.[25] Any maritime power would seek to control them, as demonstrated in 1885, when the French occupied the islands during the Sino-French War over Vietnam,[26] and again in 1895, when the Japanese landed there as a prelude to the annexation of Taiwan.[27] Their strategic location prompted the Dutch to establish a base of operations there following their failed attempt to capture Macau in 1622.[28] To protect this strategic waypoint on the Batavia–China–Japan trade route, the Dutch built a fort in the Pescadores,[29] In doing so, however, they encroached upon imperial territory and were driven out by a Ming naval expedition. The mandarins considered the Dutch presence in Penghu a strategic threat; at the same time, they signalled that the empire would not oppose a Dutch settlement in Taiwan.[30] Li Dan and Zheng Zhilong both played important roles in these negotiations.[31] The island lay beyond treacherous seas and was said to be inhabited by head-hunting savages; it did not form part of the civilized Chinese world, and the red-haired barbarians could have it if they were willing to risk their lives there.

In *Historiae Sinarum Imperii*, Szpot did not mention the strategically important Pescadores; it remains to be determined whether the name appears in his other manuscripts. It cannot be excluded that he was unaware of their importance or even of their existence. Lacking such knowledge, he framed his narrative of the Manchu invasion of Taiwan

25 Shih-shan Henry Tsai, *Maritime Taiwan: Historical Encounters with the East and the West* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2009), 4.

26 *Ibidem*, 101–103.

27 Davidson, *The Island of Formosa, Past and Present…*, 266–268.

28 Charles Ralph Boxer, *Fidalgos in the Far East, 1550–1770* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 72–93. Interestingly, in repelling the attack quite an important role played two Jesuits, Giacomo Rho and Adam Schall von Bell.

29 The remains of the destroyed Red Barbarian Fort (Hongmao Zhai) were still visible a century later, and the memory of it was still alive then – as described by Joseph Marie Anne de Moyriac de Mailla, "Lettre du Père de Mailla, missionnaire de la Compagnie de Jésus, au Père de Colonia, de la même Compagnie", in *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses, écrites des missions étrangers*, vol. 14, ed. Nicolas Le Clerc (Paris: Imprimerie de Pierre Le-Mur, 1720), 1-86; English translation of this very interesting relation were published in Joseph Anne Marie Moyriac de Mailla, *The Early History of Formosa* (Shanghai: Loureiro & co., 1874) and in William Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch* (London: Kegan Paul, 1903), 504–518.

30 John E. Wills, "The Seventeenth-Century Transformation Title Taiwan Under the Dutch and the Cheng Regime", in *Taiwan: A New History*, ed. Murray A Rubinstein (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2007), 88.

31 Wills, "Yiguan's Origins Clues from Chinese, Japanese, Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese, and Latin Sources", 116.

as a repetition of Koxinga's earlier assault, replacing the staunch Dutch defence – too well known to be denied – with the despair and suicide of Zheng Jing, whom he had previously portrayed as a morally corrupt figure.

The Dutch defence was indeed well known, largely through publications arising from controversies within the Dutch East India Company over the loss of such an important colony,[32] which they had occupied for thirty-eight years (1624–1661) and had done much to make self-sustaining and profitable, chiefly by encouraging large numbers of Chinese settlers to develop local agriculture. Tonio Andrade emphasises their economic and administrative importance, arguing that they acted as co-colonisers in the enterprise as a whole.[33] Among the Dutch colonists were several energetic missionaries active among the Siraya, one of Taiwan's indigenous peoples. The missionaries devised a writing system for the local language, in which they rendered the Gospel of Matthew and – only recently identified – the Gospel of John.[34] In their intellectual curiosity and ethnographic zeal, some rivalled the Jesuits, leaving behind unusually detailed accounts of the beliefs and everyday practices of the communities among whom they worked.[35]

"Rivalry" is central to understanding much of the situation in and around China at the time, and scientific pursuits were probably the least important arena of such competition. The Catholic Spanish were as eager as the Calvinist Dutch to secure the lucrative China–Japan trade route, which in their case extended southward to their colony in the Philippines. For this reason, the Spaniards established their own settlement in northern Taiwan in 1626,[36] built churches, attempted to convert the indigenous population, and saw several of their missionaries martyred in

32 Tonio Andrade, *Lost Colony: The Untold Story of China's First Great Victory over the West* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

33 Tonio Andrade, *How Taiwan Became Chinese: Dutch, Spanish, and Han Colonization in the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

34 Christopher Joby, "A Recently Discovered Copy of a Translation of the Gospel of St. John in Siraya", *Oceanic Linguistics* 59/1/2 (2020): 212–231. Interestingly, the literacy which the Aborigine people had acquired from the Dutch long survived the colonisers departure. Ann Heylen, "Dutch Language Policy and Early Formosan Literacy (1624-1662)", in *Missionary Approaches and Linguistics in Mainland China and Taiwan*, ed. Weiying Ku (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2001), 199–251.

35 Many of which were translated in Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*.

36 The attempt was short lived, as they were ousted by the Dutch in 1642; for details see José Eugenio Borao Mateo, *The Spanish Experience in Taiwan, 1626–1642: The Baroque Ending of a Renaissance Endeavor* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009).

the process.[37] From their base in the Philippines, the Spanish perspective on Taiwan and China assumed a more distinctly southern and maritime character, often yielding more detailed accounts of the island and the south-eastern coasts of China.[38] Among the most important of these works was *Hechos de la orden de predicadores en el imperio de China*, written in 1667 by the Dominican friar Vittorio Riccio (1621–1685).[39] Riccio spent several years in Koxinga's principal base at Xiamen, and his *Hechos* offer a rich body of information on the missions in Taiwan, Xiamen, and across southern China, as well as on the Qing–Ming (Zheng) struggle in the region.[40]

Szpot referred to him as an ambassador of Zheng Chenggong to the governor of Manila, demanding tribute on behalf of the Chinese pirate-king and threatening invasion in the event of refusal. The Polish Jesuit emphasised how burdensome the task had been for Riccio and presented his acceptance of it as an act of necessity, undertaken solely to safeguard the lives of the Christians among Zheng's followers, whom Koxinga had threatened should he refuse to comply.[41]

The title *Hechos de la orden de predicadores en el imperio de China* makes clear that the work was devoted to the deeds of Riccio's native order, the Dominicans (*Ordo Praedicatorum*), and situates it within another sphere of rivalry, this time within the Catholic Church itself. Jesuits and Dominicans differed markedly in their missionary strategies and frequently competed for influence. Additionally, in South-East Asia and China, the Jesuits were more closely aligned with the Portuguese, who maintained their colony and the diocese of Macau, while the Dominicans were associated with the Spanish in Manila and its episcopal see. Each crown claimed exclusive rights of patronage and ecclesiastical

37 José Eugenio Borao Mateo, "The Formosa Catholic Mission, 1626–1895", in *The Catholic Church in Taiwan*, ed. Francis K.H. So et al. (Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2018), 15–37.

38 Anna Busquets i Alemany, "Other Voices for the Conflict: Three Spanish Texts about the Manchus and Their Conquest of China", *Ming Qing Yanjiu* 17/01 (2012): 35–64.

39 It has not yet been published, but the transcript is available in digitized form. Vittorio Riccio, *Hechos de la Orden de Predicatores en el Ymperio de China*, 1667, http://digital.dombibliothek-koeln.de/ddbkhd/12609.

40 Busquets i Alemany, "Other Voices for the Conflict".

41 For details of this and subsequent Riccio's embassies see Anna Busquets i Alemany, "Three Manila-Fujian Diplomatic Encounters: Different Aims and Different Embassies in the Seventeenth Century", *Journal of Early Modern History* 23/5 (2019): 442–457.

jurisdiction within its sphere of colonial influence, as defined by the Treaty of Tordesillas.[42]

The rivalry was particularly intense at the time of Szpot's writing, with the two orders aligned on opposing sides in the Chinese Rites Controversy.[43] Riccio himself was well disposed towards the Jesuits and appreciated their work, even though he did not agree with them on the question of the rites.[44] His text of 1667 could not have informed Szpot's account of the events of 1683; rather, it illustrates how inter-order rivalry shaped the availability of potentially valuable sources and attitudes towards them. The rivalry was clearly visible in Szpot's work, as he devoted several pages of *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* to rebutting arguments advanced by another prominent Dominican author, Domingo Fernández de Navarrete. A determined critic of the Jesuits, Navarrete became the object of considerable efforts on their part to suppress his writings and limit their circulation.[45]

Bishop François Pallu in Taiwan

These polemics and controversies lead us to the third major development of 1683, namely the arrival of François Pallu in China and its immediate repercussions. Szpot discussed these events in Part III, Section II and the subsequent sections of *Historiae Sinarum Imperii*. The attention he devoted to this episode and the level of detail he provided stand in sharp contrast to his cursory account of the Qing conquest of Taiwan. He was, above all, a historian of the China missions rather than of China as such. Although his work contains valuable observations on

42 By the letter of the treaty, whole East Asia should be in Portuguese sphere, which would remove the cause of friction, but the Spanish established themselves by force in Philippines and would not be removed until 1895.

43 The controversy generated huge literature, but a good introduction can be found in David E. Mungello, *The Chinese Rites Controversy: Its History and Meaning* (London: Routledge, 2024).

44 Piotr Ewertowski, *Chiny w oczach hiszpańskiego dominikanina na podstawie "Hechos de La Orden de Predicadores En El Imperio de China"*, PhD dissetation (Poznań: Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu, 2024), 235–241, https://repozytorium.amu.edu.pl/server/api/core/bitstreams/a0592703-2053-4d88-9c3d-cd87dd1711a9/content (accessed on: 21.02.2026).

45 Busquets and Alemany, "Other Voices for the Conflict".

the empire in his time, the missions remained his primary concern, and he treated even relatively minor incidents at considerable length.[46]

François Pallu (1626–1684) was one of the founders of the *Missions étrangères de Paris* (MEP), a missionary society of secular priests and lay collaborators whose aim was the evangelization of foreign lands, a field that had hitherto been largely in the hands of religious orders such as the Jesuits, Dominicans, and Augustinians. The creation of the MEP formed part of a broader effort by the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, commonly known as Propaganda Fide, to centralize missionary activity, bring it under closer papal authority, and limit the influence of the colonial powers of Spain and Portugal, which supported but also controlled missionary work through the Spanish *patronato* and the Portuguese *padroado* systems. These initiatives placed the Congregation's appointees and missionaries in the field in conflict with existing ecclesiastical jurisdictions and competing colonial interests.[47] The details lie beyond the scope of this article; however, as these developments directly concerned the Jesuits in China, they were of particular interest to Szpot. One aspect of the efforts of Propaganda Fide was the creation of new ecclesiastical structures under the supervision of apostolic vicars. Pallu, titular Bishop of Heliopolis, was one of the first three such vicars appointed for East Asia, having been nominated in 1658 by Pope Alexander VII.[48] The journey of 1683 marked his third attempt to reach the Celestial Empire.

According to Pallu's own recollections, in June 1683 he and his two companions boarded a Chinese ship in Siam, intending to disembark in Canton. At the time, the Qing navy was on high alert, preparing for the invasion of Taiwan. Unwilling to risk approaching Chinese ports, the captain decided to sail directly to Japan. Fortunately for the bishop, he ultimately chose not to throw his troublesome passengers – the three missionaries – overboard. Instead, as the ship passed the coast of Taiwan,

46 Good example is his description of the burial of Matteo Ricci. See Janusz Smołucha, "Pogrzeb Mattea Ricciego SJ (1552–1610) w *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* Tomasza Szpota Dunina: kulturowa interakcja", *Rocznik Filozoficzny Ignatianum* 29/4 (2023): 59–74.

47 Tara Alberts, *Conflict and Conversion: Catholicism in Southeast Asia, 1500–1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 34–39.

48 Jean-Pierre Charbonnier, "The MEP in China: A Chronology from the 17th Century to the Present", in *Missions Étrangères de Paris (MEP) and China from the Seventeenth Century to the Present*, vol. 6, ed. Ji Li (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 246.

he put them ashore there. In this way, the vicar found himself in the Zheng domain on the eve of the Qing invasion.[49]

The timing proved particularly significant. Pallu landed in Taiwan in mid-August 1683, between the decisive battles at the Penghu archipelago, fought from 10 to 17 July, and the landing of Manchu forces on 5 October.[50] According to his own account, after the Qing conquest Pallu approached the Qing commander and was granted a ship to proceed to his designated diocese of Fujian, a favour he attributed to his saintly countenance and to divine grace.[51]

Even before his arrival, Pallu had already attempted to assert his authority over the missionaries in China. Among other measures, he demanded that they take an oath of obedience to him as their new vicar. This demand provoked considerable opposition; for example, the Spanish missionaries argued that it violated their oath of loyalty to the king.[52] In Part III, Book III, Section II of the *Historiae Sinarum Imperii*, Szpot devoted sections 1–6 to the exchanges between the apostolic vicars, other ecclesiastical authorities, and the Jesuits in Peking, explaining the latter's position, particularly with regard to the required oath. He noted that the Jesuits were obliged to accompany Kangxi on extended tours as cartographers, a circumstance that accounted for certain delays in their correspondence with the ecclesiastical authorities (from a modern perspective, this also helps to explain the presence of maps in Szpot's manuscripts). In this section, Szpot once again presented a distinctly "northern" or Peking court perspective, though he did address the situation in the south. He also set out at some length the reasons why Pallu was unable to land in Macau, the usual point of entry for most missionaries. The cause, he maintained, lay in the hostilities between the Portuguese and the French over commercial interests, rather than in any interference by missionaries already residing in China.

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49 Hippolyte Pallu, François Pallu, *Essais Biographiques Sur François Pallu, Évêque d'Héliopolis et Vicaire Apostolique Au Tong-King Au XVIIe Siècle* (Paris: Monnoyer frères, 1863), 13–14.

50 *Ibidem*, 181.

51 Pallu, Pallu, *Essais Biographiques Sur François Pallu*, 14; Frédéric Laplanche, *Chuan yue Fu er mo sha 1630–1930: Fa guo ren yan zhong de Tai wan yin xiang* (Taibei: Baqi wenhua, 2021), 55–58, repeats this story uncritically, adding also that the forced stay in Taiwan was a period of spiritual exercise for Pallu. In any case, the visit earned him a distinction of being one of the first Frenchmen to visit the island.

52 Claudia von Collani, "Beginning with Obstacles: The First Attempts of the Propaganda Fide to Establish Relations with China", *Hong Kong Journal of Catholic Studies* 14 (December 2023): 49–77.

Szpot evidently considered such clarifications necessary, as Pallu was known for his generally negative attitude toward the Jesuits and for opposing their interpretation of the Chinese rites. His views on Jesuit activity in China were strongly influenced by the aforementioned de Navarrete, whom he met and befriended in Madagascar in 1671 and who was openly hostile to the Society. Pallu's resentment toward the Jesuits deepened after his arrest in the Philippines in 1674, when a Jesuit acting as interpreter disclosed his confidential documents to the Spanish authorities, leading him to believe that the Society had orchestrated his detention.[53]

It appears that while in Taiwan Pallu blamed the Jesuits for his predicament. This episode is not mentioned in the *Historiae Sinarum Imperii*, where Szpot makes no reference to the "Taiwanese incident." In retrospect, the episode may seem relatively minor; however, such hindsight was available to modern historians, not to Szpot. The omission is therefore noteworthy, especially since he did include the incident in his *Collectanea Historiae Sinensis*.[54] There he also provided much more detailed information about the authorities in Macau and their threat to arrest Pallu should he attempt to land there. Interestingly, Pallu's account passed over this hostility, which Szpot emphasized, but mentioned the activity of the Qing fleet, a factor not addressed by Szpot. Such discrepancies may once again be interpreted as reflecting the difference between a "southern," coastal perspective and a "northern," Peking-based one, since the fathers in Peking were in contact with their confrères in Macau. In any case, relations between the Jesuits and the bishop of Heliopolis were clearly strained. Szpot's lengthy explanations may therefore be read as a polemical response to potential accusations from the French apostolic vicar.

Concluding remarks

The two incidents discussed in this article had momentous historical consequences. The Qing conquest of Taiwan led to the complete transformation of the island, which, however, had only just begun in Szpot's time. Pallu finally reached Fujian on 13 January 1684, but his stay there was brief.[55] Weakened by illness, he died in the same year in which he arrived in China. During this short period, he issued several important

53 *Ibidem*, 219.

54 ARSI, Jap. Sin. 105–I, ff. 29v–32v.

55 ARSI, Jap. Sin. 103, ff. 216v–217r; Guennou, "The Tercentenary of the Paris Foreign Mission Society in China", 88.

decisions by which he sought to reorganize China into new apostolic vicariates. This provoked conflicts with the Portuguese, who claimed that it infringed upon the rights of the diocese of Macau, as well as with Spanish missionaries and the diocese of Manila.[56] It would take thirty years before the new ecclesiastical structure was formally established in 1721.[57] Pallu also appointed Charles Maigrot MEP (1652–1730) as his successor. Ten years later, Maigrot's decree *Mandatum seu edictum* would reignite the Chinese Rites Controversy.[58]

This last issue was of greatest importance to Szpot, and it is therefore not surprising that the conquest of a mere "ball of mud" paled in comparison. The errors in his account of the conquest of Taiwan have been noted above, but they do not require further elaboration here. His access to source material was limited, and he had no earlier historical works against which to compare his account. The general history of the Missions Étrangères de Paris (MEP), published in 1894 – two hundred years after Szpot – claimed, in its description of their illustrious founder's imprisonment in Taiwan, that Pallu was captured in 1683 by Koxinga's fleet and interrogated by the famous pirate-admiral himself (sic).[59] Against this background, Szpot's inaccuracies appear relatively mild.

What I believe to be more important for future research is the extent of his sources. As noted above, Szpot appears to rely predominantly on the relations of the Jesuits based at the court in Peking. This assumption is further strengthened by the fact (which I did not discuss in this article) that *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* is a markedly Kangxi-centric work, devoting considerable space to extolling the emperor's virtues. Another interesting area for research is Szpot's attitudes, insofar as they can be surmised from the text. In his discussion of Pallu's arrival in China, Szpot seems to shift from the position of a historian of missions not merely to that of a chronicler of the Jesuit mission, but to that of a Jesuit apologist. One may therefore ask whether he moves away from writing history – even polemical history – toward a more explicit defence of the Society. Such a judgment would require careful textual analysis. Much, however, remains to be done with the thousands of pages Szpot bequeathed to us.

56 Claudia von Collani, "Beginning with Obstacles".

57 Standaert, *Handbook of Christianity in China, 1: 635–1800*, 576–578.

58 Claudia Von Collani, "Charles Maigrot's Role in the Chinese Rites Controversy", in *The Chinese Rites Controversy*, ed. David E. Mungello (London: Routledge, 2024), 149–184.

59 Adrien Launay, *Histoire Générale de La Société Des Missions-Étrangères* (Paris: Téqui, 1894), 297–298.

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