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## **In the Footsteps of Martino Martini: Prospero Intorcetta's Mission in Rome and the Role of the Procurators in a Global Context**

**Śladami Martina Martiniego: misja Prospera  
Intorcetty w Rzymie oraz rola prokuratorów  
w kontekście globalnym**

### **Abstract**

Intorcetta's letters reveal the global dimension and interconnections involved in the missionary enterprise, creating a network of relationships and connections that linked the Jesuits' missionary and economic activities in China to the European courts in order to obtain support for their apostolic work. Thanks to new documents, it is possible to see how the actions of the procurators who travelled to Rome on behalf of the Chinese mission were interconnected. This paper focuses on the missions of two procurators, Martino Martini and Prospero Intorcetta, focusing on two aspects of their work in particular related to the search for funding for the mission, namely: the search for donations and a particular episode linked to the musk trade, which demonstrate how Intorcetta's actions were in continuity with those of Martini.

**Keywords:** Martino Martini, Prospero Intorcetta, Jesuit mission in China, Jesuit procurators, Jesuit financial network.

## Abstrakt

Listy Intorcetty ukazują globalny wymiar oraz powiązany charakter przedsięwzięcia misyjnego, tworząc sieć relacji, która łączyła działalność misyjną i ekonomiczną jezuitów w Chinach z dworami europejskimi w celu uzyskania wsparcia dla ich pracy apostołskiej. Dzięki nowym dokumentom możliwe jest prześledzenie wzajemnych powiązań działań prokuratorów, którzy podróżowali do Rzymu w imieniu misji chińskiej. Artykuł koncentruje się na misjach dwóch takich prokuratorów, Martina Martiniego i Prospera Intorcetty, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem dwóch aspektów ich działalności związanych z pozyskiwaniem środków finansowych na rzecz misji: poszukiwania darowizn oraz szczególnego epizodu związanego z handlem piżmem. Elementy te ukazują ciągłość działań Intorcetty względem działalności Martiniego.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Martino Martini, Prospero Intorcetta, misja jezuicka w Chinach, prokuratorzy jezuicki, jezuicka sieć finansowa.

## Introduction

Prospero Intorcetta's mission as procurator of the Chinese Vice-Province follows that of Martino Martini by 10 years, both procurators had different tasks to perform, but their missions have close connections in several respects, mainly: (1) to inform the superiors about the state of the mission; (2) the need to raise funds to support the mission both through commercial activities and by collecting donations; (3) defending the method of evangelization before ecclesiastical authorities; (4) to recruit new missionaries; (5) the activity of publishing and disseminating the successes of the Jesuits in China. In this paper I will focus on two aspects in particular that concern financial aspects that are important for the survival of the mission in China. I will try to highlight through new recently discovered documents how the actions of Intorcetta are in continuity with that of Martini.

The survival of the missions depended on their ability to obtain the funds necessary to meet the temporal needs of the missionaries in their apostolic work. A solid financial basis was essential in order to meet all the commitments and expenses required by the missionary enterprise: these included not only the missionary's livelihood, the travel necessary for evangelisation work, and that of his assistants such as catechists, teachers, etc., but also the building of residences, churches, oratories, schools, and, last but not least, the costs of printing and distributing books. The Chinese case is noteworthy: missionaries produced and

printed hundreds of books in Chinese, both on religion and on scientific topics, while at the same time funds were also needed to purchase volumes in Europe that were useful for what has been defined as the apostolate through books.<sup>1</sup>

As the mission grew and the number of religious increased, so did the need for funds to maintain and implement the enterprise. From the very beginning, the Society had appointed procurators whose task was to take care of temporal matters in order to ensure the temporal maintenance of the Order and the missions. Within the Society, different types of procurators can be found.<sup>2</sup> Rules and guidelines were drawn up for procurators in China by Father Alessandro Valignano (1539–1606) during his time in Asia as Visitor of the missions.<sup>3</sup> Although the Chinese Vice-Province had various sources of income corresponding to the royal pension, commercial revenues, part of the interest from rented houses, as well as donations and transfers from the province of Japan, the mission's finances were nevertheless in constant difficulty and short of funds. The problem was that the enterprise would require far more funds than were available to the Chinese Vice-Province, or as Golvers acutely observed the “financial situation is that of a heavily charged budget, with a particularly fickle and vulnerable basis”.<sup>4</sup> In this regard, the dispute in the 1640s over financial matters between the procurators Álvaro Semedo of the Chinese Vice-Province and Cardim of Japan Province is representative. The former demanded the restoration of the ancient annual subsidy paid by Japan to China (revoked by Visitor Palmeiro) and the remission of China's debt to Japan.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, over time, the subsidies granted by the Portuguese crown proved insufficient due to chaos in the

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- 1 On this topic, see Nicolas Standaert (ed.), *Handbook of Christianity in China*, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 600–631.
  - 2 Dauril Alden, *The Making of an Enterprise: The Society of Jesus in Portugal, Its Empire, and Beyond, 1540–1750* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 298–311.
  - 3 See Diogo Reis Pereira, “Jesuit Procurators and the East Asian missions in the First Half of the Seventeenth Century: Material Cultures in Motion”, in *Circa missiones: Jesuit Understandings of mission through the Centuries (Proceedings of the Symposium held at Lisbon, Portugal, June 12–14, 2023)*, eds. Alessandro Corsi, Claudio Ferlan and Francisco Malta Romeiras, *International Symposia on Jesuit Studies* 3/1 (2025), special issue: 3.
  - 4 Noël Golvers, *François de Rougemont, S.J., Mission in Chàng-Shu (Chiang-Nan): A Study of the Account Book (1674–1676) and the Elogium* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1999), 630.
  - 5 Cf. Isabel Pina, “Dois procuradores jesuítas em confronto: Álvaro Semedo e António Francisco Cardim”, in *Res Sinicae. Pessoas, papéis e intercâmbios culturais entre a Europa e a China (1600–1800)*, eds. Arnaldo do Espírito Santo, Cristina Costa Gomes, Enrique Rodrigues-Moura (Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press, 2022), 105–108.

royal finances,<sup>6</sup> approximate budgets, corruption and the dangers of sea travel due to the presence of Dutch vessels, among others.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, the procurators dealt with every economic and financial aspect of the Society, also in the case of the procurators appointed to represent the missions in Rome, to whom no financial assistance was given by the Crown for their journey to Europe.<sup>8</sup> For this reasons, the procurators were always on the lookout for new benefactors and supporters of the mission through the creation of new networks of patrons; Intorcetta himself had among his main tasks to recover the sums owed by the benefactors that had not been collected for a long time.

Thanks to the global financial network developed by the Jesuits, they had various forms of financing at their disposal, although, as mentioned above, these proved insufficient for the Chinese mission. In this paper, I will focus on two specific sources of financial support carried out by the elected procurators: (a) donations and (b) commercial activities. As I will attempt to demonstrate, the documentation in the archives shows that these procurators were informed about the specific activities of their predecessors and were therefore able to continue their work in support of the mission's finances.

### (a) In search of donations for the mission

Given the difficulty in receiving grants from the crown and the papal curia itself, donations from major donors and other institutions were an important alternative source of income. From the time of Nicolas Trigault's (1577–1628) journey between 1615 and 1617 to various European courts, the importance of promoting the creation of a network of donors became clear. Trigault himself wrote on the subject: "It often came into my mind that nothing could be more helpful than if monetary sodalities and monts could be established for the propagation of the faith".<sup>9</sup> His tour has been described as one of the most famous "tournees

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6 Isabel Pina, "The European Tour of a Jesuit Procurator: Álvaro Semedo on behalf of the China mission (1637–1645)", in *Honoring the Option for China. History of the Encounters between the Catholic Church and China, from the 17th Century until Today*, eds. Pieter Ackerman, Hugo Vanheeswijk (Leuven: Ferdinand Verbiest Institute, 2023), 50.

7 Alden, *The Making of an Enterprise. The Society of Jesus in Portugal, Its Empire and Beyond*, 326–328.

8 See Luke Clossey, *Salvation and Globalization in the Early Jesuit missions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 167.

9 Quoted in Clossey, *Salvation and Globalization in the Early Jesuit missions*, 174.

de propagande missionnaire” of the modern era,<sup>10</sup> which succeeded in raising a considerable amount of donations. Among the donors were the Duke of Bavaria, Philip III, King of Spain,<sup>11</sup> but also charitable institutions. However, over time, some revenues had not been collected and therefore there were arrears to be recovered. The following procurators, Martino Martini and Prospero Intorcetta, devoted themselves to this task, working not only to collect the sums due but also to find new donors. However, the political situation in Europe could make it difficult for the procurator to obtain funds and donations for the mission. For example, A. Semedo's (1585–1658) tour of Europe as procurator (1637–1645) took place during the Portuguese Restoration, the situation of instability and uncertainty, including financial instability, meant that he not only failed to obtain payment of the arrears for the royal pension but “did not raise any significant funds or obtain donations, other than a few small amounts granted in Goa and Rome”.<sup>12</sup> His successors Martini and Intorcetta had more success with donations.

As for Martino Martini, during his trip to Europe (1653–1657) as procurator, he worked to raise funds to be able to pay both the travel expenses of his confreres to China, as well as to endow the Chinese mission. For this reason, Martini worked hard during his visit to several European courts in 1654 and managed not only to obtain new donations, but also to collect sums that were owed but had not been paid. Martini succeeded in obtaining a renewal of the donation of 500 florins (gulden) obtained by Trigault in 1616 from the Duke of Bavaria,<sup>13</sup> receiving (in 1655) an additional donation from Archduchess Maria Anna of Austria (1610–65), Maximilian's widow, of 1,500 gulden as interim support.<sup>14</sup> In July 1654, during his passage to Düsseldorf, the Duke of Neuburg, Philip William, Count Palatine of the Rhine, promised the payment of 100 Neapolitan ducats by his resident representative Antonio Macambruno.<sup>15</sup> Still during his journey from northern Europe to Rome via Austria, he was received

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10 Edmond Lamalle S.I., “La propagande du P. Nicolas Trigault en faveur des missions de Chine (1616)”, *AHSI* 9/1 (1940): 50.

11 *Ibidem*, 67–68.

12 Pina, “The European Tour of a Jesuit Procurator: Álvaro Semedo on behalf of the China mission (1637–1645)”, 50.

13 Fortunato Margiotti, *Il cattolicesimo nello Shansi dalle origini al 1738* (Roma: Edizioni “Sinica Franciscana”, 1958), 388, footnote 82.

14 Clossey, *Salvation and Globalization in the Early Jesuit missions*, 178.

15 ARSI FG 722/17, Giuliano Bertuccioli (ed.), *Martino Martini S.J. Opera Omnia*, vol. I: *Lettere e documenti* (Trento: Università degli Studi di Trento, 1998, hereafter MMOO I), 524.

in Vienna by Emperor Ferdinand III of Austria, obtaining from him a donation of one thousand florins per year, the payment of which was guaranteed by the revenue from taxes on wine, salt and beer in Bohemia.<sup>16</sup> Martini was clearly aware of the work carried out by his predecessors. In fact, he himself recalls that “Inter memorias p[atris] Nicolai Trigautij F[elicitis] R[ecordationis], quae adhuc in Sinis conservantur // Among the memoirs of the late Father Nicola Trigault, which are still preserved in China,”<sup>17</sup> he had learned that the latter had obtained donations in Naples and therefore hurried to the city to try to recover as much as he could. Furthermore, in two letters addressed to Father General Goswin Nickel (1582–1665), Martini lists a series of donations previously obtained by Trigault from various religious figures in Naples, including: Giovanni Battista Cagnetti (3,000 ducats), Father Girolamo Scaraggi (an unidentified sum which, according to Martini, the Vice-Province never received), Father Antonio Cicala (several sums offered divided between China and Japan amounting to 4,300 *scudi*, but of which China received nothing), Father Giovanni Antonio Loffredo (1,000 *scudi*), a sum allocated by Trigault for the purchase of books but not collected because the missionary had left to return to China.<sup>18</sup>

Martini’s intervention was necessary because, in many cases, donations from benefactors obtained by his predecessor had not been distributed or collected for various reasons, causing significant financial damage to the Chinese mission. Aware of the difficult situation of the mission’s finances, Intorcetta, once he arrived in Europe, worked hard to raise funds and re-establish the payment of donations, considering it of primary importance. The archives contain a memoir by Intorcetta that sheds light on the links between the missions of the various procurators sent to Rome and their efforts to continue the work of their predecessors in order to secure the funds necessary to support their confreres in China.<sup>19</sup> Almost fifteen years had passed since Martini left to return to China, so what was the situation regarding the income owed to the mission when Intorcetta arrived in Rome? The document drafted by Intorcetta does

16 MMOO I, 524–525, the Emperor’s decree is published on pages 277–280.

17 MMOO I, p. 301. In another letter, Martini shows that he is also aware of the attempts made by his predecessor, Álvaro Semedo, regarding the issue of non-payments by the Japanese Province, MMOO VI, 155–157.

18 The letters are published in MMOO I, 297–305.

19 The memoir has been recently published in Luisa Maria Paternicò and Davor Antonucci, *Prospero Intorcetta S.J.: Sapientia Sinica ed Epistolario (I parte)* (Napoli: Unior-Press, 2025), 181–189, <http://www.fedoabooks.unina.it/index.php/fedoapress/catalog/book/734>.

not indicate the situation prior to his arrival, but we know from another document that some of these donations had been suspended over time, or simply had not been collected, with great damage to the mission's coffers.<sup>20</sup> Intorcetta's task was therefore to try to recover the amounts owed and ensure their payment in the future. In the title of the memoir, Intorcetta clarifies that it is based on information left by the previous procurator, Martino Martini, when he was in Rome.<sup>21</sup> The memoir also included authentic documents of the donations and copies kept in the archives of the Portuguese Assistancy.<sup>22</sup> Like Martini before him, Intorcetta also relied on documents and information left by his predecessor for his work. It should also be noted that everything collected by the Procurator General's Office was recorded in his ledgers.<sup>23</sup> Starting from this information, he summarises the situation by listing each donation one by one and defining for each one: the amount, the reference to the original document, the dispositions he has taken for future payments, and the starting date of the payment (referring to Martini's period). The memoir is divided into seven sections: the first four concern donations from distinguished benefactors belonging to the European nobility, while the last three concern donations from Neapolitan religious figures obtained since the time of Trigault.

In the first section, Intorcetta refers to the donation made by Emperor Ferdinand III, obtained by Martini in 1654,<sup>24</sup> and collected by him the following year.<sup>25</sup> After his departure for China, the Procurator General

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20 This is the *Nota elemosinae datae ab Imperatore Provinciae Sinarum An. 1662*, preserved in ARSI, FG 722/17, see Paternicò, Antonucci, *Prospero Intorcetta S.J.: Sapiientia Sinica ed Epistolario (I parte)*, 183.

21 Martini's original document has not yet come to light.

22 The title is: *Memoria d'alcune rendite della V(ice) Prov(inci)a della China in Europa la notizia di queste rendite lasciò il P. Martino Martini in Roma, quando venne Proc(urato) re della China, con le scritture autentiche e copie di esse che stanno nell'Archivio dell'Assistenza di Portogallo // Memoir of some revenues of the Vice-Province of China in Europe. Father Martino Martini left news of these revenues in Rome when he came [to Rome] as Procurator of China, together with the authentic documents and copies thereof, which are kept in the Archives of the Portuguese Assistancy*, APE, *Informationi* 134, ff. 585r-586r, published in Paternicò, Antonucci, *Prospero Intorcetta S.J.: Sapiientia Sinica ed Epistolario (I parte)*, 181-189.

23 Cf. *Nota elemosinae datae ab Imperatore Provinciae Sinarum An. 1662*.

24 Previously, Trigault had obtained by Emperor Ferdinand II (r. 1620-37) clocks and mathematical instruments for the China mission, see Clossey, *Salvation and Globalization in the Early Jesuit missions*, 180.

25 See Martini's handwritten note on the back of the authentic document, MMOO I, 281. The collection is confirmed in the document *Nota elemosinae datae ab Imperatore Provinciae Sinarum An. 1662*.

took over and collected the sum of 5,500 florins until 1664. That same year, Ferdinand III's son Leopold I (r. 1658–1705) reassured the Jesuit General that the payments would continue.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, also in 1664, Fathers Grueber and Roth, who had arrived from China,<sup>27</sup> took charge of this and other donations from Germany, which, according to Clossey, represented “the largest and most stable external source of income.”<sup>28</sup> The sum of 500 florins owed by the Dukes of Bavaria, among the main benefactors of the mission in Germany, whose donation dates back to Trigault's tour, in the years 1632–1652, had not been paid due to military expenses during the Thirty Years' War.<sup>29</sup> As mentioned, Martini had obtained its renewal and the sums had been collected until 1662,<sup>30</sup> but subsequently payment had been made intermittently. Intorcetta gave the mandate to the procurator of the Province of Upper Germany (*P. Germaniae Superioris*) to collect this sum.<sup>31</sup> The third section of the report refers to the donation from duke Neuburg obtained by Martini (*vide supra*). This donation had also been collected until 1663, but then, due to the death of the duke's agent, Antonio Macambruno, who resided in Naples, no further payments were made. Intorcetta was advised to write to Philip William of Neuburg, elector Palatine, to recover the sums due.<sup>32</sup> The missionary's request achieved the desired result: in his reply, the duke not only reinstated the payment but also agreed to pay the arrears for the previous eight years.<sup>33</sup> However, in his memoir, Intorcetta merely mentions that the donation amounted to 100 ducats, without mentioning the restoration of the sums not paid in previous years, as stipulated by the duke in his letter. From the document *Nota elemosinae datae ab Imperatore Provinciae Sinarum An. 1662*, we learn that the payment would amount to 200 ducats (*i.e.* 100 ducats for the current alms plus another 100 until the arrears were paid off) and

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26 Clossey, *Salvation and Globalization in the Early Jesuit missions*, 180.

27 The Jesuits Johann Grueber (1623–1680) and Heinrich Roth (1620–1668) arrived in Rome on 2 February 1664.

28 Clossey, *Salvation and Globalization in the Early Jesuit missions*, 173–174.

29 On the economic support of the dukes of Bavaria for the Chinese mission see *ibidem*, 174–179.

30 Cf. *Nota elemosinae datae ab Imperatore Provinciae Sinarum An. 1662*.

31 For developments regarding this donation after Intorcetta's trip, see Clossey, *Salvation and Globalization in the Early Jesuit missions*, 178–179.

32 The letter explains that, following the death of Antonio Macambruno, the Duke's agent in Naples, his son Giuseppe had requested a new order, as the previous one had been addressed to his father. Eight years had passed since then without the alms being paid, APF, *Informationi* 134, f. 587r.

33 The letter from the duke of Neuburg dated 9 December 1671 is preserved in APF, *Informationi* 134, f. 593r.

that Intorcetta himself had collected the first 200 ducats. Finally, Father Giovanni Agostino de Nevares (or Nivares, 1611–1682), a Spaniard and procurator of the Imperial College in Naples, was appointed responsible for this donation, as recommended.<sup>34</sup> The last donation recorded in the report coming from Germany, which therefore proves to be one of the main supporters of the Chinese mission, concerns the one granted in 1654 by the elector of Cologne at the time, Maximilian Henry of Wittelsbach (1621–1688), for the sum of 100 thalers. However, only four years of this donation had been collected by 1658, despite letters of reminder having been sent to the elector's confessor. Furthermore, the confessor of the current elector, not being informed of the facts, mistakenly believed that there had been no further requests, whereas these had only been interrupted when Fathers Grueber and Roth took charge of donations from Germany. Intorcetta only mentions the sum of 100 thalers, for the collection of which he appoints rector Bernard Wimphling.<sup>35</sup> Thanks to this passage by Intorcetta, we learn that Martini had received another donation, probably obtained like the others during his journey to Rome from northern Europe (the start date is given as 22 July 1654), about which little or nothing was known.

The last sections in the memoir all concern a series of donations obtained by Father N. Trigault in Naples and not collected, on which Martini himself had already intervened during his stay in Rome. Among these was a considerable sum offered by Fr. Antonio Cicala of the Congregation of the Nativity of Our Lady in the Jesuit professed house, the collection of which had caused Martini no end of headaches. In an attempt to resolve the confusion, he had sought information from the Neapolitan and Roman procurators, but without reaching a clear conclusion.<sup>36</sup> In a letter sent to the Superior General, he concluded by stating that the revenues were still there but that the Chinese Vice-Province had not obtained anything because the procurators mistakenly believed that they were revenues intended for the Indies in general. In an attempt to clarify the situation, Intorcetta faithfully quotes an entire passage from the “Sommario dell'opere fondate e ordinate dal P. Antonio Cicala della Compagnia di Giesù per le missioni” (Summary of the works founded and organised by Father Antonio Cicala of the Society of Jesus for the missions), from which it is clear that “la fondatione essere stata fatta per la China e Giappone //

34 Paternicò, Antonucci, *Prospero Intorcetta S.J.: Sapientia Sinica ed Epistolario (I parte)*, 186.

35 Bernard Wimphling S.J. (1593–1666) was rector of the Jesuit College in Bonn.

36 MMOO I, 303, see also Margiotti, *Il cattolicesimo nello Shansi dalle origini al 1738*, 388.

the foundation was made for China and Japan”, half for each, and only if Christianity was prohibited in both countries could the sum be diverted to other countries in the East Indies.<sup>37</sup> Another large sum was donated to Trigault by his confrere Giovanni Antonio Loffredo (1591–1619). Trigault had allocated the income for the purchase of books, but it had not been collected due to the missionary’s departure. According to Martini, it had almost been lost, which is why he hurried to Naples in an attempt to recover what was owed.<sup>38</sup> The sum, as Intorcetta clarifies, again quoting a passage from Loffredo’s original document, came from the customs office in Naples and was to be collected in a single payment. However, it seems that neither Martini nor Intorcetta were able to recover the entire amount owed.<sup>39</sup> In the last section of his memoir, Intorcetta deals with the donation of 3,000 *scudi* made by Father Francesco Corcione on behalf of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament. There must have been considerable confusion regarding this donation: Martini makes no mention of it, but mentions Father Corcione in reference to Loffredo’s donation.<sup>40</sup> However, as Lamalle noted, the “Monte” that Corcione wanted to create to support the mission never saw the light of day due to fears that it would compete with the works of the Congregation of Nobles of the same professed house in Naples. When the project was finally abandoned, part of the alms initially promised to China was allocated to other purposes and other missions.<sup>41</sup> Intorcetta’s statement that the donation was “made and accepted *iuridice inter vivos*” on 28 February 1655, and therefore linked to Martini’s mission, therefore seems surprising. In this case too, the anonymous document *Nota elemosinae datae ab Imperatore Provinciae Sinarum An. 1662* helps to shed light on the matter. In fact, it is reported that the Procurator General was unable to collect the 3,000 ducats, which are said to be owed to China by the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament, as he had no knowledge of them, nor was it possible to find the documents in the archives of Fr. Corcione in Naples, adding “as Father Intorcetta himself experienced when he had them searched for”.<sup>42</sup> In a further note,

37 Paternicò, Antonucci, *Prospero Intorcetta S.J.: Sapiencia Sinica ed Epistolario (I parte)*, 187.

38 MMOO I, 299.

39 In fact, the document *Nota elemosinae datae ab Imperatore Provinciae Sinarum An. 1662* reports that only 500 florins were obtained from Naples “from various ancient revenues”.

40 Letter to the General Father, 29 April 1655, MMOO I, 299.

41 Cf. Lamalle, “La propagande du P. Nicolas Trigault en faveur des missions de Chine (1616)”, 70.

42 *Nota elemosinae datae ab Imperatore Provinciae Sinarum An. 1662*.

Intorcetta clarifies that, having passed through Naples in November 1671 on his way to Sicily, he had searched in vain for the documents but had nevertheless drawn up a delegation on the donation, referring to the need for more in-depth research in order to find the said documentation. In a final section on these donations, which were linked to the work of his predecessors Trigault and Martini, another donation is added, made by Fr. Ludovico Buglio (1606–1682), who left as a missionary for China in 1635. This sum had been sent by the procurator of the Sicilian province to the assistant of Portugal in Rome and was partly used for Fr. Valerio Sestini's journey to Lisbon.<sup>43</sup>

However, Intorcetta's work was not limited to recovering the income owed to the Chinese Vice-Province obtained by his predecessors, but he also committed himself to finding new donors. In particular the donation of 100 *scudi* per year from Cardinal L'Angravio,<sup>44</sup> which is recorded in the Archive of the Procurator General of the Society and whose collection is entrusted to Father Paolo Ottolini, procurator of China in Rome.<sup>45</sup> Finally, it should be noted that in the letters sent to Annibale Marchetti (1638–1709), a candidate for the Chinese mission, he not only urges him to look for funds for the mission before he leaves for China, but he also asks him for small gifts such as telescopes, glasses of various colours, and curiosities from Europe to be given to Chinese literati and governors.<sup>46</sup>

The following table lists the donations we have knowledge of in relation to the procurators who dealt with them during their travels in Europe:

| Donation by             | N. Trigault | M. Martini | P. Intorcetta |
|-------------------------|-------------|------------|---------------|
| Duke of Bavaria         | X           | X          | X             |
| Imperator Ferdinand III |             | X          | X             |
| Duke of Neuburg         |             | X          | X             |

43 Valerio Sestini S.J. (?–1673), embarked as a missionary for the East Indies on 1 March 1672, losing his life during the voyage in 1673.

44 This is Frederick of Hesse-Darmstadt (1616–1682), elected bishop of Breslau in 1671.

45 The letter is dated 20 June 1672. For more information on this donation, see Paternicò, Antonucci, *Prospero Intorcetta S.J.: Sapientia Sinica ed Epistolario (I parte)*, 268–270.

46 See for instance the letter dated 20 November 1671, see Paternicò, Antonucci, *Prospero Intorcetta S.J.: Sapientia Sinica ed Epistolario (I parte)*, 177–180.

47 Regarding this donation, Martini reports that he learnt that, having left the Society, he had taken his belongings with him, MMOO I, p. 304.

48 Martini reports that the funds from this donation were used to establish a college in the Malabar Province, *ibidem*.

| Donation by                 | N. Trigault | M. Martini | P. Intorcetta |
|-----------------------------|-------------|------------|---------------|
| elector of Cologne          |             | X?         | X             |
| G.B. Cognetto <sup>47</sup> |             | X          |               |
| G. Scaraggi <sup>48</sup>   | X           | X          |               |
| A. Cicala                   | X           | X          | X             |
| G.A. Loffredo               | X           | X          | X             |
| A. Corcione                 | X           | X          | X             |
| L. Buglio                   |             |            | X             |
| Cardinale L'Angravio        |             |            | X             |

### (b) A cargo of musk

The other issue that establishes a direct link between the work of the two procurators concerns a shipment of musk. In order to guarantee the missions in the East the financial resources necessary for their sustenance, given the difficulties that could sometimes be encountered in obtaining support from the Portuguese crown, which was responsible for the financial support of the missions in accordance with the *padroado*, Valignano, visitor to the Eastern provinces (1573–1606), had already realised during a trip to Japan that it was necessary to intervene by investing in the silk trade. For this reason, he entered into agreements with merchants who traded along the Macao-Nagasaki route.<sup>49</sup> However, trade was never fully approved in the early days of the Society, until specific rules were established. In essence, trade continued to be practised according to the actual needs of the missions.<sup>50</sup> On the eve of his departure from Macao, Intorcetta was entrusted with a quantity of Chinese goods (silk, sandalwood, pepper, etc.) which he could use to make a profit.<sup>51</sup> The procurator also worked to resolve a long-standing issue that Martini had dealt with before him, concerning a shipment of musk belonging to the Chinese Vice-Province, the return of which was being demanded. The story begins in 1648 when the Portuguese ship *Nossa Senhora da Conceição*, coming from Macao, on the well-known

49 Cf. Margiotti, *Il cattolicesimo nello Shansi dalle origini al 1738*, 369–370, Clossey, *Salvation and Globalization in the Early Jesuit missions*, 169.

50 On the whole question, see Margiotti, *Il cattolicesimo nello Shansi dalle origini al 1738*, 369–370, 369–377.

51 See Paternicò, Antonucci, *Prospero Intorcetta S.J.: Sapientia Sinica ed Epistolario (I parte)*, 164–170.

Macao-Manila trade route, sank off the Philippines.<sup>52</sup> The entire crew was taken prisoner and the cargo confiscated by the Philippine authorities and held in Manila. Carried on board was a quantity of musk belonging to the Jesuits of the Chinese mission, which according to the Procurator General of the Society in the Philippines (Fr. Andres de Ledesma) carried “twenty-seven cates of musk belonging to the province of China”, sent by Manuel Figueredo “so that he could use the profit expected from its sale to support the fathers working in China”.<sup>53</sup> This marked the beginning of a long period during which the Jesuits repeatedly requested the return of the musk. Musk (Port. *almizcle*, referred to as *shengxiang* 麝香 in Ming sources) was a highly prized perfume obtained from the secretions of the glands of the musk deer (*Moschus moschiferos*).<sup>54</sup> It was produced in China neighbouring areas and exported to Southeast Asia, Japan and even Europe. Its sales value per weight was extremely high, which is why it was considered very profitable and, in the event of a shipwreck, could be saved more easily than other bulkier and heavier goods. Martini, a few years later the shipwreck, finding himself passing through the Philippines where he remained for about a year (1651), began to take an interest in the matter as a procurator of the Chinese mission. Once he arrived in Europe, he brought it to the attention of Emperor Ferdinand III, who, at his request, wrote to Philip IV of Spain in 1654 to ask for the return of the *almiscre* or payment of the amount that would have been obtained from its sale.<sup>55</sup> This was the beginning of a long period during which the Jesuits repeatedly requested the return of the musk to the King of Spain, who, through the Council of the Indies, issued orders for its restitution to the then procurator Martino Martini, the last one in 1662, but the payment was never made.<sup>56</sup> The dispute went on for many years, and by the time the king gave the order to pay Martini the seized *almiscre*, the Jesuit had already been dead for a year.

52 The episode has been reconstructed by Pedro Omar Svriz-Wucherer, “The Jesuit Global networks of exchange of Asian goods: A “conflictive” musk load around the middle of the seventeenth century”, *Atlantic Studies* 19/3 (2022): 448–461, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14788810.2021.1920791>; Paternicò, Antonucci, *Prospero Intorcetta S.J.*: Sapiientia Sinica ed Epistolario (I parte), 195–198.

53 Svriz-Wucherer, “The Jesuit Global networks of exchange of Asian goods: A “conflictive” musk load around the middle of the seventeenth century”.

54 On the musk trade see Roderick Ptak, “Almíscar, Calambaque e Azougue no Comércio Macau-Japão e no Comércio da Asia Oriental (cerca de 1555–1640)”, *Revista de Cultura* 2 (2002): 47–61.

55 Clossey, *Salvation and Globalization in the Early Jesuit missions*, 180.

56 Svriz-Wucherer, “The Jesuit Global networks of exchange of Asian goods: A “conflictive” musk load around the middle of the seventeenth century”.

At this point Intorcetta comes into play. At the end of December 1671, he sent two letters, recently discovered, to ask for help from the queen regent Maria Anna of Austria (1634–1696). Both letters are kept in the Torre de Tombo Archive (ANTT) in Lisbon.<sup>57</sup> Actually, the first of these letters is not addressed directly to the queen, but to her confessor, a very influential figure at court, the Austrian Jesuit Juan Everardo Nidhard (Johann Eberhard Nidhard, 1607–1681). In fact, after Felipe IV's death (1605–1665), the queen appointed him Inquisitor General, allowing him to enter the Board of Regency, and he soon became its president. It is therefore understandable that Intorcetta addressed him directly, an influential member of the Society in the Spanish court, with great influence over the queen regent, to ask him to defend the cause of the missionaries in China. In the letter that Intorcetta writes in Latin to Nidhard, the mission procurator “*rogat Excell(enti)a V(estr)a ut dignetur apud Ser(enissi)ma Hispaniarum Regina(m) intercedere pro sublevanda Sinica missione // humbly pray Your Excellency to intercede with the Most Serene Queen of Spain for the help of the Chinese mission.*”<sup>58</sup> There are two issues that Intorcetta brings to Nidhard's knowledge and for which he asks for help: the queen's support for the mission, that is, to the founding of a new college, and to ask the *Reina gobernadora* for help in solving an old problem related to some merchandise belonging to the Jesuits from China and which was retained in Manila. Although Intorcetta was aware that the Chinese mission belonged to the Portuguese Assistancy of the Society, driven by the extreme poverty of the mission, especially after the recent persecution, he appealed to the “*eximia pietas*” (extraordinary *pietas*) of the queen regent of Spain to support the foundation of a new college in China.<sup>59</sup> As for the second request, since the goods belonging to the Jesuits in China were located in Manila (Philippines) under the control of the Spanish crown, it was natural for him to turn to the latter to try to resolve the matter successfully. Carrying on Martini's work, Intorcetta addressed the Spanish crown, reminding them in his letter both of the quantity of musk and that the sovereign of Spain had repeatedly requested payment for the musk, but the governors of the Philippines had never complied. He added that the provincial father of the Philippines, Ludovico Pimentel (1612–1689), who was certainly well informed about

57 The letters have been published in Paternicò, Antonucci, *Prospero Intorcetta S.J.: Sapientia Sinica ed Epistolario (I parte)*, 193–205.

58 *Ibidem*, 201.

59 For further discussion of this topic see my introduction to the letter in Paternicò, Antonucci, *Prospero Intorcetta S.J.: Sapientia Sinica ed Epistolario (I parte)*, 193–194.

the state of the royal coffers of the Philippines, suggested that the amount owed to the Jesuits of the Chinese Vice-Province be paid out of Mexico's royal coffers.<sup>60</sup> However, the matter must have been of such importance to the procurator that he decided to address the queen, infact another letter is preserved in which he addresses her directly:

*Prospero Intorceta sacerdote dela Com(pañi)a de Jesus Procurador en Europa dela mision della China, por si, y en nombre dela dicha Mision, suplica a V(uestra) M(ajestad) se scriba de mandar que con effecto se pague a la dicha Mision de Padres dela Compañia dela China el precio y valor del Almizcle y olores de la China... // Prospero Intorcetta, priest of the Society of Jesus, Procurator in Europe of the mission of China, for himself and in the name of the said mission, begs Your Majesty to order that the price and value of musk perfume from China be paid to the said mission of the Fathers of the Society of China...*<sup>61</sup>

In this letter, Intorcetta briefly summarises the terms of the matter once again and endorses Father Pimentel's suggestion by advancing the hypothesis that the payment never made by the governors of the Philippines, due to the lack of money in the royal coffers, was made from the Mexican treasury. But the story does not end there. Just one year later, Intorcetta again tried to obtain satisfaction of his request, this time through the mediation of another Jesuit, Manuel de Villabona (1610–1688), Procurator General of the Indies in Madrid. Manuel de Villabona addressed two petitions to the *Reina gobernadora* in which he faithfully reported Intorcetta's request.<sup>62</sup> We can imagine that Intorcetta had to turn to a new intermediary because a year after the first request, his expectations had still not been met. Not only that, but the procurator was now insisting that the payment, which had never been made from the royal coffers of the Philippines, should be made from the royal coffers of another territory of the Spanish Empire, Mexico. It is thus clear how the missionaries were aware, thanks to the network they had built, of the state of the empire's various possessions, such as the silver coming from Mexico. The procurator's action therefore takes place in a broader context, bringing the Spanish crown and its possessions into play to support the cause of the Chinese mission, connecting the mission's needs

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60 *Ibidem*, 202.

61 The undated letter appears to be more of a draft; it is written in Italian followed by a Spanish translation, see *ibidem*, 203–205.

62 The two petitions have been published in Paternicò, Antonucci, *Prospero Intorcetta S.J.: Sapientia Sinica ed Epistolario (I parte)*, 235–238, 241–244.

in a global network. Intorcetta's perseverance with the queen is finally successful, in fact the latter sends (28-4-1672),<sup>63</sup> shortly after Villabuena's plea, a letter to the governor of the Philippines Don Manuel de Leon (president of the Royal Court of Manila) in which, after having summarized all the previous dispositions adopted by her late husband and by the Council of the Indies, she orders the Royal Treasury of Manila to pay the price of the *almiscre* to the Jesuits. The letter shows that the *Reina Gobernadora* did not accept Intorcetta's suggestion to obtain payment for the musk from Mexico's coffers, and we still do not know whether the payment was ultimately made, ending a dispute that began almost 30 years earlier.

### Final remarks

Intorcetta's letters reveal the global dimension and interconnections involved in the missionary enterprise. The efforts of the procurators sent to Rome resulted in the creation of a network of relationships and connections that linked the Jesuits' missionary and economic activities in China to the European courts in order to obtain support for their apostolic work. In seeking financial support for the mission, Martini, following Trigault's example, travelled to various European courts in search of benefactors or to re-establish unpaid donations. Similarly, Intorcetta, although he did not travel to Europe (he only went to Sicily), was well aware that he had to continue the work of his predecessors. Documents show that he was well informed about the donations collected by Martini and worked to collect the sums due by entrusting the task to his delegates. At the same time, he also sought to gain new donors for the mission.

However, the funds obtained through the patrons and benefactors of the Chinese mission, including the support of the Portuguese crown, were often insufficient to cover the missionaries' pensions and all the other needs of the mission and the converts (building of churches, colleges, etc.). For this reason, missionaries not only maintained close ties with European merchants, but were also involved in all kinds of lucrative activities in order to secure the material conditions necessary for evangelisation.<sup>64</sup> The case of the musk cargo demonstrates this need to diversify sources of income. Once again, documents show us how the attempt to

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63 The letter is preserved in ANTT, *cartorio jesuitico*, liv. 86, doc. 47.

64 Vu Thanh Hélène, Ines G. Županov (eds.), *Trade and Finance in Global Missions (16th–18th Centuries)* (Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2022), 3.

recover the profits from the musk shipment involved first Martini and then Intorcetta. The latter, continuing the work of the former, reveals the global dimension of the case: while the former had been involved in the long dispute during his stay in the Philippines, once he arrived in Europe he turned to Emperor Ferdinand III for help, while the latter had directly consulted the Spanish crown, even suggesting the intervention of the Mexican treasury. These letters reveal the ties between procurators and their connections with distant and different places: China, Manila, Vienna, Rome, Madrid, Mexico, linked by the missionary activities and undertakings of the Society of Jesus.

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