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Introduction

This issue of the *Rocznik Filozoficzny Ignatianum* is devoted to the contribution of the Polish Jesuit Tomasz Dunin Szpot (1644/1645–1713) to the study of Jesuit missions in China, as documented in his principal manuscript works preserved in the Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu in Rome.

The volume opens with an article by Marek Inglot SJ on the early development of the Society of Jesus in the context of its initial missionary orientation, as expressed in the *Formula Instituti* (1540) and further developed in the *Constitutions*. The author demonstrates that the key features of the order – availability, mobility, and the universal character of its mission – were already present in the vision of Ignatius of Loyola and his first companions. The article also examines the formation of a global apostolic project based on obedience to the pope, as well as the development of ad gentes missions and educational institutions that shaped Jesuit activity in the early modern period.

Davor Antonucci studies the letters of the Italian Jesuit Prospero Intorcetta as an expression of the global character of the missionary enterprise, which created a network of connections linking the activities of the Society of Jesus in China with European courts in order to secure

financial support for the missions. Newly available documents make it possible to trace the activities of Jesuit procurators traveling to Rome precisely for this purpose. The article focuses on the work of Martino Martini and Prospero Intorcetta, particularly in relation to fundraising and the episode involving the trade in musk, highlighting the continuity of their efforts.

Gościwit Malinowski delves into the perception of Islam and Muslims in China in Tomasz Dunin Szpot's *Historiae Sinarum Imperii*. The study situates this account within the broader context of political, religious, and intellectual relations between Europe and the Islamic world in the early modern period. The author discusses Szpot's treatment of the origins and development of Islam in China, the role of Muslim communities, and their contacts with missionaries, paying particular attention to terminology (including the distinction between *religio* and *superstitio*) and narratives of its transmission through Persian merchants, Muslim scholars, and Mongol connections. The article also traces polemical encounters between Jesuits and Muslim scholars, showing how early modern European missionary historiography interpreted the presence of Islam in East Asia.

Janusz Smołucha presents Tomasz Ignacy Szpot Dunin as a Jesuit historiographer of the Chinese mission who, as a *Sarmata scriptor*, transferred the cultural experience of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth into his description of China. The author highlights the importance of Szpot's formation in a borderland environment and the influence of multiethnic and multiconfessional realities on his interpretation of the Orient, perceived not as exotic but as comparable to Eastern Europe. The article examines his approach to imperial authority in moral terms, his ordering of religious traditions, and his tendency toward a broad Eurasian perspective. It also emphasizes that Szpot's writings constitute not only a compendium of knowledge about China but also a Sarmatian theological-political reflection on order and Christian mission.

Natalia Królikowska-Jedlińska considers the sources and interpretative frameworks that shaped the image of the Muscovite state in the works of Tomasz Szpot Dunin, with particular attention to its role in Central Asia, Siberia, and its relations with China at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The author investigates whether Szpot's narrative was based on earlier Catholic accounts or on reports produced by Jesuits active in China, and to what extent it reflected the stereotypes and political interests of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth after 1686. The article also addresses the influence of the aims of the Society of Jesus on his treatment of the subject, situating the analysis within the

broader discussion of the tension between loyalty to the state and to the religious order.

Łukasz Burkiewicz offers an account of the Portuguese Jesuit Bento de Goës SJ (1602–1607), undertaken to verify Matteo Ricci's hypothesis concerning the identity of Cathay and China and to locate Christian communities. The author highlights the significance of this journey for European geography and analyzes it on the basis of well-known accounts as well as the less frequently used description by Tomasz Ignacy Dunin Szpot, likely derived from a now-lost report by Ricci.

Paweł Nowakowski presents a comparative analysis of the works of Antonio Possevino and Tomasz Szpot Dunin as two Jesuits united by a shared project: the conceptualization of the Christianization of Asia, especially China. He demonstrates that Possevino, in his Bibliotheca Selecta, outlined a global and pragmatic vision of Jesuit mission, whereas Szpot Dunin, writing a century later, developed it through a focused account of China and by emphasizing the role of Alessandro Valignano. In conclusion, it is argued that Szpot Dunin's work constitutes a realization of Possevino's earlier project, reflecting a coherent strategy of Jesuit global evangelization.

Liu Xun explores the problem of centralization of imperial power in late Ming and early Qing China on the basis of Tomasz Dunin Szpot's *Historiae Sinarum Imperii*. Combining a Jesuit perspective with the context of Sarmatian political thought, the author employs a historical-comparative method. He examines Szpot's concept of imperial authority, particularly the *anima-corpus* metaphor, his rejection of tyranny, and the role of legal and bureaucratic constraints. Comparison with modern sinological scholarship shows Szpot's interpretation as a system balancing strong rule with moral limitations. The article emphasizes that his explanation of the fall of the Ming dynasty reveals an awareness of the structural weaknesses of this model, presenting his work as a significant contribution to the history of political thought and early sinology.

Andrzej Wadas analyzes the portrayal of Zhang Xianzhong's rule in Tomasz Dunin Szpot's account contained in *Collectanea Historiae Sinensis*. The author demonstrates that Szpot does not merely record events but interprets them through classical and biblical frameworks, but also presents Zhang as a paradigmatic tyrant. The article highlights the use of anti-tyrannical discourse and references to both biblical and classical traditions. Situating the analysis within the context of Jesuit historiography, it shows how descriptions of violence were transformed into moral and theological reflection. Overall, the study underscores the role of

interpretative frameworks in shaping the European image of China in the early modern period.

Monika Miazek-Męczyńska reflects on the description of the funeral ceremonies of Xu Guangqi in Tomasz Dunin Szpot's *Historiae Sinarum Imperii*. The analysis highlights the interweaving of Chinese and Christian traditions in these rites, pointing to the significance of the Jesuit method of accommodation developed by Matteo Ricci. The analysis emphasizes that the preservation of local secular practices was possible within a Christian framework. The description of the funeral thus serves as evidence of the reconciliation of both traditions and confirms the effectiveness of Jesuit missionary strategies in seventeenth-century China.

Bogdan Zemanek addresses the problem of Tomasz Dunin Szpot's accounts of the events of 1683, namely the Qing conquest of the Zheng state in Taiwan and the arrival of Bishop François Pallu. The author argues that Szpot marginalizes the political significance of these events, presenting them briefly and with inaccuracies, while giving extensive attention to Pallu's arrival due to its relevance for missionary disputes and the Chinese Rites Controversy. The article explains that Szpot's perspective was shaped by his role as a historian of the missions and by the context of inter-order rivalry. The analysis demonstrates how missionary priorities and spatial perceptions influenced the European image of China, often obscuring major political transformations.

Hanna Wadas reconstructs the image of the Kangxi Emperor in Tomasz Dunin Szpot's account, highlighting the mechanisms of his idealization in Jesuit missionary writings. The author shows that Szpot presents the ruler as an exemplary monarch, endowed with exceptional intellectual abilities and virtues of governance. Particular emphasis is placed on the emperor's interest in European sciences and on the role of Jesuits – especially Ferdinand Verbiest and Thomas Pereira – as his teachers. The article shows that this portrayal fits within a broader pattern of idealizing rulers favorable to missionary activity.

Bartłomiej Wołyniec offers a study of the life of the Polish Jesuit Jan Mikołaj Smogulecki, a scholar and missionary active in seventeenth-century China. The author examines his origins, education, and public career, which he relinquished upon entering the Society of Jesus. He further analyzes Smogulecki's missionary and scientific work in China, particularly in the fields of mathematics and astronomy. Particular attention is given to his role in establishing contacts with Chinese elites. Overall, the article portrays him as a figure who combined scientific and religious pursuits and as a significant participant in the dialogue between European and Chinese cultures.

Katarzyna Gara examines the writing style of Tomasz Dunin Szpot in *Historiae Sinarum Imperii*, presenting it as a self-conscious form of early modern learned Latin. She identifies a synthesis of scholarly rigor, classical rhetoric, and missionary theological narrative. The author underscores the cognitive, persuasive, and interpretive functions of this style, which enables the translation of Chinese realities into the idiom of Latin culture. Drawing on examples from the text, the analysis further reveals the richness of the linguistic devices and rhetorical strategies employed.

In the final article of the volume, Tomasz Śmigla examines the application of digital humanities tools in research on Jesuit missions in China, using the edition of *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* as a case study. The author discusses the full research process – from digitization and HTR transcription, through critical editing in Classical Text Editor, to corpus analysis and the use of language models. The article demonstrates that digital technologies do not replace the researcher but rather expand their methodological and interpretative capacities. The text also emphasizes the importance of selecting appropriate tools in relation to specific research objectives.

The volume is rounded out by two book reviews: one by Krzysztof Bekieszczuk, devoted to Ines G. Županov's *Jesuit Missions in Coastal and South India (1543–1773). Between Mission and Empire*, and another by Robert Danieluk SJ, concerning Kilian Stumpf's *The Acta Pekinensia or Historical Records of the Maillard de Tournon Legation*, vol. 3: *January 1708 – February 1709*, eds. Paul Rule and Claudia von Collani (Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2024; *Studies in the History of Christianity in East Asia*, 10).

We wish you an enjoyable reading.
Janusz Smołucha, Andrzej Wadas

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Wstęp

Niniejszy numer „Rocznika Filozoficznego Ignatianum" poświęcony jest wkładowi polskiego jezuity Tomasza Dunina Szpota (1644/1645–1713) w badania nad misjami jezuickimi w Chinach, udokumentowanemu w jego głównych dziełach rękopiśmiennych przechowywanych w Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu w Rzymie.

Całość otwiera artykuł Marka Inglota SJ poświęcony początkom Towarzystwa Jezusowego w kontekście jego wczesnej orientacji misyjnej, wyrażonej w *Formulae Instituti* (1540) i rozwiniętej w *Konstytucjach*. Autor ukazuje, że kluczowe cechy zakonu – dyspozycyjność, mobilność i uniwersalny charakter misji – były obecne już w wizji Ignacego Loyoli i jego pierwszych towarzyszy. Artykuł analizuje również kształtowanie się globalnego projektu apostolskiego opartego na posłuszeństwie papieżowi oraz rozwój misji *ad gentes*, a także instytucji edukacyjnych, które uformowały działalność jezuitów w epoce wczesnonowożytnej.

Davor Antonucci studiuje listy włoskiego jezuity Prospera Intorcetty jako wyraz globalnego charakteru przedsięwzięcia misyjnego, tworzącego sieć powiązań łączącą działalność Towarzystwa Jezusowego w Chinach z dworami europejskimi w celu pozyskania wsparcia finansowego dla misji. Nowe dokumenty pozwalają prześledzić działania jezuickich

prokuratorów podróżujących do Rzymu w tym właśnie celu. Artykuł koncentruje się na aktywności Martina Martiniego oraz Prospera Intorcetty, zwłaszcza na pozyskiwaniu funduszy oraz epizodzie związanym z handlem piżmem, i ukazuje ciągłość działań obu jezuitów.

Gościwit Malinowski podejmuje analizę sposobu postrzegania islamu i muzułmanów w Chinach w dziele *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* Tomasza Dunina Szpota. Studium to wpisuje omawianą relację w szeroki kontekst politycznych, religijnych i intelektualnych relacji między Europą a światem islamu w epoce wczesnonowożytnej. Autor omawia ujęcie przez Szpota początków i rozwoju islamu w Chinach, rolę społeczności muzułmańskich oraz ich kontakty z misjonarzami, zwracając szczególną uwagę na terminologię (w tym rozróżnienie między *religio* a *superstitio*) oraz na narracje dotyczące transmisji islamu za pośrednictwem kupców perskich, uczonych muzułmańskich i powiązań mongolskich. Artykuł śledzi również polemiczne konfrontacje między jezuitami a uczonymi muzułmańskimi, ukazując, w jaki sposób wczesnonowożytna europejska historiografia misyjna interpretowała obecność islamu w Azji Wschodniej.

Janusz Smołucha przedstawia Tomasza Ignacego Szpota Dunina jako jezuickiego historiografa misji chińskiej, który jako *Sarmata scriptor* przenosił doświadczenia Rzeczypospolitej na opis Chin. Autor ukazuje znaczenie jego formacji na pograniczu kulturowym oraz wpływ wieloetniczności i wielowyznaniowości na sposób interpretacji Orientu, postrzeganego nie jako egzotyka, lecz rzeczywistość porównywalna z Europą Wschodnią. Przygląda się jego ujęciu władzy cesarskiej w kategoriach moralnych, sposobowi porządkowania tradycji religijnych oraz skłonności do szerokiej perspektywy eurazjatyckiej. Podkreśla, że pisma Szpota stanowią nie tylko kompendium wiedzy o Chinach, lecz także sarmacką refleksję teologiczno-polityczną nad ładem i misją chrześcijańską.

Natalia Królikowska-Jedlińska poddaje analizie źródła i ramy interpretacyjne kształtujące obraz państwa moskiewskiego w dziełach Tomasza Szpota Dunina, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem jego roli w Azji Środkowej, na Syberii oraz relacji z Chinami na przełomie XVII i XVIII wieku. Autorka bada, czy narracja Szpota opierała się na wcześniejszych relacjach katolickich, czy na przekazach jezuitów działających w Chinach oraz w jakim stopniu odzwierciedlała stereotypy i interesy polityczne Rzeczypospolitej po 1686 roku. Artykuł podejmuje także kwestię wpływu celów zakonu na ujęcie tematu, wpisując analizę w szerszą dyskusję o napięciu między lojalnością wobec państwa a zakonem.

Łukasz Burkiewicz przedstawia opis wyprawy portugalskiego jezuity Benta de Goësa SJ z lat 1602–1607, której celem było zweryfikowanie

hipotezy Mattea Ricciego o tożsamości Kataju i Chin oraz odnalezienie wspólnot chrześcijańskich. Autor naświetla znaczenie tej podróży dla europejskiej geografii oraz analizuje ją, bazując na znanych relacjach i rzadziej wykorzystywanym opisie Tomasza Ignacego Dunina Szpota, opartym prawdopodobnie na zaginionym sprawozdaniu Ricciego.

Paweł Nowakowski przedstawia analizę porównawczą dzieł Antonia Possevina i Tomasza Szpota Dunina, ukazując ich jako dwóch jezuitów złączonych wspólnym projektem konceptualizacji chrystianizacji Azji, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem Chin. Wykazuje, iż Possevino w *Bibliotheca Selecta* sformułował globalną i pragmatyczną wizję misji jezuickiej, natomiast Szpot Dunin, piszący sto lat później, rozwinął ją poprzez bardziej ukierunkowany opis Chin, podkreślając zarazem rolę Alessandra Valignana. W konkluzji autor dowodzi, że dzieło Szpota Dunina stanowi realizację wcześniejszego projektu Possevina, odzwierciedlając tym samym spójną strategię jezuickiej ewangelizacji o wymiarze globalnym.

Liu Xun bada zagadnienie centralizacji władzy cesarskiej w Chinach późnej dynastii Ming i wczesnej Qing na podstawie *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* Tomasza Dunina Szpota. Autor łączy perspektywę jezuicką z kontekstem sarmackiej myśli politycznej, stosując metodę historyczno-porównawczą. Omawia koncepcję władzy cesarskiej u Szpota, zwłaszcza metaforę *anima-corpus*, odrzucenie tyranii oraz znaczenie ograniczeń prawnych i biurokratycznych. Porównanie z ustaleniami współczesnej sinologii ukazuje jego ujęcie jako system łączący silną władzę z ograniczeniami moralnymi. W artykule zaakcentowano też, że wyjaśnienie upadku dynastii Ming ujawnia świadomość strukturalnych słabości tego modelu. Całość ukazuje dzieła Szpota jako ważny wkład w historię myśli politycznej i wczesną sinologię.

Andrzej Wadas analizuje sposób przedstawienia rządów Zhang Xianzhonga w relacji Tomasza Dunina Szpota zawartej w *Collectanea Historiae Sinensis.* Autor pokazuje, że Szpot nie tylko relacjonuje wydarzenia, lecz także interpretuje je w ramach tradycji klasycznej i biblijnej, przedstawiając Zhanga jako paradygmatycznego tyrana. Podkreśla wykorzystanie dyskursu antytyrannicznego oraz odniesień do tradycji biblijnej i klasycznej. Osadzając analizę w kontekście historiografii jezuickiej, wskazuje, jak opisy przemocy przekształcano w refleksję moralną i teologiczną. Całość stanowi przedstawienie roli ram interpretacyjnych w kształtowaniu europejskiego obrazu Chin w epoce wczesnonowożytnej.

Monika Miazek-Męczyńska poddaje refleksji opis ceremonii pogrzebowych Xu Guangqiego w dziele *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* Tomasza Dunina Szpota. Autorka ukazuje przenikanie się tradycji chińskich i chrześcijańskich w tych obrzędach, wskazując na znaczenie jezuickiej

metody akomodacji rozwiniętej przez Mattea Ricciego. W analizie podkreślono, że zachowanie lokalnych praktyk świeckich było możliwe w ramach chrześcijaństwa. Opis pogrzebu stanowi świadectwo pogodzenia obu tradycji oraz potwierdza skuteczność strategii misyjnej jezuitów w XVII-wiecznych Chinach.

Bogdan Zemanek podejmuje problem relacji Tomasza Dunina Szpota dotyczącej wydarzeń z 1683 r.: podboju państwa Zhengów na Tajwanie oraz przybycia biskupa François Pallu. Autor stawia tezę, że Szpot marginalizuje znaczenie wydarzeń politycznych, przedstawiając je skrótowo i z nieścisłościami, natomiast szeroko omawia epizod związany z Pallu ze względu na jego znaczenie dla sporów misyjnych i kontrowersji wokół rytów chińskich. Artykuł wyjaśnia, że perspektywa Szpota była kształtowana przez jego rolę historyka misji oraz kontekst rywalizacji między zakonami. Przeprowadzona analiza pozwala dostrzec, jak priorytety misyjne i wyobrażenia przestrzenne wpływały na europejski obraz Chin, przesłaniając kluczowe przemiany polityczne.

Hanna Wadas rekonstruuje obraz cesarza Kangxiego w relacji Tomasza Dunina Szpota, ukazując mechanizmy jego idealizacji w jezuickim piśmiennictwie misyjnym. Autorka wskazuje, że Szpot przedstawia władcę jako monarchę doskonałego, obdarzonego wyjątkowymi zdolnościami intelektualnymi i cnotami rządzenia. Podkreślone zostaje jego zainteresowanie naukami europejskimi oraz rola jezuitów, zwłaszcza Verbiesta i Pereiry, jako nauczycieli cesarza. Artykuł uwidacznia, że taki wizerunek wpisuje się w szerszy model idealizowania władców sprzyjających misjom.

Bartłomiej Wołyniec przedstawia życie polskiego jezuity Jana Mikołaja Smoguleckiego, uczonego i misjonarza działającego w XVII-wiecznych Chinach. Autor omawia jego pochodzenie, edukację oraz karierę publiczną, którą porzucił, wstępując do zakonu. Opisuje też jego działalność misyjną i naukową w Chinach, zwłaszcza w zakresie matematyki i astronomii. Warta podkreślenia jest rola Smoguleckiego w nawiązywaniu kontaktów z chińskimi elitami. Całość przedstawia go jako postać łączącą działalność naukową i religijną oraz ważnego uczestnika dialogu między kulturą europejską a chińską.

Katarzyna Gara analizuje styl pisarski Tomasza Dunina Szpota w *Historiae Sinarum Imperii*, ukazując go jako świadomą formę nowożytnej łaciny erudycyjnej. Autorka zwraca uwagę na połączenie rygoru naukowego, klasycznej retoryki i narracji misyjno-teologicznej. Podkreśla funkcje poznawcze, perswazyjne i interpretacyjne stylu, który umożliwia przekład realiów chińskich na język kultury łacińskiej. Analiza,

oparta na przykładach z tekstu, ukazuje także bogactwo zastosowanych środków językowych i strategii retorycznych.

W ostatnim artykule tego tomu Tomasz Śmigla prezentuje zastosowanie narzędzi humanistyki cyfrowej w badaniach nad misjami jezuickimi w Chinach na przykładzie edycji *Historiae Sinarum Imperii*. Autor omawia pełny proces badawczy – od digitalizacji i transkrypcji HTR, przez edycję krytyczną w programie Classical Text Editor, po analizę korpusową i wykorzystanie modeli językowych. W artykule zaakcentowano, że technologie cyfrowe nie zastępują badacza, lecz poszerzają jego możliwości warsztatowe i interpretacyjne. Podkreślono także znaczenie właściwego doboru narzędzi do celów badawczych.

Całość numeru dopełniają dwie recenzje: Krzysztofa Bekieszczuka, poświęcona pracy Ines G. Županov pt. *Jesuit Missions in Coastal and South India (1543–1773). Between Mission and Empire*, oraz Roberta Danieluka SJ, dotycząca publikacji Kiliana Stumpfa, *The Acta Pekinensia or Historical Records of the Maillard de Tournon Legation*, vol. 3: *January 1708 – February 1709*.

Życzymy przyjemnej lektury
Janusz Smołucha, Andrzej Wadas

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Ad quascumque provincias nos mittere voluerint, exsequi teneamur. The *ad gentes* Missions and the Origins of the Society of Jesus

Ad quascumque provincias nos mittere voluerint, exsequi teneamur. Misje *ad gentes* i początki Towarzystwa Jezusowego

Abstract

This article examines the origins of the Society of Jesus in the context of its early missionary orientation, as articulated in the *Formula of the Institute* (1540) and subsequently developed in the *Constitutions*. It argues that the defining characteristics of the Jesuit order – availability, mobility, and universal mission – were already present in the foundational vision of Ignatius of Loyola and his first companions. The study traces the emergence of a global apostolic project grounded in obedience to the papacy and readiness to be sent *ad quascumque provincias*. Particular attention is given to the development of the *ad gentes* missions as a central dimension of Jesuit identity, as well as to the institutional transformations – especially the establishment of colleges – that shaped the Society's activity in the early modern world. By situating these processes within the broader historical and theological framework of the sixteenth century, the article

highlights the dynamic interplay between missionary expansion, educational structures, and the evolving self-understanding of the Jesuits as both a teaching and a missionary order.

Keywords: Society of Jesus, Ignatius of Loyola, Jesuit missions, *ad gentes* missions, early modern Catholicism, Jesuit education, missionary identity.

Abstrakt

Artykuł analizuje początki Towarzystwa Jezusowego w kontekście jego wczesnej orientacji misyjnej, wyrażonej w *Formula Instituti* (1540) i rozwiniętej następnie w *Konstytucjach*. Autor dowodzi, że zasadnicze cechy zakonu jezuickiego – dyspozycyjność, mobilność oraz uniwersalny charakter misji – były już obecne w pierwotnej wizji Ignacego Loyoli i jego pierwszych towarzyszy. Studium ukazuje wyłanianie się globalnego projektu apostolskiego, opartego na posłuszeństwie wobec papiestwa oraz gotowości do bycia posłanym *ad quascumque provincias*. Szczególną uwagę poświęcono rozwojowi misji *ad gentes* jako centralnego wymiaru tożsamości jezuitów, a także przemianom instytucjonalnym – zwłaszcza powstawaniu kolegiów – które ukształtowały działalność Towarzystwa w epoce wczesnonowożytnej. Umieszczając te procesy w szerszym kontekście historycznym i teologicznym XVI wieku, artykuł ukazuje dynamiczne współoddziaływanie ekspansji misyjnej, struktur edukacyjnych oraz ewoluującego rozumienia własnej tożsamości jezuitów jako zakonu zarówno nauczającego, jak i misyjnego.

Słowa klucze: Towarzystwo Jezusowe, Ignacy Loyola, misje jezuickie, misje *ad gentes*, katolicyzm wczesnonowożytny, edukacja jezuicka, tożsamość misyjna.

The first part of the title of this article derives from the *Formula of the Institute of the Society of Jesus*,[1] approved and confirmed by Pope Paul III in the Apostolic Letter *Regimini militantis Ecclesiae*,

1 *Les Constitutions de la Compagnie de Jésus annotées par la 34e Congrégation Générale et Normes Complémentaires approuvées par la même Congrégation* (= *C*) (Paris, 1997), 5–18 (official text: *Constitutiones Societatis Iesu a Congregationi Generali XXXIV annotatae et Normae Complementariae ab eadem Congregatione approbatae* [Romae: apud Curiam Praepositi Generalis Societatis Iesu, 1995], 3–16). English translation follows: *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms: A Complete English Translation of the Official Latin Texts*, ed. John W. Padberg, S.J. (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996).

dated 27 September 1540,[2] whereby the Society of Jesus received papal approval.[3] By this pontifical act, the foundation of Ignatius of Loyola and his first companions became a religious order. Nevertheless, the Society of Jesus was not an order in the traditional sense: the Holy See approved and confirmed a radically new form of life, that is, an apostolic body which – in order to attain its purpose – adopted a manner of life unknown to the religious traditions common to other religious orders. And this purpose was the greater service of God, for the greater glory of God. By the will of its founders – the first companions all bearing the title of co-founders – this new order bound itself in a very special manner to the Apostolic See through a vow of particular obedience to the Holy Father in all matters pertaining to mission (*circa missiones*). The men who formed the Society of Jesus ("Whoever wishes to serve [...] in our Society, which we desire to be designated by the name of Jesus" [F I, 1]). They were soon called "Jesuits", though the term was initially understood in a pejorative sense. In the course of time, however, they themselves appropriated this designation, even though in the official documents of the Society the term appears only in 1975.[4]

The words of the *Formula of the Institute* express the obedience of the Jesuits and their readiness to carry out whatever the Supreme Pontiff may command " with regard to the progress of souls and the propagation of the faith" (F II, 3). Moreover, the text expresses the universality of the Society: the Jesuits are ready to go anywhere in the world in order to realise this ideal. Taken in their entirety, the Formula states:

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2 *Institutum Societatis Iesu*, vol. I (Florentiae: Ex Typographia a Ss. Conceptione, 1886–1891), 1–5.

3 The *Formula of the Institute* is to the Jesuits what the Rule is for other religious orders. The Formula of 1540 (= F I) was somewhat revised in the light of experience in 1550 (= F II), and incorporated into a second Apostolic Letter, *Exposcit debitum*, issued by Pope Julius III on 21 July 1550, to confirm the Society.
The official Latin text states: "Et quamvis Evangelio doceamur, et fide orthodoxa cognoscamus, ac firmiter profiteamur omnes Christi fideles Romano Pontifici, tamquam Capiti ac Iesu Christi Vicario, subesse; (…) summopere conducere iudicavimus, singulos nos, ultra illud comune vinculum, speciali voto adstringi, ita ut, quidquid modernus et alii Romani Pontifices pro tempore exsistentes iusserint, ad profectum animarum et fidei propagationem pertinens, et ad quascumque provincias nos mittere voluerint, sine ulla tergiversatione aut excusatione, illico, quantum in nobis fuerit, exsequi teneamur; sive miserint nos ad Turcas, sive ad quoscumque alios infideles, etiam in partibus, quas Indias vocant, existentes, sive ad quoscumque haereticos, seu schismaticos, seu quosvis fideles" [our emphasis – M. I.] (F I, 3).

4 Feliciano Delgado, *Jesuita*, in *Diccionario de espiritualidad ignaciana* (= *DEI*), ed. José García de Castro Valdés (Bilbao–Santander: Mensajero-Sal Terrae, 2007), 1077–1080.

> All the members should know not only when they first make their profession, but daily, as long as they live, that this entire Society, and each one individually are campaigning for God under faithful obedience to His Holiness [the pope] and to the other Roman Pontiffs, who will succeed him. And although the Gospel teaches us, we know from orthodox faith and firmly profess that all the faithful in Christ are subject to the Roman Pontiff as to their head and the vicar of Jesus Christ, still, for the greater humility of our Society and the perfect mortification of each one of us and the abnegation of our own wills, we have judged that it is of the greatest profit to us to go beyond the ordinary obligations and bind ourselves by a special vow, so that whatever the present Roman Pontiff and others to come will wish to command us with regard to the progress of souls and the propagation of the faith, or wherever he may be pleased to send us to any regions whatsoever, we will obey at once, without subterfuge or excuse, as far as in us lies. We pledge to do this whether he sends us among the Turks or to other infidels, even to the land they call India, or to any heretics or schismatics, or to any of the faithful (F II, 3).[5]

This ideal was later taken up and translated into concrete norms and institutional provisions in the Seventh Part of the *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*.[6] The Constitutions were elaborated by Ignatius over several years, until his death in 1556, and were approved by the First General Congregation in 1558.[7] This Part deals with "what the members need to observe" when they labor in *vineam Christi* (nos. 603–654]). Its first chapter, entitled "Missions from the Supreme Pontiff" treats of

> what the members of the Society need to observe in regard to their neighbor (which is an end eminently characteristic of our Institute)[8], when they

5 *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*…, 7.

6 Brian O'Leary, *Sent into the Lord's Vineyard: Explorations in the Jesuit Constitutions* (Oxford: Way Books, 2012).

7 The 34th General Congregation of 1995 approved and promulgated the entire set of the "Complementary Norms of the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus" (= CN), drawn largely from the Decrees of previous General Congregations that have not been abrogated or modified. They retain their proper value as explanations, guidelines, or sources of inspiration. Arranged in parallel with the structure of the Constitutions, they are intended to encourage and promote an ever more perfect observance of the Constitutions and of the whole Institute of the Society. By the will of the 34th General Congregation, they are and will always be published in one and the same volume together with the *Formula of the Institute of the Society of Jesus* and the *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, in the form annotated by the 34th General Congregation. See: *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*…

8 By the term "Institute of the Society of Jesus" one means either the Jesuits' distinctive way of life and action, or the written documents that present it in an official and legitimate form. Among these documents, some are formal laws, while others inspire

> are dispersed throughout Christ's vineyard to labor in that part of it and in that work which have been entrusted to them.

Saint Ignatius declares:

> [...] whether they have been sent to some places or others by either the supreme vicar of Christ our Lord or the superiors of the Society, who for them are similarly in the place of his Divine Majesty; or whether they themselves choose where and in what work they will labor, having been commissioned to travel to any place where they judge that greater service of God and the good of souls will follow; or whether they carry on their labor not by traveling but by residing steadily and continually in certain places where much fruit of glory and service to God is expected. And to treat the missions from His Holiness first as being most important, it should be observed that the vow which the Society made to obey him as the supreme vicar of Christ without any excuse meant that the members were to go to any place where he judges it expedient to send them for the greater glory of God and the good of souls, whether among the faithful or unbelievers. The Society did not mean the vow for a particular place, but rather for being dispersed to various regions and places throughout the world, wishing to make the best choice in this matter by having the sovereign pontiff make the distribution of its members (*C.* 603).[9]

Even if the initial intentions of Ignatius and his companions did not coincide entirely with those articulated in the *Formula of the Institute* – as will be shown below – availability and universality were, and continue to be, defining characteristics of the Jesuits.

The new foundation was the work of a converted Basque nobleman, Íñigo de Loyola (born in 1491), and his companions: Pierre Favre, Francisco de Xavier, Nicolás Bobadilla, Simão Rodrigues, and Diego Laínez

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or shed light on Ignatian spirituality, the Jesuit manner of proceeding, or refer to the sound traditions of the Society (*NC*, 7–23).

9 *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*…, 276. See also: "The intention of the fourth vow pertaining to the pope was not for a particular place but for having the members dispersed throughout the various parts of the world. For those who first united to form the Society were from different provinces and realms and did not know into which regions they were to go, whether among the faithful or the unbelievers; and therefore, to avoid erring in the path of the Lord, they made the promise or vow in order that His Holiness might distribute them for the greater glory of God, in conformity with their intention to travel throughout the world and, when they could not find the desired spiritual fruit in one place, to pass on to another and another, ever seeking the greater glory of God our Lord and the greater aid of souls" (*C.* 605), *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*…, 276–277.

and Alfonso Salmerón, the latter two likewise from Castile.[10] They gathered around Íñigo in Paris, where he pursued his studies from 1528 to 1534. His various experiences, beginning with his conversion in 1521, strengthened his conviction that a more solid intellectual formation was necessary. Consequently, he first undertook preparatory studies in Latin at Barcelona (from mid-February 1524), and then pursued higher studies at Alcalá de Henares and Salamanca. In February 1528, at the age of thirty-seven, he arrived in Paris. In 1529, he enrolled in the Faculty of Arts (artes liberales) and Latinized his name as "Ignatius." A few years later, in Italy, he would use the name Ignatius of Loyola in all official documents, while continuing to retain the name Íñigo in private.[11]

The companions, moved by a common ideal – namely, that of serving "our Lord" – soon formed a group of "friends in the Lord." Their desire was to go to the Holy Land and there, following the example of Jesus Christ, to preach the Gospel while living in absolute poverty. This desire they expressed in the form of a vow professed on 15 August 1534 in a chapel dedicated to Our Lady (also known as the *Sanctum Martyrium*) on the hill of Montmartre in Paris. In addition to the vows of chastity and poverty, they made a vow "to journey to Jerusalem". Quite soon – still in Paris – several others joined the original seven companions, namely Paschase Broët, Jean Codure, and Claude Jay. They associated themselves with the first group by likewise taking part in the second renewal of the Montmartre vows on 15 August 1536. These ten companions formed the group of co-founders of the Society of Jesus.[12]

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10 On the origins of the Society of Jesus, see, among others: Georg Schurhammer, *Franz Xaver. Sein Leben und seine Zeit*, vol. I: *Europa (1506–1541)* (Freiburg: Herder, 1955); André Ravier, *Ignace de Loyola fonde la Compagnie de Jésus* (Paris: Desclée, De Brouwer, 1974); Cándido de Dalmases, *El padre maestro Ignacio: breve biografía ignaciana* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1979); Ricardo García-Villoslada, *San Ignacio de Loyola: nueva biografia* (Madrid: La Editorial Católica, 1986), 343–467; John W. O'Malley, *Les premiers jésuites. 1540–1565* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer; Bellarmin, 1999; original edition: *The First Jesuits* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); Javier Burrieza Sánchez, *Los días de la Compañía de Jesús: un retrato histórico de sus orígenes*, "Estudios Eclesiásticos" 82 (2007): 201–234.

11 Gabriel María Verd, *De Íñigo a Ignacio. El cambio de nombre en san Ignacio de Loyola*, "Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu" (= AHSI) 60 (1991): 113–160.

12 All ten of the first companions have extensive biographical entries in the *Diccionario histórico de la Compañía de Jesús. Biográfico-temático* (= *DHCJ*), eds. Charles E. O'Neill, Joaquín María Domínguez, vol. I–IV (Roma–Madrid: Institutum Historicum, 2001) and in the *DEI*. For the lives of the nine companions of Ignatius of Loyola, see also: AHSI 59 (1990): 185–344. For Claude Jay and Alfonso Salmerón, we would also like to point out: William Bangert, *Claude Jay and Alfonso Salmerón* Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1985); Marek Inglot, *"Hosii amicus". Alfons Salmerón – pierwszy jezuita w Polsce*, in *Kardynał Stanisław Hozjusz (1504–1579). Osoba, myśl, dzieło, czasy,*

Having found themselves unable – because of a war in the Mediterranean – to realize their plan of going to the Holy Land, they transferred in 1537–1538 to Rome, where they offered themselves to the Sovereign Pontiff so that he might make use of them and send them wherever he desired. This, moreover, was the resolution envisaged at the very moment of the vows of 1534. While awaiting the definitive decision, some departed to preach in the various regions of Italy; others, by mandate of the Pope, taught at La Sapienza in Rome; and still others remained in the service of Ignatius. In 1539, the ten companions found themselves once again in Rome. From the month of March of that year until the end of June, they met at the Palazzo Delfini, the third residence of Ignatius and his companions since their arrival in the Eternal City. This meeting, known under the expression *deliberación de los primeros compañeros* ("deliberation of the first companions"), refers both to an event and to a Latin document (*Deliberatio primorum patrum*)[13] which recounts the event. This "deliberation" was a process of communal discernment through which Ignatius of Loyola and his pilgrim companions decided to found the Society of Jesus.[14] In this way, they gave a more definite form to the nature of God's call, offering themselves at the disposal of the pope and resolving to go wherever he might choose to send them. This meeting proved decisive for the future of the group, which became a well-organized body – that is, a religious order – adopting the name "the Society of Jesus," with one of

znaczenie, ed. Stanisław Achremczyk, Jan Guzowski, Jacek Jezierski (Olsztyn: Studio Poligrafii Komputerowej "SQL", 2005), 63–76. And for Petri Favre: José García de Castro, *Pedro Fabro (1506–1546). Ispirador y constructor de la primera Compañía de Jesús*, "Estudios Eclesiásticos" 82 (2007): 235–276; Santiago Madrigal Terrazas, *Pedro Fabro ante la reforma protestante*, "Estudios Eclesiásticos" 82 (2007): 277–307.

13 *MHSI*, vol. 63 (*Monumenta Ignatiana*, vol. I: *Monumenta constitutionum previa*) (Romae: 1934), 1–7.

14 The founding of the Society is closely linked to the experience Ignatius had at La Storta. In November 1537, while traveling toward Rome with Pierre Favre and Diego Laínez, and being at La Storta, near the Eternal City, during prayer in the chapel, Ignatius had a powerful mystical experience: he had such a strong impression that God was placing him at Christ's side, His Son, "that he could never doubt it". According to Laínez, it seemed to him that he saw Christ carrying the cross upon his shoulders, and near Him the Father, who said to Him: "I want you to take this man as your servant", and that Jesus received him, saying: "I want you to serve us". From that moment on, Ignatius decided to call the emerging community "the Society of Jesus" because of his great devotion to that name. The experience had a profound influence on Ignatius himself and on the direction of the new religious body, which he wanted to be wholly dedicated to Jesus, bearing His name and carrying out His work. The experience at La Storta had a profound influence on the shape and fruit of these reflections (*Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu* (= *MHSI*), vol. 73: *Fontes narrativi de S. Ignatio de Loyola et de Societatis Iesu initiis*, II (Romae, 1951), 133; Gregory Naik, *La Storta. Un lieu et une expérience*, "Jésuites. Annuaire de la Compagnie de Jésus" 47 (2007): 8–11).

their companions as its superior. On 27 September 1540, they received – as noted above – papal approval for the new foundation. On 19 April 1541, the companions unanimously elected Ignatius of Loyola as their Superior General (those absent from Rome having left or sent their votes), and on 22 April 1541 they made their religious profession at the Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls (Ignatius of Loyola, Paschase Broët, Jean Codure, Claude Jay, Diego Laínez, Alfonso Salmerón). Nicolás Bobadilla, although he was in Italy at the time (on mission in Calabria), refused to come to Rome. He sent his vote in writing in favour of Ignatius, and in September 1541 he likewise made his religious profession into the hands of the Superior General, Ignatius of Loyola, in the same Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls.[15]

Their ideals and their decision to place themselves at the disposal of the pope soon began to take concrete shape. Even before the conclusion of the meeting in the spring of 1539, some of them were sent on pontifical missions. It fell to Paschase Broët to be the first to put this offering into practice by presenting himself to the pope for missionary service, *circa missiones*. On 19 March 1539, Cardinal Gian Pietro Carafa (elected pope in 1555 under the name Paul IV), acting on an order received that same day from Paul III, commanded him in "virtute sanctae obedientiae" to proceed to Siena, though without haste and accompanied by the companion of his own choosing. He set out for Siena with Simão Rodrigues in mid-April. In June 1539, Pierre Favre and Diego Laínez were sent on a pontifical legation to Parma and Piacenza. The first companions began to disperse permanently even before the approval of the new order in 1540. Simão Rodrigues left Rome for Portugal on 5 March 1540, where he devoted himself to the establishment and organization of the Society of Jesus. In March 1540, Francis Xavier left for Lisbon in order to set out for the Indies (Asia), thereby initiating the Society of Jesus's missions

15 Bobadilla, with his restless temperament, was the "enfant terrible" among the co-founders of the Society of Jesus, yet Ignatius put up with all his eccentricities. He also found himself at the center of a crisis between the young Society and Pope Paul IV in 1557. See: Arthur L. Fisher, *A Study in Early Jesuit Government: The Nature and Origins of the Dissent of Nicolás Bobadilla*, "Viator" 10 (1979): 397–431; Ulderico Parente, *Nicolás Bobadilla 1509–1590*, AHSI 59 (1990): 323–344; Mark A. Lewis, *The Rehabilitation of Nicolás Bobadilla, S.J., during the Generalate of Everard Mercurian*, in *The Mercurian Project. Forming Jesuit Culture, 1573–1580*, ed. Thomas M. McCoog (Rome–St. Louis: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 2004), 437–459.

ad gentes. In October 1540, at the request of Pope Paul III, Pierre Favre departed for Germany.[16]

Another "fruit" of the deliberation of 1539 (alongside the document *Deliberatio primorum patrum*) was, precisely, the *Formula of the Institute*. This document encapsulated the outcome of that meeting. Its purpose was to set down, for submission to papal approval, the essential elements of the new society they hoped to establish. At this stage, the Formula consisted of five chapters (*Quinque Capitula*), each the length of a single paragraph. It was drafted by a commission, though Ignatius played a decisive role in shaping its structure. After a few amendments, the chapters were incorporated into the bull *Regimini militantis Ecclesiae* the following year. They were intended to constitute – and still constitute today – the fundamental charter of the order. All subsequent official documents would be no more than elaborations upon them and would be required to refer back to them. For the Jesuits, the Formula is what the Rule is for other religious orders.[17] In 1550, the Formula was somewhat revised in the light of experience and incorporated into a second Apostolic Letter, *Exposcit debitum*, granted by Pope Julius III on 21 July 1550 in order to confirm the Society.[18]

The *Formula of the Institute* is thus the foundational document of the Society of Jesus, indispensable for understanding the spirit of the order of Saint Ignatius of Loyola (a document that remains, nevertheless, relatively little known, even among historians of the Society). It is the source of Jesuit spirituality and the foundation of their attitudes and of all their activity. The Formula establishes the general orientations that, a few years later, would be translated into concrete structures and specific norms by the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus. The Constitutions were drafted by Ignatius, who in the meantime had been elected Superior General, and they cost him several years of work. In 1552, the Latin translation of the original Spanish text was already ready. The official text was approved and promulgated by the First General Congregation of 1558. The Constitutions articulate the fundamental principles according to which the Society intends to pursue its objective.

When referring to the end proposed by Ignatius and his first companions, as well as by all those who desire to join them (and which is the

16 On the first contacts of the young Society of Jesus with Pope Paul III and on the first pontifical missions entrusted to the Jesuits, see also Ludwig von Pastor, *Storia dei papi*, vol. V: *Paolo III (1534–1549)* (Rome: Desclee, 1914), 354–431.

17 O'Malley, *Les premiers jésuites*, 16–18.

18 *Institutum Societatis Iesu*, vol. I, 20–26.

end that God himself proposes to the Society: F I, 1; F II, 1), the Formula of 1540 describes the Society as:

> a community founded chiefly for this purpose: to strive especially for the progress of souls in Christian life and doctrine and for the propagation of the faith through the ministry of the Word, through the Spiritual Exercises and works of charity, and in particular through the Christian instruction of children and the unlearned (F I, 1). [*The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus…*, 3–4]

In the Formula of 1550, this end, which the Society sets before itself, is further expanded and comes to embrace a greater number of concrete works:

> [...] to strive especially for the defense and propagation of the faith and for the progress of souls in Christian life and doctrine, by means of public preaching, lectures, and any other ministration whatsoever of the word of God, and further by means of the Spiritual Exercises, the education of children and unlettered persons in Christianity, and the spiritual consolation of Christ's faithful through hearing confessions and administering the other sacraments [...] to reconcile the estranged, compassionately assist and serve those who are in prisons or hospitals, and indeed to perform any other works of charity, according to what will seem expedient for the glory of God and the common good (F1, 1) [*The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus…*, 3–4]

A comparison of the two texts of the *Formula of the Institute* – the two versions being separated by ten years – reveals a renewed awareness on the part of the Jesuits of what they were, as well as changes in the direction of their activity. During these ten years, the young order underwent new experiences, among them the establishment of a first college at Messina – "*Primum ac prototypum bonis artibus et moribus in Societate Iesu collegium Pauli tertii auctoritate erectum anno salutis 1548* ". At first, the members of the Society saw themselves essentially as "pilgrims" or "apostles" who, following the example of Paul, would go from place to place, wherever the urgency of proclaiming the Word of God might require. They were above all itinerant preachers, like Jesus and his disciples, engaged in a spiritual ministry. Yet they soon came to recognize the advantages of sustained work in a single place and in a more stable manner. Thus, from the very beginning, the Jesuits sought to establish permanent residences supported solely by alms. At the same time, they held that most members were not meant to remain for very

long in what would come to be called the "professed houses," but should be ready to move elsewhere whenever a new directive was given.[19]

Ignatius saw his companions travelling the roads of the entire world, radically detached from the monastic vow of stability. When, at a certain point, he came to perceive the apostolic urgency of engagement in the field of education, he did not hesitate to found stable institutions such as universities and colleges, within which he "enclosed" the greater part of the Jesuits. All this was undertaken in order to attain the greater universal good. Nevertheless, even when engaged in the colleges, they were (and remain) always to be ready to be sent and to go anywhere in the world and to serve elsewhere. The principle of the universal good led Ignatius to embrace every category of works of mercy and charity. He thus came to realize that teaching others to read and write is also a work of charity, provided that there were enough members of the Society to attend to everything (*C*, 451).

Even though neither of the two versions of the Formula mentions colleges (the Formula of 1550 lists, among the apostolic works, "lectures"), colleges and schools still form part of the definition of the Jesuits. The colleges, in fact, brought about significant changes within the Society and became something of a symbol of them. They contributed powerfully to the transformations which, in the first eight or twelve years of its history, affected its entire future. They marked a turning point in the life of the Society and significantly influenced Jesuit culture.[20]

The colleges, therefore, with all their activities – cultural, educational, scientific, and so forth – became decisive for the future of the order of Saint Ignatius. If the college of Messina paved the way for all the other colleges of the Society,[21] it was, however, the Roman College

19 O'Malley, *Les premiers jésuites*, 30–31.

20 The ideas and directives concerning education and teaching are contained in Part IV of the Constitutions ("The Learning and Other Means of Helping Their Neighbor That Are to Be Imparted to Those Who Are Retained in the Society"), of which seventeen chapters are devoted to colleges and seven chapters to universities. (*C*. 307–509). In Chapter 13, Ignatius announces to the Society its proper and definitive *Ratio studiorum*; he adds, however, that it "ought to be adapted to places, times, and persons" (*C*. 455). See also: Dominique Julia, *Jésuites et universités: les logiques d'une politique d'après les textes normatifs*, in *Gesuiti e università in Europa (secoli XVI–XVIII)*, eds. Gian Paolo Brizzi, Roberto Greci (Bologna: CLUEB, 2002), 13–36.

21 Làszlò Lucács, *L'origine dei collegi e l'insegnamento pubblico nella storia pedagogica della Compagnie di Gesù*, in *La pedagogia della Compagnia di Gesù. Atti del Convegno Internazionale, Messina 14–16 novembre 1991*, ed. Franco Guerello, Pietro Schiavone (Messina: E.S.U.R. Ignatianum, 1992), 117–126; Andrea Romano, *Il "Messanense Collegium Prototypum Societatis Iesu"*, in *Gesuiti e università in Europa*, 79–94; Andrea

(*Collegium Romanum*), founded in 1551, that would become the model for all Jesuit schools.[22]

Even though the Society was not founded as a "teaching order," the Jesuits became, within a short time, a "teaching order":[23] they were the first religious order in the Catholic Church to regard the institutional sphere of education as a central ministry, even though teaching was not the exclusive field of Jesuit activity – as the missions make clear – the Society of Jesus is a "teaching and missionary" order.[24] It is difficult for us to measure the boldness of such a course of action in its own time. The origins, and above all the dynamic development, of the Jesuits' educational work seem extraordinary: from the opening of the first institution in 1548 to the death of Saint Ignatius in 1556 – thus, within only a few years – no fewer than thirty-three colleges and public schools were established. In 1559 – the year of the promulgation of the Ratio studiorum – there were more than two hundred colleges in Europe alone. In that same year, the greater part of the Jesuits (8,277) were engaged in the work of teaching and education.[25] The consequences for the culture of early modern Catholicism were incalculable. The consequences for the culture of early modern Catholicism were incalculable. In 1773, the year of its suppression by papal decree (Clement XIV, brief Dominus ac Redemptor, 21 July), the Society administered more than eight hundred universities, seminaries, and above all secondary colleges throughout the world. Never before, nor since, has the world seen so vast a network of

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Romano, *Les jésuites dans la culture scientifique française de l'époque moderne. Bilans et perspectives*, in *Gesuiti e università in Europa*, 435–452.

22 Ricardo García Villoslada, *Storia del Collegio Romano dal suo inizio (1551) alla soppressione della Compagnia di Gesù (1773)* (Roma: apud aedes Universitatis Gregorianae, 1954).

23 Pietro de Leturia, *Perché la Compagnia di Gesù divenne un Ordine insegnante*, "Gregorianum" 21 (1940): 350–382. Volume 58 of the journal *Gregorianum* (2004), consisting of eight articles, is devoted to the pedagogy of the Society of Jesus. See also (among others): Gabriel Codina Mir, *Aux sources de la pédagogie des jésuites. Le «modus parisiensis»* (Roma: Institutum Historicum S.I., 1968); *Ignatius von Loyola und die Pädagogik der Jesuiten. Ein Modell für Schule und Persönlichkeitsbildung*, eds. Rüdiger Funiok, Harald Schöndorf (Donauwörth: Auer, 2000); Ignacio Iglesias, *Influjo de los Ejercicios Espirituales en la pedagogia ignaciana*, in *Universitas Nostra Gregoriana. La Pontificia Università Gregoriana ieri ed oggi*, ed. Paul Gilbert (Rome: AdP, 2006), 15–33.

24 Pierre-Antoine Fabre, *Conclusions: le collège, université jésuite. Les jésuites et l'université à l'âge moderne: quelques reflexions*, in *Gesuiti e università in Europa*, 458.

25 Marek Inglot, *Założenia "Ratio studiorum" (1599) i "Charakterystycznych cech jezuickiego wychowania" (1986)*, in *Pedagogika wiary. Książka dedykowana Księdzu Profesorowi Zbigniewowi Markowi SJ w 60. rocznicę urodzin i 35. rocznicę kapłaństwa*, ed. Andrzej Hajduk, Janusz Mółka (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2007), 85–95.

educational institutions operating on an international basis. The colleges were often at the centre of the cultural life of the cities and towns where they were established. Each year, they staged plays, produced ballets, and gave musical concerts.[26]

The Society, especially through its colleges – though not only through them – profoundly influenced the entire social, cultural, and religious life of numerous countries. It worked in a variety of fields, such as instruction and education, libraries, printing presses, publications, and even pharmacies, architecture, and, more generally, the arts. Practically everywhere in the world, the Jesuits contributed significantly to the development of language, culture, and science.

At roughly the same time as they began to found colleges, the Jesuits, by papal mandate, became more numerous and more resolutely engaged in the struggle against the Reformation in Germany. Just as the Society of Jesus was not founded as a "teaching order," neither was it founded to combat heresy and the Reformation.[27] The Society arose from the desire to serve God and his Church. When the Jesuits saw the unity of the Church threatened by the Reformation, they understood that this had become the most urgent and serious pastoral need. As John O'Malley writes:

> There is no need to insist that the Reformation influenced the image of the Society of Jesus, which in fact is often described as having been founded precisely in order to oppose Protestantism. That description of course misses the mark. In Paris the companions witnessed the incursions of "Lutheranism" into the French capital, and they had no use for what they understood to be the tenets of the new movement. Aware as they were of the Reformation, however, it played no palpable role in the future they then designed for themselves, and they make few references to it when they describe their years in Paris. When, in 1534, they took a vow to spend some time in ministry in a distant place, they set their eyes on Jerusalem, not Wittenberg.[28]

It was the impossibility of travelling to the Holy Land that compelled them to choose Rome instead, in order to receive directives from the pope, who, in their view, possessed a broader vision of pastoral needs. As a result, there also emerged the possibility – indeed the near inevitability – of joining the struggle against Protestantism. By October 1540,

26 O'Malley, *Les premiers jésuites*, 31–32.

27 Rogelio García Mateo, *Loyola y el luteranismo. ¿Contrarreformista o reformista?*, "Estudios Eclesiásticos" 82 (2007): 309–338.

28 O'Malley, *Les premiers jésuites*, 16.

Pierre Favre was already in Germany, though not at Jesuit initiative. It was Pope Paul III who ordered him to accompany Pedro Ortiz, the representative of Emperor Charles V, whom the pope had dispatched to the religious conference at Worms; in January 1541, he subsequently travelled on to Regensburg. In January 1542, he returned to Germany under a papal mandate to accompany Cardinal Giovanni Morone, the papal nuncio in Germany, to Speyer.[29] As early as 1550, however, the "defence of the faith" found a privileged place in the Formula, for the Jesuits had come to understand that the Reformation constituted for them a pastoral concern of the most serious urgency.[30] They understood that it was through the education and formation of the young members of the ruling class that they could attain and consolidate this objective.

The missions *ad gentes* remained the privileged work of the Society of Jesus from its very origins.[31] Thus, while the Church was mobilizing the Jesuits in Europe against the Reformation, the Society of Jesus continued to send its members outside Europe.[32] As mentioned earlier, as early as 1540 (even before the papal approval of the Society), Ignatius of Loyola sent Francis Xavier to the Indies. Leaving Rome in March 1540, he traveled via Lisbon (which he left in April 1541) and arrived in Goa on 6 May 1542, where he established the Indian province of the Society.[33] In August 1549, Francis landed in Japan, where he succeeded in

29 Pastor, *Storia dei papi*, 368–370; 418–419: Giuseppe Mellinato, *Pierre Favre 1506–1546*, AHSI 59 (1990): 185–190; Antonio Alburquerque, *Fabro, Pedro*, *DEI*, 863–868.

30 O'Malley, *Les premiers jésuites*, 32; Rainer A. Müller, *The 'Jesuitensystem' in the University Structure of Early Modern Germany*, in *Gesuiti e università in Europa*, 108.

31 For a general but comprehensive overview of the missions of the former Society of Jesus (1540–1773), see: Paolo Broggio, *Evangelizzare il mondo. Le missioni della Compagnia di Gesù tra Europa e America: secoli XVI-XVII* (Roma: Carocci Editore, 2004); Markus Friedrich, *Javier Torres Nafarrate, Los jesuitas: Inicio, supresión, resurgimiento* (Mexico: Ediciones Ibero, 2024), 459–498.

32 *El Océano y la Cruz: doce misioneros Jesuitas*, ed. Wenceslao Soto Artuñedo, José García de Castro Valdés (Aranjuez: Xerion Comunicación y Publicaciones S.L., 2024).

33 In 2025 we celebrated the 450th anniversary of the arrival in Goa of the first Jesuit originating from the lands of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth: Father Andrzej Rudomina (Rudamina) (ca. 1595–1631). He entered the Lithuanian Province in 1618 and departed for the missions in 1624. He worked in Goa (1625–1626), then in various regions of China, where he died in September 1632. He was the first Lithuanian Jesuit to reach India. See: *Encyclopedia wiedzy o jezuitach na ziemiach Polski i Litwy, 1564–1995*, ed. Ludwik Grzebień (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 1996), 583–584. On the occasion of the 400th anniversary of Father Rudomina's arrival in India, Pope Leo XIV joined the Archdiocese of Goa and Daman in commemorating the event and sent a telegram expressing his gratitude for the faithful witness of the Lithuanian Jesuit, and recalling his missionary fervour and enduring legacy. https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2025/08/25/0591.pdf (accessed on: 1.01.2026).

establishing contacts with intellectuals and converting several thousand natives. Xavier ultimately attempted, unsuccessfully, to enter China, but died at its borders, on the island of Sancian (Shangchuan), on 3 December 1552.[34] The example of Francis inspired many disciples. The Jesuits established themselves in China in 1583. The first to obtain permission to enter and reside there (in 1582) were Michele Ruggieri and Matteo Ricci. After establishing several residences in different cities of China, Father Ricci succeeded in settling in the capital in 1601, where he was received by the emperor and began his work among the scholars of the imperial court. A few years after the mission in India, the missions in Brazil began (1549) with the arrival of Manuel da Nóbrega and other religious men, who devoted themselves to the education of the colonists and to apostolic work among the indigenous populations. The mission in Spanish America began in 1586 with the dispatch of a group to Peru, followed by the founding of the Province of Paraguay in 1607 and the establishment of the reductions in Paraguay and Argentina. In a short time, the missionaries of the Society of Jesus reached other countries on various continents. In Africa, the Jesuits attempted to establish themselves in Morocco as early as 1548, but were expelled shortly thereafter. Their missionary activity on this continent achieved greater success in Ethiopia (from 1556 onward), and later in Mozambique, Angola, the Congo, and Cape Verde. In North America, after a few isolated attempts in previous years, the first Jesuits from France arrived in Quebec in 1632 under the leadership of Paul Le Jeune.

In 1583 – the same year as in China – the Jesuits established a first residence "among the Turks" in the Ottoman capital.[35]

The missionary work of the Society of Jesus continued to grow rapidly, reaching regions throughout the world in less than a century. This continued until 1773, the year of its canonical suppression by Pope Clement XIV. At that time, nearly 4,000 Jesuits (out of some 23,000 in existence) were working across the globe, and it was impossible to replace them, either quantitatively or qualitatively; about 500,000 neophytes, in the Spanish and Portuguese colonies alone, had lost their shepherds. The suppression caused very significant damage to the missions, and in some regions perhaps irreparable harm.

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34 On Xavier and his immense work, see: Schurhammer, *Franz Xaver*. See also: James Brodrick, *Saint Francis Xavier (1506–1552)* (New York: Wicklow Press).

35 Carmelo Capizzi, Henri Jalabert, *Turquía*, in *DHCJ*, vol. IV, 3849–3852; Jean-Marc Balhan, *«Même chez les Turcs!». Une paroisse œcuménique et internationale au service du dialogue inter-religieux*, in "Jésuites. Annuaire de la Compagnie de Jésus" 48 (2008): 82–86.

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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 and examines 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 apostolskiej. 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 klucze: Martino Martini, Prospero Intorcetta, misja jezuicka w Chinach, prokuratorzy jezuiccy, 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.[1]

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.[2] 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.[3] 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".[4] 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.[5] Furthermore, over time, the subsidies granted by the Portuguese crown proved insufficient due to chaos in the

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 Ch'ang-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,[6] approximate budgets, corruption and the dangers of sea travel due to the presence of Dutch vessels, among others.[7] 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.[8] For these 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".[9] His tour has been described as one of the most famous "tournees

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 Vanheeswijc (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,[10] which succeeded in raising a considerable amount of donations. Among the donors were the Duke of Bavaria, Philip III, King of Spain,[11] 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".[12] 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,[13] receiving (in 1655) an additional donation from Archduchess Maria Anna of Austria (1610–65), Maximilian's widow, of 1,500 gulden as interim support.[14] 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.[15] Still during his journey from northern Europe to Rome via Austria, he was received

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 cattolicismo 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.[16] 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[elicis] R[ecordationis], quae adhuc in Sinis conservantur // Among the memoirs of the late Father Nicola Trigault, which are still preserved in China",[17] 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 figuresm 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.[18]

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.[19] 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.[20] 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.[21] The memoir also included authentic documents of the donations and copies kept in the archives of the Portuguese Assistancy.[22] 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.[23] 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,[24] and collected by him the following year.[25] After his departure for China, the Procurator General

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.:* Sapientia 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 notitia 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*, APF, *Informationi* 134, ff. 585r-586r, published in Paternicò, Antonucci, *Prospero Intorcetta S.J.:* Sapientia 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.[26] At the same time, also in 1664, Fathers Grueber and Roth, who had arrived from China,[27] took charge of this and other donations from Germany, which, according to Clossey, represented "the largest and most stable external source of income".[28] 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.[29] As mentioned, Martini had obtained its renewal and the sums had been collected until 1662,[30] 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.[31] 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.[32] 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.[33] 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

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.[34] 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.[35] 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.[36] 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 Compagia 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 cattolicismo 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.[37] 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.[38] 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.[39] 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.[40] 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.[41] 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".[42] In a further note,

37 Paternicò, Antonucci, *Prospero Intorcetta S.J.:* Sapientia 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.[43]

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,[44] 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.[45] 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.[46]

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[47]		X	
G. Scaraggi[48]	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.[49] 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.[50] 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.[51] 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 cattolicismo 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 cattolicismo 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.[52] 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".[53] 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 (*Moscus moschiferos*).[54] It was produced in China and 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 after 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.[55] 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.[56] 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.:* Sapientia 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.[57] 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.[58] 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.[59] 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.[60] However, the matter must have been of such importance to the procurator that he decided to address the queen, in fact another letter is preserved in which he addresses her directly:

> *Prospero Intorceta sacerdote dela Com(pañi)a de Jesus Procurador en Europa dela mission 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…[61]

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 a favourable response to 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.[62] 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

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),[63] 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 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.[64] The case of the musk cargo demonstrates this need to diversify sources of income. Once again, documents show us how the attempt to

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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Jesuits and Muslims in China in the account of Tomasz Dunin Szpot, S.J.[1]

Jezuici i muzułmanie w Chinach w relacji Tomasza Dunina Szpota SJ

Abstract

This article examines the perception of Islam and Muslims in China as presented in the historical work *Historia Imperii Sinarum* by the Polish Jesuit Tomasz Dunin Szpot (1644/1645–1713). Written at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the work constitutes a synthesis of the first century of Jesuit missionary activity in China. The study places Szpot's account within its broader historical context, particularly the political, religious, and intellectual relations between Christian Europe and the Islamic world in the early modern period. It analyses how Dunin Szpot described the origins and development of Islam in China, the role of Muslim communities in Chinese society, and their interactions with Christian missionaries. Particular attention is given to the terminology used by the author, including the distinction between *religio* and *superstitio*, as well

1 This research was funded by the state budget under the programme of the Minister of Education and Science, *National Programme for the Development of the Humanities* (project no. NPRH/U22/SP/0021/2023/12), entitled *Historiae Sinarum Imperii and Collectanea Historiae Sinensis by Tomasz Szpot Dunin SJ – the Polish Contribution to the Study of Chinese Culture and History in the Early Modern Period*. The funding amount was PLN 1,566,263.42, which is also the total value of the project.

as to the historical narratives concerning the arrival of Islam in China through Persian merchants, Muslim astronomers, and contacts with the Mongol world. The article also discusses the depiction of encounters and polemical disputations between Jesuit missionaries and Muslim scholars in Central Asia and China. By situating Dunin Szpot's account within this wider historical framework, the study demonstrates how early modern European missionary historiography interpreted the presence of Islam in East Asia.

Keywords: Islam in China, Tomasz Dunin Szpot, *Historia Imperii Sinarum*, Christian–Muslim relations, Jesuit missions in China, early modern missionary historiography.

Abstrakt

Artykuł analizuje sposób postrzegania islamu i muzułmanów w Chinach przedstawiony w dziele historycznym *Historia Imperii Sinarum* autorstwa polskiego jezuity Tomasza Dunina Szpota (1644/1645–1713). Napisane na przełomie XVII i XVIII wieku dzieło stanowi syntezę pierwszego stulecia działalności misyjnej Towarzystwa Jezusowego w Chinach. Studium osadza relację Szpota w szerszym kontekście historycznym, zwłaszcza w odniesieniu do politycznych, religijnych i intelektualnych relacji między chrześcijańską Europą a światem islamu w epoce wczesnonowożytnej. Artykuł analizuje, w jaki sposób Dunin Szpot opisywał początki i rozwój islamu w Chinach, rolę społeczności muzułmańskich w społeczeństwie chińskim oraz ich kontakty z misjonarzami chrześcijańskimi. Szczególną uwagę poświęcono terminologii stosowanej przez autora, w tym rozróżnieniu między *religio* a *superstitio*, a także narracjom historycznym dotyczącym pojawienia się islamu w Chinach za pośrednictwem perskich kupców, muzułmańskich astronomów oraz za sprawą kontaktów ze światem mongolskim. Artykuł omawia również przedstawienie spotkań i polemicznych dysput między misjonarzami jezuickimi a uczonymi muzułmańskimi w Azji Centralnej i w Chinach. Umieszczenie relacji Dunina Szpota w tym szerszym kontekście historycznym pozwala ukazać, w jaki sposób wczesnonowożytna europejska historiografia misyjna interpretowała obecność islamu w Azji Wschodniej.

Słowa klucze: islam w Chinach, Tomasz Dunin Szpot, *Historia Imperii Sinarum*, relacje chrześcijańsko-muzułmańskie, misje jezuickie w Chinach, wczesnonowożytna historiografia misyjna.

The presence and activity of Muslims in China during the Ming and Qing dynasties had already become such a significant socio-political factor that it could not be overlooked by the Jesuits undertaking the mission of spreading Christianity in that country. Nor could it escape

the attention of Tomasz Dunin Szpot S.J. in his historical-apologetic monograph entitled *Historia Imperii Sinarum*, which constitutes a synthesis of the first century of missionary activity of the Society of Jesus in the Middle Kingdom. The role of Muslims may even have been more important for Christians traveling to reside in China for a longer time than for the Chinese themselves, since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw an intensification of conflicts between the Islamic world and Christian Europe, occurring on many fronts. Above all this was visible in the Mediterranean basin, where successive Holy Leagues clashed with the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, both of these worlds – Islam and Christianity – possessed their own global networks. Muslims throughout the world were united by the custom of the annual pilgrimage to Mecca (the hajj), obligatory at least once in a lifetime for every Muslim, as well as by the role of classical Arabic as the language of the religion of Islam. Christian Europe began its global expansion through extensive ventures of conquest, trade, and missionary activity first undertaken by the kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula – Portugal and Spain – on a worldwide scale, from North Africa to East Asia and the New World. These states were later joined by France, the Netherlands, and England, and to a lesser degree also by Denmark, Sweden, and even Brandenburg and Courland. Despite the religious division between Catholics and Protestants, Europe remained a certain civilizational community in which, until the end of the seventeenth century, the Latin language continued to function as a common language – if not of religion, then at least of culture.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries there were no other global networks besides Islam and Christianity. Therefore, from the very beginning of their presence in China, Christians – first the Portuguese, and later the Jesuit fathers – appeared burdened with the baggage of this global Muslim–Christian conflict of their era. For the local Muslims in China, Christian missionaries were representatives of the maritime empire of Portugal, which was destroying Muslim trade in the Indian Ocean in what was perceived as a piratical manner. The Portuguese first came into conflict with the Middle Kingdom in 1511, when – despite warnings from imperial diplomats of the Ming dynasty – they conquered Malacca, the capital of a sultanate that formally recognized Chinese suzerainty. For Christian missionaries, Chinese Muslims were co-religionists of the Ottoman Turks, the deadly threat that had loomed over Europe since the mid-fourteenth century and had already led to the conquest of the formerly Christian Balkans and Hungary, and which even posed a direct threat to Italy. They were also co-religionists of the Barbary pirates, who captured people on a massive scale not only in the Mediterranean basin but even

as far away as Iceland. They were also co-religionists of the nomadic Tatars, who ravaged the lands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Muscovy. Likewise, they were co-religionists of the Somali jihadists of Ahmed Grañ, who nearly destroyed the last Christian state in Africa – Ethiopia – had Portugal not provided Emperor Claudius (Galawdewos) with timely military assistance.

Therefore, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries there was no longer even a shadow of the former cooperation that Christians and Muslims had sometimes entered into in the thirteenth century during the era of the Mongol invasions. In 1243, at the Battle of Köse Dağ, Abkhazian, Armenian, and Trapezuntine troops fought alongside the Seljuk Turks of the Sultanate of Rum, as did 1,000 mercenaries from the Empire of Nicaea and 2,000 Franks under the command of John of Cyprus and Boniface of Genoa.[2] In the thirteenth century, during religious disputations at the court of the Great Khan in Karakorum, Christians and Muslims were capable of forming tactical alliances in order to demonstrate the truth of the God of the Abrahamic religions in confrontation with idolaters – that is, the followers of Buddhism.[3]

By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, nothing of this remained, except perhaps a hard Realpolitik, which led the ardently Catholic king of France to open French ports to the Turkish fleet sailing against Habsburg Spain, and which prompted the Shiʿite rulers of Safavid Persia to attack the Ottoman Turks in coordination with Christian allies.

The life of Tomasz Dunin Szpot[4] coincided with a particular intensification of relations between the Islamic world and Christian Europe during the years when the Ottoman Porte launched the last offensive in its history against the Christian states of Europe: Poland, the Habsburg Empire, and the Republic of Venice. Although the attempt to conquer the Empire ended in defeat for the Turks during the siege of Vienna in 1683, the end of the war was still far off. In 1684, under the patronage of the

2 Josef Matuz, "Der Niedergang der anatolischen Seldschuken: die Entscheidungsschlacht am Kösedağ", *Central Asiatic Journal*, 17(2/4), Proceedings of the 15th Meeting of the Permanent International Altaistic Conference 7.-12. August 1972 (1973): 180–199.

3 William of Rubruck, *Itinerarium fratris Willielmi de Rubruquis de ordine fratrum minorum, Galli, anno gratiae 1253 ad partes Orientales.* Cap. 36-37, in: *Sinica Franciscana* collegit, ad fidem codicum redegit et adnotavit P. Anastasius van den Wyngaert, vol. I: *Itinera et relationes Fratrum Minorum saeculi XIII et XIV* (Quaracchi–Florence: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1929).

4 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*, red. Jarosław Nowaszczuk (Szczecin: "Volumina.pl," 2017), 75–108.

Pope, the Holy League was formed, and in 1686 Orthodox Russia, under Tsarevna Sophia, joined Poland, the Habsburgs, and Venice – an event without precedent in the history of European crusades, for the activities of the League were regarded as having the character of a crusade and are often considered the last crusade in European history. The League's efforts were supported militarily or financially even by the Protestant states of Brandenburg and Sweden.

When Tomasz Dunin Szpot arrived in Rome in 1689, where he was to spend the last twenty-four years of his life, the France of Louis XIV forced the Habsburg Empire to open a second front of war in the West by launching the Nine Years' War, in which the Protestant states of the Netherlands, England, and Scotland also opposed the Sun King. In that same year the Ottoman Porte suffered defeats on the Croatian-Slavonian-Dalmatian theater in the Great Turkish War. Sultan Suleiman II began peace negotiations, but these were broken off in 1691 by the next sultan, Ahmed II. Thus, the first ten years of Szpot's stay in Rome passed during the course of the great war with Turkey. At that time he also met with Prince Boris Sheremetev, who was preparing the ultimately unrealized visit of Tsar Peter I to Rome.[5] Szpot therefore began writing his works on China in an atmosphere of great optimism prevailing in Europe, connected with the unity of all Christian denominations against the Muslim enemy and with the very concrete hopes of the Jesuit fathers for an easier and safer overland route to China through territories controlled by Moscow.

He finished writing his works in a Europe once again torn apart by conflicting political interests during the War of the Spanish Succession and the Great Northern War, when nothing remained of the spirit of the last crusade of the Holy League, and when Muscovite promises to open a route to China for the Jesuits proved to be false.

Dunin Szpot mentions Islam for the first time already in Chapter VI of Book I of his *Historiae Imperii Sinarum*, devoted to a concise presentation of the geography and an outline of the history of China. In this chapter he discusses the religions of the country, writing:

> The religion of the people, who fill the country with their great numbers, had long ago been divided into three principal sects, even before the

5 Tomasz Dunin Szpot, „Courte relation de ce qui est arrivé au tsar de Moscovie et aux seigneurs de son pays, pendant leurs voyages à Rome et autres lieux en 1698, rédigée par le P. Ignace Szpot, polonais, pénitencier à Saint-Pierre du Vatican", in *Études de théologie, de philosophie et d'histoire*, vol. 2 (Paris: Julien, Lanier, Cosnard et Ce, Editeurs, 1857), 505–508.

> Christian religion, the Koran of Muhammad with the Saracens, and the Tatar idol Foe of the Lamas entered China. One was the genuine religion, which had prevailed in China since the time of the Flood and was proper to the Literati, although there are whole families who preserve it as an inheritance of the Taoists, necromancers and magicians; the third the idolatrous sect of the Bonzes Oscians.[6]

There are six religions in total. Three of them were present in this country before the arrival of the other three. The earlier ones are Confucianism, Taoism, and Chinese Buddhism; the three that arrived later are *Religio Christiana*, *Alcoranus Mahometi cum Saracenis*, and *Lamarum Tartaricum idolum Föe*. Christianity is listed first not only because it is the faith of the author himself, but also because it appeared in China earlier than the other non-native religions. Szpot was already familiar with the contents of the stele from *Si-ngan-fou* (Xi'an), which attests to the first missions of the Church of the East at the beginning of the Tang dynasty.[7] Significant is the way in which Szpot refers to these three systems of belief: *religio Christiana*, *Alcoranus Mahometi*, and *Tartaricum idolum Foe – religio*, *Alcoranus*, *idolum*. The ancient Latin word *religio* originally meant scrupulousness, conscientious exactness; piety, religious scruple, religious awe, superstition, strict religious observance. It was not originally used to designate systems of belief at all. Only in the sixteenth century did the word begin to gain currency in its modern sense, when the Peace of Augsburg in 1555 introduced the principle *cuius regio, eius religio*, meaning that questions of Christian theology, worship, and ritual depended on the ruler of a given territory. Here *religio* meant the "mode of professing the Christian system of faith." Earlier, in the European Middle Ages, systems of belief were divided into laws given by God and transmitted by prophets: the law of Moses (fulfilled by Jesus and therefore no longer binding after his coming), the law of Jesus, and the law of Muhammad (understood as a distortion of the law of Jesus), as well as idolatrous beliefs, regarded as the result of human error and the creation of false divine beings. For this reason early Christian Latin

6 [...] multitudine suâ implentium Religiò, in tres potissimum sectas iam olim, antequam Religio Christiana, Alcoranus Mahometi cum Saracenis et Lamarum Tartaricum idolum Föè Sinam intravit, divisa fuit, unam genuinam, et quae ab ipso Diluvio in Sina regnavit, propriam Literatorum, quanquam non desunt integrae familiae, quae illam hereditate ŕ maioribus suis acceptam, nullâ Superstitione Idolorum contaminatam conservant: Alteram Taosiorum Necromantarum et Magorum; Tertiam Idololatricam Bonziorum OscianorumARSI, Jap. Sin. 102, f. 3r.

7 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.

authors (Lactantius, Minucius Felix, Augustine) began to introduce the concepts of *religio vera* versus *religiones falsae* – that is, the true Christian way of worshipping God as opposed to other false ones. In the late Middle Ages the word *religiones* also began to be used to designate various religious orders, which followed different rules of worship and monastic life in the service of God.[8]

In the early modern period the word *religio* began to be used to denote all systems of belief, including non-Christian ones. From the sixteenth century onward this occurred first in the context of geographical discoveries and descriptions of the peoples of the New World (for example in Montaigne's *Essays*, where he discusses the religion of the Indians), and then in the seventeenth century in the writings of philosophers (Bacon, Locke) and Jesuit missionaries describing Asia. It was precisely the Jesuit missionaries who, when describing China, Japan, or India, began to speak of the "religions" of Confucius, Buddha, and Brahma, thereby creating and promoting the use of *religio* as a scholarly term referring equally to Christianity as well as to the dharmic traditions of India or the Chinese schools of thought. This meaning of the word *religio* became fully established only in the nineteenth century, leading to the development of the comparative study of religion.

Thus Christianity is *religio*, whereas for Szpot Islam is *Alcoranus*, that is, the Qur'ān, a name used with the Arabic definite article *al-*. This is an extremely appropriate designation of Islam, since the Qur'ān in the Arabic language constitutes a kind of center of that religion. In Muslim belief it is the Eternal Word of God: the Qur'ān, created by Allah, has existed from all eternity in Heaven and was merely transmitted to Muhammad through the mediation of Jibrīl (Gabriel). The question of the relationship between the Qur'ān as the eternal Word of Allah and Allah himself within the consistently monotheistic framework of Islam raises theological problems analogous to those produced in monotheistic Christianity by the concept of three divine persons. By using the expression *Alcoranus Mahometi*, Szpot not only emphasizes the fundamental importance of the book for the religion of Muhammad, but also presents Muhammad as the author of the Qur'ān. This corresponds to the Christian view of Islam as a creation of Muhammad, whereas Muslims regard the book as the work of God and treat Muhammad only as the instrument through which the book was transmitted from Heaven to human societies. Tatar

8 Brent Nongbri, *Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept*, (New Haven–London: Yale University Press, 2013).

Buddhism – that is, Tibetan Lamaism – is summarized by Szpot with the brief phrase *idolum Foe*, meaning the idol or cult statue of the Buddha.

In the same chapter Dunin Szpot additionally discusses Chinese Islam in a separate section in a short paragraph:

> The Mohammedan superstition, now already very powerful in China and surpassing the temples and sanctuaries of the Gentiles with the proud structures of its mosques, entered this empire from Persia at a time that remains uncertain. There are not lacking those who trace its origins to Persian merchants who, coming to Cathay for the sake of trade, brought it with them along with their goods. Others assert that its founders were Mohammedan mathematicians who, having set out from Arabia, entered China together with the Western Tatars and there, at the request of the Tatar emperor of China, corrected the corrupted and antiquated Chinese astronomy by compiling ephemerides and canons of calculation. For this work they were honored with great rewards and privileges.[9]

Here Dunin Szpot uses the expression *superstitio Mahometana*. The Latin word *superstitio* denotes a belief placed above reason, above rationality, which in Polish is rendered by the word *zabobon* ("superstition"). The Polish word *zabobon* originally meant the whispering of spells, muttering incantations – thus performing actions ineffective in relation to the real world. The German *Aberglaube* means "counter-belief," while the Latin *superstitio* signifies an irrational attitude. Lucretius, in his epic *De natura rerum* (1,62–79), criticizes precisely *superstitio*. However, since this word does not fit the hexameter meter in which the poem is written, he replaces it with the word *religio*. As a result, in later periods he came to be regarded as an ancient atheist – a misunderstanding that stems from misinterpreting the word *religio* according to the sense propagated by seventeenth-century Jesuits.

For Szpot, Islam is a *superstitio*, powerful in the China of his own time – indeed the most powerful: *iam nunc potentissima in Sina*. Of course, Islam was not the most powerful religion in China, but rather in other Muslim countries. Nor was it the most powerful among the various

9 Mahometana Superstitio, iam nunc potentissima in Sina, et superbis Moschaearum suarum fabricis fana et delubra Gentilium superans, quo tempore intraverit in istud imperium è Perside, incertum est. Non desunt, qui principia eius ad Negotiatores Persas referant, qui commerciorûm causâ in Cataium venientes secum simul et mercibus illam intulerant. Nonnulli fundatores illius Mathematicos Mahometanos fuisse asserunt, qui ex Arabia profecti intrarunt cum Tartaris Occidentalibus Sinam, ibidemque ad postulata Tartari Imperatoris Sinarum, corruptam et antiquatam Astronomiam Sinicam conscriptis Ephemeridibus, et Canonibus calculandi correxerunt; atque ob eum laborem magnis praemiis et privilegiis fuerunt honorati. ARSI, Jap. Sin. 102, f. 5r.

systems of belief in China; it was not the dominant religion. It yielded precedence to Confucianism and the state religion, as well as to popular cults, Buddhism, and Taoism. However, the situation of particular Muslim–Christian rivalry, together with the cohesion of Muslim communities – who displayed far greater group solidarity than the adherents of other religions – intensified the impression of the strength of Chinese Islam among European observers. For them, the supposed greatness of Islam was demonstrated by the fact that mosques surpassed in grandeur – described here as pride – the buildings of non-Islamic religions.

Szpot is not certain when Islam reached China, yet he takes Persia as his point of departure. The traditions of the Chinese Hui Muslims associate the introduction of Islam to China with a cousin and companion (*ṣaḥāba*) of the Prophet Muhammad named Saʿd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ ibn Wuhayb al-Zuhrī (595–674). He is said to have accepted Islam as the seventh free inhabitant of Mecca at the age of seventeen, around 612 CE, approximately two years after the first revelations experienced by Muhammad through Jibrīl (Gabriel). The tradition of Chinese Muslims is relatively late, dating from the seventeenth century, and it contains various versions of the circumstances under which Saʿd supposedly reached China. According to one account, this occurred in 615, when he was among the first followers of Islam who fled Mecca to Christian Ethiopia to escape persecution by idolaters, before Muhammad had yet decided on the Hijra, the migration to Medina. From Ethiopia, Saʿd is said to have sailed to China and then returned to Muhammad in Medina in order to take part in the Battle of Badr in 624. This version was accepted by Liu Zhi, a Muslim Neo-Confucian scholar from Nanjing who lived from 1660 to 1739, thus somewhat later than Szpot, in his work 天方至聖實錄 (*Tianfang Zhisheng Shilu*, *The Real Record of the Last Prophet of Islam*).[10]

Already in the fourteenth century, however, a version had become widespread among Chinese Muslims that the *ṣaḥāba* Saʿd was one of the envoys whom Muhammad sent in 628 to the rulers of the world, and that he arrived precisely in China. Yet earlier Muslim sources know nothing about such a mission. The most widespread seventeenth-century version holds that the *ṣaḥāba* Saʿd, the conqueror of the Persians at the Battle of al-Qādisiyya, came to China only in 651 as part of an embassy sent after the death of the last Persian ruler in Persia, Yazdegerd III, whose son and successor Pērōz took refuge precisely in China. At that time Saʿd was said to have built the oldest mosque in China, the Huaisheng Mosque

10 Ulrich Theobald, Religions in China – Islam (*yisilanjiao* 伊斯蘭教), http://www.chinaknowledge.de/Literature/Religion/islam.html (accessed on: 14.03.2026).

in Guangzhou, and also to have died and been buried in Guangzhou, where his tomb was later venerated. In reality, however, Saʿd's grave is located in Medina.[11]

All these apocryphal legends, however, arose much later, and their purpose was to demonstrate to the Chinese the ancient presence of Islam in China. It cannot be ruled out that the impulse for this came from the efforts of the Jesuits to show that Christianity had been present in China since ancient times, or at least since the early Middle Ages. Muslims, therefore, did not wish to appear inferior to Christians.

It must nevertheless be acknowledged that Chinese sources from the Tang dynasty do indeed record the arrival, on 24 August 651, of an embassy from the state of Dashi – that is, *Taziq* in Persian, the term then used for Arab Muslims. The embassy was certainly not led by the *ṣaḥāba* Saʿd, and apart from presenting gifts to the emperor it achieved no success in propagating Islam in the Middle Kingdom. Further embassies appeared in 655, 681 (from Tokharia, bringing horses as gifts), 682, 693 (a lion was presented, but Empress Wu refused to accept a carnivorous animal), 703 (horses), 711, 713 (horses; the embassy, however, refused to perform the prostration before the emperor), 716, 719, 724 (horses), 725, 733, 744, 745, 747, 753 (two embassies: one from the Umayyads and one from the "black-robed" Abbasids), 754, 755, 756, 758, 762, 763, 772, 773, 774, 791, and 798. After this there was a break of more than a century. Only in 924 did an embassy appear again, this time to the Khitan Liao state, followed by missions to the Song in 966, and subsequently in 969, 971, 973, 974, 975, 976, 977, 979, 984, 993, 995, 997, 999 (twice), 1000, 1003, 1004, 1005, 1007, 1008, 1011, 1014, 1016, 1019, 1020, 1021, 1024, 1055, 1056, 1060, 1071, 1072, 1073, 1074, 1084, 1085, 1088, 1089 (twice), 1116, 1129, 1131, 1126, 1168, and 1205/1207.[12]

The embassies that arrived in China and returned to the caliphate certainly facilitated the establishment of Islam in China, especially after the conquest of Transoxiana in Central Asia, which began in 713, significantly bringing the borders of the caliphate and the Middle Kingdom closer together. In 742, still during the rule of the Umayyads, the Great Mosque of Xi'an was built in Chang'an, the then capital of the Tang dynasty. Since the embassy of 681 arrived via Tokharistan, this indicates that embassies

11 Donald Leslie, "The Sahaba Sa'd ibn abi Waqqas in China", in *The Legacy of Islam in China, An International Symposium in Memory of Joseph F. Fletcher, at Harvard University on April 14–16, 1989*, ed. Dru C. Gladney, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 1–30.

12 Hans Bielenstein, *Diplomacy and Trade in the Chinese World 589–1278* (Leiden–Boston: Brill 2005).

from the caliphate traveled along the overland Silk Road from Persia, which had been conquered by the caliphate – just as Dunin Szpot writes.

Muslims, however, reached China in large numbers not by the overland Silk Road but by maritime routes. After establishing a military base in Basra, they gradually took over maritime trade in the Indian Ocean, from which the Romans had been cut off after the loss of Egypt in 642. Arab–Persian merchants established trading factories in Guangzhou, Quanzhou, and Hangzhou, which developed very rapidly. A major acceleration in the influx of Muslims occurred after the center of the caliphate was moved from Syria to Iraq, after 762, when Baghdad became the capital of the caliphate. From Siraf, the port of Basra, numerous ships sailed to India and East Asia. By the beginning of the 9th century, the Muslim community in Guangzhou numbered about 200,000 inhabitants, enjoying a form of their own self-government on Chinese soil.

When in 845 Emperor Wuzong issued an edict persecuting all non-Chinese religions – namely Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, Christianity, and above all Buddhism – the edict did not contain a single word about Islam. Most likely the Chinese authorities simply did not address the question of this religion, since Islam was not spreading among the subjects of the Tang dynasty, and they did not wish to alienate foreign merchants.

Merchants were nevertheless sometimes harmed during civil wars in China. Thus in 760, the former commander of An Lushan, Tian Shengong, seized the city of Yangzhou, where he massacred thousands of Persian and Arab merchants and treated their property as tribute intended to facilitate his return to the side of the Tang dynasty. Earlier, in 758, unrest had already broken out within the Muslim community of Guangzhou. In the South China Sea, Muslim pirates operated from bases on Hainan Island, causing trade to cease in northern Vietnam and along the border between the provinces of Guangzhou and Fujian. When another rebellion broke out in Guangzhou in 878, its leader Huang Chao carried out another massacre of Muslim merchants in the city, in which between 120,000 and 200,000 people were killed.

It is precisely to these Persian–Arab merchant communities of the South China Sea that Dunin Szpot refers when describing the beginnings of Islam in China. In this respect he is correct, since this marked the beginning of the relatively large-scale presence of Islam, although it was still practiced primarily by foreigners living in China, rather than by the Chinese themselves.

The beginnings of a native Muslim population in China can be traced to the period of the Mongol Yuan dynasty, that is, to the "Western Tatars"

as Dunin Szpot calls them. The conquest of the whole of China lasted a long time. Genghis Khan himself began the invasions against the Tangut dynasty of Xixia and the Jurchen Jin dynasty in northern China, while only his grandson Kublai Khan eliminated the last centers of resistance of the Song dynasty in southern China. The Mongols had no experience in administering sedentary populations, and therefore from the very beginning they employed foreigners to govern China: related groups such as the Khitan, as well as Uyghurs, among whom Islam had begun to spread since the time of the Karakhanids in the eleventh century, Khwarazmians such as Mahmud Yalavach, the governor of Beijing in 1230, Persians, and various representatives of the Persianized world such as Ahmad Fanākatī, a Persianized Qara-Khitan.

The population of Yuan China was divided into four social groups. At the top stood the Mongols. In second place were the so-called Semu, "people with round eyes," meaning those of Caucasoid appearance, mainly Muslims from the Persian-speaking world, although among them Marco Polo, an Italian, also made a career. During his twenty-year service at the court of the Great Khan Kublai, Marco Polo communicated in Persian and Mongolian and never learned Chinese. In third place were the inhabitants of northern China, and in last place those of southern China, who were regarded as a potentially disloyal element toward the dynasty.[13]

In the second half of the fourteenth century, a series of rebellions broke out in China against the Mongols. These culminated in 1368, when the rebels captured the capital Beijing and proclaimed the new Ming dynasty. During the rebellions and the following decades – the last Yuan loyalist, the prince Naghachu, did not surrender until 1388 – the Mongols were completely expelled from China, as were the followers of Christianity, mostly of Italian origin. The new Ming dynasty, despite its strongly anti-foreign orientation, had to accept the continued presence of Muslims in China, because it was easier to win them over and persuade them to abandon service under the Mongols than to expel them from the country together with the Mongols. For this reason, for example, the great Chinese admiral of the early fifteenth century, Zheng He, was a Muslim from the province of Yunnan.

Dunin Szpot, however, does not refer at all to the role of Muslims as administrators of China in the service of the Mongols. Instead, he draws attention to the achievements of Muslim astronomy in that period, which made it possible to improve the traditional Chinese calendar and

13 Ulrich Theobald, semuren 色目人, http://www.chinaknowledge.de/History/Terms/semuren.html (accessed on: 14.03.2026).

thereby brought Muslims considerable prestige and influence within the state. This topic was of particular interest to the Jesuits, because in the second half of the seventeenth century it was Christian Jesuits who demonstrated the errors of Chinese astronomers adhering to Islam. This significantly weakened their position and made Jesuit scientific knowledge attractive to the Manchu Qing dynasty, which ruled China at the time.[14] Elsewhere in his historical work, Dunin Szpot describes in detail the conflict between Jesuit and Muslim astronomers over their position at the court of the Qing emperor.[15]

A substantial portion of his *Historia Imperii Sinarum* is devoted to the account of the journey of the Portuguese Jesuit Bento Góis through Central and Inner Asia. Travelling overland from Agra, the capital of the Mughal Empire, he set out in search of Cathay, which at that time was still regarded as a semi-mythical land and which, as Brother Góis's expedition would ultimately demonstrate, was in fact merely another name for China. Particularly noteworthy is the account of the disputation that took place in Kashgar at the court of the local ruler:

> He was not infrequently invited by various kings and princes to dispute about the faith with the Muslim priests, especially by the Mahamedhan king of Kashgar. In these debates he fought with such spirit that, although he did not break their obstinate attachment to their Qur'an, he nevertheless compelled them to acknowledge the truth – namely, that the Christian law is good. And so that they might not appear to have been defeated by this admission, they added that their own law was not bad; and that it would be blessed if Muhammad had such preachers and defenders as he himself was for Christ. One of these priests was more audacious than the others. Having first consulted with his companions, and when reason failed him, he dared – through prayers and great promises – to urge him to give his allegiance to Muhammad. But Benedict, not unaware of what had been discussed in that council, so confounded the instigator as he began to speak that he immediately fell silent and, overcome with shame, had to withdraw to his companions. They expected no other answer from Benedict than his declaration that he would rather allow himself to be cut into the smallest pieces than abandon Christ and His love. After leaving Yarkand, Benedict came to the city of Chalis, which was governed by a son of the king of Kashgar by another wife. There again he entered into conflict with the doctors of the Qur'an, whom Benedict pressed so strongly with arguments that the prince approved everything he had said in defense of the law of Christ against the Muhammadan sect. The impious doctors,

14 ARSI, Jap. Sin. 103, f. 101r-102r.

15 ARSI, Jap. Sin. 103, f. 143r-143v.

however, began to plot against his life, so that he was compelled to remain in that city for three months.[16]

The recounting of victorious disputations between Jesuit fathers and Muslims is among the favorite scenes from the lives of missionaries recorded in *Historia Imperii Sinarum* by Dunin Szpot. Thus he presents the disputation involving Nicolò Longobardo:

> But since the Mohammedans taught that there is one true God, Longobardi peacefully requested that, in order to dispel every doubt that might arise concerning the Law itself, the ruler would not hesitate to allow him to meet with the Mohammedan doctors, whom he intended to invite to his palace together with certain mandarins chosen by himself, who would serve as judges and witnesses of the discussion. The ruler embraced the request with both arms. Several meetings were therefore held with the Mohammedans in the presence of the ruler and the mandarins invited by him. In all these debates the arguments presented by Longobardi – so far as the Chinese were able to comprehend them – were demonstrated before the eye of reason and showed how greatly the Mohammedan superstition differs from the true doctrine which Christians profess concerning the nature and substance of the one true God and the true religion, and how far the Qur'an, composed of mere fables, deviates from the truth of the Divine Law.[17]

16 Non rarò à diversis Regibus et Principibus invitatus fuerat ad disputandum de fide cum Mahometanis eorum sacrificulis, praesertim verò a Mahamedhan Rege Cascaris: cum quibus tanto spiritu disputando conflixit; ut licet eorum obstinatam in suo Alcorano †tendo voluntatem non perfregerit, confessionem tamen veritatis expresserit, Legem videlicet Christianam esse bonam: et ne hoc ipso viderentur esse victi, adiungerent: nec suam esse malam; beatamque fore, si Mahometes haberet tales suos praedicatores, et encomiastas, qualis ipse esset Christi. Et fuit unus audacior ex his sacrificulis, qui facto consilio cum suis, ausus fuerat, precibus et promissis ingentibus, cum ratio deësset, illum interpellare ut Nomen Mahometo daret. Verum Benedictus, non ignarus, quid actum fuerit in eo Consilio, Subversorem incipientem loqui, ita confudit, ut statim obmutuerit, debueritque prae confusione recipere ad suos; qui aliud responsum dandum à Benedicto non expectabant, quam protestationem, malle se in minutissimas partes concidi sinere, quam Christum eiusque amorem deserere. Ex Iarcan profectus Benedictus venit in Urbem Chalis, cui praeerat Filius ex alio thoro Regis Cascaris; coram quo iterum ventum est ad conflictum cum Doctoribus Alcorani, quos ita argumentis pressit Benedictus, ut Princeps quidem approbaverit omnia, quaecunque ille disputando pro Lege Christi dixerat contra Mahometanam Sectam, Doctores autem impii insidiari eius vitae coeperint; ut idcirco tres menses in ea Civitate morari debuerit ARSI, Jap. Sin. 102, f. 150r-150v.

17 Verum cům Mahometani verum Deum unum esse docerent, pace Longobardi petiit, ut pro dissipando omni suo dubio, quod circa ipsam Legem nasci poterat, non gravaretur congredi cum Doctoribus Mahometanis, quos ipse ad suum Palatium invitaturus esset unà cum selectis à se Mandarinis, qui dicendorum arbitri et testes forent. Amplexus est utroque brachio postulatum Reguli. Fuerunt aliquot congressus cum

Various references to Muslims appear in different parts of *Historia Imperii Sinarum* by Dunin Szpot, who consistently records the religious affiliation of the individuals he describes and distinguishes between Muslim rulers and pagan ones: "and whatever in the southern regions is possessed by rulers, whether Muhammadan or pagan".[18]

He recounts a story about the persecution of Christians – most likely Nestorians from the Church of the East – which Matteo Ricci learned about in the city of Kaifeng:

> In it, they say, there is preserved among ever-burning lamps only the Pentateuch of Moses, written on parchment, clearly a great inheritance of their ancestors who had entered China together with the Western Tatars. At the same time, they say that the Saracens also entered with their Qur'an, and the Christians with their Cross. The Christians are said to live in the provinces of Xansi and Xensi, while in the city of Kaifeng only the memory of them remains among a few people who do not even know what Christ is. They are called Terzans, because perhaps they had come to China from some land called Terza, and their law is called by the Chinese Sce-zu, because of the Cross, whose form among the Chinese represents the number ten. When these Christians were still flourishing, they are said to have had a noble church in the city of Kaifeng. Later, however, when persecution was stirred up by the Saracens, and they were oppressed in the courts by their accusations out of hatred for the Christian religion – on the pretext that they were attempting to stir up seditions and rebellions (for they were men strong in war and powerful in arms) – they became discouraged and, overcome by fear, defected to other sects, both Chinese ones and those of the Hebrews and the Saracens. Their church was then seized by the Ossian Bonzes and dedicated to a certain idol. Those who still secretly practice the Christian religion retain nothing of it except a certain reverence for the Cross, with which they mark their infants on the forehead against witchcraft and other evils, believing that it possesses power against them.[19]

Mahometanis praesente Regulo, et invitatis ab eo Mandarinis: in quibus omnibus producta à Longobardo, quantum Sinae comprehendere animo poterant, ad oculum rationis demonstrata argumenta, ostenderunt, quantum distaret Superstitio Mahometana, à vera, quam Christiani profitentur de unius veri Dei Natura et substantia, Religione, et quantum aberraret Alcoranus è meris fabulis concinnatus, à veritate Legis Divinae. ARSI, Jap. Sin. 103, f. 22v.

18 [...] et quidquid in partibus meridionalibus, sive Mahometani, sive Ethnici Dynastae possident. ARSI, Jap. Sin. 102, f. 55r.

19 In ea asservari inter lumina semper ardentia Pentateuchon solum Moysis, in Charta pergamena exaratum magnam videlicet haereditatem maiorum, qui cum Tartaris Occidentalibus Sinam intraverant. Eodem tempore ingressos esse etiam Saracenos cum suo Alcorano, et Christianos cum sua Cruce. Christianos habitare in Provinciis Xansi et Xensi, in Caifum autem Urbe solam relictam memoriam in paucis, qui ne quidem scirent, quid esset Christus. Vocari eos Terzanos, ideo quod forte venissent in

In conclusion, it can be stated that the profession of the Muslim faith by some inhabitants of China was usually carefully noted by the Jesuits working there and recorded by Dunin Szpot from the sources he used. His era was marked by rivalry and hostility between the Christian world and Islam. This is demonstrated, among other things, by the fact that when Dunin Szpot wished to compare the scale of Chinese distrust toward missionaries of foreign religions, he contrasted it with the hypothetical situation of how the European population would react to the unexpected appearance of Muslim missionaries in their own country:

> For after more than forty years of preaching the Gospel in China, scarcely more than a few thousand Christians are to be found there. This small number of the faithful arises from the suspicions of the Chinese toward foreigners, which are far greater than those that would exist in Christian Europe if some number of Mohammedans were to enter a Catholic region bordering the Turks and, having established their pestilent seat in various cities, were to preach the Qur'an, erect mosques, and convert the people to Muhammad. The Chinese are a nation most hostile to foreigners; when they see a single foreigner, they form a thousand suspicions about him. Macao alone is like a thorn in their eyes, continually tormenting them, lest it should happen to their empire as it did to the Philippines, Malacca, and India, which were taken from their kings by Christian arms.[20]

Sinam ex aliqua terra, quae vocabatur Terza, Legem autem eorum dici à Sinis Sce-zu, propter Crucem, cuius forma apud Sinas exprimit numerum decimum. Hos Christianos cum essent in flore habuisse Ecclesiam nobilem in Urbe Caifum mota deinde persecutione à Saracenis, calumniis eorum oppressos in Tribunalibus odio Christianae Religionis, quasi attentarent excitare seditiones et rebelliones, (erant enim Viri bello fortes, et armis valentes) animis deiectos, victos timore, ad ad sectas alias tum Sinicas, tum Hebraeorum et Saracenorum descivisse. Ecclesiam autem eorum à Bonziis Oscianis occupatam, et cuidam idolo dedicatam fuisse. Eos, qui adhuc clanculum colunt Christianam Religionem, nihil ex illa retinere praeter solam reverentiam Crucis, quâ signant suos infantes in frontibus, contr maleficia, et alia mala, contra quae habere illam virtutem credunt. ARSI, Jap. Sin. 102, f. 137v-138r.

20 Nimirum post quadraginta et ampliůs annorum praedicationem Evangelii in Sina, non inveniri illic nisi aliquot millia Christianorum; eam paucitatem fidelium provenire ex suspicionibus Sinarum longč maioribus contra Exteros, quam in Europa Christiana fuissent, si quispiam numerus Mahometanorum intrasset in aliquam Catholicam Regionem vicinam Turcis, et positâ in diversis Civitatibus sua pestilenti sede, praedicasset Alcoranum, erigeret Moschaeas, et converteret populum ad Mahometem. Sinae gens inimicissima exteris; qui cum unum Exterum in oculis habeant, mille formant de illo suspiciones. Solum Macaum, spina est in oculis, quae illos continuň torquet, ne sicut Philippinae, Malaca Indiae armis Christianis, ereptae suis Regibus fuerunt, ita fiat cum eorum imperio. ARSI, Jap. Sin. 102, f. 230r.

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A Sarmatian on China. Tomasz Szpot Dunin and His Account of Jesuit Missions in the Far East[1]

Sarmata o Chinach. Tomasz Szpot Dunin i jego relacja o misjach jezuickich na Dalekim Wschodzie

Abstract

The article presents Tomasz Ignacy Szpot Dunin as a Jesuit historiographer of the Chinese mission who consciously described himself as a "*Sarmata scriptor*" and projected the cultural experience he had acquired in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth onto his account of China. The opening section outlines Szpot's formative background: Podlasie as a borderland region, followed by the Vilnius Academy and Jesuit colleges located on the eastern fringes of the Polish–Lithuanian state. The author links his biography with the experience of multiethnicity and multiconfessionalism, as well as with the proximity of the steppe world, particularly

1 This research was funded by the state budget under the programme of the Minister of Education and Science, *National Programme for the Development of the Humanities* (project no. NPRH/U22/SP/0021/2023/12), entitled *Historiae Sinarum Imperii and Collectanea Historiae Sinensis by Tomasz Szpot Dunin SJ – the Polish Contribution to the Study of Chinese Culture and History in the Early Modern Period*. The funding amount was PLN 1,566,263.42, which is also the total value of the project.

the presence of the Lithuanian Tatars, their military ethos, genealogical memory, and distinctive attitude toward authority. This borderland experience helps explain why Szpot – although he never visited China – did not portray the Orient solely in terms of exoticism, but rather as a reality that could be interpreted through analogies familiar from Eastern Europe. Drawing on examples from Szpot's works, the article demonstrates that he described imperial authority in China using the language of moral obligations, akin to the Old Polish ideal of the ruler as the "father" of his subjects. The author compares this mode of narration with the tradition of Polish politico-moral reflection and points out that, in Szpot's writing, the description of facts constantly shifts into ethical interpretation. His tendency to view Chinese history within a broad "Eurasian" horizon is also emphasized, one in which the tension between the agrarian world and the steppe constitutes one of the key organizing principles of the narrative. The article also discusses the way in which Szpot organizes Chinese religious and ethical traditions, distinguishing the "teaching of the scholars" as the oldest and supreme doctrine, while treating other practices as lower forms. The author interprets this as an echo of the Sarmatian experience of a multi-confessional order safeguarded by the authority of the ruler. Taken as a whole, the analysis leads to the conclusion that Szpot's writings should be read not merely as a compendium on China and the missions, but as a Sarmatian, theological-political reflection on order, morality, and the Christian mission in the non-European world.

Keywords: China, missions, Jesuits, Sarmatism, Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Tatars

Abstrakt

Artykuł przedstawia Tomasza Ignacego Szpota Dunina jako jezuickiego historiografa misji chińskiej, który świadomie określał siebie jako *Sarmata scriptor* i przenosił doświadczenie kulturowe zdobyte w Rzeczypospolitej Obojga Narodów na swój opis Chin. W części wprowadzającej omówiono środowisko formacyjne Szpota: Podlasie jako region pogranicza, a następnie Akademię Wileńską i kolegia jezuickie położone na wschodnich krańcach państwa polsko-litewskiego. Autor wiąże jego biografię z doświadczeniem wieloetniczności i wielowyznaniowości, a także z bliskością świata stepowego, zwłaszcza z obecnością Tatarów litewskich, ich etosem wojskowym, pamięcią genealogiczną oraz szczególnym stosunkiem do władzy. To doświadczenie pogranicza pomaga wyjaśnić, dlaczego Szpot – choć nigdy nie odwiedził Chin – nie przedstawiał Orientu wyłącznie w kategoriach egzotyki, lecz raczej jako rzeczywistość możliwą do interpretacji poprzez analogie znane z Europy Wschodniej. Odwołując się do przykładów z dzieł Szpota, artykuł pokazuje, że opisywał on władzę cesarską w Chinach językiem obowiązków moralnych, podobnie jak w staropolskim

ideale władcy jako „ojca" swoich poddanych. Autor porównuje ten sposób narracji z tradycją polskiej refleksji polityczno-moralnej i wskazuje, że w pismach Szpota opis faktów nieustannie przechodzi w ich interpretację etyczną. Podkreślona zostaje także jego skłonność do ujmowania historii Chin w szerokiej perspektywie „eurazjatyckiej", w której napięcie między światem rolniczym a stepowym stanowi jedną z kluczowych zasad organizujących narrację. Artykuł omawia również sposób, w jaki Szpot porządkuje chińskie tradycje religijne i etyczne, wyróżniając „naukę uczonych" jako najstarszą i najwyższą doktrynę, podczas gdy inne praktyki traktuje jako formy niższe. Autor interpretuje to jako echo sarmackiego doświadczenia ładu wielowyznaniowego, zabezpieczonego autorytetem władcy. Całość analizy prowadzi do wniosku, że pisma Szpota należy odczytywać nie tylko jako kompendium wiedzy o Chinach i misjach, lecz także jako sarmacką refleksję teologiczno-polityczną nad ładem, moralnością i chrześcijańską misją w świecie pozaeuropejskim.

Słowa klucze: Chiny, misje, jezuici, sarmatyzm, Rzeczpospolita Obojga Narodów, Tatarzy.

Tomasz Ignacy Szpot Dunin, a Polish Jesuit writing at the end of the seventeenth century about the development of Jesuit missions in China, addressed the reader in the prologue to the first volume of *Collectanea historiae sinensis* with the following words:

> Father Daniello Bartoli of the Society of Jesus brought his *History of China* down to the year 1640 and ended it at that point, almost entirely abandoning the further work in which he had intended to present the subsequent development of the Christian religion in that vast empire. Our present collection was therefore meant to serve as a continuation of that work. It has been compiled from various writings produced at different times, whether from the annual letters of that mission or from other reports, most often written in Portuguese, as well as from Roman directives. These materials cost no small amount of effort to one Sarmatian writer, both in deciphering characters that 'speak' more through abbreviated expressions than through fully developed words, and in gathering annotated sheets scattered through various archival fascicles and mixed in with documents of different missions, concerning both official matters and other writings.[2]

A close reading and comparison of Tomasz Szpot's writings on China makes it clear that the designation "Sarmatian writer" (*Sarmata scriptor*) is not a mere ornamental phrase. Rather, it points to a consciously

2 Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, Jap. Sin. 104, f. 1r.

adopted self-characterization by an author who transfers his own formative background, rooted in the culture and education of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, into the sphere of reflection on the Chinese mission. As a result, a locally shaped perspective is creatively reworked and yields an approach that distinguishes Szpot from the dominant patterns of Jesuit sinology – not so much through a break with its principles as through a clear shift in interpretative emphasis.

Tomasz Szpot grew up in Podlasie, a borderland region where Latin, Ruthenian, and steppe traditions intermingled from an early age, and where the experience of cultural plurality formed part of the ordinary fabric of life. The aim of this article is to demonstrate the distinctiveness and a certain innovativeness of this Polish Jesuit writing about early modern China – an author who consciously identified himself as a Sarmatian, a term denoting membership in the multiethnic and multinational noble elite of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth.[3] Importantly, the subsequent stages of his formation did not lead him beyond this milieu; on the contrary, they reinforced his experience of life at the intersection of cultures. In such an environment, his Sarmatian identity matured – understood not as a mere costume, but as the mentality of a person accustomed to borderlands, to a multiplicity of languages, confessions, and cultural orders, and at the same time to thinking in terms of genealogy, custom, and historical memory. In Vilnius, in August 1664, he began a two-year novitiate in the Lithuanian Province of the Society of Jesus. Between 1674 and 1678 he studied at the Vilnius Academy, receiving priestly ordination toward the end of that period. He completed his tertianship in 1680–1681 in Nesvizh, likewise situated within the same zone of intersecting traditions and communities, after which he spent five years working at the Jesuit college in Pinsk, where he taught, among other subjects, rhetoric and philosophy.[4]

In all these places, Szpot had the opportunity not only to absorb classical Greco-Latin learning, but also to encounter the world of Muslim steppe communities, above all the Tatars. At this point, it is worth explaining the enduring presence of Tatars in Lithuania. The principal

3 On more about Sarmatism, cf. Stanisław Cynarski, *Sarmatyzm – ideologia i styl życia*, in *Polska XVII wieku. Państwo, społeczeństwo, kultura*, ed. Janusz Tazbir (Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1969), 220–243; Janusz Tazbir, "Sarmatyzm a barok," *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 76/4 (1969): 815–830; Stanisław Grzybowski, *Sarmatyzm* (Warszawa: Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, 1996).

4 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), 75–77.

organizer of Tatar settlement there was Grand Duke Vytautas, who took advantage of the crisis of the Golden Horde at the turn of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries to settle Tatars in Lithuania and Poland as a military population. Some of them arrived voluntarily and retained Islam; others, especially those who settled in Poland, accepted baptism and gradually underwent assimilation. Tatar settlement in Lithuania had both economic and political causes: wars, dynastic conflicts, and the disintegration of the structures of the Golden Horde made the nomadic way of life increasingly difficult and limited opportunities for raiding expeditions. The Grand Duchy of Lithuania, by contrast, attracted them with its stability, land grants, and the protection of its rulers, which inspired trust among Mongol and Tatar refugees. This migration led to the permanent settlement of Tatars in Lithuania and to the transition of many groups from a nomadic to a sedentary way of life. The most favorable period in the history of the Lithuanian Tatars fell during the reign of Sigismund Augustus, who extended his protection to them and granted numerous privileges. From the time of Stephen Báthory and Sigismund III Vasa onward, Lithuanian Tatars were enlisted for military service in paid Tatar banners, becoming a permanent component of the armed forces of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth.[5]

Lithuanian Tatars enjoyed a status similar to that of the local nobility: they were personally free, could own dependents, exercise patrimonial jurisdiction, and benefited from legal and judicial protection, although for a long time their property rights and participation in political life were partially restricted.[6] At the same time, they preserved not only their own faith but also distinct customs and dress. Among Lithuanian Tatars, memory of ancestors – of descent from specific murzas, beys, or even khans – retained far greater importance than in the surrounding Christian society. This was not merely a matter of prestige but a foundation of identity. A mode of thinking grounded in genealogy and blood ties has a clearly steppe origin and corresponds to the Mongol-Tatar model of social organization, in which lineage outweighed territorial affiliation.[7]

5 Stanisław Kryczyński, *Tatarzy litewscy. Próba monografii historyczno-etnograficznej* (Warszawa: Wydanie Rady Centralnej Związku Kulturalno-Oświatowego Tatarów Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 1938), 5–27.

6 Andrzej B. Zakrzewski, "Czy Tatarzy litewscy rzeczywiście nie byli szlachtą? (w związku z artykułem «PH» t. 77, z. 3, 467–480, Sobczak, J., Czy tatarska ludność Litwy należała do stanu szlacheckiego?; zob. też «PH» t. 79, z. 2, 345–358)," *Przegląd Historyczny* 79/3 (1988): 573–580.

7 Kryczyński, *Tatarzy litewscy*, 150–200.

An important feature of Tatar society was the durability of its military ethos and patterns of behavior characteristic of steppe culture. Lithuanian Tatars long preserved their own style of warfare, horsemanship, and weaponry, as well as distinct military terminology. Their readiness for mounted service, attachment to the horse as the foundation of military existence, and the belief in the hereditary nature of military duty were direct legacies of the world of the Golden Horde and its successors. Their military mentality remained "steppe," based on mobility and loyalty to a leader and the community, rather than on feudal hierarchy in the Western sense. Continuity with Mongol traditions is also evident in their distinctive attitude toward authority and law. For a long time, Lithuanian Tatars accepted the overlordship of the Grand Duke or the Polish king, while at the same time maintaining a strong sense of their own internal autonomy, especially in matters of custom, family life, and religion. This reflects the Mongol model of relations between the khan and individual clans, in which obedience was personal and contractual rather than abstract and institutional. Also notable among them was the persistence of historical images and narratives in which the steppe, the Horde, and the world of past migrations occupied a central place. Even after several centuries of settled life in Lithuania and Poland, Tatars preserved in their tradition images of eastern origins, stories of khans, dynastic struggles, and flights from civil war. This was not regarded as mere legend, but as an element of collective memory characteristic of communities emerging from a nomadic culture, where history was transmitted in the form of oral clan narratives.[8]

Another aspect that deserves attention is the role of Tatars as a visible element of everyday life in the eastern lands of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. They were encountered not only on military campaigns but also in towns, villages, and noble estates, where they served as soldiers, messengers, craftsmen, and landholders. Their presence familiarized successive generations with cultural traditions rooted in the Turkic and Islamic worlds beyond the eastern frontier. Its legacy survives to this day in the Lipka Tatar villages of Bohoniki and Kruszyniany. As a result, for the Polish gentry, the Orient was often associated not with distant exoticism but with experiences drawn from their immediate social environment.

For Tomasz Szpot, images of the Tatars and the memory of their place in the history and structures of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth

8 Artur Konopacki, *Życie religijne Tatarów na ziemiach Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego w XVI–XIX wieku* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2010), 21 ff.

became not merely an element of cultural background, but also an important point of reference to which he later turned when organizing and explaining Chinese realities through analogies drawn from the experience of the steppe world. His school and religious formation in colleges located on the eastern frontiers of the Polish–Lithuanian state took place within the cultural and geopolitical conditions described above. These were regions where Latin, Orthodox, and Islamic civilizations met, and at the same time a space of intense contact with the Oriental tradition – both real and imagined. In such circumstances, knowledge of the Orient was not exclusively a bookish construct, but part of a broader intellectual and religious experience. In Jesuit colleges, the foundation of education remained the *Ratio studiorum*, approved in 1599, which emphasized thorough mastery of Latin, rhetoric, philosophy, and theology. This program was universal and, in its essential framework, was implemented in a similar way throughout Europe; in practice, however, local conditions influenced the choice of examples, supplementary readings, and topics for rhetorical exercises. Jesuit education in the Commonwealth, which naturally absorbed the Sarmatian imagination and the intellectual style of the elites, played an important role in unifying the cultural horizon of the nobility, introducing it to a world of concepts and references extending far beyond local realities.[9] Szpot, shaped within this very tradition, demonstrates how the universal model of Jesuit formation could be creatively "translated" into the language of borderland experience and then used to describe a world as distant as China.

One of the most important areas of Jesuit activity in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth was the education of political and military elites. From this perspective, knowledge of Islam and the Ottoman Empire held particular significance. The "Turkish question" was a constant presence in Jesuit preaching, polemical writing, and the teaching of history. Although their stance was clearly apologetic, Jesuits conveyed relatively extensive knowledge about the structure of the Ottoman state, its administration, and its military system – knowledge that was both practical and polemical. The future soldier, as well as the preacher and teacher, was expected not only to know theological arguments against Islam, but also to understand the political and social realities of the Muslim world. For students in the frontier colleges, who had opportunities to encounter Tatars and

9 Jakub Niedźwiedź, *Inkulturacja szkolnictwa jezuickiego w Polsce i na Litwie w XVI–XVIII wieku*, in *Formowanie kultury katolickiej w dobie potrydenckiej. Powszechność i narodowość katolicyzmu polskiego*, t. 6 (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2016), 222–248; *idem*, "Jesuit Education in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth," *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 5 (2018): 441–455.

sometimes even Turks, such knowledge was not abstract. In their schools, Jesuits transmitted a vision of the world grounded in the opposition between Christianity and Islam, the idea of defending the *respublica Christiana*, and the conviction of a moral duty to resist the Ottomans.[10]

Contact with knowledge about Central Asia and the Far East, disseminated through the Jesuit network of correspondence, was also of great importance for young Jesuits. This interest stemmed primarily from missionary and scholarly aims, while in the case of Persia an additional significant thread emerged: the search for a potential ally against the Ottomans.[11] China, Japan, and India were not the subject of systematic instruction, but circulated within the internal networks of the order through missionary reports, letters, and hagiographic literature. Jesuit colleges played a key role in popularizing knowledge about the Asian missions, both among students and among a wider audience. These accounts portrayed the Far East as a sphere requiring exceptionally high intellectual competence.[12]

China in particular was portrayed as a civilization grounded in ethics and a rational social order, which encouraged the belief that Christianization did not have to entail the destruction of local culture. This image,

10 The Jesuits played a key role in shaping soldiers in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth as a group requiring pastoral care and discipline, creating special catechisms for them and permanent structures of military chaplains. They also promoted the idea of fighting against Muslims, presenting war with them as a particular fulfillment of a soldier's vocation. Mirosław Lenart, *Miles pius et iustus. Żołnierz chrześcijański katolickiej wiary w kulturze i piśmiennictwie dawnej Rzeczypospolitej (XVI–XVIII w.)* (Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich, 2009), *passim*; Damien Tricoire, "To Fight, or Not to Fight: Piotr Skarga, the Catholic Ideal of Christian Soldier, and the Reformation of Polish Nobility (around 1600)," *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 4 (2017): 624–636.

11 The example of Jesuit activity in Persia shows that they were not only carriers of geographical, ethnographic, and political knowledge about Asia in Europe, but also connected to political projects concerning the Ottoman Empire. Ryszard Skowron, *La contribución de Tadeusz Krusiński S.I. al conocimiento de Persia y del Cáucaso en Europa. La circulación de la información y propiedad intelectual en el siglo XVIII*, in *Eastern Europe, Safavid Persia and the Iberian World. Frontiers and Circulations at the Edge of Empires*, eds. José Cutillas Ferrer, Óscar Recio Morales (Valencia: Albatros, 2019), 59–79; *idem*, "Tłumaczenia i recepcja w Europie i Turcji prac Judy Tadeusza Krusińskiego SI o wojnie afgańsko-perskiej i upadku dynastii Safawidów," *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Prace Historyczne* 147/1 (2020): 13–36.

12 Duc Ha Nguyen, *Polscy misjonarze na Dalekim Wschodzie w XVII–XVIII wieku* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Neriton, 2006), 137–138; Joanna Wasilewska-Dobkowska, "Wyobrażenia Dalekiego Wschodu w środowisku polskich jezuitów," *Toruńskie Studia o Sztuce Orientu* 1 (2004): 16; Tomasz Graff, Bartłomiej Wołyniec, "Rola i znaczenie kolegiów jezuickich w propagowaniu wśród mieszkańców Rzeczypospolitej wiedzy na temat działalności misyjnej Towarzystwa Jezusowego na Dalekim Wschodzie," *Rocznik Filozoficzny Ignatianum* 29/4 (2023): 115–120.

consolidated in Jesuit writings, exerted a lasting influence on ways of thinking about Asia within religious circles. Contact with missionary literature had an existential dimension for many young Jesuits. Accounts of martyrdom in Japan and of the hardships of missions in China and India stirred the imagination and shaped the ideal of the missionary as a scholar, diplomat, and witness to the faith. Jesuit colleges were places where missionary vocations were born, although only a few received permission to depart; consequently, the literary activity of Jesuits who remained in Europe became an alternative form of participation in the missions.

The case of Tomasz Ignacy Szpot Dunin, author of *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* and *Collectanea Historiae Sinensis*, illustrates this model well.[13] The form and content of his works grew out of an intellectual formation in which interest in Asia had already been instilled at an early stage of education. In this context, it is worth emphasizing the specific character of the schools he attended. They played an important role in shaping cognitive horizons and sensitivity to questions concerning the East. Many of these institutions operated in a multi-confessional and multiethnic environment, which fostered intellectual openness while maintaining a clear Catholic identity. Knowledge about the Orient and Asia developed here out of a borderland experience, where religious and cultural differences posed concrete pastoral and educational challenges. The first Jesuits active in the Commonwealth reported to Rome that Vilnius would be an excellent location for establishing a college. This was justified by the argument that, in the long term, it could open the possibility of charting an overland route to China, leading through Moscow and Tatar territories – a route considered far safer than sea travel.[14] These arguments contributed to the founding of the Vilnius Academy in 1579, which served

13 Despite repeated efforts, Szpot did not obtain permission from his superiors to go on mission to China. Instead, his training, expertise, and evident interest in Chinese affairs led the order's authorities to entrust him with another task, equally important for the mission: organizing archival materials and compiling a history of Jesuit engagement in the Far East. Danieluk, *Konfesjonał i pióro*, 82, 88–89; Thierry Meynard, "For the record: The Canton exile of the missionaries (1666–1671) by the Polish Jesuit Szpot Dunin," *Annales Missiologici Posnanienses* 25 (2020): 147–148; Graff, Wołyniec, "Rola i znaczenie kolegiów jezuickich," 114.

14 Jan Korewa, *Z dziejów diecezji warmińskiej w. XVI. Geneza Braniewskiego Hosianum. Przyczynek do dziejów zespolenia Warmii z Rzeczpospolitą (1549–1564)*, Poznań–Lublin: Księgarnia św. Wojciecha, 1965, 124; Józef Włodarski, Zhao Gang, "Kontakty Polski z Chinami od XIII do końca XVIII wieku – próba nowego spojrzenia," *Gdańskie Studia Azji Wschodniej* 5 (2014): 24.

not only as the principal Jesuit center of learning but also as a cultural bridge between West and East.[15]

Unlike many of his contemporaries among Western European Jesuits who dealt with Oriental matters, Szpot – though he never visited China – did not perceive the Orient solely as an exotic and distant reality. His image of the East also grew out of the borderland experience of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. For him, Tatars were not an abstraction but fellow citizens, neighbors, soldiers of the Commonwealth, and sometimes even co-religionists – converts. Their presence within the social and military structures of the Polish–Lithuanian state, as well as their religion and customs, constituted a real point of reference for him. As scholars of Sarmatism have shown, the myth of Sarmatian genealogy was not merely a fantasy, but a cultural construct that encouraged identification with steppe peoples whom the Western world usually regarded as "barbarian."[16] It is no exaggeration to say that a Polish Sarmatian might have felt a spiritual affinity with a Tatar, much as a Roman once did with a Scythian. The Roman association of *virtus virilis* with barbarian austerity was closely linked to martial courage, self-mastery, disdain for luxury, and readiness for sacrifice, as evidenced, for example, in the writings of Horace and Seneca.[17] This symbolic affinity translated into a particular capacity to understand the political, military, and religious logic of nomadic peoples. In Sarmatian ideology, one can easily discern a strong presence of references to the East and of Oriental motifs. The most pronounced revival of these ideas occurred in the second half of the seventeenth century, during the reign of John III Sobieski.[18] This ruler made efforts to establish contact with the court of the Kangxi Emperor through the mediation of Jesuits connected with the Beijing mission, while also showing interest in the concept of an overland route to the Far East via Moscow and Tatar territories, viewed as an alternative to the uncertain maritime route.[19] Although these initiatives did not result in

15 Ludwik Piechnik, "Związki kulturowe dawnej Akademii Wileńskiej z Zachodem w latach 1570–1773," *Analecta Cracoviensia* 19 (1987): 343–362.

16 Tadeusz Mańkowski, *Genealogia sarmatyzmu* (Warszawa: Tow. Wydawnicze "Łuk," 1946), 20–28; Ewa Anna Żukowska, "Sarmacja i sarmatyzm w kulturze polskiej XVII stulecia w świetle opinii badaczy," *Roczniki Humanistyczne* 52/2 (2004): 71–73.

17 Horace wrote of the Scythians, living in simplicity amid the frost, as an example of people who were hardy and unyielding. Q. Horatius Flaccus, *Carmina* III 24, 9–16; Seneca, De Vita Beata 7.3–8; *idem*, Epistulae Morales 114.10–15.

18 Mańkowski, *Genealogia sarmatyzmu*, 77.

19 Jerzy Paszenda, "Jezuici w Moskwie za króla Jana III Sobieskiego," *Nasza Przeszłość* 97 (2002): 371–380; Monika Miazek-Męczyńska, *Przez Moskwę do Chin? Polski wkład w jezuickie poszukiwania drogi lądowej na Daleki Wschód*, in *Itinera clericorum.*

lasting diplomatic relations, it may be assumed that a political calculation was also present in the background – namely, the search for a potential point of leverage in the broader strategic game against Muscovy and the Ottoman Porte.

Below are several examples of how Szpot transfers patterns of thought shaped in the realities of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth onto the world he describes. This is most clearly visible in passages that appear purely informative – in remarks on court ceremony, offices, and discipline – where the choice of emphasis and the language of evaluation reveal the author's perspective. It is in such places that one can most readily observe that China is viewed through the prism of experiences and categories characteristic of noble culture, without any explicit intention of conducting a comparative analysis. For this reason, it is worth first examining how Szpot constructs the image of imperial authority, for example in his characterization of the reign of the Kangxi Emperor.

Although care and vigilance in governing his empire consumed a large part of his time, from the very beginning – in accordance with the teaching of the Teacher of the Empire, Confucius, which the Chinese call great – he was convinced that he ought to be not a lord but a father to his subjects, to rule them with justice and love, and to ensure their peace and security. Hence he devoted all his efforts to ensuring that he did not neglect his duties in selecting officials of the empire and in keeping them faithful to their obligations.[20]

The analysis of the passage suggests an image of a ruler whom Tomasz Szpot presents as a moral guardian of the people rather than a despot. In his view, the Chinese emperor was not a tyrant, but rather a father to his subjects, guided by principles of justice and love. He ruled according to the Confucian *Doctrina Magna* – the teaching of the moral duty of the ruler toward society – and understood his role not in terms of power, but of responsibility. His task was to ensure the peace and security of his subjects, and concern for the common good formed the foundation of the entire system of authority. In this context, imperial officials appeared as an

Kulturotwórcze i religijne aspekty podróży duchownych, ed. Danuta Quirini-Popławska, Łukasz Burkiewicz (Kraków: Akademia Ignatianum – Wydawnictwo WAM, 2014), 515–527.

20 Quanquam magnam partem temporis attrahebat ad se sollicitudo et vigilantia in gubernando suo imperio: ut, cùm iam à principio ex Doctrina, quam vocant Sinae Magnam, Magistri Imperii Confucii sibi persuasisset, se debere esse non Dominum sed Patrem suorum Subditorum, eosque regere iustitiâ et amore, ac pacem eorum securitatemque procurare, in hoc totum suum studium collocaret, ne suo debito in eligendis, continendisque in suo officio Magistratibus Imperii deësset. ARSI, Jap. Sin. 102, f. 75r.

extension of his moral mission. Their just actions and loyal service were understood not merely as administrative duties, but as an expression of the ethical order of the state. This conception aligns with the Confucian ideal of the ruler as the moral linchpin of the state, shaping his subjects primarily through personal example and concern for social order. Szpot presents it, however, in a tone that renders the image of the emperor reminiscent of political ideals familiar from the culture of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, particularly in the language of evaluation and the emphasis on the ruler's duties toward the community.

The key context for this line of reasoning is provided by the works of the Polish Jesuit Piotr Skarga, especially his famous Sejm Sermons.[21] According to Skarga, the ruler of the Commonwealth was to be the "father of the fatherland," concerned with the common good. Similarly, another Polish author, Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski, in his treatise *O poprawie Rzeczypospolitej* [*On the Improvement of the Commonwealth*],[22] described the monarch as just and morally accountable to both God and the citizens. Another Old Polish writer, Stanisław Orzechowski, in *Quincunx*, wrote that the king is, on the one hand, *primus inter pares*, but at the same time the father of the nation.[23] In the thought of Sarmatian-era authors, the king was to act as the father of the noble nation – exercising authority within the framework of law. The monarch ruled not through fear, but through love, justice, and alignment with the will of God. His duties included careful selection of officials, respect for the "golden liberty," and concern for peace and the faith. The ideal of governance was thus grounded in a moral relationship, rather than a purely political one.

The passage from *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* reflects Szpot's characteristic attempt at civilizational parallelism – his Sarmatian nostalgia for the model of a "gentle, paternal monarchy," shared by both the idealized image of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth and Confucian China. It also reveals the author's deeply rooted conviction that common constitutional and ethical forms could exist despite differing cultural traditions. By depicting the Chinese emperor as the father of his people, Szpot

21 The first edition of Skarga's Sejm Sermons appeared in Kraków in 1597 as part of a larger collection of his sermons entitled *Kazania na niedziele y święta całego roku x. Piotra Skargi* […] *w drukarniey Andrzeia Piotrkowczyka* (Kraków: [Andrzej Piotrkowczyk], 1597), 657–707.

22 *Commentariorvm de republica emendanda libri quinque Andreae Fricii Modrevii ad regem, senatum, pontifices, presbyteros, equites, populum[quoque] Polonis ac reliquae Sarmatiae* […] (Kraków: Lazarus Andreae excudebat, 1551).

23 *Quincunx, to jest wzór Korony Polskiej na cynku wystawiony, przez Stanisława Orzechowskiego Okszyca z przemyskiej ziemi, i za kolędę posłom koronnym do Warszawy na nowe lato roku pańskiego 1564 posłany* (Kraków: [Łazarz Andrysowicz] 1564).

consciously or unconsciously frames him within a Sarmatian model of monarchy. He adopts the same rhetoric used by preachers and moralists of the old Commonwealth. The Confucian model of "rule by virtue" and the "caring monarch" is translated in his account into the language of Latin republicanism – intelligible and acceptable to a Polish nobleman. In this way, governance in China and Poland, though formally different, appears in Szpot's perspective as a parallel world of virtues, where *virtus virilis* prevails rather than force or the whim of a tyrant.

Comparing Szpot's narrative with that of his contemporaries – such as Fr. Martino Martini, SJ,[24] Fr. Álvaro Semedo, SJ,[25] or Fr. Gabriel de Magalhães, SJ[26] – it becomes clear that, although all of them drew on the experiences of the missions and contacts with Chinese elites, their perspective remained deeply rooted in the Western European model of statehood. They presented China as an administrative-bureaucratic system, describable and mappable. Szpot, by contrast – raised in the realities of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, a religiously and culturally pluralistic state marked by experience with wars against the Tatars – perceived China as a living socio-political-religious organism, whose rhythm was shaped by border tensions. He portrays Chinese history not only from a Sinocentric perspective, as his Jesuit colleagues did, but as a continuous dialogue (and conflict) between agricultural civilization and the nomadic world of the steppes. He stretches this world from Manchuria to the steppe frontiers Wild Fields of Ukraine, sketching a distinctive "Eurasian horizon of history." The Polish Jesuit describes invasions, reforms, and the rule of dynasties of Tatar and Manchu origin, not demonizing them, but seeing in them instruments of Providence for the renewal of ossified order. The fall of the Ming and the rise of the Manchus are presented not as a catastrophe, but as a natural dynastic transition, an element of historical order. Moreover, he notes that Christianity and the Jesuit mission flourished even under Tatar rule. Hence the title of the third book of his *Historiae Sinarum Imperii: Sina Evangelicâ luce sub imperatoribus Tartaris illustrior mundo facta*.[27] This mode of

24 Martino Martini, *Novus Atlas Sinensis* (Amsterdam, 1655).

25 Álvaro Semedo, *Imperio de la China, i cultura evangelica en èl, por los religios de la Compañia de Iesus* (Madrid: Juan Sánchez, 1642).

26 Gabriel de Magalhães authored *Doze Excellencias da China* in Portuguese in 1668. It was subsequently translated into French and printed in 1688 as *Nouvelle Relation de la Chine* (Paris: Chez Claude Barbin au Palais sur le second Perron de la Sainte Chappelle, M. DC. LXXXVIII, 1688).

27 Which can be rendered into English: China Made More Renowned to the World by the Light of the Gospel under the Tartar Emperors ARSI, Jap. Sin. 103, f. 35r.

narration is almost providential in character – for Szpot, the history of China is not only a political process, but also part of God's plan. He presents it as a dynamic space, responsive to external impulses and capable of spiritual transformation.

In Szpot's narrative, one can also discern a Sarmatian approach to religions in imperial China. Beginning his remarks on the subject in *Historiae Sinarum Imperii*, he wrote:

> The religion of the entire population, inhabiting the fifteen provinces – Beijing, Xantum, Shanxi, Shaanxi, Sichuan, Yunnan, Guizhou, Guangxi, Guangdong, Fujian, Huguang, Jiangxi, Henan, Zhejiang, and Nanjing – had long ago been divided into three main sects, even before the arrival of the Christian religion in China, the Koran of Muhammad along with the Saracens, and the Tatar idol Foe Lam. The first was authentic and had prevailed in China since the time of the Flood. It belonged to the Scholars, although there are entire families who have preserved it, inheriting it from their ancestors untainted by any idolatrous superstition. The second was the sect of Taoist necromancers and magicians; the third was the idolatrous sect of the Oscian monks.[28]

Faithful to his Jesuit education, Szpot then organizes Chinese religious and ethical traditions according to a scheme familiar from Christian comparative theology. He places first the "authentic" teaching of the scholars (*literati*), which he links to the most ancient history, reaching back, as he writes, to "the time after the Flood." This is not, however, an analysis of Confucianism as a strictly philosophical-moral system; rather, it assigns it the role of the overarching norm that orders public life and custom – what, from his perspective, corresponds to the "religion of the scholars." In this classification, one can see an echo of the way religious pluralism was understood in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth: as both a political fact and a hierarchical arrangement oriented toward Catholicism. Just as in Poland different confessions coexisted under the authority of the king, so in China different cults and schools of thought functioned under the emperor's authority, while the primacy of the scholars' teaching – which Szpot interpreted as dominant – was maintained.

There are many more such comparisons and examples in the works of Tomasz Szpot, and the recurring pattern of combining description with interpretation, knowledge with moral evaluation, allows us to see in his writing something more than a mere account of the Far East. Tomasz Szpot's oeuvre is not only descriptive; it is also a theological and political

28 ARSI, Jap. Sin. 102, f. 3r.

reflection. It blends historical narrative with preaching and moral discourse. His Sarmatism was not a lifestyle, but a way of understanding the world: a borderland sensibility, a readiness for dialogue, and moral responsibility toward the community. His love of order, combined with Christian universalism, makes Szpot surprisingly close to the modern notion of a borderland humanist. In an era when the Orient was either idealized or demonized, Tomasz Szpot chose a third path: one of empathetic understanding, rooted in the experience of multiculturalism. For this reason, his work should be read not only as a compendium of knowledge about China, but also as an original Sarmatian reflection on history, morality, and the Christian mission in the North-East Asia.

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A Conscious Choice of Sources: Tomasz Szpot Dunin on Muscovy in Inner Asia and Sino-Russian Relations in *Historia Sinarum Imperii*[1]

Świadomy dobór źródeł: Tomasz Dunin Szpot o relacjach państwa moskiewskiego z Azją Wewnętrzną i Chinami w *Historia Sinarum Imperii*

Abstract

This article explores the sources and interpretive frameworks that shaped Tomasz Szpot Dunin's representation of Muscovy, its position in Inner Asia, and its relations with China at the turn of the eighteenth century. It examines the missionary literature on which he relied, asking whether his account drew on earlier Catholic reports describing attempts to enter and traverse Muscovy, or whether it was based primarily on writings produced

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by Jesuit missionaries active in China. The study further examines the extent to which Szpot Dunin engaged with information and stereotypes circulating in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth and whether his portrayal of Muscovy aligned with Polish–Lithuanian political interests in the aftermath of the Treaty of Grzymułtowski (1686). Finally, it considers how the global aims of the Jesuit Order, including access to Muscovy and the establishment of an overland route to China may have influenced his narrative strategies. By addressing these questions, the article situates *Historia Sinarum Imperii* within its intellectual, political, and institutional contexts and contributes to ongoing discussions about competing loyalties to royal patrons and other networks of the early modern Jesuit order.

Keywords: China, Jesuit missionaries, Muscovy, Poland-Lithuania, Siberia, Thomas Szpot Dunin.

Abstrakt

Celem artykułu jest ustalenie źródeł i ram interpretacyjnych, które ukształtowały sposób przedstawienia państwa moskiewskiego przez Tomasza Szpota Dunina, roli, jaką odgrywała Moskwa w Azji Środkowej, a szczególnie na Syberii, oraz jej relacji z Chinami na przełomie XVII i XVIII wieku. Poprzez analizę literatury, na której opierał się autor, bada się, czy jego narracja czerpała z wcześniejszych katolickich relacji opisujących próby dotarcia do państwa moskiewskiego i podróży przez jej terytorium, np. wzdłuż Wołgi na Kaukaz i do Persji, czy też opierała się przede wszystkim na pismach jezuitów działających bezpośrednio w Chinach. Artykuł analizuje ponadto, w jakim stopniu Szpot Dunin wykorzystywał informacje i stereotypy krążące w Rzeczypospolitej Obojga Narodów oraz czy jego obraz państwa moskiewskiego pozostawał w zgodzie z interesami politycznymi Rzeczypospolitej po zawarciu traktatu Grzymułtowskiego (1686). Wreszcie stawia pytania o wpływ takich celów zakonu jezuitów jak uzyskanie dostępu do państwa moskiewskiego czy otrzymanie pozwolenia na podróż lądową do Chin przez terytorium wielkiego księstwa na strategie narracyjne autora. Podjęcie tych zagadnień ma na celu głębsze zrozumienie treści i kontekstu powstania dzieła Tomasza Szpota Dunina oraz dodania jeszcze jednego przypadku do dyskusji na temat konfliktu lojalności względem państwa pochodzenia lub zakonu wśród jezuitów w epoce nowożytnej.

Słowa klucze: Chiny, misje jezuickie, Moskwa, Rzeczpospolita Obojga Narodów, Syberia, Tomasz Szpot Dunin.

Tomasz Ignacy Szpot Dunin (ca. 1645–1713), a young Polish nobleman from Podlasie, entered the Society of Jesus in Vilnius in 1664. In the years that followed, he pursued studies in philosophy and theology

and completed pedagogical training at Jesuit colleges in Reszel, Vilnius, Drohiczyn, and Warsaw. He was ordained a priest in Vilnius in 1677. Over the next eleven years, he served in various capacities within the Lithuanian Province of the Society of Jesus. In 1688, he was sent to Rome, where he remained for the rest of his life. Although hearing confessions in St. Peter's Basilica was his primary duty, he was also tasked with compiling a history of the Jesuit mission in China from its beginnings to his own time. His unpublished manuscripts, preserved in the Jesuit Roman Archives, include *Historia Sinarum Imperii*, two series of *Collectanea*, and several shorter works.[2]

This study examines the sources of Szpot Dunin's knowledge and the intellectual frameworks that shaped his narrative on Muscovy, its role in Inner Asia, and its relations with China in the second half of the seventeenth century, with particular emphasis on the turn of the eighteenth century. The article aims to assess which missionary accounts he used. Did he draw on seventeenth-century Catholic reports describing attempts to enter and travel through Muscovy, for example by Ioannes Thaddeus (1600s–1610s), Thomas Vitale (1639), Philippus d'Avril and his companions (1680s), or Ioannes Milan (1690s–1700s), or did he primarily rely on accounts written by missionaries active in China, such as the well-known accounts of Thomas Pereira, Ioannes Francisus Gerbillon, Antonius Thomas, or Ferdinandus Verbiest? Did he include the seventeenth-century Catholic reports describing both successful and failed attempts to enter Muscovy? The study also considers the extent to which Szpot Dunin incorporated information or stereotypes about Muscovy circulating in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth and examines whether his portrayal aligned with Polish–Lithuanian political interests after the Treaty of Grzymułtowski (1686).

Second, the study investigates whether the global objectives of the Jesuit Order, such as obtaining permission to preach in Muscovy, securing authorization to travel to China via the overland route through Muscovy, or assessing the possibility of expanding missionary activity in Inner Asia, influenced the construction of Szpot Dunin's narrative. By addressing these questions, the study sheds light on the author's intellectual and

2 ARSI, Jap. Sin. 102-103 (*Historia*); Jap. Sin. 104-105; 109-111 (*Collectanea*). For more about Szpot and his work, 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 (2023): 337–358.

political positioning, thereby enriching our understanding of *Historia Sinarum Imperii* and contributing to the recent discussions on the competing loyalties to royal patrons and other networks within the Jesuit Order in the early modern period.[3]

Which sources informed Tomasz Szpot Dunin's account of Muscovy, its role in Inner Asia, and its relations with China?

An analysis of Szpot Dunin's perception of Muscovy, its role in Inner Asia, and its relations with China must take into account his origins, his education and the intellectual formation he received within the Lithuanian Province of the Jesuit Order, and his later intellectual development during his stay in Rome after 1688.

Born around 1645 in Podlasie, Szpot Dunin spent his youth amid the series of mid-seventeenth-century military campaigns conducted on the territory of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth by, among others, Swedish, Transylvanian, and Muscovite forces. The Muscovite–Polish War of 1654–1667 had long-lasting repercussions for the socio-economic life of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. During the conflict, the Muscovite army pursued a policy of resettlement, forcibly transferring inhabitants of Lithuanian towns and villages into Muscovite territories, which resulted in severe demographic losses. Members of the local nobility were also taken captive; their treatment varied from being held as hostages at the court of the grand duke or in the households of prominent Muscovite officials to being deported to distant eastern regions, where their skills were used to support Muscovite efforts to colonize Siberia.[4]

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3 For more on the competing jurisdictions and loyalties tied to state networks emerging within the Society of Jesus in the early modern period, and especially in the second half of the seventeenth century, see: Dauril Alden, *The making of an enterprise: the Society of Jesus in Portugal, its empire and beyond 1540–1750* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 267–272; Frederik Vermote, "Travellers Lost and Redirected: Jesuit Networks and the Limits of European Exploration in Asia," *Itinerario* 41/3 (2017): 484–506.

4 Particularly noteworthy among the most recent and comprehensive studies on this topic are: Jerzy Wojciechowski, *Obraz Rosji w Rzeczypospolitej w drugiej połowie XVII wieku*, PhD Dissertation defended at the University of Silesia, Katowice (Katowice, 2020), 202–225; Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, "Captive Colonizers: The Role of the Prisoners of War from Poland-Lithuania and the Crimean Khanate in the Russian Subjugation of Eastern Siberia," *Journal of World History* 33/1 (2022): 73–102.

From the very first diplomatic negotiations following the outbreak of the war, held in Niewież in 1656, the Polish–Lithuanian side demanded the return of captives and forcibly resettled civilians. This demand, which remained a recurring issue in Polish–Muscovite negotiations, was incorporated into the agreements concluded in 1667 and 1672. Under the provisions of the Truce of Andrusovo (1667), all those who had not changed their faith, including members of the nobility, the clergy, soldiers, and Jews, were permitted to return to their homeland. Peasants, merchants, and townspeople, however, as well as Jews who had converted to Orthodoxy and married Orthodox women, were required to remain in Muscovy. A subsequent treaty concluded in 1672 granted townspeople and merchants permission to return, provided they were not residing in the households of boyars or state officials.[5]

It should be emphasized that the Muscovite side consistently refused to allow the return of abducted peasants and repeatedly obstructed the departure of even those limited groups formally covered by the agreements. This practice became a persistent source of tension in subsequent negotiations and remained a regular feature of the instructions issued to Polish–Lithuanian envoys sent to the grand duke of Muscovy. Given the scale of the Muscovite invasion and the protracted nature of the conflict, which, with brief interruptions, lasted more than thirty years, it is highly probable that Szpot Dunin became familiar with the issues of war damage, captivity, and forced resettlement during this period. Moreover, he may have come into contact with individuals, most probably members of the nobility, who returned to the Commonwealth under the terms of these agreements.

As Szpot Dunin served at the Warsaw collegium in the years 1678–1680 and again in 1686–1688, he likely had relatively easy access to information and rumors circulating at the royal court, including those related to the final negotiations and conclusion of the Treaty of Grzymułtowski (1686), which not only brought the decades-long Polish–Muscovite conflict to an end but also secured, although only for a very short period, certain privileges for Catholics in Muscovy.[6] Nevertheless, *Historia Sinarum Imperii* contains no direct references to eastern Siberia as a destination of forced resettlement, nor does it draw on any oral or written accounts left by Polish exiles.

5 Wojciechowski, *Obraz Rosji w Rzeczypospolitej w drugiej połowie XVII wieku*, 224–226.

6 Kirill Kochegarov, "The Jesuit Mission and the Local Catholic Community in Smolensk. The First Years after the Treaty of Eternal Peace 1686," in *Foreigners in Muscovy. Western Immigrants in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Russia*, ed. Simon Dreher, Wolfgang Mueller (London: Routledge, 2022), 115–132.

There is, for example, no evidence that Szpot Dunin was familiar with what was presumably the earliest Polish description of eastern Siberia, authored by a Jesuit, Andrzej Kawieczyński. He was taken captive from the Nowogródek collegium in Lithuania in 1654. As a relatively prominent figure, Kawieczyński was initially held in Moscow, where he began organizing the life of the local Catholic community. This activity met with the disapproval of the grand duke's officials, who subsequently sent him to work in the Siberian quarries. Kawieczyński returned only after four years, following the intervention of Polish–Lithuanian envoys in 1664.

The final years of Kawieczyńsi's life were spent at the collegium in Nieśwież,[7] where, before his death in 1667, he wrote memoirs that are now lost but were used in composing his obituary.[8] According to the latter, the Jesuit lived alone in exile among local inhabitants described as heathens who practiced witchcraft and worshipped trees and devils. It is difficult to determine whether Szpot Dunin, who spent the years 1680–1681 in Nieśwież, had any opportunity to become acquainted with either Kawieczyński's writings or with stories about the extraordinary circumstances of his captivity. Likewise, there is no evidence that Szpot Dunin was familiar with the diaries of Adam Kamieński Dłużyk, a former war captive deported to Siberia in 1660 who returned to the Commonwealth in 1672. Although Dłużyk's account is relatively well known and has been widely discussed, offering valuable proto-ethnographic descriptions of Siberia,[9] it must be read with considerable caution, particularly the sections concerning his own service in the Yakutsk province.[10]

In searching for additional groups of texts that might have influenced Szpot Dunin's narrative, one must exclude the anti-Muscovite propaganda produced in circles surrounding the Polish court from the second half of the sixteenth century onward.[11] At first glance, it may seem surprising

7 For a detailed account of this significant Jesuit establishment in the Lithuanian province, located in the capital of the influential Radziwiłł family, see: Andrea Mariani, "Duszpasterstwo jezuitów nieświeskich w XVII–XVIII wieku. Między ideałem potrydenckim a lokalnymi uwarunkowaniami," *Rocznik Lituanistyczny* 2 (2016): 47–91.

8 Bronisław Natoński, "Kawieczyński (Kawaczyński, Kawęczyński) Andrzej h. Ostoja (1619–1667)," in *Polski słownik biograficzny*. vol. 12 (Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków: PAU, 1966–1967), 249.

9 Adam Kamieński-Dłużyk, "Diariusz więzienia moskiewskiego, miast i miejsc," z pierwodruku wydali oraz przypisami i komentarzami opatrzyli A. Kuczyński, B. Polewoj, Z. J. Wójcik," in *Dwa polskie pamiętniki z Syberii XVII i XVIII wiek*, ed. A. Kuczyński (Wrocław–Warszawa: Polskie Towarzystwo Ludoznawcze, 1996).

10 Kołodziejczyk, "Captive Colonizers," 93–94.

11 At this point, it is worth mentioning at least one of the earliest examples of such texts, recorded in the 1570s during a period when the papacy – much as it would again in the

that a Polish–Lithuanian Jesuit who personally witnessed the long-term consequences of the Muscovite–Polish military conflicts (1654–1686) nevertheless refrained, in his depiction of the former enemy and long-standing rival, from reproducing the negative stereotypes that circulated in the Commonwealth during the seventeenth century.[12]

A revealing example of Szpot Dunin's stance can be found by comparing his assessment of Muscovite trustworthiness in diplomatic negotiations with that expressed, for example, by one of the most influential Polish statesmen in the 17th century, Crown Hetman Stanisław Koniecpolski. In the early 1640s, when the Polish court was considering an anti-Crimean alliance, the hetman described the prospective partner as follows:

"But considering the innate hatred of the Muscovites toward our nation and their slippery faith, the matter appeared full of danger. For once they had settled in that place, they would have drawn to themselves all of Christendom situated by the Black Sea and the Maeotian Marshes: they would have drawn in even the Tatar hordes, whom they would already have detached from the Turks and through whom they could have become a burden to us. Moreover, with the Cossacks so close, both in faith and in the hope of plunder, who can say whether they would not have torn them away from us and then [do the same] with the whole Ruthenia?"[13]

1680s – sought to draw Muscovy into a desirable anti-Ottoman alliance: *Sprawa wielkiego kniazia moskiewskiego. Roku 1571* [*A Brief Account of the Character and Brutal Rule of Vasil'evich, Tyrant of Muscovy*] by Albert Schlichting. According to recent findings, the work was initially promoted by the Polish court for internal use rather than as part of an international anti-Muscovite campaign. It was only the papal nuncio to the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, Vincenzo dal Portico, who – while preparing for a mission to Muscovy aimed at drawing it into an anti-Ottoman league – ordered the Polish text to be translated into Latin and sent to Rome. This step ultimately led the Holy See to abandon its plans for an alliance with Muscovy. Contrary to a thesis long upheld in Russian and Soviet historiography, it was not the Polish–Lithuanian court that directly shaped the negative image of Muscovy on the international stage by commissioning a strongly critical Latin description of the state. Rather, this development resulted from the initiative of the nuncio. It was dal Portico who ordered the translation of Schlichting's Polish account into Latin – a version that influenced papal policy in 1571 and contributed to the relative popularity of its various redactions in the early modern Commonwealth and Western Europe. For more, see: Hieronim Grala, "Wokół dzieła i osoby Alberta Schlichtinga. (Przyczynek do dziejów propagandy antymoskiewskiej w drugiej połowie XVI w.)," *Studia Źródłoznawcze* 38 (2000): 35–51; Albert Schlichting, *Sprawa Wielkiego Kniazia Moskiewskiego*, ed. Grzegorz Franczak, Marek Janicki (Warszawa: Sub Lupa, 2025), esp. 34–38.

12 Hieronim Grala, "O genezie polskiej rusofobii," *Przegląd Historyczny* 83/1 (1992): 135–153.

13 "Ale konsyderując *innatum odium* moskiewskie przeciwko narodowi naszemu i owę ich śliską wiarę, zdała się *res periculi plena*. Bo osiadłszy tamto miejsce, wszystko

In his account of the negotiations at Nerchinsk (1689),[14] Szpot Dunin makes no reference to alleged Muscovite duplicity, a charge that, as Koniecpolski's opinion illustrates, recurred frequently in seventeenth-century Polish–Lithuanian political writings. On the contrary, he explicitly challenges this negative stereotype in the following passage:

> The second dispute that arose lasted longer. Had it not been resolved by the same Fathers [Thomas Pereira and Ioannes Franciscus Gerbillon], it would have been necessary, right at the very beginning of the talks and without settling the matter, to leave the settlement of Nerchinsk and return to China. The Chinese had already formed an opinion of the Muscovites, essentially for every reason: that this nation is inclined to deceit, ambushes, and wickedness. This belief, which once encompassed all Europeans, before China entered into maritime trade relations with them and experienced that Europeans love virtue and justice no less than the Chinese themselves, now revived with particular force in regard to the Muscovites, perhaps because of the crimes of the Muscovite common people along the borders with Tartary, or because of the deceitful rebuilding of Albazin. The task of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus was to strive constantly, in all matters, to eradicate this belief completely from the minds of the Chinese and the Tatars.[15]

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chrześciaństwo *ad Pontem Euxinum et Paludem Meotidem* siedzące, do siebie przyciągnęli: pociągnęliby i same Ordy tatarskie, którychby już odstrychnęli od Turków i niemi mogliby nam być ciężcy. A co więtsza Kozaków tak blisko mając i wiarą i *spe praedae* kto wie? jeżeliby ich nieoderwali od nas a potém i wszystkiej Rusi?". Stanisław Koniecpolski, "Diskurs o zniesieniu Tatarów Krymskich i Lidze z Moskwą," in *Pamiętniki o Koniecpolskich: przyczynek do dziejów polskich XVII wieku*, ed. Stanisław Przyłęcki (Lwów: Drukarnia Piotra Pillera, 1842), 302.

14 The history of the Treaty of Nerchinsk (1689) has been examined in considerable depth in the existing scholarship. For a recent and comprehensive account that also addresses the role of the Jesuits in the negotiations, see, for example, Peter Perdue, "Boundaries and Trade in the Early Modern World: Negotiations at Nerchinsk and Beijing," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 43 (2010): 341–356; Birgit Tremml-Werner, Lisa Hellman, "Merely *Ad hoc* Diplomacy? A Global Historical Comparison of Early Modern Japanese–Spanish and Qing-Russian Foreign Relations," *Diplomatica* 2/1 (2020): 57–78. A study that places greater emphasis on the Muscovite perspective, with particular attention to the treaty's commercial implications, is Erika Monahan, *The Merchants of Siberia: Trade in Early Modern Eurasia* (Ithaca–London: Cornell University Press, 2016), esp. 55–90. The report of the head of the Muscovite delegation, Fedor Alekseievich Golovin is available in Natalia F. Demidova, Vladimir S. Miasnikov, *Russko-Kitaiski otnosheniia v XVII veke v dvukh tomakh*, vol. 2, ed. S.L. Tikhvinskii (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Nauka, 1972), 555–641.

15 ARSI, Jap. Sin. 102, fol. 47v. I would like to thank Katarzyna Gara for sharing her Polish translation of *Historia Sinarum Imperii*, any errors in the English translation are entirely my own.

The above description should be compared with the corresponding passage from the account left by Thomas Pereira, who, together with Ioannes Franciscus Gerbillon, accompanied the Chinese delegation during the negotiations:

> Our [Chinese] ambassadors, however, persisted saying, 'The Moscovites are not like you – sincere and reliable – do not let them deceive you. Today they say one thing, but tomorrow they do not keep word. We have had a lot of experience with them, and you have had none; we know that they are liars.'

Hearing this and knowing that it was a misconception – though seemingly they had some foundation for it insofar as it pertained to the people of the lower classes and that it would threaten the expected success [of the negotiations] – I decided to rise in defense of the Muscovites and of the common interest, for which I hope the Moscovites will show gratitude towards the Society of Jesus and for which also the Grand Duke will not deny us due acknowledgement. Therefore. I spoke as follows: 'Sirs, it is not right to make mountains out of mole hills. You must not confuse small matters with important ones and much less conflate mean people with great. The concept which your Excellencies have of the Moscovites is founded on the basis of dealings with people of the lower class, whose aim usually is deception. Until now, you have not had an opportunity to negotiate with and know the Moscovites. What you said of them could also be said about the Chinese, among whom there are liars without number; from which fact, however, it does not follow that one must deny credit to all Chinese; on the contrary, one must consider individuals. Again, you say that the Moscovites drink much wine; are there not many Chinese who drink as well, and who in this respect are nowise inferior to them? Many of them can daily be found walking and on horseback in the streets of Peking – a topic on which much more could be said. Yet, in spite of all this, one must not conclude that there are no sober people among the Chinese, for indeed there are many who do not drink at all. And the same could be said about other matters, so that one must not refuse confidence in these people even though there is malice in the inferiors or perfidy in common people. You should listen to what the Moscovites say on this question and not blindly believe what others say about them.'"[16]

16 Thomas Pereira, *The Jesuits and the Sino-Russian Treaty of Nerchinsk (1689): The Diary of Thomas Pereira. S. J.*, ed. Joseph Sebes (Rome: Institutum Historicum S.I., 1961), 240–243.

A close reading of the two passages indicates that Szpot Dunin relies heavily on Pereira's account; his description of the negotiations is, in effect, a shortened version of it. This dependence is particularly evident in his treatment of the Latin interpreter of the Muscovite delegation. As in Pereira's narrative, the interpreter remains unnamed and is mentioned only as "the Latin interpreter." The individual in question was Andrei Belobotski, a Polish nobleman, most likely of Ruthenian origin, who left the Commonwealth for Muscovy and converted to Orthodoxy around 1681, a trajectory that would have been of obvious interest to a Polish-Lithuanian readership. To conclude the discussion of possible Polish-Lithuanian influences on Szpot Dunin's narrative, it is worth briefly considering the titles he employs for the rulers of Muscovy in *Historia Sinarum Imperii*. Throughout the work, they are consistently referred to as the "grand dukes of Muscovy," rather than the "tsars of Muscovy" or the "Russian tsars."

In light of the long-standing diplomatic disputes of the seventeenth century—stemming from the Polish refusal to recognize the Muscovite ruler's claim to the title of tsar—this terminological choice might initially appear to reflect Szpot Dunin's origins and a degree of loyalty to Polish-Lithuanian political tradition. Even the fact that, under difficult political circumstances, the Commonwealth agreed in the Treaty of Grzymułtowski (1686) to refer to Ivan and Peter as *velikie gosudary tsary, velikie kniazi*[17] does not preclude the possibility that a Polish Jesuit might deliberately employ a less prestigious title to protest against the strengthening of the Muscovite power in the region.[18] Yet the reluctance to recognize the title of tsar was not unique to the Commonwealth. Within the Catholic world, there existed a persistent unease about acknowledging more than one emperor in Christendom. Jesuit missionaries in China, such as Thomas Pereira, Ioannes Franciscus Gerbillon, and Antonius Thomas, also referred to the rulers of Muscovy as "grand dukes." Szpot Dunin's choice of terminology is therefore more plausibly explained by this wider Catholic concern than by the specifically Polish-Lithuanian diplomatic practice of avoiding the title *tsar* in the context of rivalry with Muscovy over the Ruthenian heritage.

In his account of the early stages of Chinese–Muscovite relations, the first official embassies dispatched by the grand duke to Beijing

17 *Sbornik gramot i dogovorov o prisoedinenii tsarstv i oblastei k gosudarstvu rossiiskomu v XVII–XIX vekakh*, part. 1 (Petrograd = St. Petersburg: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1922), 155.

18 Henryk Wisner, "Dyplomacja polska w latach 1572–1648," in *Historia dyplomacji polskiej*, ed. Zbigniew Wójcik, vol. 2 (Warszawa: PWN, 1982), 96–100, 116–117.

(beginning in 1654), and the conflicts between the Kangxi emperor and Galdan, the powerful khan of the Dzungars, Szpot Dunin draws extensively on the writings of Jesuit missionaries active in China in the second half of the seventeenth and the very early eighteenth centuries. This reliance can be illustrated by comparing the description of the Chinese army's celebrated victory over the Dzungars at the battle of Ulan Budung (1690) in *Historia Sinarum Imperii* with that found in *De Bello Cam Hi Imperatoris Tartaro-Sinici contra Tartaros Erutanos. Feliciter confecto anno 1697*, written by Antonius Thomas and sent to Rome in 1701. As Davor Antonucci has discussed in detail, the Jesuit missionary devoted particular attention to the tactics employed by the Galdan, who during the battle used camels as protection against the Emperor's army. This information was derived directly from a report submitted to the court by the Chinese commander-in-chief.[19] Szpot Dunin provides the same detail in the following passage:

"Therefore, in order not to be surrounded by a large number of imperial troops and to withstand the first assault, he [Galdan] established camp near Mount Pecha. His right flank was protected by forests stretching over gently rising hills, while his left was shielded by the banks of a river swollen with marshes that were difficult to cross. In the center of the camp, camels lay in a dense row, tied together so that they could not move, forming, as it were, a solid wall against the imperial cavalry. Concealed behind their massive bodies were riflemen who defended the camp."[20]

Similarly, when addressing missionary efforts to reach the Far East by an overland route, Szpot Dunin confines his discussion to the unsuccessful attempt of Philippus Grimaldi in 1690, situating it within the broader framework of the Jesuits' intermediary role in Sino-Russian relations. This passage constitutes the sole instance in which he mentions the support of John III Sobieski for Jesuit plans to reach the Far East *iter Moscoviam*, and he explicitly equates the Polish king's role with that of the Habsburg emperor.[21] He provides no information about the contemporary mission of Philippus d'Avril, who travelled with Polish-Lithuanian Jesuits, nor does he refer to earlier efforts by missionaries from various orders to make use of the Volga route through Muscovite

19 Davor Antonucci, "Antoine Thomas: A Historian of the Sino-Zunghar War," in *The itinerary of Antoine Thomas S.J. (1644–1709), scientist and missionary from Namur in China*, ed. Michel Hermans, Isabelle Parmentier (Leuven: Ferdinand Verbiest Institute, 2017), 219–252, esp. 246–248.

20 ARSI, Jap. Sin. 102, fol. 56v.

21 ARSI, Jap. Sin. 102, fol. 43r-v.

territory. Consequently, his narrative omits relatively well-known figures such as Ioannes Thaddeus, prefect of the Discalced Carmelite mission in Persia, who travelled in the first two decades of the seventeenth century,[22] the Dominican Thomas Vitale,[23] whose own journey in 1639 inspired him to compose a quasi-guide for fellow missionaries on how to prepare for the Volga route, and numerous others who attempted to reach Persia, Central Asia, or China via the overland route in the second half of the seventeenth century.[24]

Surprisingly, Szpot Dunin remains silent about the Jesuits from the Bohemian sub-province, who thanks to the support of Leopold I – yet another member of the Holy League – were granted permission to remain in Moscow in 1685. Although they were expelled as early as 1690,[25] two other members of the Society, Ioannes Milan and Ioannes Berula from Olomouc, were sent back to Moscow in 1693, disguised as ordinary Catholic clergy.[26] Initially, they focused on ministering to the residents of the German suburb (*Nemetskaia sloboda*) and on cultivating valuable contacts at the Petrine court, including the renowned Siberian cartographer Andrei Vinius.[27] In 1700, Milan travelled south to the Azov Sea region, where he spend some time among the Kalmyks, a group only briefly mentioned by Szpot Dunin.[28] From this expedition, Milan produced a detailed report which Paul Shore has described as "an important early contribution to the ethnography of the region," containing insightful remarks on their social customs, beliefs, music, and language. As might be expected, the missionary devoted a significant portion of his

22 *A Chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia. The Safavids and the Papal Mission of the 17th and 18th Centuries*, ed. Herbert Chick (London–New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012), vol. 1, 104–112, 196–197; Christian Windler, *Missionare in Persien. Kulturelle Diversität und Normenkonkurrenz im frühneuzeitlichen Katholizismus (17.-18. Jahrhundert)* (Köln–Weimar–Wien: Böhlau-Verlag, 2018), 189, 213.

23 Archivio Storico di Propaganda Fide (hereafter APF), *Scritture originali referite nelle Congregatione* (SOCG), vol. 119, f. 265-267.

24 For a recent study on the missionaries' efforts to open the land route in the-mid 17th century, see: Yuval Givon, "Connecting Eurasia: Jesuit Experimentation with Overland Mobility Between China and Europe, 1656–1664," *Journal of World History* 33/4 (2022): 639–668.

25 APF, *Acta Sacra Congregatione anno 1684*, vol. 54, fol. 126v; *anno 1692*, vol. 62, fol. 183.

26 APF, *Acta Sacra Congregatione anno 1693*, vol. 63, fols. 105r-107r.

27 For a monography of Vinius in English, see: Kees Boterbloem, *Moderniser of Russia: Andrei Vinius, 1641–1716* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); for his contacts with Milan, 228.

28 ARSI, Jap. Sin. 102, fol. 65v.

manuscript to the description of local religious practices.[29] Milan's precise objectives remain a mystery. However, a note in the minutes of the monthly meetings of the cardinals and consultors of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide in 1699 suggests that, although the Holy See was rather pessimistic about prospects of operating directly in Moscow, it nonetheless entertained some hope regarding missionary work among the Kalmyks and considered that possibility worthy of further exploration.[30] Given that Milan travelled south in 1700, it is likely that he acted in response to this Roman initiative.

Conclusion

Given Thomas Szpot Dunin's origins, education, and life trajectory, it is reasonable to assume that his knowledge of Muscovy – and possibly of its role in Siberia – was shaped by literature produced in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, as well as by the rumors and information circulating in his homeland, including those stemming from the prolonged Polish–Muscovite conflict of 1654–1686. It is likewise probable that, during his service in the Lithuanian Province and especially after his transfer to Rome, he became acquainted with reports concerning missionary activity in the Black Sea region, the Caspian basin, and Muscovy following the Treaty of Grzymułtowski. In Rome, he would have had access to Jesuit archival materials relating not only the Chinese mission but also to other missionary fields, and he may even have consulted consulted documentation from the archives of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. Nevertheless, the preceding analysis suggests that Szpot Dunin made a deliberate decision to base his work primarily on materials produced by Jesuit missionaries active in China. The motivations behind this choice can only be inferred. He may have considered these accounts the most reliable sources available, or as the most appropriate for the purposes for which *Historia Sinarum Imperii* was commissioned.

At the same time, it is important to bear in mind the constant circulation of information between the Jesuits in China and their confreres in Europe, as well as with members of the Republic of Letters and with

29 Paul Shore, "A Jesuit among the Kalmyks: An Example of Proto-Ethnography by the Society of Jesus in the Eighteenth Century," in *Early Modern Overseas Careers. East-Central Europeans as Jesuit Missionaries and Dutch East India Employees*, ed. Igor Iwo Chabrowski, Natalia Królikowska-Jedlińska (CEU Press: Vienna, 2025), 171–194.

30 APF, *Acta Sacrae Congregationis anno 1699*, vol. 69, fols. 242–246.

European and Asian courts. Even a European ruler only marginally involved in Chinese affairs, such as John III Sobieski, maintained correspondence with Ferdinand Verbiest, had direct contact with Philippus Grimaldi during his travels through the Commonwealth,[31] and appears to have followed developments at the Kangxi court with considerable interest. His family archives preserve a copy of a letter written in 1690 by Antonius Thomas to the Jesuit General concerning the contemporary situation in China and the perspective of the Catholic mission there.[32] As a result, accounts produced by Jesuit missionaries in China frequently incorporated information obtained through exchanges with other Western Europeans, Muscovites, and various additional interlocutors. Cartography provides a particularly instructive example in this regard, as Helena Jaskov has demonstrated in her detailed analysis of changes in Jesuit, Muscovite, and Chinese maps following the negotiations at Nerchinsk.[33]

Szpot Dunin's choice of sources was most likely shaped by the complex political and religious circumstances in which *Historia Sinarum Imperii* was composed. For the Jesuit mission in China, the turn of the eighteenth century was, on the one hand, a period of remarkable success, symbolized by the Edict of Tolerance (1692), and of renewed hope for securing a viable overland route to China on the other. These expectations were closely linked, among other factors, to Muscovy's accession to the Holy League and to the visit to Rome of Peter the Great's influential courtier, Boris Sheremetev.[34] At the same time, however, the mission

31 Karolina Targosz, *Jan III Sobieski mecenasem nauk i uczonych* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Muzeum Pałacu w Wilanowie, 2012), 269–332; Michael Carhart, *Leibniz Discovers Asia: Social Networking in the Republic of Letters* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019), 39, 43–47.

32 Interestingly, in this letter dated 28th of August 1690 and sent from Beijing, Antonius Thomas addresses, among other matters, the issue of reaching China through the overland route in the following manner: "I therefore hope that the piety of the Most Serene King, which I have personally perceived so deeply, will be such that he will not only take care to send many missionaries from our Society here by his ships, but will also approve that some come from Germany and Poland via the overland route through Muscovy, already made safe by merchants, and also from Spain via the Philippines. For this Chinese Empire is vast indeed, as are Tartary and Korea, where the Gospel of Christ may be preached without fear; and, however, many may come from the Society, they will still not be sufficient for so great a harvest." This is my translation from Latin. National Historical Archive of Belarus in Minsk (NGAB), fond 695 – *Sobieski Archives in Oława*, op. 162.

33 Helena Jaskov, "The Negotiated Geography of the Treaty of Nerchinsk (1689) and the Role of the Jesuits," *Late Imperial China* 40/2 (2019): 45–88.

34 Gościwit Malinowski, "Fryderyk Kazimierz Wolff SJ (1643–1708) i Tomasz Dunin Szpot SJ (1644–1713) – polscy jezuici jako pośrednicy kulturowi w czasach poselstwa

was confronted with the increasingly contentious issue of the Chinese Rites controversy.[35]

Against this backdrop, Szpot Dunin appears to have sought to construct a coherent and focused narrative that responded to the immediate needs of the Jesuit Order. This likely required distilling his account of elements that might have complicated or undermined these objectives, such as a distinctly Polish–Lithuanian negative perspective on Muscovy, or that might have diverted attention from the central concerns of the work – including the future of the China mission – by introducing peripheral issues such as missionary activity in the Black Sea or Caspian regions.

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Bento de Goës SJ (1562–1607) and his journey from India to China in search of Cathay (1602–1607) according to *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* by Tomasz Ignacy Dunin Szpot SJ[1]

Bento de Goës SJ (1562–1607) i jego podróż z Indii do Chin w poszukiwaniu kraju Kataj (1602–1607) na podstawie *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* Tomasza Ignacego Dunina Szpota SJ

Abstract

The article describes the expedition of the Portuguese Jesuit Bento de Goës SJ undertaken between 1602 and 1607 from India to China in search of the land of Cathay and the purported Christian communities believed to exist there. The principal objective of the expedition was to

1 This research was funded by the state budget under the programme of the Minister of Education and Science, *National Programme for the Development of the Humanities* (project no. NPRH/U22/SP/0021/2023/12), entitled *Historiae Sinarum Imperii and Collectanea Historiae Sinensis by Tomasz Szpot Dunin SJ – the Polish Contribution to the Study of Chinese Culture and History in the Early Modern Period*. The funding amount was PLN 1,566,263.42, which is also the total value of the project.

verify a hypothesis advanced by Matteo Ricci SJ and other Jesuits active in China, namely that China and Cathay described in medieval sources were in fact one and the same political entity. Through this journey, Bento de Goës became the first European to travel overland from India to China via Central Asia, overcoming exceptionally formidable natural obstacles, including the Pamir and Karakoram mountain ranges. The results of the expedition confirmed the identification of Cathay with China, known in the European tradition also under the names Serica and Sinea, which was a finding with significant implications for European geography and perceptions of Asia. Travelling incognito through Persia and Afghanistan, Goës reached Suzhou on the Great Wall in 1606, where the identification of Cathay with China and of Cambaluc (Khanbaliq) with Peking was conclusively confirmed. He died there in 1607, probably from exhaustion or as a result of poisoning. Despite attempts by local Muslims to seize his body and documents, his companions ensured him a Christian burial, and fragments of his journal were subsequently delivered to Matteo Ricci. This expedition, known primarily from the works of Fernão Guerreiro SJ, and Matteo Ricci, is re-examined in the present article in the light of a description previously unused for this purpose, prepared by the Polish Jesuit Tomasz Ignacy Dunin Szpot SJ, and preserved in his *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* (Jap. Sin. 102). Dunin Szpot's account was most probably based on Ricci's concise report of 1607, sent to Rome in at least two copies, via India and the Manila route. This brief account, now lost, is also attested in the testimony of Fernão Guerreiro, and Dunin Szpot's description may therefore constitute a second confirmed source deriving from that original account.

Keywords: Bento de Goës, Cathay, Tomasz Ignacy Dunin Szpot, missions, Jesuits

Abstrakt

Artykuł przedstawia wyprawę portugalskiego jezuity Benta de Goësa SJ z Indii do Chin odbytą w latach 1602–1607 w poszukiwaniu kraju Kataj oraz mających tam się znajdować rzekomych wspólnot chrześcijańskich. Jej głównym celem była weryfikacja hipotezy Mattea Ricciego SJ, że Chiny i znany ze średniowiecznych przekazów Kataj stanowią to samo państwo. Goës jako pierwszy Europejczyk przebył lądową drogę z Indii do Chin przez Azję Środkową, pokonując m.in. Pamir i Karakorum. Wyniki wyprawy potwierdziły utożsamienie Kataju z Chinami (znanymi w tradycji europejskiej również pod nazwami Serica i Sinea), co miało istotne znaczenie dla europejskiej geografii i obrazu Azji. Podróżując incognito przez Persję i Afganistan, Goës dotarł w 1606 roku do Suzhou przy Wielkim Murze, gdzie potwierdził identyfikację Kataju z Chinami oraz Chanbałyku z Pekinem. Tam też zmarł w 1607 roku, prawdopodobnie

z wycieńczenia lub w wyniku otrucia. Mimo prób przejęcia jego ciała i dokumentów przez miejscowych muzułmanów towarzysze zapewnili mu chrześcijański pochówek, a fragmenty dziennika przekazano Matteowi Ricciemu SJ. Wyprawa ta znana między innymi z dzieł Fernão Guerreiry SJ oraz Mattea Ricciego SJ została omówiona w niniejszym artykule w świetle dotychczas niewykorzystywanego w tym zakresie opisu sporządzonego przez polskiego jezuitę Tomasza Ignacego Dunina Szpota SJ znajdującego się w jego dziele *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* (Jap. Sin. 102). Opis Dunina Szpota opiera się zapewne na zwięzłym sprawozdaniu Ricciego z 1607 roku, przesłanym do Rzymu w co najmniej dwóch kopiach przez Indie i drogą manilską. Ta krótka relacja, dziś zaginiona, znana jest także z przekazu Fernão Guerreiro, a opis Dunina Szpota może być drugim potwierdzonym źródłem korzystającym z tego sprawozdania.

Słowa klucze: Bento de Goës, Kataj, Tomasz Ignacy Dunin Szpot, misje, jezuici

Introduction

Bento de Goës SJ (鄂本篤, 1562–1607), a Jesuit originating from the Portuguese Azores, gained renown for his overland journey from Agra to Chinese Suzhou (in Gansu, not to be confused with Suzhou near Shanghai). In 1602, he set out on an expedition in search of the land of Cathay. He was the first European to traverse the route from India to China across Central Asia. His mission was to resolve the question of Cathay's identity: whether it constituted the same political entity as China or should instead be understood as a distinct territory. Should the two prove to be separate countries, an additional objective was to locate in Cathay the numerous Christian communities that, according to various reports, were believed to exist there. His expedition demonstrated that Cathay – known from the accounts of medieval travellers such as Marco Polo and Ruy González de Clavijo – and China, identified in classical sources as *Serica* and *Sinae*, were in fact one and the same country. In this way, the thesis advanced by Matteo Ricci SJ (1552–1610) and other Jesuits residing in China – that Cathay and China were identical – was confirmed. This discovery significantly reshaped early modern conceptual geography and the contemporary perception of the world.

Apart from a few brief and incidental references in the letters of Jerónimo Xavier SJ (1549–1617), all reliable knowledge of Bento de Goës's journey to Cathay derives from the writings of Matteo Ricci and Fernão Guerreiro SJ (c. 1550–1617). Although Pierre du Jarric SJ (1566–1617) is

frequently cited as an authority on this subject, his account of Goës's expedition is entirely dependent on Guerreiro's narrative, which was published in English by Charles Herbert Payne.[2] Bento de Goës kept a diary in which he recorded the daily events of his journey. However, this document has not survived to the present day either in its entirety or in its original form. After his death, it was largely destroyed by Muslims in Suzhou, with only a few fragments preserved by his travel companion, an Armenian named Isaac. Isaac carried the salvaged notes to Peking, where he handed them over to Matteo Ricci. Based on these fragmentary materials and the Armenian's oral account, Ricci attempted to reconstruct the narrative of the journey as faithfully as possible, thereby becoming the principal source on Bento de Goës's mission. He included this account in his memoirs, which he began writing two years prior to death.[3]

These memoirs were translated from Italian and published in Latin by his fellow missionary, the Belgian Nicolas Trigault SJ (1577–1628), under the title *De Christiana expeditione apud Sinas suscepta ab Societate Jesu ex P. Matthaei Ricij eiusdem Societatis Commentariis*.[4] Specifically, it is Book V, chapters XI, XII, and XIII of that work. For nearly three centuries, scholars relied on this text – whether in its Latin or French version – until, between 1911 and 1913, Pietro Tacchi Venturi SJ (1861–1956) published previously unknown manuscripts of Ricci.[5] In the

2 *Jahangir and the Jesuits: with an account of the travels of Benedict Goës and the mission to Pegu, from the Relations of Father Fernão Guerreiro, S.J*, trans. Charles Herbert Payne (London: Routledge, 1930), 119–182.

3 Cornelius Wessels, *Early Jesuit Travellers in Central Asia, 1603–1721*, with map and illustrations (Hauge: Martinus Nijhoff, 1924), 2.

4 *De Christiana expeditione apud Sinas suscepta ab Socjetate Jesu ex P. Matthaei Ricij eiusdem Societatis Commentariis*. Libri 5 ad S.D.N. Paulum 5. in quibus Sinensis Regni mores, leges atque instituta & nouae illius Ecclesiae difficillima primordia accurate & summa fide describuntur. Auctore P. Nicolao Trigautio Belga ex eadem Societate (Augustae Vind.: apud Christoph. Mangium, 1615), 544–569. An English translation of this work is also available, cf. Nicolas Trigault, *China in the Sixteenth Century: The Journals of Mathew Ricci: 1583–1610*, trans. Louis J. Gallagher (New York: Random House, 1953). Cf. also Matthieu Ricci, Nicolas Trigault, *Histoire de l'expédition chrétienne au royaume de la Chine, 1582–1610*, introduction par Joseph Shih; établissement du texte et annotations par Georges Bessière; tables et index par Joseph Dehergne (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer; Montréal: Bellarmin, 1978).

5 *Opere storiche del P. Matteo Ricci S. I.*, ed. Pietro Tacchi Venturi, vol. 1-2 (Macerata: Comitato per le Onoranze Nazionali, 1911–1913). Tacchi Venturi published both the letters of Matteo Ricci and his *Commentari della Cina*, the Italian manuscript previously known only through the expanded and edited Latin version prepared by Nicolas Trigault (*De Christiana expeditione apud Sinas*). However, Tacchi Venturi's lack of knowledge of Chinese made it necessary to produce a new, more rigorously prepared critical edition, which was undertaken by Pasquale M. d'Elià SJ (1890–1963). This edition, known as *Fonti Ricciane*, appeared in the 1940s: *Fonti ricciane; documenti*

early seventeenth century, the Anglican clergyman Samuel Purchas (c. 1577–1626) also published (in 1625) the monumental work *Purchas His Pilgrimes*, an extensive collection of travel accounts that can be regarded as a continuation of Richard Hakluyt's (c. 1552–1616) *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*. In his work, Purchas devoted a section to the description of Bento de Goës's journey. Purchas, acting as editor and compiler, was, however, frequently criticised for his lack of editorial precision, inconsistency, and even unfaithfulness to the original sources.[6]

The article is based on a critical analysis of the manuscript source *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* by Tomasz Ignacy Dunin Szpot, preserved in the Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (ARSI). This source contains an account of Bento de Goës's mission and has not previously been used in studies of the expedition.[7] The narrative of Dunin Szpot is compared with the accounts of Fernão Guerreiro, Matteo Ricci and with the later historiographical tradition. The research method employed consists of a comparative analysis of texts situated within a broad historical, geographical, missionary, and ideological context of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, allowing both the factual course of the expedition and its significance in the debate over the identity of Cathay and China to be assessed.

Presence in historiography

It appears that, in Polish historiography, no one has yet undertaken the task of presenting the life and achievements of Bento de Goës, while the foreign literature on this subject is fairly extensive. A brief summary of this remarkable traveller and Jesuit's journey can be found in the work

originali concernenti Matteo Ricci e la storia delle prime relazioni tra l'Europa e la Cina (1579–1615), ed. and annotated by Pasquale M. d'Elià under the patronage of the Reale Accademia d'Italia, vol. 1–3, *Edizione nazionale delle opere edite e inedite* (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1942–1949). The sections concerning Bento de Goës are found in vol. 2, 391–445, and vol. 3, 152–154.

6 Between 1905 and 1907, Samuel Purchas's works were reprinted in twenty volumes. Cf. "The report of a Mahometan Merchant which had beene in Cambalu: and the troublesome travell of Benedictus Goës, a Portugall Jesuite, from Lahor to China by land, thorow the Tartars Countreyes, A.D. 1598," in *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas His Pilgrimes in Twenty Volumes*, ed. Samuel Purchas, vol. 12 (Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1906), 222–238.

7 Thomae Dunin-Szpot, *Historiae Sinarum Imperii*; Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, Jap. Sin. 102, ff. 149v-151v.

Décadas da Ásia, published at the end of the eighteenth century by the Portuguese historian Diogo do Couto (1542–1616).[8] The first modern scholar to emphasise the significance of Bento de Goës's activities was the German geographer Carl Ritter (1779–1859).[9] The popularity of the Portuguese Jesuit increased after the publication, in 1866, of excerpts from Trigault's work dedicated to his journey. These excerpts were included in one of the volumes of a collection of medieval European and Arabic travel accounts on China and Central Asia, edited by the Scottish orientalist and geographer Henry Yule (1820–1889) and published by the British scholarly organisation, The Hakluyt Society.[10] Following in his footsteps, the French Jesuit Joseph Brucker published an article that helped revive interest in the topic, particularly in Portugal, where the memory of de Goës had almost entirely faded.[11] During this period, when the German geologist, geographer, cartographer, and China researcher Ferdinand von Richthofen (1833–1905) first coined the term *Seidenstraße* ("Silk Road") in 1877 to describe the famous trade route connecting Europe with Asia, known today as the Silk Road, he also mentioned Bento de Goës in one of his works.[12] Subsequently, the Dutch Jesuit Cornelius Nicolaas Petrus Wessels (1880–1964) published *Early Jesuit Travellers in Central Asia, 1603–1721 in 1924*, which included extensive information on Bento de Goës, supported by a wide range of source documentation.[13] In the following years, studies on de Goës began to appear more widely, including works by Louis Pfister SJ (1833–1891),[14] Henri Bernard-Maitre

8 Diego do Couto, *Decada Décima*, Dos feitos...em quanto governaram na India Fernão Telles, Francisco de Mascarenhas e Duarte de Menezes, Parte ultima, Livro V, Cap. VII (Lisboa: Na Regia Officina Typografica, 1778), 492–498.

9 Carl Ritter, *Die Erdkunde von Asien*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Gedruckt und verlegt bei G. Reimer, 1832), 218 ff., 322 ff.; vol. 2 (1833), 437 ff.; vol. 5 (1837), 391 ff., 422 ff., 503 ff.

10 *Cathay and the Way Thither: Being a Collection of Medieval Notices of China*, ed. and trans. Henry Yule, Vol. 2 (London: the Hakluyt Society, 1866), 529–596. A new edition of Yule's work, amended by Henri Cordier: *Cathay and the Way Thither: Being a Collection of Medieval Notices of China*, ed. and trans. Henry Yule, vol. 4: *Ibn Batuta – Benedict Goës – Index*. New edition, revised throughout in the light of recent discoveries by Henri Cordier (London: the Hakluyt Society, 1916), 169–254.

11 Joseph Brucker, "Benoît Goès, missionnaire voyageur dans l'Asie centrale," *Revue Études* 6, vol. 3 (1879): 589–612, 678–695.

12 Ferdinand von Richthofen, *China. Ergebnisse eigener Reisen und darauf gegründeter Studien*, vol. 1 (Berlin: D. Reimer, 1877), 666–670.

13 Wessels, *Early Jesuit Travellers*, 1–42.

14 Louis Pfister, *Notices biographiques et bibliographiques sur les Jésuites de l'ancienne mission de Chine, 1552–1773*, vol. 1 (Shanghai: Imprimerie de la Mission Catholique, 1932), 95–102.

SJ (1889–1975),[15] Felix Alfred Plattner SJ (1906–1974),[16] Eduardo Brazão (1907–1987),[17] Armando Cãndido,[18] George Bishop,[19] Hui-Hung Chen[20] as well as on works about Ricci, such as a book by Vincent Cronin.[21] A further scholarly contribution is the study by Henri Hosten SJ (1873–1935), which publishes translations of selected excerpts from letters and works related to Goës, including texts by Nicolas Trigault and Francisco de Sousa.[22] Importantly, Bento de Goës is included in the *Diccionario histórico de la Compañía de Jesús*, whereas Tomasz Ignacy Dunin Szpot – whose work is analysed here – is unjustly absent from this key Jesuit reference work.[23] His figure is, however, noted in a brief entry in the *Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jésus*,[24] and in the *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions*.[25]

15 Henri Bernard-Maitre, *Le frère Bento de Goës chez les musulmans de la Haute-Asie* (Tientsin: Procure de la Mission de Sienshien, 1934).

16 Felix Alfred Plattner, *Jesuiten zur See: der Weg nach Asien: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Entdeckungen* (Zürich: Atlantis, 1946); an English edition, see *ibidem*, *Jesuits Go East*, trans. Lord Sudley, Oscar Blobel (The Newman Press: Westminster, 1952), 135–150.

17 Eduardo Brazão, *Em demanda do Cataio: a viagem de Bento de Goës à China (1603–1607)* (Lisboa: Agência-Geral do Ultramar, 1954).

18 Armando Cãndido, *Exaltação de Bento de Gois* (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1962).

19 George Bishop, *In Search of Cathay: The Travels of Bento de Goës, S.J., 1562–1607* (Anand, Gujarat, India: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1998).

20 Hui-Hung Chen, "de Goës, Bento, SJ (1562–1607)," in *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the Jesuits*, general editor Thomas Worcester, associate editors Megan C. Armstrong, James Corkery, Alison Fleming, Andrés Ignacio Prieto (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 338–339.

21 Vincent Cronin, *The Wise Man From the West* (New York: Image Books, 1957).

22 Henri Hosten, "Some Notes on Bro. Bento de Goes, S. J. (1583–d. 1607)," *Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 23 (1927): 137–140.

23 John Correia-Afonso, Nancy M. Gettelman, "Goës (Góis), Bento de," in *Diccionario histórico de la Compañía de Jesús: biográfico – temático*, ed.. Charles E. O´Neill, Joaquín M. Domínguez, vol. II: Costa Rossetti – Industrias (Madrid; Roma: Universidad Pontificia Comillas, Institutum Historicum, 2001), 1765–1766.

24 "Goes, Benoit," in *Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jésus*, ed. Carlos Sommervogel, nouvelle édition, part I: *Bibliographie* (par Augustin et Aloys de Backer), part II: *Histoire* (par Auguste Carayon), vol. 3: *Desjacques–Gzowski* (Brussels: Oscar Schepens; Paris: Alphonse Picard, 1892), 1529–1530.

25 John W. Witek, "Goes, Bento de," in *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson, assistant editor Robert T. Coote (New York: Simon & Schuster Macmillan, 1998), 246–247.

Biography of Bento de Goës

Bento de Goës was born at the end of July 1562 in Vila Franca do Campo on the island of São Miguel in the Azores archipelago and was baptised on 9 August 1562.[26] At around twenty years of age, shortly after travelling to India in 1583, he entered colonial service as a soldier. After a turbulent period of life, he underwent a sudden moral and spiritual transformation and, abandoning his former way of life, requested admission to the Society of Jesus. According to both historical sources and hagiographical tradition, Bento de Goës led, for a time, a life not befitting a Jesuit brother, until – as legend has it – in 1583 he experienced a religious vision in a church in the village of Colachel, in the Travancore region (southern India).[27] This event reportedly prompted his decision to join the Society of Jesus, which formally took place in February 1584 at the Jesuit College in Goa, then the principal point of departure for missionary expeditions to various regions of Asia. From there, Jesuits were sent to Agra and Delhi to the court of the Great Mughal, to Abyssinia, the Moluccas, and to China and Japan. After two years of study and religious formation, he temporarily left the college and travelled to Hormuz. In 1588 he returned to Goa, continued his formation, and adopted the Jesuit name Bento de Goës.[28] Dunin Szpot refers to Bento de Goës as a *temporal coadjutor*, that is, a lay brother.[29] What distinguishes brothers in the Society of Jesus is that they commit themselves to service without pursuing priestly ordination. Similar to spiritual coadjutors, they also do not take the solemn fourth vow of obedience related to mission.[30] On

26 A hypothesis concerning Bento de Goës's original surname, which was allegedly *Luís Gonçalves*, emerged through the work of José de Torres. This claim was based on, among others, a baptismal record from 1562 in Vila Franca do Campo. However, the absence of confirmation of this identification in Jesuit sources, together with the silence of contemporary authors, weakens the credibility of this hypothesis, and an examination of parish registers has failed to yield conclusive evidence. See José de Torres, *Bento de Góes, pequenos quadros românticos* (Ponta Delgada: Instituto Cultural de Ponta, 1851).

27 Hosten, "Some Notes on Bro. Bento de Goes," 138–140.

28 Luther Carrington Goodrich, "Bento de Goës," in *Dictionary of Ming biography, 1368–1644*, eds. Luther Carrington Goodrich, Zhaoying Fang, vol. 1 (New York–London: Columbia University Press, 1976), 472–473.

29 Jap. Sin. 102, ff. 150r.

30 Temporal coadjutors, more commonly known as brothers, are Jesuits who participate in the mission of the Society of Jesus. Cf. Jonathan Stott, "Brothers," in *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the Jesuits*, gen. ed. Thomas Worcester, assoc. eds. Megan C. Armstrong, James Corkery, SJ, Alison Fleming, and Andrés Ignacio Prieto, and asst. ed. Henry Shea (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 120.

several occasions Goës was encouraged to undertake theological studies with a view to priesthood, but out of humility he consistently refused.[31] In 1594, he was assigned to the third Jesuit diplomatic-missionary mission to the Mughal Empire, led by Jerónimo Xavier, the nephew of St. Francis Xavier.[32] The purpose of the expedition was to reach the court of Emperor Akbar the Great in Lahore, where Bento de Goës arrived on 5 May 1595 and gained the favour and trust of the ruler[33]. By 1598 he was already residing at the Mughal court in Lahore, and in 1601 Akbar entrusted him with a diplomatic mission to Goa. Although Goës was not a man of formal education, his familiarity with the Mughal court and Kashmir, his proficiency in Persian, and his exceptional prudence and practical abilities led to his being entrusted with the mission to search for Cathay.[34] By early 1602 he had already returned to Agra, where he prepared for the expedition on which he set out on 29 October 1602.[35]

Cathay, Cina, Sinica, Serica and European travels to East Asia before the sixteenth century

To properly understand Bento de Goës's activity in Asia, it is necessary to situate it within the broader context of Portuguese expansion and early modern geographical knowledge. From the late fifteenth century, Portuguese maritime exploration, culminating in Vasco da Gama's voyage to India in 1498, opened direct sea routes between Europe and Asia and gradually extended toward China. Key strategic bases, including Goa and Malacca, facilitated further expansion, and by the mid-sixteenth century the Portuguese had established a permanent presence in Macau (1557),

31 Wessels, *Early Jesuit Travellers*, 7.

32 Akbar invited the Jesuits to his court on three occasions: the first mission lasted from 1580 to 1583, the second took place in 1591, and the third began in 1594, initiating a longer Jesuit presence at the Mughal court. The purpose of these invitations was to gain knowledge of Christian doctrine through religious disputations and the reading of books, although Akbar's motivations also had a clearly political dimension. See Agnieszka Kuczkiewicz-Fraś, "Akbar the Great (1542–1605) and Christianity: Between Religion and Politics," *Orientalia Christiana Cracoviensia* 3 (2011): 75–89.

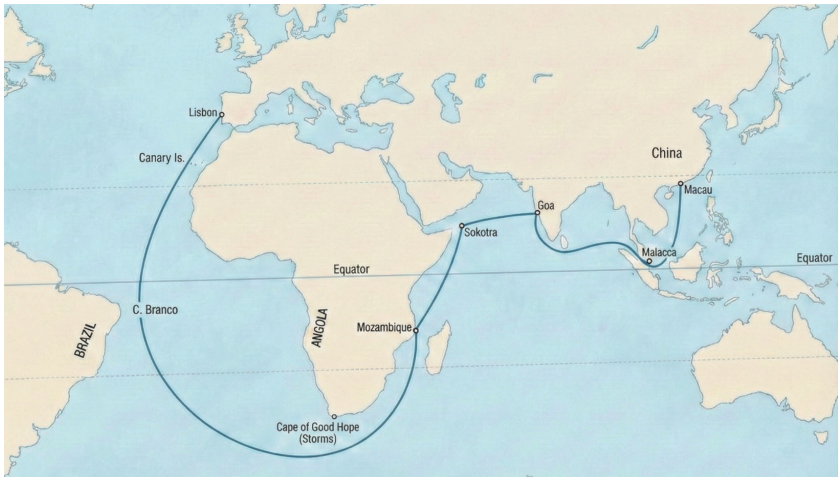
33 Wessels, *Early Jesuit Travellers*, 10–11.

34 Correia-Afonso, Gettelman, "Goës (Góis), Bento de," 1765.

35 Ricci, as well as many scholars who rely on his account, gives the incorrect date of 6 January 1603. See: *Fonti Ricciane, vol. 2, 396*.

thereby creating a new framework for contacts between Europe and the Ming Empire.[36]

The discovery of the sea route to India by Vasco da Gama revolutionised maritime transport, yet the journey from Lisbon to Goa – and onward to Macau and Japan – remained long, dangerous, and highly dependent on seasonal winds. Initially, Portuguese ships sailed along the African coast, keeping close to land, but over time, with improved knowledge of Atlantic currents and wind patterns, they began to venture westward, leading to the accidental discovery of Brazil by Pedro Álvares Cabral. The voyage to Goa usually lasted five to seven months, and since ships departing Portugal in spring typically reached India in autumn, it was not possible to safely continue on to Macau. Travellers therefore had to wait until the following spring for favourable winds. As a result, the journey from Lisbon to Macau took approximately two years, and to Japan as long as three.[37]



Map no. 1. The map illustrates the principal route of the Portuguese maritime network linking Lisbon with India and China in the early modern period. Its design is inspired by maps created by Jerzy Paszenda SJ for the Polish edition of Felix Alfred Plattner's *Jesuiten zur See*. Author: Piotr Bukański (Ignatianum University in Cracow, 2026).

36 The literature on this subject is extensive and multifaceted; therefore, there is no need to review it in detail here. I confine myself to indicating selected works of a reference nature, see Charles Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire: 1415–1825* (New York: Knopf, 1969); Malyn Newitt, *A History of Portuguese Overseas Expansion, 1400–1668* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Portuguese Empire in Asia, 1500–1700: A Political and Economic History* (New York: Longman, 1993).

37 Plattner, *Jesuits Go East*, 49, 56, 60–61.

In light of these logistical difficulties, contemporaries considered whether it might be possible at least to shorten the journey by travelling overland from India to China. Yet this proved difficult because geographical knowledge remained limited. Early modern understanding of Asia still relied largely on Claudius Ptolemy's *Geographia*, which described China as a vast region known under two names: Serica and Sinae. The first, Serica (Greek *Σηρική*, "the land of silk"), inhabited by the Seres (Greek *Σῆρες*, "the people of silk"), was reached by land via the Silk Road. Sinae (or Qin/Sin), derived from the name of the first imperial dynasty in Chinese history – the powerful but short-lived Qin dynasty (221–206) – was accessed by sea and located at the eastern extremity of the inhabited world, south of Serica.[38] In the thirteenth century a third designation, Cathay, appeared in European sources, though its relationship to Serica and Sinae remained unclear. This uncertainty was further reinforced by reports of Nestorian Christian communities in Central Asia and China and by the medieval legend of Prester John, believed to rule a Christian realm somewhere beyond the Islamic world in Asia.

Latin Europe developed a sustained interest in Central and East Asia in the thirteenth century, following the expansion of the Mongol Empire across Eurasia.[39] This expansion brought both military confrontation with Europe and new opportunities for contact, leading to diplomatic missions such as that of John of Pian di Carpine (1245–1247) and later journeys by William of Rubruck (1253–1254). At the same time, merchants from Italian city-states travelled to China via Central Asia under the conditions of the Pax Mongolica.[40] After Kublai Khan established the Yuan dynasty (1271) and moved the imperial capital to Khanbaliq, Europe gained more detailed knowledge of Asia through travellers such as Marco Polo. His account, along with later commercial manuals such as Pegolotti's *Pratica della Mercatura*, provided important information about routes to Cathay and its capital.[41]

38 Samuel N. C. Lieu, "From Qin (Ch'in) to Cathay: Names for China and the Chinese on the Silk Road," *The Medieval History Journal* 27/1 (2024): 20–21.

39 The literature on this topic is substantial, and there is no need to cite it here. Reference is instead made to monographic studies addressing this broad issue; see, for example, the works of Igor de Rachewiltz, *Papal Envoys to the Great Khans* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971); Peter Jackson, *The Mongols and the West* (London–New York: Routledge, 2018).

40 Rachewiltz, 84–124.

41 Francesco Balducci Pegolotti, *La Pratica della Mercatura*, ed. Allan Evans (Cambridge: Medieval Academy of America, 1936), 21–23, 41.

Missionaries were sent to China not only to convert non-Christians but also in response to reports – especially those by Marco Polo – of Christian communities in Cathay and the legend of Prester John. Identifying these locations became an important element of missionary strategy, aimed at locating the supposed "lost Christians" of Inner Asia.[42] Accounts by travellers such as John of Pian di Carpine, William of Rubruck, and Odoric of Pordenone confirmed the presence of largely Nestorian communities, with whom Franciscans maintained contact. This led to the establishment of a Catholic presence in China, including the appointment of John of Montecorvino as Archbishop of Khanbaliq in 1307, which continued under Mongol patronage until the fall of the Yuan dynasty in 1368.[43]

The name Cathay was unknown in Europe prior to the Mongol invasions of the thirteenth century, after which it came to denote the Mongol-controlled regions of northern China. Derived from the Khitan people, the term persisted in European geographical terminology long after their political decline. It remained widely used in late medieval and early modern Europe, appearing on maps such as the Catalan Atlas and Fra Mauro's world map, and shaping the expectations of explorers like Christopher Columbus and John Cabot.[44] Knowledge of Cathay in late medieval Europe became increasingly fragmentary, based on sporadic reports such as those of Ruy González de Clavijo and Johann Schiltberger. Although some additional descriptions were provided by authors like Niccolò Conti and Josaphat Barbaro, these relied largely on second-hand information, allowing imagination to shape the image of this distant land. Clavijo's account is particularly noteworthy: during his mission to Timur's court (1403–1406), he encountered envoys of the Chinese emperor and referred to Cathay and its capital in terms reflecting contemporary geographical uncertainty. He further claimed that the ruler of Cathay had embraced Christianity, a statement indicative of contemporary European fantasies about a Christian East.[45] His words align with

42 Davor Antonucci, "Marco Polo nella letteratura missionaria dei secoli XVI-XIX," in *Marco Polo. Storia e mito di un viaggio e di un libro*, a cura di Samuela Simion et Eugenio Burgio (Roma: Carocci editore S.p.A., 2024), 367–368.

43 Caesaris Baronii, *Annales ecclesiastici*, denuo excusi et ad nostra usque tempora perducti ab Augustino Theiner, vol. XXIII (1286–1312) (Parisiis: apud Victorem Palmé, 1870), 403.

44 Karl A. Wittfogel, Feng Chia-Sheng, *History of Chinese Society: Liao (907–1125)*, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, 36 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1949), 2; Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo*, vol. 1, 216.

45 Ruy González de Clavijo, *Embajada a Tamorlán*, edición, introducción y notas de Francisco López Estrada (Madrid: Castalia, 1999), 261, 315.

the widespread belief in the existence of a powerful Christian ruler in the East – the legendary Prester John – who was thought to govern a vast empire, initially located in India and later in Mongolia, Ethiopia, or even in the Caucasus, as suggested in the testimony of the Dominican archbishop John III of Sulṭāniyya.[46]

A new phase in relations with China began with the Portuguese navigators, whose search for a maritime route to India opened a new chapter in Eurasian contacts. After 1368, however, Christian presence in China declined under the Ming dynasty, and direct relations with Europe were interrupted for over a century. They were restored only in the early sixteenth century, although papal activity during this period was largely limited to symbolic measures, such as the appointment of John III of Sulṭāniyya as apostolic administrator of Khanbaliq in 1410.[47] Between 1514 and 1517, the Portuguese reached China by sea, and in 1557 established a permanent trading settlement in Macau. Their presence was initially met with suspicion and hostility, which gradually diminished with the arrival of the Jesuits. Through a strategy of cultural accommodation, the Jesuits adapted Christian teaching to Chinese intellectual traditions, gaining both converts and broader acceptance. At first, Europeans in China did not associate familiar place names such as Peking or Canton with those found in medieval sources. Only deeper inland exploration led to the identification of China with Cathay. In 1596, Matteo Ricci formulated the thesis that the two were identical, a view he confirmed after settling in Peking in 1598 and subsequently communicated to Europe and India.[48] At the same time, reports reaching the Jesuits in India – particularly from Jerónimo Xavier in Lahore – described Cathay as a powerful empire with a large urban network and a significant Christian population, reinforcing the urgency of resolving the Cathay–China question.[49]

46 Łukasz Burkiewicz, "The visit of the Dominican John III of Sulṭāniyya, bischofe von Persya, an envoy of Tīmūr and Mīrān Shāh to the Teutonic court in 1407," *Rocznik Filozoficzny Ignatianum* 31/4 (2025), 107–108.

47 Raymond Loenertz, "Eveques dominicains des deux Armenies," *Archivium Fratrum Praedicatorum* 10 (1940): 267–268.

48 Wessels, *Early Jesuit Travellers*, 6.

49 Jarric, *L'histoire*, vol. 2, 576–578.

The expedition of Bento de Goës to China in the account of Tomasz Ignacy Dunin Szpot

In recent years, several studies have been devoted to the life and scholarly output of the Polish Jesuit Tomasz Ignacy Dunin Szpot SJ, examining in detail both his biography and the structure and significance of his works preserved in the Roman Archive of the Society of Jesus.[50] Tomasz Ignacy Dunin Szpot was born in 1644 or 1645 in Podlasie, in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and entered the Society of Jesus in Vilnius in 1664. After completing his philosophical and theological studies, as well as engaging in pedagogical work at several Jesuit colleges, including those in Vilnius, Warsaw, and Pińsk, he was ordained a priest and served as both a teacher and prefect of a college. In 1688 he was summoned to Rome, where from 1689 until the end of his life, for a period of twenty-four years, he served as a penitentiary at St. Peter's Basilica. In addition to his spiritual duties, the authorities of the Society entrusted him with the task of searching for and collecting materials in the Roman archives relating to the history and missions of the Jesuits in China, and subsequently of writing works on this subject. He died in 1713. His manuscripts constitute valuable and still insufficiently exploited sources for research on the history of Jesuit missions in China. Previous scholars studying the travels of Bento de Goës have not made use of the account of his journey preserved in one of the manuscripts of Dunin Szpot, held in the Roman Archive of the Society of Jesus. This work, *Historiae Sinarum Imperii, Pars II (Sina evangelica luce sub imperatoribus sinis illustrata), Liber 2*, contains a description of the evangelisation of China during the Ming dynasty (up to 1644).[51]

The narrative of Tomasz Ignacy Dunin Szpot opens with the information that Matteo Ricci received a letter from Niccolò Pimenta SJ stating that Brother Bento de Goës had been sent in search of Cathay. The decision to undertake this mission arose from the conviction of

50 For a detailed biographical entry on Dunin Szpot, cf. 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; Janusz Smołucha, Gościwit Malinowski, Andrzej Wadas, Łukasz Burkiewicz, "Tomasz Ignacy Dunin Szpot, SJ," in *Etnoznawcy. Portal wiedzy o dorobku polskiej etnografii*, ed. Katarzyna Ceklarz, Anna W. Brzezińska, Joanna Koźmińska, Damian Kasprzyk, et al., etnoznawcy.pl, 14 June 2025; 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.

51 Jap. Sin. 102, ff. 149v-151v.

Jesuits stationed in Agra – based on reports from Muslim informants – that numerous Christians lived in Cathay. Ricci, however, repeatedly explained that Cathay was nothing other than China and that the names Cathay and Cambalu were merely older designations that had remained in use. Despite these explanations, as Dunin Szpot emphasised, zeal in bringing aid to the supposed Christians led many to place greater trust in rumours than in Ricci's arguments.[52]

As Dunin Szpot describes, the expedition was to be undertaken with the consent of the king of Portugal and at his expense in January 1603. There was no doubt regarding his integrity and generosity, and it was expected that he would successfully accomplish the mission entrusted to him and bring it to a favourable conclusion. Disguised as a merchant and travelling in the company of traders, he embarked on the journey with great courage. After six months of travel, however, he was abandoned in Kabul by his companions, who refused to proceed further. Of the entire group, only one companion remained with him: an Armenian named Isaac, who had been assigned to accompany Bento de Goës by Akbar the Great himself. After traversing steep mountain passes, snow-covered valleys, and dense, impenetrable forests, Bento de Goës reached Yarkand, the capital of the Kingdom of Kashgar, where he was compelled to remain for a year. A group of merchants he had joined earlier in Lahore – numbering 450 armed men – refused to continue beyond the borders of Kashgar because Tatar brigands controlled the routes. In Yarkand, Bento adopted the Persian name Abdullah, meaning "servant of God", to which he added a byname signifying "Christian". Dunin Szpot emphasised that during his journey the Portuguese missionary endured extraordinary persecution at the hands of Muslims who, driven by deep hostility toward Christians, repeatedly attempted to take his life. Only divine protection, in which he placed complete trust, delivered him from these dangers. He was frequently invited by local rulers, most notably Muhammad Khan, the king of Kashgar, to engage in religious disputations with Muslim scholars. Although he did not succeed in converting them from the Qur'an, he compelled them to concede that Christian law was good. Attempts to persuade him to convert to Islam through flattery and promises were resolutely rejected, as he declared that he would sooner give his life than renounce Christ.[53]

52 *Ibidem*, ff. 149v-150r.

53 *Ibidem*, f. 150r.



Fig. 1. Bento de Goës during his journey through the remote regions of Central Asia. Author: Andrzej Zaręba (Ignatianum University in Cracow, 2025).

After leaving Yarkand, Bento arrived in the city of Chalis, ruled by the son of the king of Kashgar. There, in the presence of the prince, he again debated scholars of the Qur'an and defended Christian doctrine so effectively that the prince openly acknowledged the force of his arguments. As Dunin Szpot noted, however, hostile scholars soon began plotting against his life, which forced him to remain in the city for three months.[54] Upon his departure from Chalis, the benevolent prince issued letters of safe conduct guaranteeing him secure passage to Camus, the last city of the Kingdom of Kashgar on the route to Cathay. At Bento de Goës's explicit request, the name Abdullah retained the addition *Isai* ("Christian"). An elderly cleric present on this occasion, moved by his courage, placed his cap on the ground and, through tears, exclaimed that Bento de Goës was "a man who keeps the faith", since he had openly confessed it among his enemies. He then rendered him the highest marks of respect. Equipped with letters of safe conduct, Bento de Goës left the caravan and continued his journey with the faithful Armenian Isaac, torn between sorrow

54 *Ibidem*, ff. 150r-150v.

at discovering that the sought-after Cathay was in fact China and joy at the thought of meeting Father Matteo Ricci.[55]

At this time, Matteo Ricci already knew from envoys of Muslim rulers that Bento de Goës had reached the vicinity of the Great Wall of China. These envoys, preparing to return from Peking to their homelands, provided Ricci with a detailed description of the traveller; in particular, the envoy of the king of Kashgar also mentioned the gifts Bento de Goës had presented to the ruler. Deeply moved by this news, Ricci anxiously awaited confirmation that his confrere had entered Chinese territory. Meanwhile, after five months of travel from Chalis, Bento de Goës reached the settlement of Chaicuon at the foot of the Great Wall, where he waited twenty days for permission from the governor of Shaanxi Province to cross the border. Once permission was granted, he reached the city of Suzhou after a single day's journey. There he was assigned a place of residence and forbidden to travel further into the country. This occurred at the end of 1605, less than three years after his departure from Agra. From Suzhou, Bento de Goës wrote a letter to Matteo Ricci and sent it to Peking.[56]

Because the letter was written in European script and addressed to "Fr. Matteo Ricci" – a name unknown in Peking and throughout China, where he was known as "Li Mateu" – the messenger did not know to whom it should be delivered. At the same time, numerous merchants and embassies from Muslim rulers arrived in Peking bearing tribute for the Chinese emperor. When Ricci questioned them about Bento, it emerged that many knew him, yet were unable to provide information, as the name "Bento" meant nothing to them; they knew him exclusively as "Abdullah Isai". Greater success followed with a second letter, sent three months later by a converted Muslim. He kept his promise and, despite the hardships of a winter journey from Shaanxi to Peking, delivered the letter to Ricci in November 1606.[57]

Meanwhile, in Suzhou, Bento de Goës – exhausted by the hardships of travel, material deprivation, and spiritual suffering, and likely further weakened by poison administered by Muslims – was approaching the end of his life. After receiving his letter and obtaining permission from the Tribunal of Rites (*Tribunal Rituum*), on 11 December 1606 Matteo Ricci dispatched João Fernandes. Fernandes, a novice of the Society of Jesus born in China, was supplied with funds and letters of recommendation.

55 *Ibidem*, f. 150v.

56 *Ibidem*.

57 *Ibidem*, ff. 150v-151r.

He was accompanied by a Christian familiar with the region who, upon reaching Xi'an, stole half the money and fled, leaving Fernandes alone. The missionary nevertheless continued his journey and arrived in Suzhou at the end of March 1607, almost entirely without means of support.[58]

On the eve of Fernandes's arrival, Bento de Goës dreamed that someone had been sent from Peking to seek him. The following morning he sent his faithful companion, the Armenian Isaac, to look around the market. When Isaac learned that a traveller from the capital had arrived, Bento awaited the visitor with joy. The meeting with João Fernandes – who spoke his native Portuguese, having been born in Macau, and conveyed greetings from Ricci – filled him with profound emotion. With tears in his eyes, he raised his hands to heaven and said: "Now, Lord, you let your servant depart in peace, according to your word…". Despite his best efforts, João Fernandes was unable to provide the sick man with adequate care: the city lacked Chinese physicians and medicines, and the Muslim doctors who had previously probably poisoned him inspired no trust. Eleven days after the envoy's arrival, Bento de Goës died, retaining a reputation for extraordinary virtue, such that even Muslims referred to him as "a saint according to the Christian law".[59]

After Bento de Goës's death, Muslims divided his possessions and burned his manuscripts, including his travel diary, which contained a detailed account of the expedition, as well as records written in Persian documenting their obligations to him; these were destroyed in order to eliminate evidence. Attempting to bury his body in their own cemetery, they sought to retain it, but João Fernandes and Isaac managed to recover it, place it in a wooden coffin, and bury it elsewhere. Subsequently, the Muslims began to persecute them, attempting to enslave Isaac and threatening João Fernandes over demands for the return of Bento de Goës's belongings. They ultimately resolved to eliminate them and, unable to do so themselves, bribed a corrupt governor, who ordered both men imprisoned.[60]

João Fernandes spent four or five months in prison. Despite the hostility of the corrupt governor and the Muslim community, he maintained dignity and perseverance, which enabled him to secure freedom for himself and Isaac and to recover part of the property that had earlier been concealed. Borrowing money from a friend, they set out on the return journey and reached Peking at the end of October 1607. When Isaac

58 *Ibidem*, f. 151r.

59 *Ibidem*.

60 *Ibidem*.

regained his strength, Matteo Ricci provided him with funds for travel to the Mughal Empire. From Macau he proceeded to Goa and then to Agra, where he rejoined his community as an eyewitness to events that definitively confirmed that the sought-after Cathay and China were one and the same country.[61]

In Dunin Szpot's account, the expedition of Bento de Goës emerges as a heroic testimony of faith and perseverance which – despite persecution, betrayal, and the missionary's ultimate death – led to the unequivocal confirmation that Cathay and China were the same country. Combining the missionary dimension with a dramatic narrative of travel and near-martyrdom, as Dunin Szpot presents it, this account situates Goës's fate within the broader history of the providential development of Jesuit missions in China.

Comparison of the accounts of Fernão Guerreiro and Matteo Ricci with that of Tomasz Ignacy Dunin Szpot SJ

The account of Tomasz Ignacy Dunin Szpot concerning the journey of Bento de Goës should be considered alongside the two previously known sources on this expedition, namely, the accounts of Fernão Guerreiro and Matteo Ricci. Neither Dunin Szpot nor Guerreiro ever travelled to Asia, and both functioned as editors and compilers of materials sent to Europe from Jesuit missions. Guerreiro based his work on two sources:

1. Letters sent by Goës during his journey from Lahore to Yarkand and during his stay in that city.[62]
2. A report by Ricci, prepared at the end of 1607 in two copies: the first was sent to the Provincial of India, with instructions to forward it via Portugal to the Superior General of the Society in Rome; and the second was likewise sent to Rome via the

61 *Ibidem*, f. 151v.

62 Letters of Goës: 1. Letter written from Lahore on 30 December 1602 to the Vice-Provincial of Goa Nuno Rodrigues SJ (1539–1604) concerning his departure for Cathay. 2. Another letter, written in Lahore on 24 February 1603, addressed to Jerónimo Xavier. 3. Letter written before 30 March 1603 (undated), sent from the route between Lahore and Yarkand to Manuel Pinheiro SJ (in response to correspondence received from him). 4. Letter written from Yarkand on 2 February 1604 to Jerónimo Xavier. See *Jahangir and the Jesuits*, trans. Payne; for English translations of the first three letters, see pp. 129–131, 131–133, and 133–134; for a more extensive discussion of the fourth, see 135–149; for bibliographical information on the letters, see: Sommervogel, *Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jésus*, 1529–1530.

Vice-Provincial of Japan and then through New Spain, that is, along the Manila route linking the Philippines with Spanish America (in both cases, the original has not survived).[63]

Ricci refers to the existence of this report in letters sent from Peking to Rome: first in a letter addressed to Girolamo Costa SJ, dated 8 March 1608[64]; then in another letter of the same date addressed to the Superior General Claudio Acquaviva[65]; and finally in a letter of 22 August 1608, also addressed to Acquaviva.[66] In this correspondence, Ricci reports that he had prepared, in Portuguese (with the intention of translating it into Italian upon its arrival in Europe), a detailed account of Goës's entire expedition and the circumstances of his death. This account was then sent to Jesuit superiors by two communication routes, indicating that at least two copies of the report existed. It constituted one of the most important sources on Goës's expedition, as it was written immediately after the events described, when memory of them was still fresh.[67]

Matteo Ricci, however, based his account primarily on the surviving fragments of Goës's journal and on the oral testimony of the Armenian Isaac. All indications suggest that Ricci was unfamiliar with the letters of Goës used by Fernão Guerreiro. Moreover, it appears that the surviving fragments of the journal, recovered from Muslims in Suzhou, concerned mainly the final stage of the expedition, which further shaped the character of his narrative. As a result, Ricci was able to describe the last part of the journey in much greater detail, whereas he presented its earlier stages more concisely, relying exclusively on Isaac's unreliable memory, which proved less useful the further back it extended. Guerreiro, for his part, did not yet have access to Ricci's later *Commentarii* (completed in 1610 and published in 1611) and most likely relied on Ricci's earlier, now lost report of around 1607, supplementing it with four of Goës's letters. Consequently, Guerreiro's account of the Lahore – Yarkand section is considerably more detailed, whereas the part concerning the route from Yarkand to Suzhou, based on Ricci's report, is markedly more concise in character.[68]

63 Charles Herbert Payne, "Introduction," in *Jahangir and the Jesuits*, xxv.

64 Matteo Ricci, *Lettere (1580–1609)*, ed. Piero Corradini, a cura di Francesco D'Arelli, prefazione di Filippo Mignini, con un saggio di Sergio Bozzola (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2001), 461–463, lettera 48 (Peking, 6 March 1608).

65 *Ibidem*, 473–480, lettera 49 (Peking, 6 March 1608).

66 *Ibidem*, 482–485, lettera 50 (Peking, 22 August 1608).

67 *Ibidem*, 485.

68 Payne, "Introduction," xxi–xxvi.

Matteo Ricci's account of the causes and circumstances surrounding the dispatch of Bento de Goës's expedition is, in its essential points, very close to the description presented by Dunin Szpot, although significantly more detailed.[69] On the basis of a broader body of sources, it is known that after leaving Agra on 29 October 1602, Goës reached Lahore on 8 December 1602.[70] Ricci, however, gives the date of departure as 6 January 1603, which is a piece of information repeated by Dunin Szpot, who more generally indicates January 1603 as the moment of departure for Cathay. This clearly suggests that neither Dunin Szpot nor Ricci was familiar with the content of the letters sent by Goës during his journey.[71] Given the scope of the present study, further discussion will be limited to an outline of the route taken by Goës. The analysis is divided into two parts: the first concerns the journey from Lahore to Yarkand, while the second covers the stay in Yarkand and the subsequent route from that city to Suzhou, where Goës died.

The analysis may therefore begin with an outline of the first stage of Goës's journey. It led from Lahore towards Kashgar, to which caravans departed only once a year. This departure did not occur earlier than 24 February 1603 and most likely took place toward the end of Lent in that year, that is, around 30 March.[72] The subsequent route, leading through Athec (Attock) and the mountainous regions of Afghanistan to Kabul, was difficult and dangerous. It passed through Passaur (Peshawar) and Jalalabad, and travellers had to contend both with harsh conditions and with the threat posed by bands of robbers.[73] At this stage of the journey, Goës recorded information about the little-known population of the Kafirs inhabiting a region referred to by the Jesuit as Caferstam (Kafiristan). This mountainous area, located northeast of the Kabul valley between the Kunar River and the Hindu Kush range, was inhabited by a community that strongly guarded its independence. Surrounding Muslims referred to them as Kafirs ("infidels"), although they were more commonly known as the Siah-Posh, a name derived from the black colour of their clothing.[74] Goës's account most likely constitutes one of the earliest surviving references to the existence of this community of ancient origin.[75]

69 *Fonti Ricciane*, vol. 3, 391–399.

70 Wessels, *Early Jesuit Travellers*, 14; *Jahangir and the Jesuits*, 129–131.

71 *Fonti Ricciane*, vol. 3, 401; Jap. Sin. 102, ff. 149v.

72 *Fonti Ricciane*, vol. 3, 402, n. 3.

73 Wessels, *Early Jesuit Travellers*, 14.

74 *Fonti Ricciane*, vol. 3, 403.

75 Wessels, *Early Jesuit Travellers*, 15.

After more than six months of travel, the caravan reached Kabul, where two of Goës's companions left the expedition, leaving him accompanied only by Isaac, mentioned earlier in connection with Dunin Szpot's account. The dangers encountered on the way discouraged many travellers from continuing, forcing those who remained to undertake an eight-month halt in order to replenish the significantly depleted ranks of the caravan.[76] After joining a new caravan bound for Central Asia, a more easterly route was chosen, which was more difficult but also more direct, across the Hindu Kush, most likely via the Parwan or Bajgah pass, leading through Charikar to Parwan, the most advanced frontier outpost of the Mughal Empire, where imperial authority was already largely nominal.[77] This crossing, regarded in the sources as particularly demanding, involved a complex system of smaller passes preceding the main section of the route.[78]

The caravan then undertook a twenty-day crossing through the mountains to Aingaram, followed by a further fifteen-day march to the region of Calcia, whose inhabitants – according to Ricci, drawing on Goës's account – were fair-skinned and resembled Flemings.[79] The route continued through Gialalabath (possibly Aliabad on the Kunduz River) and the war-ravaged Talhan (Talikhan), from where, via Badakhshan, the travellers reached Ciarciunar and then followed the upper course of the Amu Darya (Padsh) through a narrow and dangerous valley. Gradually ascending towards the Pamir highlands, the caravan reached Serpanil (Sir-i-Pamil), then crossed the region of Sarikol and the Ciecilalith pass (identified with Chichiklik), continuing along the Tangitar River and along a difficult river route to Jacorich (Yakka-arik), finally arriving in Yarkand in November 1603.[80]

Ricci's account of time and distance is burdened with numerous inaccuracies, resulting from ambiguities in the manuscript and misinterpretations of the data; an example is the unrealistic duration he assigns to the journey from Attock to Peshawar. A comparative analysis with other sources, especially Goës's letters, allows for a partial correction of these errors and confirms that Goës kept more precise records of distances in

76 *Jahangir and the Jesuits*, 151.

77 *Fonti Ricciane*, vol. 3, 405.

78 Wessels, *Early Jesuit Travellers*, 16.

79 *Fonti Ricciane*, vol. 3, 406.

80 *Ibidem*, vol. 3, 407–412; Wessels, *Early Jesuit Travellers*, 16–24; *Jahangir and the Jesuits*, 152.

his journal, noting, among other things, the traversal of 102 *kos* (corresponding to the same number of Italian miles).[81]

A comparison of Dunin Szpot's account with those of Ricci and Guerreiro reveals a clear reduction in topographical detail. Unlike them, he does not provide specific stages of the route or the names of intermediate localities, limiting himself to a general outline of the journey from Kabul to Yarkand. Whereas the accounts of Ricci and Guerreiro, especially those drawing on Goës's letters, enable the reconstruction of the course of the expedition, Dunin Szpot's description is synthetic and narrative in character, lacking geographical precision. He also makes no mention of Goës's eight-month stay in Kabul.

Turning now to the second part of Goës's journey, from Yarkand to Suzhou, it should be noted that his stay in Yarkand lasted approximately one year and unfolded in a tense atmosphere marked by religious disputes accompanying his appearances at the court of Muhammad Khan, ruler of Kashgar.[82] At the same time, the dissolution of the earlier caravan and the specific organisation of trade required the formation of a new expedition under the formal authority of a representative appointed by the ruler of Kashgar. Caravans travelling to China functioned as tributary missions, constituting the only permissible means of crossing the imperial borders.[83] Due to the prolonged negotiations concerning the formation of a new caravan, Goës visited Khotan (Hotan), located in the oasis of the same name southeast of Yarkand. There, Bento de Goës granted a loan of 600 gold coins to the mother of the king of Khotan, who was also the sister of the ruler of Kashgar, after she encountered financial difficulties while returning from a pilgrimage to Mecca. In return, it was agreed that the sum would be repaid in stone from Khotan – known among the Chinese as *yu*, in antiquity as jasper, and in modern mineralogy as nephrite – long highly valued in the East, especially in China, where it was believed to possess special properties.[84] This was of considerable importance to Goës, as the stone constituted a valuable commodity in trade along routes leading to China.[85] Dunin Szpot does not mention Goës's stay in Khotan, but he does record the disputes conducted with Muslims in Yarkand, including those held at the court of Muhammad Khan. Guerreiro, in turn, does not mention the visit to Khotan, limit-

81 *Jahangir and the Jesuits*, 133–134.

82 *Ibidem*, 152.

83 Wessels, *Early Jesuit Travellers*, 21–25.

84 *Fonti Ricciane*, vol. 3, 414–416; Wessels, *Early Jesuit Travellers*, 27.

85 Wessels, *Early Jesuit Travellers*, 26–27.

ing himself to a brief reference to Goës's encounter with the "Lady from Mecca"; nor does he record the disputes with Muslims during Goës's year-long stay in Yarkand.[86]

Eventually, the caravan was formed, and on 14 November 1604 Goës set out with it toward the kingdom of Chalis, located east of Kashgar, having obtained a safe-conduct permitting travel to that country while concealing the fact that his true destination was Cathay. He chose the northern route, leading through the oasis cities of Aksu, Kucha, Turfan, and Hami, from which he then crossed the desert and entered Chinese territory. Ricci provides a full list of the localities through which Goës travelled, although many of them are small settlements that cannot now be identified with certainty, even with the aid of detailed maps.[87]

After twenty-five days, the caravan reached Aksu, where the young ruler, a cousin of the king of Kashgar, received Goës favourably after he had presented gifts. Following a fifteen-day stop caused by waiting for other members of the expedition and a series of official visits, the journey resumed. The caravan then proceeded to Kucha, where it remained for a month due to exhaustion and difficulties related to transport. Twenty-five days after leaving the oasis, and despite tensions with Muslim clerics, Goës reached Chalis in mid-April 1604, a small but well-fortified town situated on the main caravan route.[88] In Chalis, the reception by the Muslim ruler, a relative of the king of Kashgar, was initially unfavourable. However, the presentation of travel documents and gifts enabled Goës to continue his journey. During a nocturnal religious disputation attended by the ruler and Muslim scholars, Goës engaged in a theological debate, which concluded with the ruler acknowledging that Christians, too, were true believers, which was interpreted as a distant echo of earlier Nestorian communities in Central Asia.[89]

86 *Jahangir and the Jesuits*, 152–153.

87 *Fonti Ricciane*, vol. 3, 421.

88 *Fonti Ricciane*, vol. 3, 424–425; Wessels, *Early Jesuit Travellers*, 34.

89 Wessels, *Early Jesuit Travellers*, 35.



Fig. 2. Bento de Goës in Suzhou. Author: Andrzej Zaręba (Ignatianum University in Cracow, 2025).

Due to difficulties in assembling the caravan, Goës remained in Chalis for a further three months, after which he obtained permission to continue his journey independently. During this time, he encountered merchants from Cathay, who informed him of the presence of Jesuits in Peking, thereby strengthening his conviction that Cathay and China were one and the same state. He then travelled via Puccian, Turfan, and Hami, reaching the latter fortress on 17 October 1605, from where, after a short stop, he set out across the Gobi Desert.[90] After arriving at Jiayuguan (Chaicuon) and obtaining permission from the authorities of Gansu province, for which he waited twenty-five days, Goës reached Suzhou at the end of 1605.[91] Travel along this section was particularly dangerous due to Tatar incursions and harsh climatic conditions.[92] In Suzhou, Goës once again received confirmation of the presence of European missionaries in Peking. His first letter to Matteo Ricci did not reach its destination. Only a subsequent letter, sent in 1606, contained an account of the journey, emphasising its dangers and lack of commercial profitability, as well as a request for assistance in reaching the capital.

90 *Jahangir and the Jesuits*, 154.

91 *Ibidem*, 155; Wessels, *Early Jesuit Travellers*, 35–38.

92 *Fonti Ricciane*, vol. 3, 426–427.



Map no. 2. The map illustrates the route of Bento de Goës in comparison with the journeys of Johann Grueber SJ (Peking to Smyrna, 1661–1663) and Niccolò Gianpriamo SJ (Peking to Moscow, 1721). Its design is inspired by maps created by Jerzy Paszenda SJ for the Polish edition of Felix Alfred Plattner's *Jesuiten zur See*. Author: Piotr Bukański (Ignatianum University in Cracow, 2026).

A comparison of this route with the account presented in Dunin Szpot's work reveals clear differences in the level of detail. The Polish Jesuit does not mention the numerous localities recorded by Ricci, limiting himself to a brief reference to the journey through Chalis and to the arrival at Chaicuon, where, according to his account, Goës waited twenty days for permission to enter China,[93] whereas Ricci gives a period of twenty-five days.[94] Dunin Szpot's narrative is clearly synthetic in character and offers limited possibilities for reconstructing the route, identifying locations, or analysing topographical details. The final stage of Goës's expedition, however, is described by Dunin Szpot in greater detail and shows close agreement with Ricci's account, containing the largest number of elements consistent with the Italian Jesuit's narrative. For this reason, I do not repeat here those passages that have already been discussed in the earlier analysis of the Polish Jesuit's account.

93 Jap. Sin. 102, f. 150v.

94 *Fonti Ricciane*, vol. 3, 428.

In this context, the limited topographical precision of Dunin Szpot's account should not be interpreted as a weakness of the source. On the contrary, it reflects a different narrative intention. Unlike Ricci and Guerreiro, whose accounts allow for the reconstruction of the route, Dunin Szpot did not aim to provide a detailed geographical description. His narrative emphasises above all the spiritual dimension of the expedition, presenting it as a testimony to perseverance, missionary zeal, and the hardships associated with evangelisation in Asia. Consequently, Goës's journey appears not so much as a geographical endeavour but rather as an *exemplum* of missionary endurance, shaped in accordance with the broader aims of Jesuit historiography. In this light, the particular character of Dunin Szpot's work as a whole can also be explained: it was not intended as a precise geographical account, but as part of a narrative highlighting the meaning and significance of Jesuit missionary activity.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that Dunin Szpot's account is factually less detailed than those of Ricci and Guerreiro. In its description of the route and distances covered, it remains clearly limited and is decidedly less precise than the narratives of both these authors. It also reproduces the chronological errors present in Ricci's account, suggesting that Dunin Szpot drew on his work, most likely the short report sent from China at the end of 1607. This is further confirmed by the similarly limited range of information concerning the route from Yarkand to Suzhou, also visible in Guerreiro's account. Consequently, the section devoted to Goës's expedition in Dunin Szpot's work constitutes – after Guerreiro's account – a secondary testimony to the original form of Ricci's narrative of this journey. In the present study, a different dating has also been proposed from that adopted by most scholars. Whereas the majority following Ricci, identify 1603 as the beginning of the expedition, I propose instead the year 1602, when Bento de Goës left Agra in October, toward Lahore and further north.

Goës, who died on 11 April 1607 in Suzhou at the age of 45, belonged to the group of Western missionaries who succumbed to illness at a relatively young age after entering China.[95] He was also the first European

95 Many Western missionaries died of illness at a young age after arriving in China. See: Tang Kaijian, *Setting Off from Macau. Essays on Jesuit History during the Ming and Qing Dynasties*, Jesuit Studies vol. 5 (Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2016), 81, n. 166.

to traverse Central Asia overland in a documented journey, overcoming some of the continent's most formidable geographical barriers, including the Pamir and Karakoram ranges. His expedition is considered by many scholars to be one of the most significant exploratory achievements of the early modern period, comparable in difficulty and importance to Marco Polo's thirteenth-century journey. Unlike Marco Polo, however, Goës traveled through territories that were far more politically fragmented and often controlled by Muslim authorities hostile to Christians. He was also the first traveler since the Venetian to attempt to connect the routes linking South Asia with China overland – a feat he accomplished at the beginning of the seventeenth century, nearly three hundred years after Polo's journey. Notably, a comparable expedition would not occur until the nineteenth century, despite later travelers having access to more advanced navigational tools and survival resources. Despite the significance of his journey, Bento de Goës remains a relatively underappreciated figure in historiography, including Portuguese historiography, particularly in the context of narratives about the Age of Discovery. This is evidenced, for example, by the absence of commemorative events in continental Portugal on the four-hundredth anniversary of his death (2007), with the only celebrations taking place in his hometown of Vila Franca do Campo in the Azores.[96]

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96 Since 1907, the main square in Vila Franca do Campo has been named after Bento de Goës, and in 1962 a bronze monument dedicated to this Jesuit explorer was unveiled on the square.

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Appendix – Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, Jap. Sin. 102, ff. 149v-151v.

F. Benedicti Goës S. I. expeditio ad quaerendum Cataium[97]

VIII. (1.) Haec dum agebantur in Provincia Quantum, Riccius accepit literas ex Indiis Orientalibus à P. Nicolao Pimenta nuncias expediti F. Benedicti Goës Lusitani ad quaerendum Cataium, de quo Patres Soc: Iesu, Agrae Metropoli Mogoris in Apostolico munere residentes ab Impostoribus quibusdam Saracenis, non distinguentibus quantum intersit inter Christianos et Idololatras, didicerant, illud totum esse Christianum, aequè plenum Ecclesiis et Sacerdotibus ac Regna Europae. Monuerat bis tervé suis Epistolis Riccius Patres in Indiis [aparat: del. manentes et suprascriptum tes] manentes: Cataium idem esse cum Sina, nec aliud in Orbe inveniri Cataium et Cambalù praeter sex Provincias Septemtrionales Sinae et Pekinum; ita olim ab antiquis vocata: quae vocabula apud Persas, Mogores et alias gentes populosque Occidentales Sinis hucusque

The expedition of Brother Bento de Góis of the Society of Jesus in search of Cathay

VIII. (1.) While these events were unfolding in the province of Guangdong, Ricci received a letter from the East Indies sent by Father Niccolò Pimenta, informing him that Brother Bento de Góis, a Lusitanian, had been sent on a mission to search for Cathay. The Jesuit Fathers engaged in missionary work in Agra, the capital of the Mughal Empire, had learned about him from certain Saracen impostors – who failed to distinguish between Christians and idolaters – that the entire region was Christian, full of churches and priests, just like the kingdoms of Europe. Ricci had warned the Fathers in India two or three times in his letters that Cathay was in fact the same as China, and that apart from the six northern provinces of China and Peking there is no other Cathay or Cambalu. These are the names once used by the ancients, and these terms

97 Jap. Sin. 102, ff. 149v-151v.

perennabant. Nihilominus nimium credulus zelus iuvandi Christianos in Cataio plus fidei dedit [p. 150r] Mahometanis dicentibus quam Riccio scribenti.

remained in use among Persians, Mughals, and other Western peoples down to the present day. Nonetheless, an overly eager zeal to assist the [150r] Christians in Cathay led many to place more faith in the words of Mohammedans than Ricci's words.

Annus Christi 1606 Vanlye 34

In the year of Our Lord 1606, the 34th year of the Wanli reign

Quare cum Regis Catholici consensu, expeditus fuit sumptibus Regiis à P. Nicolao Pimenta Anno 1603 in Ianuario Benedictus Goës Coadiutor temporalis Soc: Iesu, vir annorum ferè quadraginta, olim in seculo Regis Catholici magnanimus miles: de cuius vitae morumque integritate et magnitudine animi non ambigebatur, quin deducturus esset commissum sibi laborem, felici successu ad finem desideratum. Sumptâ itaque Benedictus specie Mercatoris, in comitatu et Societate plurium Mercatorum, magno animo agressus est illud iter, eodem animo prosecuturus illud usque ad murum magnum Sinarum; nisi post exactos sex menses itineris à suis comitibus, ultra prosequi suum iter nolentibus, in Cabul Civitate [aparat: deletae tres suprascriptae litterae] desertus fuisset.

Accordingly, with the approval of the Catholic king and at royal expense, Father Niccolò Pimenta dispatched Bento de Góis in January 1603. He was a Temporal Coadjutor in the Society of Jesus, around forty years old, and as a laymen he was formerly a valiant soldier in the service of the Catholic king. Regarding his moral integrity and magnanimity there was no doubt that he would carry out his mission successfully and bring it to its desired conclusion. Disguised as a merchant and traveling with a company of fellow traders, Bento set out on his journey with great courage, and he would have continued in this same spirit all the way to the Great Wall of China if, after six months of travel, he had not been abandoned in the city of Kabul by his companions, who refused to continue the journey any farther.

Pericula Benedicti et disputationes cum Mahometanis in Itinere versus Cataium

The perils faced by Bento and his debates with Mohammedans on the journey to Cathay

Ex tot Sociis solus ipsi comes ulterioris viae remansit Isaac Armenus quidam [aparat: p.c. quidam], qui cum Agrae coniugem liberosque haberet, et iussu Achabar Regis Mogorum socius itineris ipsi assignatus esset, fidelissimè illi, omnium periculorum eius et laborum particeps, usque ad extremum servivit. Cum hoc ex montium asperitatibus, vallium nivibus, et silvarum difficultatibus eluctatus, pervenit in Iarcan metropolim Regni Cascar, et ibidem coactus fuit unum annum morari; quòd societas Negotiatorum, cui se coniunxerat proficiscenti ex Civitate Lahor Mogorum, ultra fines regni Cascar, quantumvis numeraret suos quadringentos quinquaginta viros armatos, noluerit iter suum prosequi, ob Tartarorum maiori numero itinera obsidentium latrocinia. Assumpserat ille

Of all his companions, only one remained on the road ahead – a certain Armenian named Isaac. This man, who had a wife and children in Agra and had been assigned to accompany Bento by order of the Mughal emperor Akbar, served him faithfully to the end, sharing all his dangers and hardships. After struggling his way across steep mountains, snow-covered valleys, and dense, impassable forests, Bento reached Yarkand, the capital of the kingdom of Kashgar. There, he was compelled to remain for a year. The merchant group he had joined in Lahore – numbering 450 armed men – refused to proceed beyond the borders of Kashgar due to Tatar bandits, who, being more numerous, controlled the roads. He adopted the Persian name Abdullah, meaning "servant of God", to which he added a Persian

sibi Nomen Persicum Abdulah, significans Mancipium Dei, eique addiderat cognomen, quod Christianum linguâ Persicâ dicebat: quibus cum facta ipsius responderent, mirum est, quantis persecutionibus ob eam causam involutus fuerit à Mahometanis in eo itinere; qui ex odio innato contra Christianos, saepiùs tentaverunt eum vitâ privare nisi Divina Protectio, in qua tota spes eius erat, ipsi in omnibus periculis praesto adfuisset. Non rarò à diversis Regibus et Principibus invitatus fuerat ad disputandum [p. 150v] de fide cum Mahometanis eorum sacrificulis, praesertim verò a Mahamedhan Rege Cascaris: cum quibus tanto spiritu disputando conflixit [aparat: p.c. conflixit]; ut licet eorum obstinatam in suo Alcorano tendo voluntatem non perfregerit, confessionem tamen veritatis expresserit, Legem videlicet Christianam esse bonam: et ne hoc ipso viderentur esse victi, adiungerent: nec suam esse malam; beatamque fore, si Mahometes haberet tales suos praedicatores, et encomiastas, qualis ipse esset Christi. Et fuit unus audacior ex his sacrificulis, qui facto [aparat: p.c. facto] consilio cum suis, ausus fuerat, precibus et promissis ingentibus, cum ratio deësset, illum interpellare ut Nomen Mahometo daret. Verum Benedictus, non ignarus, quid actum fuerit in eo Consilio, Subversorem incipientem loqui, ita confudit, ut statim obmutuerit, debueritque prae confusione recipere ad suos; qui aliud responsum dandum à Benedicto non expectabant, quam protestationem, malle se in minutissimas partes concidi sinere, quam Christum eiusque amorem deserere. Ex Iarcan profectus Benedictus venit in Urbem Chalis, cui praeerat Filius ex alio thoro Regis Cascaris; coram quo iterum ventum est ad conflictum cum Doctoribus Alcorani, quos ita argumentis pressit Benedictus, ut Princeps quidem approbaverit omnia, quaecunque ille disputando pro Lege Christi dixerat contra Mahometanam Sectam, Doctores autem impii insidiari eius vitae coeperint; ut idcirco tres menses in ea Civitate morari debuerit.

epithet meaning "Christian". His conduct reflected the name, and he endured extraordinary persecution throughout the journey at the hands of Mohammedans. Driven by their deep-seated hatred of Christians, they repeatedly attempted to take his life. Only Divine protection, in which he placed all his trust, delivered him from these dangers. He was often invited by various kings and princes to engage in religious debate with Mohammedan clerics, especially by Muhammad Khan, the King of Kashgar. Bento argued with such fervour that, although he did not break their stubborn adherence to the Qur'an, he compelled them to admit that Christian law was good. To avoid appearing defeated, they would add that their own law was not bad either, and would be blessed if Muhammad had preachers and defenders like Bento was for Christ. One particularly bold cleric, after consulting with others, tried to persuade Bento to profess himself for Mohammed, using flattery and grand promises – having run out of arguments. But Bento, aware of the scheme, so utterly confounded the man at the outset of his speech that he fell silent and had to retreat to his colleagues dumbfounded. They awaited no other reply from Bento than his declaration that he would rather be torn to pieces than abandon Christ and His love. Departing from Yarkand, Bento arrived in the city of Chalis, ruled by a son of the king of Kashgar from another woman. There, once again he debated with scholars of the Qur'an in the prince's presence and pressed them so effectively with arguments that the prince openly endorsed everything Bento said in defence of Christian doctrine against the sect of Muhammad. However, the impious scholars began plotting [150v] against his life, and Bento had to remain in the city for three months.

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Discedentem è Civitate Chali comitatus est ille humanus Princeps Literis suis patentibus ob securitatem in eo maximè periculoso itinere, usque ad Camus Civitatem ultimam Regni Cascar, versùs Cataium. In quibus dandis cum Princeps rogasset, An nomini ipsius Abdullah adiungendum esset Isai quod significat Christianum? affirmavit Benedictus, dixitque se cum his nominibus profectum esse Agrâ Mogorum Metropoli, et velle ire in Cataium. Quo audito, quidam senex è sacrificulis adstantibus Principi obstupuit, et deposito suo in terram pileo, lacrymans exclamavit: O vere iste est Miserman, scilicet Observator suae Legis! Audistis confessionem, quâ coram Nostro Principe in medio nostrî, quos scit esse non solum contrariae sed etiam inimicae suae Legi, religionis, declaravit se esse Christianum! Quid huic simile faceremus nos inter Christianos? negaremus forsitan, nos ne quidem cognoscere nostrum Mahometem? Hoc dicto, caput pileo cooperuit, magnisque demonstrationibus venerationis et reverentiae ad ritum nationis honoravit Benedictum. His literis munitus non amplius attendit Göes ad comitatum Mercatorum lentè se moventium. Solus cum suo Isaac Armeno commisit se itineri per viam duobus affectibus agitatus, uno maestitiae, quòd aliud Cataium non invenerit, quàm Sinam, quam in Urbe Chali didicerat vocari Cataium, altero laetitiae, quod tandem aliquando visurus et salutaturus esset P. Mattheum Riccium: verum alia, quam ille desiderabat circa illum fuit Divina dispositio.

In the year of Our Lord 1606, the 34th year of the Wanli reign

When he departed from Chalis, the friendly prince provided him with safe conduct letters for his security on the particularly perilous journey to the city of Camus, the last settlement in the kingdom of Kashgar on the route to Cathay. While issuing the letters, the prince asked whether the name Abdullah should be followed by 'Isai', meaning 'Christian'. Bento confirmed, saying that under these names he had left the Mughal capital of Agra and intended to proceed to Cathay. Upon hearing this, an elderly cleric standing near the prince was struck speechless. Placing his cap on the ground, he exclaimed through tears, "Indeed, this is a *Miserman* – a man who keeps his faith! You have heard his confession, declaring himself a Christian in the presence of our prince, here among us, knowing that we are not merely of a different religion, but enemies of his! Would we do the same among Christians? We might even deny that we know our Muhammad!" With these words, he replaced his cap and, in accordance with the customs of his people, honoured Bento with the highest signs of reverence and respect. Armed with these letters, de Góis no longer concerned himself with the slow-moving caravan of merchants. He set out on his own with his Armenian companion Isaac, torn between two emotions: sorrow at discovering that he would find no other Cathay than China, which he had learned at Chalis was called Cathay, and joy at the prospect of finally seeing and greeting Father Matteo Ricci. Yet Divine providence had something different in store for him than what he had hoped.

Benedictus Goës in Sina Cataium invenit

(2.) Iam Riccius intellexerat ex Oratoribus Mahometanorum Principum, Pekino reditum in suas Patrias parantium, qui minutim coram illo descripserant Benedictum, praesertim ille qui Regis Cascar fuit, qui etiam recensuit, quae ab illo munera Regi Cascar oblata fuerint, eum esse propius in itinere Muro magno Sinarum. Idcirco solicitus erat, ut quam primum posset certior fieri de eius ingressu in Sinam. Interea Benedictus exactis in itinere à Civitate Chali ad Murum

Bento de Góis finds Cathay in China

(2.) Ricci had already learned from envoys of Mohammedan princes that Bento had reached the vicinity of the Great Wall of China during his journey. These envoys were preparing to return from Peking to their homelands and had personally provided Ricci with detailed descriptions of Bento, especially the envoy from the King of Kashgar, who also described the gifts Bento had presented to the king. Ricci was therefore eager and anxious to receive confirmation of Bento's

Sinicum quinque mensibus venit ad Oppidum Chaicuon dictum ad murum magnum situm, in quo exspectavit diebus viginti facultatem intrandi à Prorege Provinciae Xensi. Quâ habita intravit in Sinam, et unius diei itinere pervenit ad Sucheu Urbem, quam ipsi Prorex assignaverat, vetito ulteriore [aparat: a.c. ulteriori] in Sinam progressu, ultimis diebus anni 1605 tertio scilicet anno nondum finito, ex quo commiserat se itineri Agrâ Mogorum. Scripserat ille Sucheo ad P. Riccium, quamprimum poterat, habere commoditatem, misitque literas Pekinum:

entry into China. Meanwhile, after a five-month journey from the city of Chalis to the Great Wall, Bento arrived at a settlement called Chaicuon, located at the Wall, where he waited twenty days for official permission from the governor of Shaanxi province to enter China. Once granted, he crossed into China and, after a one-day journey, reached the city of Suzhou, which the governor designated for him and forbade him from traveling further inland. This occurred in the final days of 1605, with the third year since he had committed himself to the journey from Mughal Agra not quite concluded. From Suzhou, Bento wrote to Father Ricci as soon as he had the opportunity and sent the letter to Peking.

Riccii de illo solicitudo

sed quia ea Epistola Europaeo Charactere exarata [aparat: p.c. exarata] fuit, et nomen, et nomen illi inscriptum P. Matthaei Riccii qui Pekini et per Sinam Li Mateu vocabatur, Pekini ignotum, qui eam Pekinum tulerat, nescivit ad quem spectaret. Sub idem tempus pervenerant Pekinum multi negotiatores cum suorum Principum Mahometanorum, ut illis mos est, Oratoribus, veluti Tributum Imperatori Sinarum ferentibus: ex quibus cum Riccius quaesivisset nuncium aliquod de Benedicto, licet plerique eum cognoscerent, nesciebant tamen dare rationem, quòd Benedicti nomen ipsis ignotum esset, sed Abdullah Isai duntaxat, quo nomine ille utebatur inter Mahometanos. Felicior fuit eius secunda Epistola, quam post tres menses suae habitationis in Sucheu Xensi Provinciae miserat per unum Mahometanum fugitivum melius instructum; qui in ea reddenda Riccio fidem suam quidem exolvit; sed tardiùs, idque in Novembri anni 1606, fuit ipsi reddita, propter moram, quam Mahometanus ille facere debuerat, in itinere brumali tempore ex Provincia Xensi Pekinum maximè impedito. [p. 151r]

Ricci's concern for Bento

However, because the letter was written in European script and addressed to "Fr. Matteo Ricci" – a name unknown in Peking and throughout China, where he was referred to as "Li Mateu" – the one who bore the letter to Peking did not know to whom it should be delivered. At the same time, many merchants arrived in Peking with, as was their custom, the envoys of Mohammedan rulers bearing tribute to the Chinese emperor. When Ricci inquired among them for any news of Bento, although many were familiar with him, they could provide no information because the name 'Bento' meant nothing to them – they only knew him as 'Abdullah Isai', the name he used among Mohammedans. Better fortune came with a second letter that Bento sent three months later, during his stay in Suzhou, via a better-informed Mohammedan convert. This man did indeed keep his word and delivered the letter to Ricci [151r], though it reached him late – in November 1606 – because of delays the messenger was forced to make during a particularly difficult winter journey from Shaanxi to Peking.

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Interim Benedictus in Sucheu consumptus tum laboribus et aerumnis itinerum, tum afflictione animi et necessitate, quibus dicitur accessisse venenum ipsi datum à Mahometanis ad finem vitae properabat.

The year of Christ 1607, the 35th year of the Wanli reign

Meanwhile, Bento, weakened in Suzhou by both the physical hardships and suffering of the journey, and by spiritual affliction and deprivation – apparently worsened by poison administered to him by Mohammedans – was approaching the end of his life.

Ioan: Fernandez missus à Riccio in Sucheu Provinciae Xensi ad illum

Habitâ hac illius epistola Riccius, quamprimum potuit obtinere facultatem à Tribunali Rituum, cum ea expedivit Ioannem Fernandez natione Sinam tunc Tyronem Soc: Iesu die 11 Decembris anni 1606 instructum sufficienti pecuniâ ac literis tum suis, tum aliorum Patrum, et cum illo unum Christianum earum Regionum peritum, sed is nequam homo, ubi pervenit in Urbem Sigan Metropolim Provinciae Xensi ablatâ furto pecuniâ mediâ Ioanni ampliùs non comparuit. Itaque solus Fernandez reliquum itineris in Sucheu [aparat: a.c. sucheu] Urbem conficere debuit, in quam ad finem Martii anni 1607 pervenit sine sufficienti provisione et necessitatibus Benedicti, et suo reditui Pekinum. Nocte quae praecesserat diem adventûs Ioannis Fernandez, Benedictus in somno vidit venisse unum in Urbem missum Pekino, qui illum quaereret; quod cùm crederet esse verum, manè misit suum fidelem Isaacum Armenum, qui eleëmosynam elargiretur pauperibus et in foro Urbis inquireret, utrum aliquis peregrè non venisset in Urbem? Quod cùm quidam Iuvenis Isaaco affirmasset, venisse scilicet unum è Regià, bonus nuncius fuit Benedicto, cui ipse supervenit Ioannes Fernandez. Ex eius aspectu, et affatu linguâ Lusitanâ, quam Fernandez callebat natus Macai, salutationeque, quam dedit à P. Riccio, Benedictus mirâ animi voluptate gestiens, obortis prae gaudio lacrymis, ac in caelum porrectis manibus, exclamavit: Nunc, inquiens, dimittis servum tuum Domine secundum verbum tuum in pace etc. Verùm quanta ipsius fuit laetitia, tantum Fernandez [aparat: a.c. Fernandum] habuit animi maerorem, quod non potuerit ullum invenire remedium iuvandi Infirmi, praeter convenientem eius infirmitati cibum.

João Fernandes sent by Ricci to Suzhou in Shaanxi province

As soon as Ricci received Bento's letter and was able to obtain permission from the Tribunal of Rites, he sent João Fernandes – a Chinese-born novice of the Society of Jesus – on 11 December 1606, equipping him with sufficient funds and letters from himself and other Fathers. He also sent with him a Christian familiar with the region. However, when this vile man reached the city of Xi'an, the capital of Shaanxi province, he stole half of Fernandes's money and disappeared. Thus Fernandes had to complete the rest of the journey to Suzhou on his own. He arrived there at the end of March 1607, lacking sufficient resources and the necessary supplies for Bento's care, as well as for his own return to Peking. The night before João Fernandes arrived, Bento dreamed that someone had entered the city, sent from Peking to find him. Believing the dream to be true, he sent his faithful Armenian companion Isaac the next morning to distribute alms to the poor and to inquire at the city market whether anyone had arrived from afar. When a young man confirmed to Isaac that someone had indeed arrived from the capital, Bento was overjoyed. Shortly afterward, João Fernandes appeared. Upon seeing him and at the sound of his native Lusitanian tongue – which Fernandes knew well, having been born in Macau – and then hearing Ricci's greeting, Bento was filled with spiritual delight. With tears of joy, he raised his hands to heaven and exclaimed: "Now, Lord, you let your servant depart in peace, according to your word…". Yet as great as Bento's joy was, so great was Fernandes's sorrow, for he was unable to find a means of helping the ailing man beyond providing food suited to his condition. In this city – seemingly inhabited mostly

Medici Sinae [aparat: p.c. Sinae] in ea Urbe totâ quasi habitata ab Exteris nulli, medicinae nullae. Mahometanis, inter quos inveniebantur et medici et medicamenta, non erat fidendum: ut qui iam antè prae odio Christianae Religionis dederant ipsi venenum, et tunc desiderabant eius mortem, ut in res, quas secum habebat, involarent, sicut postea fecerunt. Ita magis ac magis deficiendo viribus Benedictus ad diem [aparat: p.c. diem] undecimum ex quo venerat Fernandez, Spiritum suum Deo reddidit, Religiosus consummatae virtutis, ob quam ipsi etiam Mahometani vocabant eum sanctum in Lege Christiana.

by foreigners – there were no Chinese physicians or medicines. The Mohammedans, who did have physicians and remedies, were not to be trusted. Having previously poisoned Bento out of hatred for the Christian faith, they also now wished for his death so they could seize his belongings, which they eventually did. Thus, as his strength continued to fade, Bento surrendered his soul to God on the eleventh day after Fernandes's arrival. He was a religious man of exemplary virtue, for which reason even the Mohammedans referred to him as "a saint according to the Christian law".

Mors Benedicti Goës, et acta Mahometanorum maligna

Post eius mortem Mahometani, quidquid habuit, inter se diripuerunt; scripta eius, et Diarium itineris, in quo singula, quae toto itinere occurrerant, notata fuerant, quod contineret debita eorum apud ipsum contracta, ne superesset memoria, ex qua convincerentur esse debitores, siquidem Persico idiomate conscriptum fuit, combusserunt: ipsumque Corpus voluerunt habere in suis manibus, et sepelire in suo, quod in ea Urbe habent Cemeterio. Vix Fernandez cum suo Isaaco illud potuit ab illis eripere, et inclusum Arcae ligneae in loco separato dare sepulturae. Successerunt deinde ingentes ab illis illatae molestiae tum Isaaco, quem volebant in suam servitutem redigere, tum Ioanni Fernandez, quod requireret ab eis furto sublate post mortem Benedicti: ob quod utrumque morti destinaverant. Cum autem id non possent, effecerunt apud Gubernatorem Urbis, hominem venalem et iniquum, ut eos carceri addiceret,
[p. 151v]

The death of Bento de Góis and the misdeeds of the Mohammedans

After his death, the Mohammedans plundered all his possessions among themselves. They burned his writings and travel journal, which contained a full account of everything that had occurred during his journey. Because the journal recorded their debts to him – written in Persian – they destroyed it to eliminate any proof that could be used to hold them accountable as debtors. They also attempted to retain his body and bury it in their own cemetery in the city. Fernandes and Isaac barely succeeded in seizing the body from them, which they placed in a wooden coffin and buried in a separate location. Afterward, the Mohammedans began to harass them violently – attempting to enslave Isaac and threatening João Fernandes for demanding the return of Bento's belongings. They resolved therefore that both men should die. As they were unable to do this, they succeeded in bribing the city's corrupt and unjust governor, who had them imprisoned.
[151v]

Annus Christi 1607 Vanlye 35

In quo quatuor aut quinque menses detentus Ioannes, tandem et se, et Isaacum fremente iniquo Gubernatore cum suis Mahometanis, et res aliquas secum, quas Isaac ab oculis Mahometanorum absconderat, generosè liberavit, ac demum acceptâ [aparat: p.c. acceptâ] mutuò ab

In the year of Our Lord 1607, the 35th year of the Wanli reign

João was held in prison for four or five months. Ultimately, despite the hostility of the corrupt governor and his Mohammedans, he managed – dignified and resolute – to secure the release of himself, Isaac, and certain belongings that Isaac had hidden from the eyes of the Mohammedans.

amico pecuniâ pro reditu impendenda reversus fuit Pekinum ad finem Octobris Anni 1607. Inde Isaac restauratis viribus instructus rebus necessariis a P. Riccio ad iter faciendum in Mogor discessit Macaum, Macao Goam, et Goâ Agram Metropolim Mogoris redux ad suos, oculatus et suo impendio doctus testis [aparat: sscr. testis], dubio, utrum Cataium esset Sina, finem imposuit.

At last, borrowing funds from a friend to finance the journey home, João returned to Peking at the end of October 1607. After regaining his strength, Isaac, provided by Father Ricci with the necessary supplies for the journey to the Mughal Empire, set out for Macau, from there to Goa, and finally to Agra, the Mughal capital. There, he rejoined his community as an eyewitness, bearing hard-earned knowledge that ended the dispute about whether Cathay was China.

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Bridging Worlds: Visions of China and East Asia in Antonio Possevino's SJ *Bibliotheca Selecta* and Tomasz Szpot Dunin's SJ Writings on China[1]

Mosty między światami: Wizje Chin i Azji Wschodniej w *Bibliotheca Selecta* Antonia Possevina SJ i pismach o Chinach Tomasza Szpota Dunina SJ

Abstract

The text compares Antonio Possevino and Tomasz Szpot Dunin as two Jesuits united by one major idea: the planning and description of Christian missions in Asia, especially China. Possevino developed a global Jesuit vision in *Bibliotheca Selecta*, where defense of Catholic orthodoxy was combined with attention to Japan and other parts of the world. The author

1 This research was funded by the state budget under the programme of the Minister of Education and Science, *National Programme for the Development of the Humanities* (project no. NPRH/U22/SP/0021/2023/12), entitled *Historiae Sinarum Imperii and Collectanea Historiae Sinensis by Tomasz Szpot Dunin SJ – the Polish Contribution to the Study of Chinese Culture and History in the Early Modern Period*. The funding amount was PLN 1,566,263.42, which is also the total value of the project.

argues that this was both an ideological framework and a practical missionary project, shaped by realism and the need for proper preparation. Writing about a century later, Szpot Dunin focused directly on China, creating a historical and cultural account of Jesuit missions and emphasizing Alessandro Valignano as organizer, strategist, and man of prayer. The main conclusion is that Szpot's work represents the fulfillment of the plan first outlined by Possevino: from a broad vision of world evangelization to a detailed interpretation of China. The author suggests that this was a remarkably coherent and long-term Jesuit strategy, whose importance was not diminished by the fact that it was never fully embraced by the Church and Europe of the time.

Keywords: Possevino, Szpot Dunin, Japanese missions, Chinese missions, Jesuit missions, *Bibliotheca Selecta*

Abstrakt

Tekst porównuje Antonia Possevina i Tomasza Szpota Dunina jako dwóch jezuitów, których łączyła jedna wielka idea: planowanie i opisywanie chrystianizacji Azji, zwłaszcza Chin. Possevino tworzył wizję globalnej misji jezuitów w dziele *Bibliotheca Selecta*, gdzie obok obrony katolicyzmu przed protestantyzmem ważne miejsce zajmowały Japonia i inne kraje świata. Autor pokazuje, że u Possevina była to zarówno konstrukcja ideowa, jak i praktyczny projekt misyjny, oparty na realizmie i potrzebie odpowiedniego przygotowania misji. Szpot Dunin, piszący około sto lat później, rozwijał już wprost temat Chin, budując historyczno-kulturowy obraz misji jezuickich i podkreślając rolę Alessandra Valignana jako organizatora, stratega i człowieka modlitwy. Wnioskiem płynącym z tekstu jest to, że dzieło Szpota stanowi realizację wcześniejszego planu nakreślonego przez Possevina: od ogólnej wizji ewangelizacji świata do szczegółowego opisu i interpretacji Chin. Autor sugeruje, że była to wyjątkowo spójna i długofalowa strategia jezuitów, której znaczenia nie osłabia fakt, że nie została w pełni przyjęta przez ówczesny Kościół i Europę.

Słowa klucze: Possevino, Szpot Dunin, misje japońskie, misje chińskie, misje jezuickie, *Bibliotheca Selecta*

Antonio Possevino, a Jesuit and papal legate, arrived in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth with a project that from a contemporary perspective may appear utopian: he sought to reconcile the interests of the Commonwealth and Muscovy in pursuit of a broader vision of the Church and Europe. In the Polish historical perspective, this mediatory program was perceived as a naive faith in promises, whereas the experience of the eastern frontier underscored the necessity of negotiating from

a position of strength. Jan Matejko's painting *Stefan Batory pod Pskowem* (*Stefan Batory at Pskov*) visualizes this ambivalence: the central, black silhouette of the Jesuit cassock is frequently interpreted as a dark stain on the canvas, symbolizing the problematic role of the mediator[2].

This specifically Polish perception of Possevino, which emphasizes his diplomatic activity and its political consequences, remains largely unknown outside national historiography. Only a deeper study of his extensive intellectual and missionary legacy enables a reevaluation of this perspective within the broader context of global evangelization. Nearly a century later, the work of Tomasz Szpot-Dunin, focused almost exclusively on China, fulfills the need for a detailed study of the East outlined by Possevino.

Despite their differences – a diplomat with a global horizon contrasted with an archival scholar – both figures share a hallmark of the Jesuit formation of the era: a clear sense of purpose, subordinating intellectual labor to a long-term missionary project. The article analyzes the visions of China and East Asia in Possevino's *Bibliotheca Selecta* and Szpot-Dunin's writings as two stages of this coherent, enduring strategy of "bridging worlds."

Bibliotheca Selecta – to select and to embrace the whole world

It is difficult to encompass the vast scope of Antonio Possevino's activities. Alongside diplomatic missions, he became renowned for creating a Jesuit compendium entitled *Bibliotheca Selecta*.[3] The work arose in response to threats to Catholic orthodoxy posed by Protestant and Reformation writings, particularly those of Conrad Gesner.[4]

Bibliotheca Selecta had an encyclopedic and bibliographical character, covering theology, history, the natural sciences, philosophy, and other domains of humanistic learning, in line with the pedagogical principles

2 Antoni Maśliński, "Obrazy Matejki w świetle metody ikonograficznej," *Roczniki Humanistyczne* 17 (1969): 30.

3 Antonio Possevino. *Bibliotheca selecta de ratione studiorum ad disciplinas & ad salutem omnium gentium procurandam*, vol. 2 (Romae: Typographia Apostolica Vaticana, 1593).

4 Paul Nelles, "Reading and Memory in the Universal Library: Conrad Gessner and the Renaissance Book," in *Ars Reminiscendi: Mind and Memory in Renaissance Culture*, eds. Donald Beecher and Grant Williams (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 150–151.

of the Jesuit *Ratio Studiorum*. It served as a model for Catholic libraries. Often regarded simply as a handbook or bibliographical guide, the work was, as J. P. Donnelly noted, also constructed around Possevino's vision of global evangelization.[5]

The first volume consisted of six books devoted to approaches toward various Christian confessions and peoples practicing other religions, arranged to illustrate their proximity to Catholicism. The structure divided groups into the faithful of Orthodoxy, Christian sects, and opponents such as Protestants or atheists.

Texts also addressed non-Christian religions, including Judaism, Islam, and Asian traditions, with Japan receiving particular emphasis. Two extensive books were dedicated to Japan, presented as a catechism authored by Alessandro Valignano.[6] Exceptional in size and detail, the catechism followed the structure of a Christian apology. It opened with a refutation of Japanese Buddhist teachings and concluded with an exposition of Christian doctrine, including the Decalogue, sacraments, salvation history, and eschatology.

Possevino's selection of Valignano's catechism was both ideological and missionary. Its inclusion highlighted the importance of Jesuit missions in Asia and the political and cultural challenges faced by missionaries. At the same time, it mirrored debates within the order surrounding *limpieza de sangre* ("purity of blood"), a principle Possevino opposed.[7] He advocated openness to ethnic diversity as a condition for global evangelization.

Thus, the construction of *Bibliotheca Selecta* was not merely informational. It functioned as an ideological project, promoting both the Jesuit mission of world evangelization and internal debate within the order.

Possevino and China – the next stage

As mentioned above, *Bibliotheca Selecta* represented Possevino's ideological plan. Yet it must be remembered that this Jesuit diplomat – though

5 John Patrick Donelly, "Antonio Possevino's Plan for World Evangelization," *The Catholic Historical Review* 74/2 (1988): 179–198.

6 Alessandro Valignano, *Catechismus Christianae Fidei, in Quo Veritas Nostrae Religionis Ostenditur, Sectae Japonenses Confutantur* (Olyssipone: Excudebat Antonius Riberius, 1586).

7 Radu Cucuteanu, "Identitary Avatars: Antonio Possevino, S.J., and the Jews during the Post-Tridentine Period," *Studia Judaica* 22 (2017): 97.

he had far-reaching visions – also sought real ways of bringing them into effect.

Possevino was a realist, especially when it came to organizing missions. He knew what they required to begin at all. His realism is evident in his reflections on the material and institutional prerequisites of overseas missions, where he emphasized the indispensability of logistical, political, and social support:

> Indeed, those who were sent to the Indies under the protection of kings, and especially by the mandate of the Apostolic See – if they lacked sailors, ships, rowers, soldiers, food, clothing, books, ports, and houses – what could they possibly do among those savage peoples without miracles and the gift of tongues? Or how could they sustain themselves without magistrates and security?[8]

Here he shows two approaches: some ignored "human necessities" and perished, while others accepted reality – and from Florida to the Philippines, through China and Japan, these were the ones who succeeded.

Possevino died decades before the birth of Szpot, yet he foreshadowed his work. In *Bibliotheca Selecta* he wrote:

> As for the Chinese, since until now their history has been less known among us, one can now say: the whole matter requires a proper commentary, which – with God's help – will one day come to light.[9]

This was not the vision of a recluse, nor the whim of a single man, but part of a broader plan intrinsic to the nature of the order. Possevino knew that whoever the future author might be, the evangelization of China required such a study.

When describing the kingdom, he speaks of its fifteen provinces, frequent invasions, the variety of settlements from great cities to countless hamlets, its climate, natural resources, plants and fauna. Then comes a statement – perhaps uttered without full awareness, yet bearing historical weight: "And this nation, which in itself is like paradise on earth, requires nothing from the outside for its pleasures."[10]

This comparison was made at a time when the first serious difficulties were arising for the Japanese missions: political tensions, possible changes in government policy, and reactions to the expanding influence

8 Possevino, *Bibliotheca selecta*, 451.

9 *Ibidem*, 453.

10 *Ibidem*, 453.

of Christianity and its foreign connections. In this perspective, Japan appeared to him as a more important and more accessible mission filed than China. It is a testimony shaped by the time in which he wrote and acted.

Dunin Szpot – China in the spotlight

There is no need to discuss the figure of Thomas Dunin Szpot in detail, as comprehensive scholarly studies of his life and intellectual legacy already exist. Particularly noteworthy is the work of Łukasz Burkiewicz and Andrzej Wadas, whose research has firmly established the importance of Dunin Szpot's contributions to early modern sinology and the history of Jesuit missions in East Asia. It is, however, worthwhile to highlight a few comparative aspects in relation to Possevino. The contrast is striking: Szpot's writings focus exclusively on China – constituting a fragment of a global question, yet one considerably broader than the corresponding sections in the *Bibliotheca Selecta*. Written almost exactly a century later, Szpot's work reflects not only chronological distance but also a distinct conceptual orientation. Rather than adopting Possevino's catechetical-pedagogical framework, Szpot develops a historical and cultural narrative grounded in sources documenting the Chinese missions. The missionary instruments that appear in his work are there by virtue of the subject matter, not as part of a systematically elaborated doctrine.

It is significant that Szpot wrote during Japan's period of isolation, which lends particular force to his observations – especially when he recalls Francis Xavier's words that Japan might embrace Christianity if China were to accept it first.[11] Such a remark reveals how missionaries gradually learned to grasp the cultural and mental hierarchies of East Asia, where the acceptance of new religious ideas was always conditioned. In Possevino, this theme is far weaker, showing a difference in their understanding of how religious ideas spread in the region.

Against this backdrop, the figure of Alessandro Valignano stands out strongly, mentioned by Szpot in nearly ten substantial passages. These are not passing references, but connected to crucial moments in the history of the mission. Valignano appears as the Visitor of Japan and China, a leader who gave direction to Jesuit activity. He played a central role in opening China itself to missionary work, and his decision to send the

11 Thomae Dunin-Szpot, *Historiae Sinarum Imperii*; Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, Jap. Sin. 102, f. 79r.

first fathers – such as Ruggieri – laid the foundations for future Jesuit presence in the Middle Kingdom.

The text further highlights him as an organizer whose returns from Japan and carefully planned strategies redirected missionary work onto a lasting course. The author speaks of his "care and prudence" ("cura et prudentia"), through which "the wishes of Saint Francis, the Apostle of India, were fulfilled, as the East beheld them".[12] In this matter, Szpot aligns with the spirit of Possevino, who, in formulating rhetorical recommendations for Jesuit letter writers, emphasized the importance of "prudentia" (wisdom) surpassing the merits of style.[13] Valignano thus appears not through a single heroic gesture, but through long-term and deliberate preparation of a coherent strategy.

At the same time, Szpot emphasizes his spiritual side. Valignano was a man of prayer, seeking God's help in moments of crisis. This completes his portrait as not only an organizer and strategist, but also a profound Christian, for whom mission was an act of obedience. In Szpot's account, Valignano emerges both as a key political thinker and as the embodiment of missionary realism that gave historical shape to Francis Xavier's dream of evangelizing Asia.

Possevino and Szpot – two works one idea

In Possevino's work we see a disruption of proportions in favor of including the powerful catechism for the Japanese authored by Alessandro Valignano.[14] The Visitor is a point of reference for the author of the *Bibliotheca Selecta*, and the proportion clearly speaks of the importance of the Japanese missions in the 1590s.[15]

Szpot writes repeatedly about Valignano's role in relation to the missions – especially about his function as Mission Visitor to Japan, but

12 *Ibidem*, f. 79v.

13 Grant Boswell, "Letter Writing among the Jesuits: Antonio Possevino's Advice in the *Bibliotheca Selecta* (1593)," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 66 (2003): 252.

14 Linda Zampol D'Ortia, "Alessandro Valignano, Catecismo da fé cristá, no qual se contem de modo facil e claro a verdade da nossa sancta fé christã," *Bulletin of Portuguese Japanese Studies* 4 (2018): 19; Urs App, *The Birth of Orientalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 140.

15 The exact strategy behind Possevino's decision to include the catechism in *Bibliotheca Selecta* was presented in Paweł F. Nowakowski, "Wątek japoński w Bibliotheca Selecta Antonia Possevina SJ i jego związek z sytuacją misji jezuickich," in *Antonio Possevino SJ (1533–1611). Życie i dzieło na tle epoki*, red. D. Quirini-Popławska (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Akademii Ignatianum w Krakowie, 2012), 567–584.

also about his contribution to the Japanese embassy to Rome and to the management of the human resources of the order in organizing missions in China and Japan. For understandable reasons, he only briefly mentions the Japanese dimension of Valignano's activity, focusing instead on his relationships with Jesuit missionaries in China.

What Szpot could not see – and what, it seems, he did not notice – was the feedback effect, that is, for example, the influence of Alessandro Valignano's Japanese experiences on the method of evangelization in China. Such a connection between Valignano's Japanese catechism and Matteo Ricci's Tianzhu shiyi (The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven) was demonstrated by Thierry Maynard in 2013.[16] Ricci's treatise was published about ten years after the *Bibliotheca Selecta*.

We know that Szpot was interested in Japan and also wrote its history, as well as a work on Japanese martyrs. However, the historical moment in which he created was already one in which the hopes placed by Possevino and Valignano had to be put aside. The Chinese environment, therefore, became the primary one – with the whole discussion about the mistakes made in Japan and those issues that could not be influenced despite great hopes.

The beginnings of ethnographic descriptions in the *Bibliotheca Selecta* find their development in Szpot's works – from mentions of the Great Wall through clothing used to spiritual culture.

In the field of Sinology, Szpot fulfills what Possevino had outlined a hundred years earlier in his grand evangelizing project. Here, we can see consequences and the pursuit of a defined direction – so Szpot's work should be considered in this broader context, just as Maynard demonstrated the links between Ricci's Chinese catechism and Valignano's Japanese catechism.

In comparing the two works, one can see the implementation of a single plan – an exceptionally enduring evangelizing idea and a well-designed strategy. The fact that church and European secular authorities could not be persuaded to embrace it does not diminish the uniqueness and significance of this plan. It is hard to say whether the Church, the Jesuit order, and the Western world today have even one idea that is equally well thought out and carried out. I suspect they do not.

16 Thierry Meynard, "The Overlooked Connection between Ricci's: *Tianzhu shiyi* and Valignano's *Catechismus Japonensis*," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 40 (2013): 303–322.

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The Centralization of Imperial Power in China During the Late Ming and Early Qing Dynasties, in Light of Tomasz Szpot's *Historia Sinarum Imperii*[1]

Centralizacja władzy cesarskiej w Chinach w okresie późnej dynastii Ming i wczesnej dynastii Qing w świetle *Historia Sinarum Imperii* Tomasza Dunina Szpota

Abstract

This article examines the centralization of imperial power in China during the late Ming and early Qing dynasties through a specific reading of *Historia Sinarum Imperii*, an unpublished Latin manuscript by the Polish Jesuit Tomasz Ignacy Dunin Szpot (1644/1645–1713). Situating Szpot's work within the intellectual traditions of the seventeenth-century Jesuit

1 This research was funded by the state budget under the programme of the Minister of Education and Science, *National Programme for the Development of the Humanities* (project no. NPRH/U22/SP/0021/2023/12), entitled *Historiae Sinarum Imperii and Collectanea Historiae Sinensis by Tomasz Szpot Dunin SJ – the Polish Contribution to the Study of Chinese Culture and History in the Early Modern Period*. The funding amount was PLN 1,566,263.42, which is also the total value of the project.

mission and Sarmatian political thought, the study employs a historical-comparative method that combines textual analysis of Jesuit sources with insights from modern sinological scholarship. Particular attention is given to Szpot's conceptualization of imperial authority through the *anima-corpus* metaphor, his rejection of *tyrannicum*, and his emphasis on legal constraints, bureaucratic mediation, and the *libertas monendi* as internal limits on centralized power. By comparing Szpot's interpretation with modern analyses by Joanna Waley-Cohen, Timothy Brook, and Ch'ien Mu, the article demonstrates that Szpot articulated an early modern understanding of Chinese imperial centralization as a system that combined strong monarchical authority with moral and institutional restraint. At the same time, Szpot's explanation of the Ming collapse reveals his awareness of the structural vulnerabilities inherent in such a centralized system when moral leadership and bureaucratic harmony failed. The study argues that *Historia Sinarum Imperii* should be reconsidered not merely as a compilation of Jesuit knowledge about China, but as a significant contribution to the comparative history of political thought and the early formation of Western Sinology.

Keywords: Tomasz Dunin Szpot, Jesuit sinology, late Ming China, early Qing China, Chinese imperial ideology.

Abstrakt

Artykuł analizuje centralizację władzy cesarskiej w Chinach w okresie późnej dynastii Ming i wczesnej dynastii Qing na podstawie szczegółowej lektury *Historia Sinarum Imperii*, nieopublikowanego łacińskiego rękopisu polskiego jezuity Tomasza Ignacego Dunina Szpota (1644/1645–1713). Umieszczając dzieło Szpota zarówno w kontekście tradycji intelektualnych siedemnastowiecznej misji jezuickiej, jak i myśli politycznej Rzeczypospolitej sarmackiej, studium przyjmuje metodę historyczno-porównawczą, łącząc analizę tekstową źródeł jezuickich z ustaleniami współczesnej sinologii. Szczególną uwagę poświęcono koncepcji władzy cesarskiej w ujęciu Szpota, wyrażonej w metaforze *anima-corpus*, jego odrzuceniu pojęcia *tyrannicum* oraz podkreśleniu znaczenia ograniczeń prawnych, mediacji biurokratycznej i *libertas monendi* jako wewnętrznych ograniczeń władzy scentralizowanej. Porównanie interpretacji Szpota z analizami Joanny Waley-Cohen, Timothy'ego Brooka i Ch'ien Mu pozwala wykazać, że Szpot sformułował wczesnonowożytne rozumienie chińskiej centralizacji imperialnej jako systemu łączącego silną władzę monarszą z ograniczeniami moralnymi i instytucjonalnymi. Jednocześnie jego wyjaśnienie upadku dynastii Ming ujawnia świadomość strukturalnych słabości takiego systemu w sytuacji, gdy zawodzą przywództwo moralne i harmonia biurokratyczna. Studium dowodzi, że *Historia Sinarum Imperii* powinna być ponownie rozważona nie tylko jako kompilacja jezuickiej wiedzy o Chinach, lecz także jako

istotny wkład w porównawczą historię myśli politycznej oraz wczesne kształtowanie się zachodniej sinologii.

Słowa klucze: Tomasz Dunin Szpot, sinologia jezuicka, późne Chiny dynastii Ming, wczesne Chiny dynastii Qing, chińska ideologia imperialna.

Introduction

This study employs a historical-comparative method designed to situate Tomasz Ignacy Dunin Szpot's *Historia Sinarum Imperii* within both the intellectual world of the seventeenth-century Jesuit mission and the current state of sinological scholarship on late Ming and early Qing administrative structures. The analysis proceeds along three complementary axes: the critical examination of Jesuit sources; the contextualized reading of Szpot's text; and the integration of modern historiographical research.

First, the study undertakes a systematic reading of *Historia Sinarum Imperii*, examining not only its narrative content but also its structure, vocabulary, and rhetorical strategies. Particular attention is given to Szpot's choice of political terminology, such as his use of the *anima-corpus* metaphor for imperial governance, and to the ways in which Sarmatian political ideology and Jesuit intellectual traditions shape his interpretation of Chinese political institutions. By analyzing Szpot's descriptive and interpretive layers separately, the article identifies where his account reflects inherited Jesuit perspectives and where it represents an original contribution.

Second, Jesuit sources from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are evaluated through the criterion of cognitive proximity. Accounts based on direct experience of China, such as those of Matteo Ricci, Ferdinand Verbiest, Johann Adam Schall von Bell, and Álvaro Semedo, are given greater evidentiary weight than works written at a geographical or experiential distance, such as those of Athanasius Kircher. This approach allows for a more precise assessment of how Szpot relied on, adapted, or diverged from earlier missionary narratives when presenting the Chinese administrative and bureaucratic system.

Third, Szpot's descriptions are compared with insights drawn from modern scholarship on Chinese imperial governance, including studies by Joanna Waley-Cohen, Timothy Brook and Ch'ien Mu (錢穆). These works provide a contemporary analytical framework for understanding bureaucratic centralization under the late Ming and early Qing dynasties.

The criteria used to evaluate Szpot's interpretation include:

1. its consistency with established sinological historiography, especially regarding centralization, bureaucratic practice, and institutional continuity across the Ming-Qing transition;
2. the degree of dependence on earlier Jesuit accounts and the extent of Szpot's original contributions;
3. the presence of ideological elements, particularly those derived from Sarmatian political thought, such as concepts of *Aurea Libertas*, anti-tyranny discourse, and the moral expectations of rulership;
4. the cognitive value of *Historia Sinarum Imperii* as a document reflecting European perceptions of China in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, regardless of its factual accuracy.

By combining these methodological components, the study interprets Szpot's work not only as a historical source but also as a transcultural intellectual artifact, shaped by the interaction of Jesuit missionary knowledge, European political categories, and early modern encounters with Chinese civilization. This approach makes it possible to appreciate both the scholarly value and the ideological limitations of Szpot's depiction of the Chinese administrative and bureaucratic system and to place his work meaningfully within the global history of early modern political thought.

China in the Late Ming and Early Qing Dynasties

The late Ming (明) and early Qing (清) period (roughly the 17th century) was marked by dynastic transition, intense political turbulence, and eventual administrative consolidation. The Ming dynasty established in 1368 by a native Han (漢) Chinese regime, collapsed in 1644 due largely to lavishness of the emperors, fiscal failure, eunuchs' intervention in the imperial court, corruption of officials, peasant rebels and Manchu invasion, finally giving way to the Qing dynasty founded by the Manchus (Man 滿).[2] The remnants of Ming Imperial family then retreated to Southeastern China with their loyalists, where the short-lived Southern Ming (Nan Ming 南明) persisted until the execution of the Yongli emperor (永曆) in 1662. Despite the violent transition, the new Qing rulers largely preserved and continued the Ming imperial

2 Cf. Denis Twitchett, Frederick W. Mote (eds.), *The Cambridge History of China. Vol. 8: The Ming Dynasty, 1368–1644, Part 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 165–166.

institutions and Confucian bureaucratic framework.[3] Under the Qing, especially during the long reign of the Kangxi Emperor (康熙 1661–1722), China entered a phase of renewed stability and prosperity after years of war and chaos. The imperial state remained highly centralized, with the emperor at its apex, supported by the Grand Secretariat (Nei Ge 內閣) and the Six Ministries (Liu Bu 六部) in the capital, and a hierarchy of provincial and local officials selected through the civil service examinations known as Keju (科舉). This examination system, which ensured that only those with the highest scholarly degrees could enter government, was a defining feature of Chinese administration carried over from the Ming into the Qing. The Qing did introduce some innovations, for instance, integrating the Manchu aristocracy through the banner system (Ba Qi八旗) and practicing a dual appointment of Manchu and Han officials in top posts, yet the distinctive patterns of social and administrative organization that emerged in Ming times persisted in essential form under Qing rule.[4]

Jesuit Missionaries and the Transmission of Knowledge about China

Europe's understanding of China's history and civilization during this era depended heavily on reports and writings by Catholic missionaries, particularly Jesuits, who lived in or gathered information about the "Middle Kingdom" (Zhong Guo中國). From the late 16th century onward, these missionaries served as cultural brokers, publishing influential works that introduced Europeans to China's geography, government, religion and customs.[5] Jesuit pioneers like Michele Ruggieri and Matteo Ricci pro-

3 Cf. Twitchett, Mote, *The Cambridge History of China, Vol. 8*, 9; cf. Willard J. Peterson (ed.), *The Cambridge History of China. Vol. 9, Part Two: The Ch'ing Dynasty to 1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 14, 18.

4 Cf. Peterson, *The Cambridge History of China, Vol. 9, Part Two,* 119–120.

5 The groundbreaking early examples were the *Tractado em que se cõtam muito por estẽso as cousas da China*, by the Portuguese Dominican friar, Gaspar Da Cruz, printed at Evora in 1569, and the *Historia de las cosas más notables, ritos y costumbres del gran reyno de la China*, by Juan González de Mendoza, O.S.A., published in 1585 at Rome. The former work is regarded as the first detailed European book on Ming China, which was not frequently quoted by latter writers owing to the great plague year, while the latter compiled reports from clerics and explorers, especially from Gaspar Da Cruz and the Augustinian friar, Martín de Rada, to present a broad survey of China's politics, economy, and rituals during the Ming dynasty. Mendoza's book became a model for European writing about China in the 16th and 17th centuries, shaping a generally

vided first-hand information that further deepened Europe's appreciation of Chinese civilization. Matteo Ricci's journals (Chinese: Li Madou 利瑪竇), translated into Latin by Nicolas Trigault (Chinese: Jin Nige 金尼閣) as *De Christiana Expeditione apud Sinas*,[6] offered one of the earliest outsider glimpses of Chinese society and governance. Subsequent Jesuit accounts continued to highlight aspects of Chinese statecraft and history: for example, Álvaro de Semedo's (Chinese: Zeng Dezhao 曾德昭) *Imperio de la China*[7] described the administrative divisions and justice system of Ming China, and Martino Martini's (Chinese: Wei Kuangguo 衛匡國) works recounted both ancient Chinese history and the contemporary Manchu conquest.[8] Polish Jesuit Michał Boym (Chinese: Bu Mige 卜彌格) played a crucial role at the Southern Ming court, serving as an imperial envoy to the Holy See, and published a *Flora Sinensis* in 1656 at Vienna, describing China's natural world. Another Portuguese Jesuit Gabriel de Magalhães (Chinese: An Wensi 安文思), whose *Nouvelle relation de la China*, published in 1688 after his death, detailed Chinese government and customs also broadened European knowledge of China.[9] Through their letters and books, missionaries portrayed China as a highly civilized empire with an orderly bureaucracy and rich cultural traditions,[10] tempering fantastical legends with empirical observations.

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favorable and curious image of China in Europe, cf. Charles Ralph Boxer (ed.), *South China in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1953), xi–lxvii.

6 Orig. publ. Augsburg: Christoph Mang, 1615. The brief information on different edtions of the same book see: David E. Mungello, *Curious Land: Jesuit Accommodation and the Origins of Sinology* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden Gmbh, 1985), 48.

7 The first edition of Álvaro de Semedo's work was published in Portuguese in 1641 at Madrid, and the following year it was translated into Spanish under the title *Imperio de la China*, on which the Italian, French and English versions are based. Cf. Mungello, *Curious Land*, 75.

8 Martini's *Sinicae historiae decas prima: res à gentis origine ad Christum natum in extrema Asia, sive Magno Sinarum imperio gestas complexa* was firstly published in 1658 at Munich in Latin, cf. Mungello, *Curious Land*, 124. His another work entitled *De Bello Tartarico Historia* was firstly published in 1654 at Antwerp in Latin, the further information on contents and different versions see: Edwin J. Van Kley, "News from China; Seventeenth-Century European Notices of the Manchu Conquest," *The Journal of Modern History* 45/4 (1973): 563–568, Mungello, *Curious Land*, 110–116.

9 The major work of Gabriel de Magalhães entitled *Nouvelle relation de la China* published at Paris actually derived from his *Doze excellences da China*, a manuscript composed in 1668 in Portuguese. Cf. Mungello, *Curious Land*, 95–96.

10 Numerous early Jesuit accounts of China emphasize the empire's high level of "*urbanitas ritusque politiores* (Li 禮)," its developed "*artes illiberales* (Ji 技)": "*Cum publica omnium fama experientiaque teste, constet, hanc gentem in paucis esse industriam, facile ex superioriore capite colligitur, artes omnes illiberales apud eam reperiri, cum materia nulla desit, merces quoque ipsa ingenia pelliciat*" (Since public reputation and

By the late 17th century, figures like Johann Adam Schall von Bell (Chinese: Tang Ruowang 湯若望) and Ferdinand Verbiest (Chinese: Nan Huairen 南懷仁), Jesuits serving as astronomers (qintianjian 欽天監) at the Qing court, were themselves examples of China's openness to Western technical expertise, and their letters back to Europe emphasized the sophistication of Qing statecraft.

These cumulative contributions were synthesized by writers both within and outside the mission. Daniello Bartoli, a Jesuit historian, published *Dell' Historia Della Compagnia di Giesu La Cina Terza Parte Dell'Asia* (1663) in Italian at Rome, which provides a detailed account of Jesuit missions in China from the death of St. Francis Xavier in 1552 to 1640.[11]

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the testimony of experience show that this people is extraordinarily industrious, it is easy to infer from the preceding discussion that all the mechanical arts are found among them, for no material is lacking and wealth attracts talented minds themselves.). *De Christiana Expeditione apud Sinas*, 18. "*Antiquum sibi Sinarum regnum cognomen indidit ab urbanitate ritibusque politioribus; quin etiam urbanitas numeratur una e quinque virtutibus, quae apud eos velut cardines caeterarum praedicantur*" (The ancient kingdom of the Chinese gave itself its name on account of its urbanity and rather polished rites; indeed, urbanity is counted as one of the five virtues, which among them are proclaimed as the foundations of all the others.). *Ibidem*, 63. Matteo Ricci stressed the exceptional moral culture of the Chinese, especially "*parentum observantia* (Xiao 孝)" as well: "*Omnes Sinarum libri, qui de moribus aguntur, toti sunt in excitandis filiis ad parentum observantiam, maiorumque venerationem. Et sane si externam illam pietatis faciem intueamur, nulla alia toto terrarum orbe cum Sinis comparari potest*" (All the Chinese books that deal with morals conduct are wholly devoted to encouraging children to show obedience to their parents and reverence for their ancestors. And truly, if we consider that outward expression of piety, no other nation in the whole world can be compared with the Chinese.). *Ibidem*, 79. Martino Martini even claimed the primordial antiquity of Chinese sciences: "*Inde constat scientiam primam apud Sinas Mathematicam fuisse, atque a Noe ad posteros quasi per manus propagatam*" (It is therefore clear that the first science among the Chinese was Mathematics, and that it was handed down to their descendants as if transmitted from Noah.). *Sinicae Historiae Decas Prima*, 17.

11 For additional specialized discussions of this book, see: Yinlan Wu, *La Cina di Daniello Bartoli* (Vatican City: Urbaniana University Press, 2014). Tomasz Dunin Szpot likewise consulted this work while composing his *Historia Sinarum Imperii*. One particularly interesting passage concerns Wei Zhongxian (魏忠賢), the powerful Chinese eunuch who, immediately after the death of Emperor Tianqi (天啟), hurried to the residence of Xin Wang (信王) and proclaimed that he had already been chosen as the new sovereign. Daniello Bartoli reported this episode in a brief and straightforward manner: "*e appena hebbero pochi passi il piè fuor del palagio, che si videro sopraggiunti, e trapassati da Gueicun a cavallo, e a tutta briglia corrente, a dar'egli a Sinuam il felice annuntio, d'esser Imperadore, e invitarlo a palagio.*" (And they had scarcely taken a few steps outside the palace when they saw themselves overtaken and passed by Wei Zhongxian on horseback, riding at full speed, to bring to Xin Wang the happy news that he was Emperor, and to invite him to the palace.). Daniello Bartoli, *Dell'historia della Compagnia di Giesù. La Cina, terza parte dell'Asia* (Rome: Nella Stamperia del Varese, 1663), 879. Szpot, however, transformed the same event into a vivid and dramatic scene: "*nihil moratus, admotis equo calcaribus praevolaturum se omnem famam putavit,*

Athanasius Kircher's *China Illustrata* (1667)[12] was an encyclopedic Latin volume collecting diverse Jesuit reports, on everything from Chinese history and language to flora, fauna, and myths, accompanied by abundant illustrations. Kircher, who never visited China himself, maintained a voluminous correspondence with fellow Jesuits in China, collecting all the information he could from their letters and journals. Drawing on these sources, Kircher's work vividly introduced European readers to Chinese inventions, monuments, and even the marvelous Nestorian Stele. In the early 18th century, the massive four-volume *Description de l'Empire de la Chine* (1735)[13] compiled by Jean-Baptiste Du Halde crowned this Jesuit scholarly enterprise. Du Halde was entrusted by his superiors to edit the published and manuscript accounts of Jesuit travellers in China, ultimately incorporating the firsthand narratives of twenty-seven Jesuit missionaries into an authoritative compendium of Chinese history, government, religion, and arts.[14]

Through such works by western Catholic missionaries, especially Jesuits, Europeans gained an unprecedented window into how China was governed and how its people lived. The Jesuits' role as knowledge-brokers was crucial, for they transmitted factual information about China's imperial bureaucracy and Confucian ethos. This context of rich Jesuit Sinology set the stage for Tomasz Dunin Szpot's own contribution at the turn of the 18th century.

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allaturumque faustum Nuncium Sin Vamo Principi… et admissus ad Principem, Quod faustum inquit fortunatumque sit Tibi et Imperio Princeps. factus es Imperator Sinarum. Te iam Palatium, Te Thronus maiorum tuorum exspectat, ingredere bonis avibus Regium augustale, conscende Thronum, quem tibi vota nostra designarunt, et impera." (Without delay, urging his horse forward with his spurs, [Wei Zhongxian] thought he would outstrip all rumor and bring the fortunate message to Xin Wang… And admitted into the presence of the Prince, he said: 'May this be favorable and prosperous for you and for the Empire, Prince. You have become Emperor of the Chinese. The palace now awaits you; the throne of your ancestors awaits you. Enter the royal palace under good auspices, ascend the throne that our vows have designated for you, and rule!). ARSI, Jap. Sin. 102, f. 17r. This comparison reveals not only that Szpot was thoroughly trained in classical literature, with clear echoes of Ciceronian diction, but also that he possessed a remarkable talent for narrating historical events with dramatic intensity.

12 The complete title of the book is: *China Monumentis qua Sacris qua Profanis, nec non Variis Naturae & Artis Spectaculis, Aliarumque Rerum Memorabilium Argumentis Illustrata*. Further information on this work see: Mungello, *Curious Land*, 134–143.

13 The complete title of this monumental work is: *Description Geographique, Historique, Chronologique, Politique, et Physique de l'Empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie Chinoise*.

14 Isabelle Landry-Deron, *La preuve par la Chine: La "Description" de J. B. du Halde, jésuite, 1735*. (*Qing Zhongguo zuozheng: Duhede de "Zhonghua diguo quanzhi"* 请中国作证：杜赫德的《中华帝国全志》), trans. Xu Minglong (Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2015).

Ignacy Dunin Szpot and *Historia Sinarum Imperii*

Tomasz Ignacy Dunin Szpot, S.J., was born in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the same year when the Shunzhi emperor (順治 1638-1661) was enthroned as empeor of China in Peking (1644). He possessed a deep interest in China and the civilizations of the Far East. Having consulted a large body of historical materials that had circulated from China to Europe, He compiled the *Collectanea Historiae Sinensis*[15] and the *Collectanea Pro Historia Sinica* in Latin, works that on the one hand explained to the Holy See the rationale behind the Jesuit strategy in China, and on the other provided the Western religious world and intellectual community with abundant information about the ancient civilizations of the East. In his later years, he completed his life's great achievement, the *Historia Sinarum Imperii*. This historical treatise describes Chinese history, as well as the diplomatic activities of the Jesuits in Sino-European relations. His *Opera Omnia* resulted in eight voluminous manuscript volumes, a total of 2234 pages of Latin text, among them the *Historia Sinarum Imperii* comprises more than 500 pages. However, due to the Holy See's changing attitude toward the *Societas Iesu*, his *Opera Omnia* were never printed, and the manuscript remained preserved in the *Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu*, receiving scholarly attention only in recent years. Szpot called himself in his work entitled *Collectanea Historia Sinensis* as "*unus Sarmata scriptor*",[16] which highly emphasizes his ethnocultural identity. As a Sarmatian writer, he gladly accepted the concepts of Sarmatianism, higly estimating the usage of Latin language, supporting the values of equality and *Aurea Libertas*, defending virtues and avoidng vices,[17] which were deeply rooted in his mind and greatly influenced his way of interpretation towards Chinese History, for in *Historia Sinarum Imperii*[18] the author gave us many examples of Chinese

15 *Collectanea Historiae Sinensis* is a title assigned to the work by a later editor, as we know from the manuscript cover and the first page prepared by that editor. Szpot himself, however, preferred to call the work *Collectanea pro Historia Sinarum*.

16 ARSI, Jap. Sin. 104, f. 1r

17 Sarmatianism was a dominant ideology in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth and exerted a profound influence on many Polish writers of the seventeenth century. Cf. Daniel Stone, *The Polish-Lithuanian State, 1386–1795* (Seattle–London: University of Washington Press, 2001), 211–232.

18 Although some modern scholars cite the title of the work in the plural: *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* (for example, Professor Robert Danieluk S.J.), I contend that it should be cited in the singular: *Historia Sinarum Imperii*. If we examine only the form of the title as it appears in the manuscript: *Historiae Sinarum Imperii Pars I* (ARSI, Jap. Sin. 104, f. 1v), "*Historiae Sinarum Imperii* " may indeed be understood either as a nominative

rebellions against Manchus due the motive for "*libertas*," although in fact this kind of interpretation is problematic from a Chinese perspective, because the Chinese people living in the 17 century higly maintained different concepts of liberty from the Europeans, for them who were deeply immersed in the tradition of Confucianism rebellions aimed at maintenance of "Xiao (孝)" and "Li (禮),"[19] at the defence of traditional Chinese dress which is the sign of highest humanity and civilization. Nevertheless, his account offers a unique Sarmatian interpretation of Chinese civilization, one that holds significant value for the history of Western Sinology and enriches its intellectual scope. As a Jesuit, Szpot shared a historical outlook similar to that of other Jesuits of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries who had undertaken missionary work in China. He approached Chinese civilization and its bureaucratic system with both curiosity and respect, yet also with a critical eye. Consequently, to understand his interpretation of Chinese civilization, especially his view of the centralization of imperial power in China during late Ming and early Qing dynasties, which constitutes the central focus of this article, we must first consider his dual identity: that of a Sarmatian and a Jesuit.

The *Historia Sinarum Imperii* is divided into three parts and provides a broad panorama of Chinese history, scilicet from the very beginnings of Chinese civilization up to the year 1697, as well as a narrative of Jesuit missionary activity. The first part, *Sina a Tartaris obscurata*, focuses primarily on general Chinese history and offers detailed accounts of the major historical events of the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, together

in apposition to "*Pars I*" or as a genitive modifying it, depending on the author's stylistic preference. However, when we consider Szpot's other work entitled: *Collectaneorum Pro Historia Sinarum Tomus I* (ARSI, Jap. Sin. 104, f. 1v), it becomes clear that "*Collectaneorum*" must be taken as a genitive. This indicates that Szpot himself favored using such titles in the genitive case rather than the nominative. Consequently, the proper restituted title should be *Historia Sinarum Imperii* rather than *Historiae Sinarum Imperii*.

19 Xiao (孝) and Li (禮) are two important concepts in Confucian philosophy. Both notions embody distinctive modes of thought derived from indigenous Chinese Confucian culture, and it is difficult to find precise equivalents in European languages. Even among the highly learned Jesuits who came to China, their translations of these terms diverged considerably. For example, xiao was variously rendered as "*parentum observantia*," "*obtemperare parentibus*," "*obedire et servire parentibus*," "*pietas et obedientia*," and "*officium pii atque obedientis filii*." Similarly, li was translated as "*urbanitas ritusque politiores*," "*officium*," "*officia civilia*," "*regula rectae rationis*," and "*primaevum illud temperamentum naturae rationalis*." See: Thierry Meynard, S.J., *The Jesuit Reading of Confucius: The First Complete Translation of the Lunyu (1687) Published in the West* (Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2015). This diversity of interpretations and translations vividly reflects the early attempts of the Jesuit missionaries to mediate between Chinese and Western intellectual traditions within a Latin linguistic framework.

with descriptions of China's geography, cultural life, military institutions, traditional beliefs, administrative system, and ethnic characteristics. The second part, *Sina Evangelica Luca sub Imperatoribus Sinis Illustra*, covers the missionary enterprise under the late Ming emperors from 1552 to 1644, while the third part, *Sina Evangelica Luce sub Imperatoribus Tartaris illustrior mundo facta*, concentrates on missionary work during the early Qing period. Broadly speaking, the first part of the work deals with Chinese history in a manner that could even attract the serious interest of Chinese readers today, whereas the second and third parts focus on Jesuit missionary activities. Numerous detailed historical reports are preserved in this work, many of which are otherwise lost, making *Historia Sinarum Imperii* not merely a reflection on the past but, in many instances, a valuable reconstruction of both Chinese history and the history of the evangelic mission. In the following pages, we will examine Szpot's interesting account of the centralization of Imperial power in China from his *Historia Sinarum Imperii*, and consider the continuing significance of his work for contemporary Chinese studies.

Centralization of imperial power

Galeote Pereira, a Portuguese traveler imprisoned in southern China between 1549 and 1552, produced one of the earliest European accounts based on personal experience. He reported that for many years the thirteen provinces of China had been subject to a single emperor residing in Peking. Pereira also heard that a golden tablet inscribed with the emperor's name was placed before the nobility, who saluted it daily in reverence.[20] These descriptions offered Europeans an early impression of the highly centralized imperial authority of the Ming dynasty. Mendoza, however, went further and provided a more philosophical and political explanation of the imperial title, noting that among the Chinese the emperor is regarded as "*Señor del mundo*" and "*hijo del Cielo* (Tianzi 天子)."[21] Matteo Ricci elaborated upon this conception, explaining that the emperor is called "*filius caeli* (Tianzi)" because the Chinese venerate

20 Boxer, *South China in the Sixteenth Century*, 3–45.

21 Mendosa, *Historia de las cosas más notables, ritos y costumbres del gran reyno de la China*, I.3.1. Since Latin served as the principal medium of communication within the literary world of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Latin version of this work, published in 1591 under the title *Nova et succincta, vera tamen historia de amplissimo, potentissimoque, nostro quidem orbi hactenus incognito … regno China*, rendered the two imperial titles as "*dominus orbis*" and "*filius caeli*," see p. 131.

Heaven as the supreme divinity (*supremum numen*);[22] to call the emperor the "Tianzi" he observed, is essentially equivalent to calling him the son of God. Another common form of address was "Hoamsi (Huangshang 皇上)," meaning the Supreme Emperor or Monarch.[23] Semedo recorded yet another title, "Kium Vam (Junwang 君王)," explaining that Kium (Jun 君) is used to address foreign kings, while Vam (Wang 王) is the name by which the sons of kings are called; when combined as Kium Vam, the expression was used to refer to the Chinese emperor.[24] Among all the Jesuits of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Portuguese missionary Magalhães provided the most detailed list of imperial appellation, recording ten titles: Tien Hu (Tianzi 天子), Son of Heaven; Xim Tien Hu (Shengtianzi 聖天子), Holy Son of Heaven; Hoam Ti (Huangdi 皇帝), August and Great Emperor; Xim Xoam (Shengshang 聖皇), Holy Emperor; Hoam Xam (Huangshang 皇上), August Sovereign; Xim Kium (Shengjun 聖君), Holy Prince; Xim Xam (Shengshang 聖上), Holy Sovereignty; Que Chu (Guozhu 國主), Lord of the Kingdom; Chao Tim (Chaoting 朝廷), the Royal Court; and Van Sui (Wanshui 萬歲), ten

22 Ricci's interpretation of *tian* (天) as a "*supremum numen*" was not merely a missionary strategy intended to align Confucianism with the Catholicism. Rather, it also reflected his deep study of the Confucian classics and his affirmation of the meaning of *tian* as a sovereign power found in pre-Qin (先秦) texts. Jesuit missionaries, following Ricci's lead, generally upheld the pre-Qin Confucian understanding of *tian* and rejected the Neo-Confucian (Songming Li Xue 宋明理學) reinterpretation. In their view, Neo-Confucianism transformed the sovereign *tian* into a moral–principled *tian*, thereby denying a supreme dinivity endowed with independent will and ultimately reducing itself to "atheism." Thus, the Jesuits' approach to Sinological studies also stimulated Chinese intellectuals to reflect upon their own cultural tradition, thereby enriching the content of classical Chinese scholarship. Modern Chinese academia likewise tends to recognize three fundamental meanings of *tian* in Chinese philosophy: (1) the natural *tian* (自然之天), that is, the physical sky; (2) the sovereign *tian* (主宰之天), the supreme divinity with an independent will, the meaning upheld by Ricci and other Jesuits; and (3) the moral–principled *tian* (义理之天), the Neo-Confucian interpretation articulated by Zhu Xi (朱熹) and other Song–Ming thinkers. See Dainian Zhang (张岱年) (ed.), *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Chinese Philosophy (Revised Edition)* [*Zhongguo zhexue da cidian (xiuding ben)* 中国哲学大辞典（修订本）] (Shanghai: Shanghai Lexicographical Publishing House, 2014), 19.

23 "Ex eo quod huius regni fines ita longe lateque proferantur, & exignoratione transmarini Orbis, arbitrantur Sinae Regem suum orbi universo imperare, ideoque specioso illum nomine Caeli filiumThiencu dicunt, & hodie ut olim semper, appellant, quia porro caelum ipsi pro supremo numine colunt, idem est caeli ac Dei filium nominare. Vulgo tamen non hoc nomine sed Hoamsi appellatur, hoc est, supremum Imperatorem aut Monarcham." Matteo Ricci, Nicolas Trigault, *De Christiana expeditione apud Sinas suscepta ab Societate Jesu: ex P. Matthaei Riccii eiusdem Societatis commentariis libri V* (Augsburg [Augusta Vindelicorum]: Apud Christophorum Mangium, 1615), 45.

24 Semedo, *Imperio de La China*, 146.

thousand years.[25] Understanding these various forms of imperial appellation was essential for the first Jesuits who came to China, as it provided an important key to grasping concepts of Chinese imperial power. Drawing on the extensive materials preserved in Rome, Szpot offered a notably accurate reflection of this system. As he cited Verbiest:

> Quantum vero ad Regimen Civile Sinarum attinet, illud tam perfecto Monarchicum est, ut ei par nulla unquam Monarchia aut habuisse aut habere suo quidem iudicio, sed multorum annorum in Regia Pekinensi experientia acquisito Ferdinandus Verbiest asseruerit.[26]

(As for the civil administration of China, it is so perfectly monarchical that, in Verbiest's judgment, formed not only by opinion but by many years of experience at the Imperial Court in Peking, no other monarchy has ever equaled it or equals it now.)

In fact, Jesuit opinions regarding the Chinese monarchical system were far from uniform. Ferdinand Verbiest maintained a decidedly positive assessment of it, and Matteo Ricci shared a similar view. Ricci observed that the entire Chinese empire was governed by a class of *literati*, whom he regarded as philosophers. In such a system, the minds of rulers could be cultivated through literature, which had always been esteemed more highly than the military profession. He therefore assumed that this was why the Chinese were not inclined to expand their territory.[27] Kircher, by contrast, offered a far more negative evaluation of the Chinese monarchy. While acknowledging that the Chinese empire was the richest in the world, he contended that its political structure should be described as an "*Absoluta Monarchia*," with the emperor himself serving as an "*Absolutissimum Caput et Dominus*." In such a system, he argued, no political matter was permitted to anyone without the emperor's prior consultation. Kircher even declared that the empire, plunged into a deep darkness of paganism and exposed to the corruptions of unspeakable

25 Gabriel de Magalhães, A *New History of China, Containing a Description of the Most Considerable Particulars of that Vast Empire* (London: Thomas Newborough, 1688), 254–255.

26 Jap. Sin. 102, f. 7v.

27 Universum regnum ut supra dixi, a suis Philosophis administrari, & in iis merum mistumque imperium reperiri." "Id inde fortasse habet originem, quod studiis litterarum hominis animus nobilitetur, aut ideo quod iam inde ab ipsis huius regni promordiis litterae mansuetiores pluris semper fuerint, quam professio militaris, apud gentem minime cupidam imperii proferendi." Ricci, Trigault, *De Christiana Expeditione apud Sinas*, 59–60.

luxury, was destined to suffer "*aeternae poenae.*"[28] Szpot, however, adopted Verbiest's perspective. Verbiest, the Flemish Jesuit missionary, had not only spent nearly thirty years in China but had also served as an imperial astronomer deeply involved in crucial court affairs, forming a close relationship with the Kangxi Emperor. For Szpot, Verbiest's *experientia* carried far more weight and credibility than Kircher's *iudicium*, especially since Kircher had never been to China. This contrast reveals Szpot's methodological rigor and his preference for firsthand empirical testimony over speculative judgment.

Now let us consider Szpot's brief but remarkably accurate description of the centralization of imperial power in China:

> The emperor is the soul from which alone this vast body of the empire receives and preserves its strength and vital movement.[29]

The terms *anima* and *corpus* are essentially theological categories used to express the nature of the human person. Szpot is the first author to apply this analogy to the Chinese empire, thereby clothing a secular political system in a distinctly sacred vocabulary. Yet this raises an important question: as a writer shaped by Sarmatian ideology, how could Szpot view the centralization of Chinese imperial authority in a positive light? To answer this, we must look at his description of Chinese political functions:

> Nevertheless, wise antiquity so restricted him [i.e. emperor] by its laws, and so bound him by the counsels of the magistrates and by the freedom of admonishment whenever he should go stray, that although he holds all power within his empire, he can do nothing that is absolutist. Rather, he governs his subjects solely according to the rule of equality and justice. The authority to reward and to punish rests with him alone.[30]

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28 Athanasius Kircher, *China monumentis, qua sacris qua profanis, nec non variis naturae et artis spectaculis, aliarumque rerum memorabilium argumentis illustrata* (Amsterdam: Apud Joannem Janssonium à Waesberge et Elizeum Weyerstraet, 1667), 165–166.

29 Imperator est anima a qua sola totum hoc vastum Imperii Corpus vigorem suum et motum vitalem accipit, conservatque. Jap. Sin. 102, f. 7v.

30 Nihilominus provida antiquitas, ita eum suis legibus circumscripsit, ita consiliis Magistratuum, et libertate monendi, sicubi in devia laberetur, constrinxit; ut qui omnia in suo imperio potest, nihil, quod tyrannicum sit, possit: sed sola aequi iustique ratione regat suos subditos. Penes illum solum est potestas praemiandi et puniendi. Jap. Sin. 102, f. 7v.

Matteo Ricci had already clearly defined the Chinese political system as a mixture of monarchy and aristocracy.[31] Setting aside Kircher's harsh judgment, Szpot accepted Ricci's view. He explained that although the emperor stood at the center of political power, his authority was not unlimited; it was restrained by laws, by the counsels of his officials, and, above all, by what Szpot called the *libertas monendi*, the freedom to admonish the ruler. None of these features contradicted Sarmatian political ideology, which strongly rejected only the *absolutum dominium*, called *tyrannicum* by Szpot, yet supported the political rights of the *nobiles*, who could speak freely before the Polish king and cast votes in the *sejmik* (local diet) and the *sejm* (parliament).[32]

For Szpot, an ideal Chinese emperor could also serve as a model for a perfect Polish king, one who lends an attentive ear to the nobility and governs the realm with equity and justice. In this sense, Szpot occupies a uniquely significant position: he interpreted Chinese civilization through the dual lens of a Jesuit and a Sarmatian political thinker.

Szpot's observations on the centralization of Chinese imperial power even remain highly relevant to modern scholarship. Professor Joanna Waley-Cohen has described the Qing emperor as the centripetal center of imperial authority, emphasizing that such centralization operated through flexible governance rather than uniform absolutism.[33] Imperial authority, in her view, was grounded in moral and ritual performance and should not be reduced to *absolutum dominium*[34] Similarly, Timothy Brook characterizes late-Ming government as an autocratic system marked by an enhanced concentration of power in the imperial institution, while at the same time stressing the practical limits of such centralization.[35] In the late Ming, particularly during the reign of the Wanli emperor (萬曆), imperial authority increasingly became indirect: the throne was often vacant, and the business of the realm proceeded "offstage" through bureaucratic routines, eunuchs, and grand secretaries. Effective governance thus depended less on the emperor's active personal

31 "Et dixerim initio, Monarchiam esse huius regni administrandi rationem, tamen e dictis facile constat, & e dicendis constabit, Aristocratiae non parum admisceri." Ricci, Trigault, *De Christiana Expeditione apud Sinas*, 45.

32 Daniel Stone, *The Polish-Lithuanian State, 1386–1795*, 177–189.

33 Joanna Waley-Cohen, "The New Qing History," *Radical History Review* 88 (2004): 198.

34 Joanna Waley-Cohen, *The Culture of War in China* (London–New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 12.

35 Timothy Brook, *The Troubled Empire: China in the Yuan and Ming Dynasties* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 86–89.

intervention than on political skill, moral authority, and elite cooperation, as officials formed factions to sustain administrative functioning.[36]

If Chinese emperors had consistently embodied moral excellence and the imperial mechanism had been truly perfect, it would be difficult to explain why the Ming dynasty was ultimately replaced by the Qing. Szpot was clearly aware of the collapse of the Ming empire and sought to explain why an empire dominated by the Han population could, twice in Chinese history, pass into the hands of the *Tartari*. He articulated this insight with remarkable breadth, observing that:

> An empire so populous, so wealthy, so prudently and wisely fortified at home and abroad by the laws of peace and justice, and so renowned throughout all those realms for its wisdom, was brought to ruin by the avarice of emperors, the negligence of generals, and the rivalry of the mandarins.[37]

Through this judgment, Szpot demonstrates a distinctly critical awareness of the limits of imperial centralization. While he cited Ferdinand Verbiest's idealized description of the Chinese political order, he simultaneously identified the internal structural crises: imperial avarice, military incompetence, and bureaucratic rivalry, that ultimately undermined the system and led to dynastic collapse.

In contrast to European scholars such as Frederick Mote, who described Ming governance as "despotism," and Edward Farmer, who classified it as "autocracy,"[38] the prominent Chinese historian Ch'ien Mu argued that such Western categories were problematic when applied to the Chinese imperial system. Ch'ien Mu introduced a crucial conceptual distinction between "power" (权) and "obligation" (職責), rejecting a sovereignty-based understanding of politics.[39] In his interpretation, imperial centralization meant that political authority was symbolically and morally concentrated in the ruler,[40] while actual governance oper-

36 *Ibidem*, 100–103.

37 Tam populosum, tam opulentum, tamque providè et sapienter ad pacis et iustitiae leges domi et foris munitum, et sapientia per omnia illa regna celebratissimum Imperium, prodidit avaritia Imperatorum socordia Ducum, et aemulatio Mandarinorum. Jap. Sin. 102, f. 10r.

38 Brook, *The Troubled Empire*, 86–89.

39 Ch'ien Mu, *Merits and Demerits of Political Systems in Dynastic China*, trans. Siying Zhang (Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press; Berlin: Springer, 2019), 114–116.

40 *Ibidem*, 137–142.

ated through delegated bureaucratic structures.[41] Imperial power was thus conceived less as direct administrative control than as a concentration of political and moral responsibility, internally constrained by Confucian ethics, remonstrance practices, and established bureaucratic norms. While Szpot articulated an early modern, Jesuit-informed vision of centralized yet non-tyrannical rule, Ch'ien Mu provided an indigenous theoretical justification for how such a system could function without collapsing into *absolutum dominium*. Despite their vastly different historical and cultural contexts, both converge on a shared model in which moral authority and institutional structures serve to restrain centralized sovereignty.

Conclusion

This study has examined the centralization of imperial power in China during the late Ming and early Qing dynasties through the lens of *Historia Sinarum Imperii* by Tomasz Ignacy Dunin Szpot, situating his work within both the Jesuit intellectual tradition and modern sinological scholarship. By combining close textual analysis with a comparative historiographical approach, the article has demonstrated that Szpot's account is neither a naïve idealization nor a simple repetition of earlier missionary narratives, but rather a sophisticated and critically informed interpretation of Chinese imperial governance.

Szpot conceptualized the Chinese emperor as the *anima* of a vast imperial *corpus*, a metaphor that underscores the highly centralized nature of political authority in China. At the same time, he explicitly rejected any understanding of this centralization as *tyrannicum*. Instead, he emphasized the role of laws, bureaucratic institutions, and above all the *libertas monendi*, as internal restraints on imperial power. This dual emphasis on central authority and institutional limitation reflects both Jesuit political ethnography and Szpot's Sarmatian intellectual background, particularly his hostility toward *absolutum dominium* and his valorization of moral governance.

When read in dialogue with modern scholarship, Szpot's observations appear remarkably prescient. His explanation of the Ming collapse shows that he did not mistake institutional ideals for historical reality. Centralization, in his view, could ensure order and justice only when

41 *Ibidem*, 83–89.

sustained by moral leadership and institutional harmony; once these failed, the same structure could accelerate dynastic decline.

Taken together, these findings suggest that *Historia Sinarum Imperii* deserves renewed attention not merely as a reflection of Jesuit information about China, but as a serious contribution to the comparative history of political thought. Szpot's work demonstrates how early modern European observers could grasp the distinctive logic of Chinese imperial centralization, one that combined strong central authority with non-tyrannical restraint, and how this logic continues to resonate with both modern Western historiography and Chinese intellectual traditions. In this sense, Szpot occupies a unique position in the history of Western Sinology: as a Jesuit, a Sarmatian, and a perceptive interpreter of Chinese statecraft whose insights remain meaningful for contemporary scholarship.

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Fornax Babylonica: The Tyranny of Zhang Xianzhong in Jesuit Accounts Recorded by Tomasz Dunin Szpot[1]

Fornax Babylonica: Tyrania Zhang Xianzhonga w relacjach jezuitów spisanych przez Tomasza Dunina Szpota

Abstract

This article examines the representation of Zhang Xianzhong's (張獻忠, 1606–1647) rule in the account of the Jesuit Tomasz Dunin Szpot, preserved in the manuscript *Collectanea Historiae Sinensis* (Jap. Sin. 104). A major rebel leader of the late Ming period, Zhang established his regime in Sichuan in 1644, where his rule was associated, in both Chinese and European sources, with extreme violence and large-scale destruction. The article argues that Szpot does not merely record these events but actively reshapes them within a framework drawn from classical and biblical traditions. Through the language of anti-tyrannical discourse and scriptural and

1 This research was funded by the state budget under the programme of the Minister of Education and Science, *National Programme for the Development of the Humanities* (project no. NPRH/U22/SP/0021/2023/12), entitled *Historiae Sinarum Imperii and Collectanea Historiae Sinensis by Tomasz Szpot Dunin SJ – the Polish Contribution to the Study of Chinese Culture and History in the Early Modern Period*. The funding amount was PLN 1,566,263.42, which is also the total value of the project.

classical references, Zhang Xianzhong is constructed as a paradigmatic insane tyrant whose rule embodies the collapse of political and moral order. By situating Szpot's narrative within the broader context of Jesuit historiography, the study demonstrates how early modern missionary writing transformed episodes of mass violence into a form of moral and theological reflection. In doing so, it highlights the role of interpretative frameworks in mediating cross-cultural encounters and in shaping European understandings of political catastrophe in early modern China.

Keywords: Zhang Xianzhong, devastation of Sichuan, Jesuit historiography, Tomasz Dunin Szpot, early modern China, anti-tyrannical discourse, mass violence in early modern history.

Abstrakt

Artykuł analizuje sposób przedstawienia rządów Zhang Xianzhonga (張獻忠, 1606–1647) w relacji jezuity Tomasza Dunina Szpota, zachowanej w rękopisie *Collectanea Historiae Sinensis* (Jap. Sin. 104). Zhang, jeden z głównych przywódców rebelii schyłkowego okresu dynastii Ming, ustanowił swoje rządy w Syczuanie w 1644 roku, gdzie jego panowanie było w źródłach zarówno chińskich, jak i europejskich kojarzone ze skrajną przemocą i zniszczeniem na wielką skalę. Artykuł dowodzi, że Szpot nie ogranicza się jedynie do rejestrowania tych wydarzeń, lecz aktywnie je przekształca, ujmując w ramy zaczerpnięte z tradycji klasycznej i biblijnej. Za pomocą języka dyskursu antytyrannicznego oraz odniesień do Pisma Świętego i tradycji klasycznej Zhang Xianzhong zostaje ukazany jako paradygmatyczny, obłąkany tyran, którego rządy ucieleśniają załamanie porządku politycznego i moralnego. Umieszczając narrację Szpota w szerszym kontekście historiografii jezuickiej, artykuł pokazuje, w jaki sposób wczesnonowożytne piśmiennictwo misyjne przekształcało epizody masowej przemocy w formę refleksji moralnej i teologicznej. W ten sposób podkreśla rolę ram interpretacyjnych w mediowaniu spotkań międzykulturowych oraz w kształtowaniu europejskiego rozumienia katastrofy politycznej w Chinach epoki wczesnonowożytnej.

Słowa klucze: Zhang Xianzhong, zniszczenie Syczuanu, historiografia jezuicka, Tomasz Dunin Szpot, Chiny epoki wczesnonowożytnej, dyskurs antytyranniczny, masowa przemoc w historii wczesnonowożytnej.

Introduction

The figure of Zhang Xianzhong (張獻忠, 1606–1647),[2] one of the most prominent rebel leaders of the late Ming period, occupies a distinctive place in both Chinese and European historical writing. In European Jesuit sources, where he often appears under the Latinized name Taxun, his rule in Sichuan is associated with extreme violence and large-scale devastation, remembered as one of the most destructive episodes of the seventeenth century.[3] Among the accounts that record these events, the narrative of the Jesuit Tomasz Dunin Szpot remains relatively understudied, despite its considerable historical value.[4] Drawing on reports by missionaries, including eyewitness accounts, Szpot offers not merely a description of events in Sichuan, but an interpretation shaped by a distinct set of conceptual and rhetorical resources. He constructs the image of Zhang Xianzhong within an intellectual framework designed to render these events legible to a European audience. This article therefore asks what conceptual matrix the Polish Jesuit employs in order to translate an unfamiliar and violent reality into terms intelligible within early modern European thought, and how episodes of extreme violence are recast in the language of classical and biblical traditions.

2 See his biographical entry in: Lin Yutang, "Chang Hsien-chung," in *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period (1644–1912)*, vol. 1, ed. Arthur W. Hummel (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1943), 37–38.

3 On Jesuit accounts of Zhang Xianzhong's rule in Sichuan, see Chan (2011). The author analyzes the testimonies of the Jesuit missionaries Lodovico Buglio and Gabriel de Magalhães, who lived in Sichuan during Zhang's regime (1644–1647), drawing primarily on the Chinese compilation *Shengjiao ru Chuan ji* (1918) prepared by the French missionary François-Marie-Joseph Gourdon from earlier Jesuit reports. Chan Hok-lam, "傳教士對張獻忠據蜀稱王的記載" (Jesuits' Impressions on Zhang Xianzhong in Sichuan (1644–1647)), *Journal of Chinese Studies* 中國文化研究所學報 52 (2011): 65–94. Contemporary historiography: "He also had a craving for human flesh. After each person was dismembered in front of him and roasted, he would lift up several slices of meat [and eat them]. Also, when he destroyed Huangzhou, he ripped open all the functionaries in the city, and the women's fingernails dripped blood which flowed across [the ground]. After the dissection was finished, they were all crushed. Frederic Wakeman, *The Great Enterprise, The Manchu Reconstruction of Imperial Order in Seventeenth-Century China*, vol. 1 (Berkeley–Los Angeles–London: University of California Press, 1985), 339, footnote 65.

4 ARSI, Jap. Sin. 104, ff. 51r–66r.

Jesuit witnesses in Sichuan

Szpot based his narrative primarily on the testimonies of two missionaries active in Sichuan during the rebellion, Gabriel de Magalhães and Ludovico Buglio.[5] Both men came into direct contact with Zhang Xianzhong and left detailed accounts of the events they witnessed. Their reports circulated widely within Jesuit correspondence networks and became among the principal European sources on the devastation of Sichuan. In the *Collectanea Historiae Sinensis*, Szpot devotes approximately sixteen folios to Zhang Xianzhong, the destruction of Chengdu, and the wider devastation of the province. It is important to note that the drama presented by Szpot unfolds on two interrelated levels. The destruction of the province is rendered through the experience of the missionaries, whose individual suffering becomes inseparable from the catastrophe affecting the broader community. In this way, personal testimony is woven into a wider narrative of collective calamity.[6]

An approaching storm

Although violence had accompanied Zhang Xianzhong's campaigns prior to his takeover of Sichuan, many mandarins initially received his rule with misplaced hope. Szpot presents this early phase as one of apparent order and promise, in which the new ruler sought to secure support through displays of generosity and justice, thereby winning the allegiance of both civil and military officials. Yet from the outset the narrative is marked by a sign of impending catastrophe: the burning of the Jesuit residence and church, which Szpot records as a moment of particular gravity and as a prelude to the wider destruction that would soon engulf the city. This movement from hope to catastrophe is further expressed through a contrast drawn from natural forces. The new regime appears at first as a rising sun, promising renewal and the restoration of order.

5 See: Gabriel de Magalhães, Relação da perda e destituição da Provincia e Christiandade de Su Chuen e do que os pes. Luis Buglio e Gabriel de Magalhães passarão em seu cativ, report sent to Manuel de Azevedo; dated May 18, 1649. ARSI, Jap. Sin. 127, ff. 1r- 35v.

6 ARSI, Jap. Sin. 104, ff. 51r-67r. Erik Zürcher, "In the Yellow Tiger's Den: Buglio and Magalhães at the Court of Zhang Xianzhong, 1644–1647," *Monumenta Serica* 25 (2002): 355–372; Erich Hauer, "Li Tzĕ-Chĕng und Chang Hsien-Chung: Ein Beitrag zum Ende der Mingdynastie," *Monumenta Serica* 1 (1935): 1–44; James B. Parsons, "The Culmination of a Chinese Peasant Rebellion: Chang Hsien-chung in Szechwan, 1644–46," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 16/3 (May 1957): 387–400.

In retrospect, however, this expectation is overturned: what had seemed a source of light proves instead to herald an impending storm descending upon the province. Through this opposition of *sol* and *tempestas*, Szpot gives shape to a sequence in which promise gives way to devastation. These expectations thus quickly proved illusory. As Szpot observes, of the roughly one thousand mandarins who gathered around Zhang, only a few dozen ultimately survived, a stark indication of the rapid descent from anticipated renewal into catastrophic destruction.

> Meanwhile Cham-hien-cium [Zhang Xianzhong – AW] entered the metropolis not without slaughter and fires – at which time even the house of the Fathers and the church were burned – and on the fifth day of September in the year 1644, in a solemn ceremony, he had himself inaugurated as king of the province of Suchuen. He began his reign under auspices of liberality, justice, and magnificence, by which he won the support of all […] Seeing these beginnings of the rule of this tyrant, the mandarins conceived hopes of better fortune for the empire to which he was already aspiring; they believed that under this new family the provinces and cities would flourish again, and that the empire would return to that condition in which Humwu [the Hongwu Emperor –AW], the first founder of the imperial family of Taiming, had left it to his descendants. Yet, wretched men, they were unaware what a storm this rising sun among the clouds was soon to portend, in which, of the thousand mandarins who at that time formed his court, all perished except for twenty-five.[7]

The destruction of Chengdu

Instead of a dynastic founder who was to shine with virtue like the sun in the heavens, the province came under the rule of a tyrant who spread a savage, beast-like cruelty throughout the capital, Chengdu.[8]

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7 "Interea Cham-hien-cium non sine caedibus et incendiis, quo tempore etiam Domus Patrum et Ecclesia conflagrarvit, ingressus Metropolim die 5ta Septemb. anni 1644 solemni ritu se in Regem Provinciae Suchuen inaugurari fecit; caeptque regni sui auspiciis, a liberalitate, iustitia, et magnificentia, quibus omnium animos sibi captivavit; […] Visis ergo his primordiis Regni huius Tyranni, conceperant spem melioris fortunae sui imperii Mandarini ad quod ille iam humi aspirabat; foreque arbitrabantur, ut sub nova hac familia reflorcerent Prouinciae et Urbes, et Imperium rediret ad eum statum in quo Humwu primus fundator Taimingae Imperialis familiae suis posteris reliquerat; ignari miseri quantam tempestatem ille inter nubila oriens Sol paulo post fuisset portendens, in qua ex mille Mandarinis Aulam ipsis tunc facientibus, solis viginti quinque exceptis omnes perierunt". ARSI, Jap. Sin. 104, f. 51v.

8 "[…] spargens per urbem immanem et ferinam saevitatem". ARSI, Jap. Sin. 104, f. 51r.

What follows is a sustained account of extreme violence directed against the educated elite. Szpot records a range of elaborated and repeated forms of execution, conveying both the scale and the systematic character of the repression. The tyrant's actions bore the marks of bestial ferocity (*belluina ferocia*), and his words fell like thunderbolts from the sky (ex *ore illius fulmina*). According to the Jesuit missionaries:

> They saw many Mandarins fall – some by the sword, others by the gallows, others flayed, others cut into tiny pieces, others beaten to death with cudgels, others fastened to tree trunks, others tormented by fire, others by iron – all victims of this tyrant's fury.[9]

The force of this passage lies in its anaphoric and repetitive structure. The recurrence of "others" (*alios*) creates a rhythm of accumulation, in which each act of violence reinforces the last, transforming individual instances into a continuous pattern. What emerges is not a series of isolated punishments, but a sustained process of destruction directed at the administrative and moral order embodied by the literati. This passage conveys the systematic nature of the violence and the multiplicity of punishments inflicted upon the victims.

Zhang directed his violence with particular intensity against the Buddhist monks. While a small number of Confucian literati survived the devastation, the Buddhist monastic population was exterminated in its entirety. Szpot presents this destruction as complete. Of the two thousand Buddhist monks residing in Chengdu, not one survived. A similar fate befell the monastic population in other towns of the province. According to Szpot, the tyrant harboured a particular hatred for them, believing them to be responsible for instigating continual rebellions against him.[10]

The massacre of the inhabitants of Chengdu is described by both Martino Martini and Tomasz Dunin Szpot in some of the most dramatic passages preserved in the Jesuit sources. Szpot's account, however, provides a more detailed description than Martini's *Regni Sinensis a Tartaris*

9 "Viderunt cecidisse plurimos Mandarinos, alios gladio, alios furca, alios excoriatos, alios minutim in frustula concisos, alios sub fustibus mortuos, alios truncis arborum affixos, alios igne, alios ferro cruciatos, victimam furori huius tyranni". ARSI, Jap. Sin. 104, f. 53v.

10 "Nam ex duobus millibus Bonziorum, quos Chimtu Metropolis intra moenia sua alebat, nullus gladium evasit, nullus superstes remansit". ARSI, Jap.Sin. 104, f. 53v. For Jesuit–Buddhist contacts during the rule of Zhang Xianzhong, see: Thierry Meynard, "A Buddhist Christian Encounter in Late Ming Dynasty: New Insights from the Chengdu Conflict of 1643–1644," *Hualin International Journal of Buddhist Studies* 6/2 (2023): 65–110.

devastati enarratio (1654). The following passage illustrates how the Italian Jesuit depicted the suffering of the population:

> First, he ordered that all the inhabitants of Chengdu, the metropolitan city – men and women of every rank and condition – should be bound in chains by a detachment of his army that had entered the city. Some writers report that their number amounted to six hundred thousand. Shortly afterwards he himself rode through the ranks of these prisoners. With lamentable cries and tears – capable of moving even a stone – they addressed him as their king and lord, kneeling and begging that he spare his innocent people. For a brief moment he halted, as if human nature, recoiling from such horrors, exerted some restraining force upon his cruelty. Yet soon reverting to his usual disposition, he cried out: "Kill them! Kill these rebels!" Thus, on the same day, all were slaughtered outside the city walls, while the bloodstained bandit himself stood watching the massacre [trans. Andrzej Wadas].[11]

Szpot's account, however, amplifies the same episode considerably. Whereas Martini offers a relatively concise narrative of the massacre, the Polish Jesuit transforms the scene into a far more elaborate and dramatically constructed tableau of collective supplication and destruction. The following passage illustrates how Szpot expands and intensifies the episode:

> By now the City, filled with an innumerable multitude of people, lay beyond the city gate, at the southern bridge of the river Chimtu, when the Tyrant came there on horseback. At the sight of him, all the wretched men fell to their knees and, striking the ground with their heads, poured forth with tears their pitiful cries:'Our King, great King, live ten thousand years! You are our King; we are your People, who have never wished in any way to offend you! In all things we have served and obeyed you. Why do you kill us? Whom do you fear, O King? We are all unarmed. We are a people, not soldiers! Your people, not your enemies! Forgive us, O King, most mighty King, have mercy on your innocent People!' At these tearful cries, the Tyrant halted, thoughtful, and seemed for a moment, as if driven by

11 "Primum itaque omnes omnis generis ac conditionis in Chingtu metropolitana urbe cives, ab intromissa exercitus parte, vinculis constringi voluit; sexcenta hominum millia fuisse scribunt. Mox ipse per hos vinctos obequitans transivit, quem lamentabili eiulatu ac lacrymis, quibus vel lapidem movissent, regem ac dominum compellabant, flexis genibus rogantes ut innocenti populo suo parceret. Stetit ipse tantillum, natura humana diris visceribus ac crudelitate vim aliquam inferente; mox tamen ad ingenium rediens: 'Occidite', inquit, 'occidite hos rebelles.' Quare omnes eodem die extra urbis moenia, spectante ac vidente sanguinolento latrone, trucidati sunt." Martino Martini, *De bello Tartarico historia* (Antwerp: Balthasar Moretus, 1654), 110.

> the stings of conscience, to begin to be moved to pity. But that adamantine heart was so hard that it admitted no compassion into his soul; rather, inflamed with a wild beast's rage, after reproaching them with conspiracies, rebellions, and plots laid against his life, he gave spurs to his horse and rushed from the place, shouting: 'Strike! Slay! Butcher the rebel and the traitor!' The cruel sentence was carried into execution, by which the Metropolis Chimtu was turned into a desert without inhabitant. The river Humqua, flowing past, was reddened with the blood of the slain, rolling more blood than waters; and by reason of the multitude of corpses that were thrown into it from the bridge, it was not navigable [trans. Andrzej Wadas].[12]

The two accounts differ markedly in their narrative structure, rhetorical intensity, and interpretative framing of the massacre of the inhabitants of Chengdu. Martino Martini's version presents a relatively concise and restrained report of the events. His narrative focuses primarily on the sequence of actions: the inhabitants are bound in chains, the tyrant rides through the ranks of prisoners, briefly hesitates when confronted with their lament, and ultimately orders their execution. Although the scene includes elements of pathos –particularly the people's plea for mercy – the description remains compressed and largely factual. The massacre itself is summarized in a few sentences, culminating in the striking image of the *sanguinolentus latro*, the bloodstained bandit who watches the slaughter outside the city walls. Szpot's account, by contrast, expands the same episode into a much more elaborate and dramatically constructed narrative. The setting is carefully staged on the plain beyond the city gate near the southern bridge of the river Chimtu, where an immense crowd gathers to implore the tyrant for mercy. Their supplication is rendered in extended direct speech, which intensifies the emotional force of the scene. Szpot also deepens the psychological dimension of the tyrant's conduct: the moment of hesitation reported by Martini becomes an internal struggle between conscience and cruelty. The episode ultimately culminates in imagery of total devastation, as Chengdu is transformed into a deserted city and the nearby river is said to run red with blood. In Szpot's description, this amounts to a vision of total destruction: human beings reduced to slaughtered cattle (*velut totidem pecora trucidari iussit*), and the province itself turned into a desert (*factam desertum*).[13]

The language employed by Szpot may be situated within a classical rhetorical tradition, recalling patterns of Ciceronian moral invective, particularly as exemplified in his oration Pro Sulla. There, Cicero portrays

12 ARSI, Jap. Sin. 104, ff. 55v.-56r.

13 ARSI, Jap. Sin. 104, f. 55r; ARSI, Jap. Sin. 104, f. 54v.

his opponents through a vocabulary of excess, moral corruption, and bestial imagery, placing them outside the bounds of reason and civic order. A comparable strategy is evident in Szpot's account. The use of cumulative enumeration and the depiction of the tyrant in terms of *belluina feritas* align his narrative with a classical mode of representing political disorder as a regression from humanity to bestiality.[14]

Szpot moves beyond Martini in shaping the image of the ruler. The usurper is presented as a head without a body (*caput sine corpore*) and a king without subjects (*rex sine populo*), from whose reign nothing will remain but an empty and meaningless name (*cui nihil restat ex regno praeter inane et vanum nomen*). The figure of a ruler without subjects and a body severed from its head evokes not only the collapse of legitimate sovereignty, but also the dissolution of political order into a hollow form devoid of substance. In this perspective, tyrannical power assumes the character of an insatiable lust for domination, a force that, like Shakespeare's "universal wolf," ultimately turns upon itself and consumes its own source.[15]

Szpot consistently frames Zhang Xianzhong's rule within a classical and Christian anti-tyrannical vocabulary. The rebel ruler is described as *tyrannus* and *latro*, underscoring both the illegitimacy of his power and the violence through which it was exercised, and at times as an imaginarius imperator, a self-proclaimed emperor whose claims are exposed as hollow. This terminology is reinforced by a cluster of terms such as *saevitia* and *rabies*, which present the tyrant not merely as a violent

14 "[…] nolite, iudices, arbitrari hominum illum impetum et conatum fuisse: neque enim ulla gens tam barbara aut tam immanis umquam fuit in qua non modo tot, sed unus tam crudelis hostis patriae sit inventus, beluae quaedam illae ex portentis immanes ac ferae forma hominum indutae exstiterunt. […] introspicite Catilinae, Autroni, Cethegi, Lentuli ceterorumque mentis; quas vos in his libidines, quae flagitia, quas turpitudines, quantas audacias, quam incredibilis furores, quas notas facinorum, quae indicia parricidiorum, quantos acervos scelerum reperietis!" Pro P. Sulla Oratio 76. See critical edition: Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Pro P. Sulla Oratio*, ed. D. H. Berry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 116–117.

15 "Belluina feritate [….] caput sine corpore, Rex sine populo […] cui nihil restat ex regno praeter inane et vanum nomen". ARSI, Jap. Sin. 104, f. 56r. Kenneth M. Swope analyzes the rebellion of Zhang Xianzhong within the broader context of the Ming–Qing transition and the collapse of state authority in southwest China. He argues that although Zhang's rule in Sichuan was marked by extreme violence, the scale of devastation in the region resulted not only from his campaigns but also from subsequent warfare and political turmoil: Kenneth M. Swope, *On the Trail of the Yellow Tiger: War, Trauma, and Social Dislocation in Southwest China during the Ming–Qing Transition* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2018), 1–16. On the "universal wolf," see: William Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, ed. David Bevington (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2015), 1.3.111–114.

political actor but as a figure who has forfeited his humanity. Within this framework, the three dominant features of his tyranny emerge: *idolatria*, *rabies, deliria, crudelitas*.[16]

Szpot reflects on Zhang Xianzhong's attempt to legitimize his rule through a moralized interpretation of dynastic change. By claiming that even Confucius had once rejected the people of Sichuan, the tyrant invokes the notion of a providential condemnation of the region, thereby justifying the punishment of its population as a form of collective responsibility. At the same time, the reference to the cyclical replacement of ruling houses echoes the Chinese doctrine of the Mandate of Heaven (*tianming*), which Zhang appropriated in order to present his rebellion not as banditry but as the divinely sanctioned foundation of a new dynasty.[17]

Theatrum crudelitatis

Another image Szpot employs is that of *theatrum crudelitatis*, suggesting that the devastation of Sichuan unfolded as a vast spectacle of violence. The phrase "Lacrymabilis illa fuit Patribus mutatio scenae in eo Crudelitatis Theatro"[18] introduces a theatrical metaphor that situates Szpot's narrative within an early modern culture of violence. This notion points to a context in which acts of punishment and destruction were not only carried out but also made visible – through public executions, ritualized displays of torture, and the devastation of war. Events such as the Sack of Rome (1527), the French Wars of Religion, and the Thirty Years' War offer clear parallels.

Within this framework, *mutatio scenae* denotes not merely a change of circumstance, but a transition between successive phases in a structured sequence of violence. Szpot's language thus presents the experience of the missionaries as participation in a theatre of cruelty, in which violence is simultaneously enacted and witnessed. The metaphor underscores the

16 His usurpation: Taxun imaginarius Imperator Sinarum: ARSI, Jap. Sin. 104, 57r., f. 60r; his madness: ARSI, Jap. Sin. 104, f. 61r.; his idolatry and cruelty: ARSI, Jap. Sin. 104, f. 60; his fury: ARSI, Jap. Sin. 104, f. 54v.

17 ARSI, Jap. Sin. 104, f. 58r.

18 ARSI, Jap. Sin. 104, f. 63v.

visibility of suffering: cruelty appears not as hidden excess but as something staged and repeated.[19]

In this sense, Szpot's account reflects an early modern understanding of political violence as both destructive and demonstrative, operating through display as much as through force. The scale of destruction was such that it left a lasting imprint on collective memory. Later historiography suggests that the province remained largely depopulated for decades. Descriptions of abandoned roads, roaming wild animals, and travellers moving through forests that had reclaimed former settlements underscore the extent of the devastation. Some chroniclers even refer to the phenomenon of so-called "tree-jumpers," further illustrating the transformation of the landscape. Together, these accounts evoke a region profoundly reshaped by catastrophe.[20]

Hic fuit Suchuensis provinciae Troia

The image of *theatrum crudelitatis* is complemented in Szpot's account by another motif drawn from the classical tradition, namely the destruction of Troy (Hic fuit Suchuensis Provinciae Troia)[21] Sichuan is thus presented as a space of devastation comparable to a city long remembered

19 On the early modern Jesuit understanding of martyrdom as spectacle (*spectaculum facti sumus*), see: Gerard Kilroy, Edmund Campion, *A Scholarly Life* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 331–348.

20 For seventy years Szechwan lay a deserted wilderness; jungle grew up and covered the roads. From Chengtu northwards as far as Paoning there was to be seen "no human smoke". The chroniclers record that, with no hunters to keep the numbers down, herds of savage tigers began to appear and infested the jungle-covered roads, and in the desperation of hunger these tigers would attack the villages in packs, and would burst their way through closed doors. Hordes of fierce, famished wild dogs added to the miseries of those who had to travel along the roads; and according to these histories a new race of men began to appear, the so-called "tree-jumpers". To avoid the attacks of these fierce dogs on the ground, these men would make their way from place to place by leaping from one tree to another, through the forests which still covered a large part of Szechwan: Vyvyan Henry Donnithorne, "Chang Hsien-Chong and the Dark Age," *The West China Missionary News* 40/7–8 (July–August 1940): 238.

21 "Ad explendam suam saevitiam belluinam parum Tyranno Taxun fuit non reliquisse habitatorem in Urbe, quin ipsam Urbem suam sibi sepulchrum faceret, cuius cineribus et ruinis inscriberetur: Hic fuit Suchuensis Provinciae Troia. Primum igitur omnium iussit unam sui Palatii partem incendere, quam ardentem ex alia parte non sine magna sui crudelis animi voluptate spectavit. Postquam egressus fuit ex Chimtu, etiam reliquam partem Palatii, et quidquid in Urbe fuit aedificiorum, tum Regiorum, tum privatorum, templa deorum, Claustra Bonziorum, Collegia Literatorum et Academias Confucianas incendio dedit, atque in cineres aut exspoliata cadavera vertit." ARSI, Jap. Sin. 104, f. 62r.

as the paradigmatic symbol of total ruin. In his account of the massacres, Szpot avoids graphic detail and instead frames the events within a register of moral and theological reflection. While his narrative may be placed in dialogue with contemporary European works such as Richard Verstegen's *Theatrum Crudelitatum Haereticorum*[22] and Arnold Haven's *Speculum Haereticae Crudelitatis*,[23] the contrast is marked. These works rely on visual excess and vivid representations of violence to affect their audiences, whereas Szpot interprets cruelty through allegory and moral reasoning. His account thus transforms atrocity into a site of reflection on human depravity, divine justice, and the fragility of political order.

> To satiate his beastly cruelty, it was not enough for the tyrant Taxun to leave no inhabitant alive in the city; he must also make the city itself his tomb, inscribed with its own ashes and ruins. This was the Troy of the Province of Szechuan […] Thus that city, once the metropolis of the province and lately teeming with people, became, with no man and no building left, a desert like Arabia. […] Thus he went wherever his eyes led him, without any fixed road; and each day in every place he left the marks of a beast raging against mankind (*ferocientis in homines, belluae signa relinquebat*) [trans. Andrzej Wadas].[24]

Szpot's comparison of Chengdu to Troy, which he employs on two occasions – *Hic fuit Suchuensis Provinciae Troja* […] *ubi Troia fuit* – functions not merely as ornament, but as interpretation. Like Troy, the city is not simply taken, but erased. Its destruction is total: not only its inhabitants, but also its institutions – temples, academies, and dwellings – are reduced to ashes. What had been a centre of order and continuity is transformed into an empty space, a "desert," marked only by the absence of life. It is turned into a desert – an open grave, strewn with unburied corpses. Yet the parallel also marks a difference. In classical tradition, the fall of Troy retains a tragic structure, governed by war and fate. In Szpot's account, that structure collapses. The tyrant destroys without measure or purpose, taking evident pleasure in ruin and extending violence even beyond the city's fall. The execution of the guide signals this loss of order: no longer led, he moves without direction, leaving behind only the traces of a beast. Chengdu thus appears not simply as another

22 Richard Verstegen, *Theatrum crudelitatum haereticorum nostri temporis* (Antverpiae: apud Hadrianum Huberti, 1587).

23 Arnoldus Havens, *Speculum haereticae crudelitatis* (Coloniae: apud Servatium Erffens, 1608).

24 ARSI, Jap. Sin. 104, f. 62r.

Troy, but as its radicalization: a city whose destruction no longer belongs to the logic of war, but to that of unbounded cruelty, in which the very form of human settlement is undone.

Fornax Babylonica

Szpot grounds his central theological argument in the third chapter of the Book of Daniel, which recounts the confrontation between the three youths and King Nebuchadnezzar and their miraculous deliverance from the fiery furnace. He reads the fate of the Jesuit missionaries at Zhang's court through this biblical paradigm. Central to his narrative is the metaphor of the *fornax Babylonica*[25], by means of which the sufferings of the missionaries and the inhabitants of Sichuan are cast as a trial analogous to the persecutions endured by the righteous in sacred history.

The parallel extends beyond the image of the fornax Babylonica and turns on a more fundamental point: the interpretation of signs. Daniel survives because he can explain what the ruler cannot understand. Dreams are not private phenomena; they concern rule, judgment, and the order of the realm. His knowledge is at once dangerous and necessary, and it is this ambivalence that secures his survival. The Jesuits in seventeenth-century Sichuan occupied a comparable position. They did not interpret dreams, but the heavens. Eclipses, calendars, and other celestial signs carried political significance and demanded explanation. In this context, astronomy assumed a role akin to prophecy: it exposed the interpreter, yet at the same time rendered him indispensable. Chinese scholars, by contrast, proved of no use to Zhang, just as the Babylonian sages failed Nebuchadnezzar. Western astronomy, however, held a particular appeal for him, in much the same way that Daniel's interpretation of dreams proved decisive for the Babylonian king.[26] The missionaries were sustained within this *fornax sinica* not only by faith, but also by their astronomical expertise. One striking line from the sources encapsulates this condition: "O blessed calendar, through you we live!" – a poignant reflection of their self-understanding amid these horrors.[27]

Alongside these two explicit references to the Book of Daniel, Szpot's narrative also contains a third implicit allusion. In William Blake's famous

25 "Petiit uterque Pater, ut ex illa fornace Babylonica ad suum se transferrent tentorium; negavit utrique Tyrannus," ARSI, Jap. Sin. 104, f. 65r.

26 The Book of Daniel 2:1–49.

27 "O beatum Calendarium, per te vivimus". ARSI, Jap. Sin. 143, f. 222r.

engraving, an iconographical commentary on the fourth chapter of the book, Nebuchadnezzar is rendered as a profoundly bestial, hybrid figure, fusing traits of a predatory bird with those of a terrestrial animal. Reduced to a degraded, crawling posture, he moves on all fours in a state of frenzied derangement, his matted beard trailing along his hand. His nails have assumed the form of talons, his flesh is depicted in coarse, almost visceral tones, and his fixed, glaring eyes have all but relinquished their human expression.[28] While Nebuchadnezzar, in the biblical narrative, ultimately recovers his reason and humanity, Zhang in Szpot's account lives as a beast and perishes as one.

Theological and cultural interpretations of violence

Jean Jarric (1566–1617), a Jesuit writer, distinguishes between two kinds of cruelty: the diabolical, arising from demonic motives, and the barbaric, stemming from human nature itself. These categories provided a framework through which the missionaries could interpret the excesses they witnessed.[29] More strikingly still, Zhang – evil incarnate – presents himself as a defender of moral order. In his conversations with the missionaries, Zhang Xianzhong sought to justify his rule through theological reasoning: he argued that although the missionaries had come to proclaim the law of the Lord of Heaven, the people had refused to obey it, and that, despite having received all things from Heaven, they gave nothing in return. He further claimed that even Confucius had regarded the people of the province as corrupted beyond repair. This logic echoes, in distorted form, earlier imperial reasoning. The last Ming emperor, Chongzhen, is said to have advised his successor, Li Zicheng, to punish the officials whom he blamed for the fall of the empire – he was willing to sacrifice the mandarins but sought to spare the common people.[30] Zhang, by contrast, extends guilt to all. For him, the entire population

28 The Book of Daniel 2:25–30; George M. Harper, "Blake's 'Nebuchadnezzar' in 'The City of Dreadful Night,'" *Studies in Philology* 50/1 (January 1953): 68–80.

29 Pierre Du Jarric, *Histoire des choses plus memorables advenues tant ez Indes Orientales, que autres païs, de la descouverte des Portugais, En l'est ablissement & progrez de lafoy Chrestienne & Catholique: Et principalement de ce que les Religieux de la Compagnie de Jesus y ont faict, & enduré pour la mesme fin* (Bourdeaus: Par Simon Millanges Imprimeur ordinaire du Roy, 1610), 341, 459–461. A more detailed explanation see: Hanna Kawon Wadas, *Pozycja i znaczenie tradycyjnych religii we wczesnonowożytnych Chinach w świetle relacji misjonarzy jezuickich*, Doctoral thesis (Kraków: Uniwersytet Ignatianum w Krakowie, 2025), 25–26.

30 "Macta Mandarinos, conserva meum populum." ARSI, Jap. Sin. 103, f. 34v.

of Sichuan stands condemned – by Heaven, by Confucius, and by himself, as the supposed agent of divine will. He thus provides a theological justification for indiscriminate violence: since all are equally corrupt, none deserve to be spared. In Zhang's view, all people are equally evil and therefore equally worthy of death.[31]

Thomas Dunin Szpot and genocide studies

The Jesuit testimony concerning Zhang Xianzhong's massacres in Sichuan can also be situated within the broader framework of contemporary genocide studies. On the theological plane, the abyss between bestial cruelty and human heroism recalls the reflections of Father Konstanty Michalski, who during the Second World War meditated on the moral gulf separating bestiality from heroism.[32] In legal and conceptual history, the category of genocidium, first defined by Raphael Lemkin, has been further developed by Ryszard Szawłowski, who introduced the notion of *genocidium atrox*, a particularly cruel and dreadful form of extermination.[33] The tragedy of Sichuan, with its scale of violence and systematic destruction surpassing, in terms of sheer atrocity, even the later Taiping rebellion. Jesuit accounts, beginning already with Martino Martini, register the unprecedented nature of this bloodshed, while modern scholarship, including *The Cambridge History of Genocide*,[34] has provided a conceptual lens through which to interpret such early modern instances of mass killing within the history of global violence.

31 "Coelum fecit res universas propter homines, et homines nihil propter coelum". ARSI, Jap. Sin 103, f. 58r.

32 Konstanty Michalski, *Między heroizmem a bestialstwem* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Mariackie, 1949).

33 Ryszard Szawłowski, „Rafał Lemkin (1900–1959) – polski prawnik twórcą pojęcia 'ludobójstwo,'" in *Zbrodnie przeszłości. Opracowania i materiały prokuratorów IPN*, vol. 2: *Ludobójstwo*, ed. Radosław Ignatiew, Antoni Kura (Warszawa: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2008), 7–22; *idem*, "Trzy tematy z dziedziny 'genocydologii,'" in *Zbrodnie przeszłości. Opracowania i materiały prokuratorów IPN*, vol. 2: *Ludobójstwo*, ed. Radosław Ignatiew, Antoni Kura (Warszawa: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2008), 26–27.

34 *The Cambridge World History of Genocide*, vol. 2: *Genocide in the Indigenous, Early Modern and Imperial Worlds, from c.1535 to World War One*, ed. Ned Blackhawk, Ben Kiernan, Benjamin Madley, Rebe Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023).

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The Funeral Rites of Xu Guangqi in the Account of Tomasz Dunin Szpot, SJ (*Historiae Sinarum Imperii*, Jap. Sin. 103, 4r–5v) Chinese and Christian Funerary Traditions in Convergence[1]

Obrzędy pogrzebowe Xu Guangqi w relacji Tomasza Dunina Szpota SJ (*Historiae Sinarum Imperii*, Jap. Sin. 103, 4r–5v) Zbieżność chińskich i chrześcijańskich tradycji pogrzebowych

Abstract

The aim of this article is to analyze the description of the funeral ceremonies of Xu Guangqi, a Chinese mandarin and imperial official who, after

1 This research was funded by the state budget under the programme of the Minister of Education and Science, *National Programme for the Development of the Humanities* (project no. NPRH/U22/SP/0021/2023/12), entitled *Historiae Sinarum Imperii and Collectanea Historiae Sinensis by Tomasz Szpot Dunin SJ – the Polish Contribution to the Study of Chinese Culture and History in the Early Modern Period*. The funding amount was PLN 1,566,263.42, which is also the total value of the project.

his baptism, was known as Paulus (Paul). This description is presented in Tomasz Dunin Szpot's *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* (Jap. Sin. 103). The intertwining of elements from native Chinese and Christian traditions within these funeral rites indirectly demonstrates the validity of the accommodative method adopted by the Jesuits in China and developed and propagated by Matteo Ricci, SJ. One of the core assumptions of the method was respect for local secular traditions, which the Jesuits allowed Chinese converts to continue to practice. The detailed description of Paul Xu's funeral ceremonies thus provides evidence of the possibility of reconciling Chinese and Christian traditions and, indirectly, confirms the effectiveness of the solutions adopted by the Jesuits in their evangelization efforts in seventeenth-century China.

Keywords: Xu Guangqi, Matteo Ricci, funeral rites, accommodation, Candida Xu.

Abstrakt

Celem niniejszego artykułu jest analiza opisu ceremonii pogrzebowych Xu Guangqiego, chińskiego mandaryna i urzędnika cesarskiego, który po chrzcie przyjął imię Paulus (Paweł). Opis ten został przedstawiony w dziele Tomasza Dunina Szpota *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* (Jap. Sin. 103). Wzajemne przenikanie się elementów rodzimych tradycji chińskich i tradycji chrześcijańskiej w tych obrzędach pogrzebowych pośrednio ukazuje zasadność metody akomodacji przyjętej przez jezuitów w Chinach, rozwiniętej i propagowanej przez Mattea Ricciego SJ. Jednym z podstawowych założeń tej metody był szacunek dla lokalnych tradycji świeckich, które jezuici pozwalali chińskim konwertytom nadal praktykować. Szczegółowy opis ceremonii pogrzebowych Pawła Xu stanowi zatem świadectwo możliwości pogodzenia tradycji chińskich i chrześcijańskich oraz pośrednio potwierdza skuteczność rozwiązań przyjętych przez jezuitów w ich działalności ewangelizacyjnej w siedemnastowiecznych Chinach.

Słowa klucze: Xu Guangqi, Matteo Ricci, obrzędy pogrzebowe, akomodacja, Candida Xu.

In the historical work *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* by Tomasz Dunin Szpot genre scenes occupy a significant place. These scenes depict events from the everyday lives of entire Christian communities as well as of individual believers. Their function and purpose within the historical narrative are varied: from simple embellishment that breaks the sequence of predominantly military events, through supplementing the portrayal of key historical figures with accounts of their private lives, to explaining aspects of Chinese cultural specificity. Such explanations may have

helped European readers better understand the text, while also serving to arouse their interest and encourage further reading. An important part of these genre scenes consists of depictions from the lives of Chinese Christians who, through their conduct, actions, commitment, and at times also through their suffering and death, bear witness to their fidelity to the new religion they embraced as a result of the missionary activity of the Society of Jesus. Scenes of this kind constitute clear evidence of the success of Jesuit missionary efforts and, at the same time, attest to the validity of the methods they adopted in proclaiming the Gospel.

One such approach was the method of accommodation, most commonly referred to as the strategy of Matteo Ricci, SJ (1552–1610), as it was he who developed it fully and put it into practice, although its foundations had been laid earlier by another Jesuit, Alessandro Valignano (1539–1606), who served as visitor of Jesuit missions in East Asia between 1574 and 1606. This method was based on four fundamental principles: the accommodation or adaptation of missionaries to Chinese culture; a vertical model of instruction, directed from the highest social strata toward the lower ones; evangelization through European learning, employed as a means of gaining attention and respect; and openness and tolerance toward Chinese cultural values. The deliberate intertwining of Chinese cultural practices and Christian religious practices, treated as complementary rather than mutually exclusive, constituted a compromise carefully developed by the Jesuits in China. This approach enabled the gradual spread of Christianity in a culturally distant land without disrupting, and while respecting, its long-established social and state structures. It was also the only model of evangelization – and indeed of Jesuit missionary presence in China – accepted by the emperors. In Europe, however, it did not always meet with understanding, let alone approval, which the Jesuits sought persistently amid the intensifying so-called Accommodation Controversy.

In this article, I aim to demonstrate how Tomasz Dunin Szpot, in his account of the funeral rites of Xu Guangqi (徐光启)[2] – one of the most prominent Chinese converts of the early seventeenth century – juxtaposed and harmonized elements of Chinese tradition with Catholic ritual practice. In doing so, he revealed their compatibility and, more or less

2 For more on the life and importance of Xu Guangqi for the beginnings of the Jesuit mission in China cf. Gregory Blue, "Xu Guangqi in the West: Early Jesuit Sources and the Construction of an Identity," in *Statecraft & Intellectual Renewal in Late Ming China: The Cross-Cultural Synthesis of Xu Guangqi (1562–1633)*, *Sinica Leidensia*, vol. 50 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 19–71.

consciously, argued for the validity of the assumptions underlying Matteo Ricci's method of accommodation.

Among the disciples and associates gathered around Matteo Ricci during his time in China, Xu Guangqi undoubtedly occupied a position of particular importance. Over time, he became one of the pillars of the Chinese Catholic Church, alongside two other eminent mandarin converts: Li Zhizao (1565–1630) and Yang Tingyun (1557–1627).[3] Xu Guangqi's figure is inextricably linked with the beginnings of the Jesuit mission in China, not least through the well-known double portrait of Xu Guangqi and Matteo Ricci included in *China Monumentis Illustrata* (Amsterdam 1667) by Athanasius Kircher, SJ. To this day, this image continues to serve as an illustration of the fundamental principle guiding the Jesuit evangelization strategy in seventeenth-century China: dialogue, friendship, and mutual inspiration between scholars of East and West.



Fig. 1. Illustration of Xu Guangqi and Matteo Ricci from, Athanasius Kircher, *China Monumentis Illustrata* (1667).

3 Cf. Williard J. Peterson, "Why Did They Become Christians? Yang T'ing-yun, Li Chih-tsao, and Hsu Kuang-ch'i," in *East Meets West: The Jesuits in China, 1582–1773*, ed. Charles Ronan and Bonnie Oh (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1988), 129–152.

Born in Shanghai on 24 April 1562 into an aristocratic family, Xu Guangqi attained high positions within the imperial administration thanks to his thorough education and innate talents. At the Ming court during the reign of the Chongzhen Emperor (r. 1627–1644), he served, among other roles, as Minister of Rites, overseeing state affairs related to ritual, culture, education, and foreign relations. He also held the office of Vice Grand Secretary, effectively acting as deputy head of the imperial Grand Secretariat. In this capacity, he was involved, among other matters, in the defense of the empire against Manchu incursions, cooperating in this regard with the Portuguese. At the same time, in accordance with his status as a scholar-official, Xu Guangqi pursued scholarly work in mathematics and astronomy – most notably in connection with calendar reform – as well as in agriculture and irrigation engineering.

In 1596, Xu Guangqi first came into contact with Jesuit missionaries and Catholic teachings when he met Lazzaro Cattaneo, SJ (1560–1640) in Canton. His subsequent encounter with Matteo Ricci in Nanjing in 1600 encouraged him to undertake a systematic study of Christian doctrine. After studying Ricci's *Tianzhu shiyi* (*The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*) and completing a ten-day period of instruction in preparation for receiving the sacrament of baptism, Xu Guangqi was baptized on 15 January 1603. The sacrament was administered by João de Rocha, SJ (1565–1623), who bestowed upon him a new Christian name – Paulus (Paul). The choice of this name was certainly not accidental, as the example of the Apostle of the Gentiles was intended to guide the newly baptized convert in his efforts on behalf of the Christian community.[4] Following his baptism, Xu demonstrated profound commitment to the dissemination of Christianity in China, as well as to the transmission of knowledge gained through his collaborative studies with Matteo Ricci. To this end, he relocated to Beijing in 1604. This cooperation resulted, among other achievements, in the first translation of Euclid's *Elements* into Chinese and in Latin translations of Confucian teachings. Paulus Xu Guangqi not only actively promoted the Christian faith within his own family – leading to the baptism of his wife, children, and extended relatives – but also worked for the growth and development of the Chinese Christian community as a whole. To accomplish this, he financed the construction of Jesuit churches and residences in his native Shanghai, actively protected missionaries from persecution, and, in his memorials

4 The special patronage of St. Paul the Apostle over Xu Guangqi was also emphasized during the funeral rites discussed in this article, as a portrait of St. Paul was carried in the procession as the first sacred image.

addressed to the imperial court, argued for the possibility of coexistence between Christianity and Confucian teaching.

Xu Guangqi died on 8 November 1633 in Beijing. During his illness, he was accompanied and provided with spiritual support by another Jesuit, Johann Schall von Bell, who also ensured that Xu Guangqi's body was transported to Shanghai, his native city, in accordance with Chinese funerary customs. There, the body was laid in state and remained on public display for the following eight years, as only in 1641 did external circumstances allow for the funeral ceremonies to be conducted with the full ceremonial honors due to an official of his rank.

In his *History of China* (*Historiae Sinarum Imperii*, Jap. Sin. 103, 4r–5v), Tomasz Dunin Szpot provided a detailed account of the entire ceremony, offering a careful description of each rite, which combined elements of traditional Chinese ritual practice with Christian customs[5]. This extensive description – spanning three pages of the manuscript – may have played a significant role in shaping the perceptions of European readers, for whom Dunin Szpot's work was ultimately intended, regarding the possibility of a harmonious integration of the two traditions. The funeral of such a prominent state official, and at the same time a devout Christian and defender of the Church in China, as Xu Guangqi was, constituted tangible evidence that the Confucian doctrine concerning the veneration of ancestors through funerary rites and commemorative ceremonies could be fully reconciled with Catholic doctrine – one of the central points of contention in the so-called Chinese Rites Controversy. In Dunin Szpot's account, elements of Confucian and Christian tradition resonate with one another and form a harmonious whole.

Dunin Szpot emphatically underscores this reconciliation of the principles of both traditions already during the preparations for the funeral of Paulus Xu, as the decision concerning the form of burial was taken with particular care. It considered several factors and was the result of consultations between the family and the Jesuits:

> … Doctor Jacob, after consultation with Father Brancato, relatives, and friends, undertook to render to his father the final honors with such dignity as were required by his father's rank, the good reputation of the Christian

5 A detailed account of European and Chinese funeral customs and the interpenetration of both traditions in China under the influence of the Jesuit evangelization can be found in Nicolas Standaert, *The Interweaving of Rituals Funerals in the Cultural Exchange Between China and Europe* (Washington: University of Washington Press, 2008).

religion in the eyes of the pagans, and the laws of the empire concerning the burial of distinguished men.

The Doctor Jacob mentioned in the quotation above – Xu Ji – was the only son of Xu Guangqi. As his successor and closest surviving relative, he was obliged both to observe the longest period of mourning among all family members and to ensure a proper burial, provide his father with posthumous honor, and care for his grave for the rest of his life.[6] The observance of mourning, understood as "clothing oneself in filial obedience" (*chuanxiao*), required the son to wear a coarse, sleeveless garment without hems or adornment, fastened only with a belt, for three years.[7] For state officials, the death of a parent[8] imposed the formal obligation to take a three-year leave from duties toward the state. Through both appearance and conduct, the son was required to manifest sorrow at the loss of his father, a requirement that was to be particularly evident during the funeral ceremony itself, when the son – physically weakened by grief – walked in the procession leaning on a staff and supported by relatives.[9]

Dunin Szpot explains the extension of the mourning period beyond that prescribed by tradition in the case of Xu Guangqi's death not only by the son's exceptional sense of loss and respect for the deceased, but also by the necessity of preparing a dignified burial site – namely, the construction of a mausoleum[10] and the planting of cypress trees around

6 Cf. Wiesław Olszewski, *Chiny. Zarys kultury* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu, 2003), 77.

7 In accordance with the degree of kinship to the deceased, the same attire was also prescribed for a father after the death of his firstborn son, for a wife after the death of her husband, for an unmarried daughter after the death of her father, and for a vassal after the death of his liege. In cases of more distant kinship, mourning garments were correspondingly lighter and more artfully made, and the period for which they were worn was shorter; cf. Jacques Pimpaneau, *Chiny. Kultura i tradycje*, trans. Irena Kałużyńska (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Akademickie DIALOG, 2001), 123–124.

8 In pre-Ming China, only the death of a father required the observance of a three-year mourning period, while the death of a mother entailed mourning of the second rank, unless she was the father's principal wife. From the time of the Ming dynasty onward, mourning for one's mother was obligatorily observed for three years, just as in the case of mourning for one's father.

9 John Chinnery, "Rodzina i społeczeństwo," in *Chiny. Kraj niebiańskiego smoka*, ed. Edward L. Shaughnessy, trans. Anna K. Maleszko, Bożena Mierzejewska (Warszawa: Horyzont, 2001), 60.

10 In Chinese tradition, both the selection of the site for the construction of a tomb and the determination of the date of the funeral required consultation with a geomancer. Dunin Szpot does not mention such consultations being undertaken by the Xu family; however, it may be inferred that the exceptionally long interval between the death and

it. Dunin Szpot emphasizes that cypress trees were also regarded by the Chinese as trees associated with mourning and burial, although it appears that their association with graves in China was rather linked to their perception as symbols of longevity.[11] The long lifespan of these plants, planted as guardians of tombs, was meant to ensure the enduring preservation of the burial sites themselves.

In shaping decisions concerning the entire course of Xu Guangqi's funeral ceremony – which was intended to serve as a dual testimony to the deceased's standing, both within the state and within the Christian community – a significant role was naturally played by the spiritual guardian of the local Christians, Francesco Brancato, SJ (1607–1671).[12] His opinion, and above all his participation in the ceremony, exerted a strong influence on the funeral's representational impact. The ceremony thus took on the character of a public manifestation of Christianity, while at the same time remaining fully embedded within and respectful of Chinese tradition. This is already evident in the rites preceding the burial itself. Dunin describes them as follows:

> Thus, on the night preceding the mourning procession and the funeral ceremony, one hundred and forty Christians dressed in mourning garments set out from the Jesuit church, carrying lit torches and walking pair by pair in a long line through the most prominent streets of the city, as far as the city gate, and from there to the House of Learning,[13] where the body was lying in state. At the head of this mournful procession marched four purple banners bearing a white cross, while a fifth – white with a purple cross and the five wounds of Christ – was carried by four selected youths. From four silver vessels filled with fragrant incense, they rendered homage to the signs of Christ's death. Next followed a gilded cross of Christ, mounted on a magnificently decorated frame and surrounded on all sides by the light of candles made of pure wax, carried on the shoulders of bearers. It was accompanied by many other Christian faithful with their rosaries – who, as

burial of Xu Guangqi could have been conditioned by multiple factors, including those not explicitly addressed in the text.

11 Cf. Wolfram Eberhard, *Symbole chińskie. Słownik*, trans. Renata Darda (Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych UNIVERSITAS, 2001), s.v. *cyprys (bo)*, 45.

12 Francesco Brancato was an Italian Jesuit who conducted vigorous and effective evangelizing activity in China, including in Shanghai, where he baptized several thousand Chinese converts, cf. https://www.fondazioneintorcetta.info/pdf/Brancati_Francesco_1607_1671.pdf (accessed on: 29.12.2025).

13 The House of Learning, a pavilion built by Paulus Xu Guangqi himself as a place of study, was located outside the city walls, which made it particularly suitable for displaying the coffin containing the deceased's body.

> mentioned above, numbered many thousands within the walls of this city. In this ordered formation, the procession passed through streets lined on both sides with spectators and proceeded to the House of Learning. There, Doctor Jacob Xu, a mandarin, together with his three sons, came out to meet them. He knelt with great reverence, received those approaching in accordance with Chinese custom, and venerated the cross. Finally, when the cross was carried into the spacious main hall of the House, he offered solemn thanks to the Christians for their piety and dismissed them.

The throngs of thousands accompanying the Christian symbols in the procession, along with banners and the cross carried through clouds of incense to the funerary hall, were received by the principal mourners in the Chinese manner – with a bow to the ground. This visitation of the deceased, performed by Chinese Christians, fulfilled a duty prescribed by Chinese custom. Relatives were obliged to bow before the coffin, and the number of mourning laments and expressions of grief they uttered was strictly determined by their degree of kinship to the deceased.

The most important and grandest ceremonies were associated with the funeral itself. In the traditional Chinese ritual, they began in front of the ancestral temple, from where the procession set out according to a fixed order. At the front walked professional mourners, followed by musicians and exorcists driving away evil spirits, and then the mourners carrying personal belongings of the deceased. In the case of officials and warriors, these included items associated with their offices and weapons, as well as garments, vessels, and jewelry intended to be buried with the deceased. Next came the coffin, transported on a special funeral cart, behind which the deceased's family followed according to a hierarchical order determined by degree of kinship.[14]

All of these elements are present in the description of Xu Guangqi's funeral – the Christian Paulus Xu – with the difference that they were supplemented or modified by elements of Catholic ritual. Thus, in the early hours of the morning, when the procession was formed to escort Xu Guangqi to his final resting place, at the head of the funeral procession

> … a triumphal feretory bore an image of Saint Paul the Apostle, Teacher to the Nations, holding the Gospel in his hand – as a memorial to the tireless zeal and fervent effort with which Doctor Paulus Xu Colao[15] promoted the Christian faith in the Chinese empire. After the image of the holy Apostle marched six banners depicting the holy Archangels Michael, Gabriel, and

14 Cf. Alexandra Wetzel, *Chiny. Od ustanowienia cesarstwa do dynastii Ming* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo "Arkady," 2008), 296.

15 *Colao* – a Chinese term for a high official.

> Raphael; the Guardian Angel; the Queen of Angels; and the Holy Cross. These were positioned appropriately among groups of Christians carrying censers with precious incense. Following them walked one hundred and forty Christians in a long line, carrying lit torches and rosaries in their hands.

Placing images of an entire array of Catholic saints, the Virgin Mary, and the cross at the forefront of the procession clearly establishes a hierarchy, placing the religious element before the cultural. However, for balance, the next stage of the procession takes on a strictly traditional character, referring to Chinese history and the personal achievements of the deceased:

> Next, twenty tables draped with white silk were carried, each displaying painted emblems drawn from the early history of China's great heroes, celebrated for deeds benefiting the state, but here adapted in honor of Paulus Colao. Accompanying these tributes to Paulus were his garments, insignia of the Colao rank, and a gilded official's chair, borne on the shoulders of four men, flanked by four mandarins on horseback. Behind them proceeded an image of Paulus Colao himself, displayed on a feretory covered with silk interwoven with gold, surrounded by a radiant glow and carried by eight men – one might imagine that the living Colao was stepping out from his tribunal or palace into the city. Accompanying the image were twenty drums struck in a mournful rhythm, alongside weeping mandarins, former students of Doctor Paulus, dressed in mourning garments of coarse hemp and bound with straw cords; next followed friends, relatives, Father Francesco Brancato between two Christian scholars – grandsons of Colao – and Doctor Jacob, the son, in accordance with Chinese custom supported on a staff, appearing faint with profound grief and sorrow, held up by two attendants. After this mournful scene came the body itself, enclosed in a coffin made of fragrant, decay-resistant wood, covered with white silk embroidered with a magnificent red cross, topped with the inscription of the Savior in the four initials, as custom dictated. Flanking the coffin were, on the right, Paulus's widow – the mother of Doctor Jacob – borne in a litter by eight men, and on the left, Jacob's wife with their two daughters, Candida and Felicita – each in her own litter carried by four men. Behind the coffin followed all the female servants of the household, dressed in mourning attire, separated from the view of spectators on both sides by linen curtains two hundred hands long and eight hands high, hung on poles like walls. At the very end of the procession walked countless poor Christians

gathered from across the Shanghai region, to whom, after the funeral rites, all of the aforementioned tables with offerings were distributed as alms.[16]

Thus, all elements of a traditional Chinese funeral were preserved. The mourners, dressed in coarse garments, proceeded toward the burial site to the solemn rhythm of the drums. The deceased, present in a dual sense – both through his image and as the body resting in the coffin – undertook his journey to the final resting place. His son accompanied him on this journey but walked with difficulty, weakened by prolonged grief, seeking support from the men accompanying him and from a long staff (*zhangqi*), which complemented the mourning attire and, in accordance with tradition, was made of undyed cloth.

The traditional absence of color in the mourners' garments is echoed in the shroud covering the coffin. It is made of white silk, for it was precisely the lack of color – white[17] – that was perceived in China as the color of mourning. Against this background, however, the image of the cross embroidered on the shroud stands out in vivid red. The color of the embroidery is certainly not accidental, as it not only refers to the washing of the deceased in the life-giving blood of the crucified Christ, but also evokes Chinese symbolism, in which red has been regarded since ancient times as a life-giving color[18] associated with fortune. In this way, the symbolism of the two traditions is intertwined in the posthumous shroud of Paulus Xu. Also noteworthy is the presence of women accompanying the coffin, somewhat hidden within their litters. Carried, again in accordance with the hierarchy of kinship, the female relatives of the deceased, along with their attendants walking on foot, expanded the throng of those mourning Xu Guangqi – people who, as we may infer, owed their conversion to Christianity to him. Among them was one of the deceased's granddaughters, Candida Xu, who would later play a significant role in the history of Christianity in China. She became renowned for her piety and efforts on behalf of Catholicism, and in some studies is even referred to as the "mother of the Chinese Church." The activities

16 These carefully itemized gifts intended for almsgiving consisted of "numerous slaughtered pigs, sheep, calves, hares, roosters, and other animals of this kind, together with two hundred or more tables lavishly laden with various dishes and covered with silk cloths – all of which, after the funeral, were to be distributed among the poor."

17 Cf. Pimpaneau, *Chiny. Kultura i tradycje*, 122; Janusz Smołucha, "Pogrzeb Matteo Ricciego SJ (1552–1610) w *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* Tomasza Szpota Dunina. Kulturowa interakcja", *Rocznik Filozoficzny Ignatianum* 29/4 (2003), 64.

18 "Red appears to have been regarded in prehistoric times as a 'life-giving' color; burial finds reveal that cinnabar or red ochre was placed in graves together with the dead.", cf. Eberhard, *Symbole chińskie*., s.v. *czerwony (hong)*, 47.

of Candida Xu were described and publicized in Europe by the Jesuit Philippe Couplet (1623–1693), who collaborated with her.[19]

The sheer number of people forming the funeral procession – which Dunin Szpot emphatically stresses consisted of "countless Christians" – most clearly attests to the effectiveness of the Jesuits' evangelizing efforts in China. Paulus Xu's funeral was a carefully staged and deliberate manifestation of the triumph of Catholicism, intended to appeal to the imagination and emotions of even those residents of Shanghai who had not yet encountered the teachings of the "Fathers from the West." Through its monumental theatricality, visual spectacle, musical accompaniment, and mass scale, the funeral procession of a high-ranking official, esteemed for his service to the local community, served as the most effective catechesis the Jesuits could provide to the people of Shanghai. This is also why Dunin Szpot's account so meticulously describes all elements of the procession, highlighting the Christian symbols interwoven with traditional Chinese ritual. After reading it, a European audience could hardly fail to feel admiration for the Jesuits' achievements, who could boast such a spectacular success in their evangelizing mission.

The funeral procession itself, moreover, attracts far more attention than the burial ceremony, which is described much more modestly and unfolds, as it were, along two parallel tracks: at the coffin, Chinese rites (referred to by Dunin Szpot as "pagan") are performed in succession, followed by Catholic rites celebrated by Fr. Francesco Brancato:

> In this order of procession and with such solemnity of ceremony, the cortege reached the burial site. There, between two so-called triumphal arches – such as are commonly erected in China in honor of meritorious men – and amid a ring of cypresses surrounding those arches, a spacious chapel was built over the grave. When the body was taken from the shoulders of the bearers and laid within it, the pagan friends, having performed their funerary rites, returned to the city, while Father Brancato, together with the Christians, after reciting – according to the Church rite – the Office for the Dead and other prayers for the soul of this righteous man, brought the funeral observances of that day to a close.

From this passage we do not learn according to which rite or religious order the Chinese performed their ceremonies, which may point to a certain ignorance on the part of the Jesuits, who not infrequently subsumed all systems of Chinese belief under the common label of *idololatria*.

19 Cf. Gail King, *"A Model for All Christian Women". Candida Xu, a Chinese Woman of the Seventeenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2020).

What is noteworthy, however, is that although Paul Xu was a Christian, his non-Christian friends were not denied the right to pay him respect in accordance with their own religious convictions. Nevertheless, it is the Christian prayers that ultimately bring the ceremony to a close, in a sense sealing the entire set of rites.

The following day brought the official completion of the farewell to Xu Guangqi. At sunrise, the Prefect of Shanghai, accompanied by mandarins, presented at the sarcophagus a gift sent by the Emperor in honor of the distinguished official. After the ceremony had been carried out in accordance with Chinese custom and the entire procession returned to the city, the final act of the funeral took place – the placing of the coffin in the sarcophagus, preceded by a blessing and prayers performed by Fr. Francesco Brancato. The Jesuit additionally covered the coffin with a white silk cloth, on which an epitaph of his own authorship was embroidered in golden letters, with the following wording:[20]

> To the Great Doctor of the Chinese Empire, Paul Xu, counsellor of the imperial cabinet of that realm, a man most eminent among all the dignitaries of the state; for his acceptance of the Christian faith, which he honored, loved, and spread; renowned beyond the measure of his earthly years – the entire Society of Jesus has erected this monument as a token of grateful remembrance and love.

The second eulogy, also authored by Fr. Brancato and similar in content, but written in Chinese, was embroidered in gold thread on silk and hung in the main hall of the House of Learning, where Xu Guangqi's body had previously rested while awaiting burial. The text praised the merits of the deceased for the state, for the local community of Shanghai, and for the Society of Jesus, presenting the magnitude and versatility of his achievements. Its placement in a publicly accessible space, in a position of honor, made it possible for all learned mandarins visiting the House of Learning to become acquainted with it. Dunin Szpot once again emphasizes Fr. Brancato's skillful combination of the two traditions: although the eulogy was written in Chinese and on a traditional material, its style and form were European. This was so well received by learned readers that it ultimately led to the eulogy being published in print.

In *The History of China*, Dunin Szpot contributed to securing and perpetuating the posthumous glory of Xu Guangqi, portraying him in

20 On the epitaph and its reconstruction on Xu Guangqi's tomb in Shanghai, cf. article *Tomasz Szpot Dunin's Historiae Sinarum Imperii and the Original Text of Xu Guangqi's Latin Epitaph* (in print).

the final paragraph of his account as an uncompromising promoter and defender of Christianity in China, as well as a great benefactor of the Society of Jesus. Paulus Xu provided the Jesuits with comprehensive support and means of livelihood, institutional and financial protection, and through his personal example attracted entire multitudes of new believers to the Church. To this day, Xu Guangqi's tomb remains a central feature of the Shanghai park that bears his name, and the 350th anniversary of his death was publicly commemorated. At that time (in 1983), for understandable reasons, media coverage emphasized primarily Xu Guangqi's contributions to the development of Chinese science and technology, paying little attention to the Christian dimension of his life. The twenty-first century – especially the year 2010, when the 400th anniversary of Matteo Ricci's death was solemnly celebrated in Beijing – changed the perception of Xu Guangqi's life achievements in global media and scholarly literature. His figure, alongside Ricci's, once again became a symbol of intercultural dialogue, of China's openness to the Western world, and of a partnership rooted in mutual acceptance and respect for difference. His contributions to the Church were also highlighted, which resulted in the opening of his beatification process in 2011.[21] This undoubtedly confirms the conviction held by Matteo Ricci and the continuators of his evangelization method in China: that the Chinese could become Christians without losing their cultural and social identity – that in becoming Christians, they need not cease to be Chinese. Xu Guangqi and his descendants, immortalized on the pages of Tomasz Dunin Szpot's *Historia Sinarum Imperii*, constitute the best proof of this.

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21 Cf. https://jcapsj.org/2011/06/chinese-catholic-layman-be-beatified/ (accessed on: 29.12.2025)

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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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Maximus inter maximos Imperatores. The Idealisation of the Kangxi Emperor in the Account of Tomasz Ignacy Dunin Szpot SJ[1]

Maximus inter maximos Imperatores. Idealizacja cesarza Kangxi w relacji Tomasza Ignacego Dunina Szpota SJ

Abstract

The article analyses the image of the Kangxi Emperor (1661–1722) in the account of the Polish Jesuit Tomasz Ignacy Dunin Szpot preserved in the manuscript with the shelfmark Jap. Sin. 111. The aim of the study is to examine the way in which the ruler is portrayed in Jesuit missionary

1 The quotation is taken from the manuscript of Tomasz Ignacy Dunin Szpot. In full it reads as follows: "[Camhi–H.W.] maximus inter maximos Imperatores, quos Sina habuit dictus fuerit." ARSI, Jap. Sin. 111, f. 6r. This research was funded by the state budget under the programme of the Minister of Education and Science, *National Programme for the Development of the Humanities* (project no. NPRH/U22/SP/0021/2023/12), entitled *Historiae Sinarum Imperii and Collectanea Historiae Sinensis by Tomasz Szpot Dunin SJ – the Polish Contribution to the Study of Chinese Culture and History in the Early Modern Period*. The funding amount was PLN 1,566,263.42, which is also the total value of the project.

literature and to identify the mechanisms leading to his idealisation. Drawing on reports of missionaries active at the Qing court, Szpot presents the emperor as a monarch endowed with the qualities of an ideal ruler: extraordinary memory, intellectual acuity, a love of learning, and the ability to govern the state with prudence. An important element of this narrative is also Kangxi's interest in European sciences and the activities of Jesuits – especially Ferdinand Verbiest and Thomas Pereira – who served as his teachers in mathematics, astronomy, and music. An analysis of Szpot's text demonstrates that this description fits into the characteristic pattern of missionary accounts that tended to idealise rulers favourable to the activities of the Jesuits.

Key words: Kangxi Emperor, Tomasz Ignacy Dunin Szpot SJ, Jesuit missionaries in China, idealisation of the ruler.

Abstrakt

Artykuł analizuje obraz cesarza Kangxi (1661–1722) w relacji polskiego jezuity Tomasza Ignacego Dunina Szpota zachowanej w rękopisie o sygnaturze Jap. Sin. 111. Celem pracy jest ukazanie sposobu przedstawiania władcy w jezuickim piśmiennictwie misyjnym oraz mechanizmów prowadzących do jego idealizacji. Szpot, opierając się na relacjach misjonarzy działających na dworze Qingów, kreśli wizerunek cesarza jako monarchy obdarzonego cechami władcy doskonałego: niezwykłą pamięcią, bystrością umysłu, umiłowaniem nauki oraz zdolnością do roztropnego kierowania państwem. Istotnym elementem tej narracji jest także zainteresowanie cesarza Kangxi naukami europejskimi oraz działalność jezuitów – zwłaszcza Ferdinanda Verbiesta i Thomasa Pereiry – którzy pełnili funkcję jego mistrzów w zakresie matematyki, astronomii i muzyki. Analiza tekstu Szpota pokazuje, że opis ten wpisuje się w charakterystyczny dla relacji misyjnych model idealizowania władców przychylnych działalności jezuitów.

Słowa klucze: cesarz Kangxi, Tomasz Ignacy Dunin Szpot SJ, misjonarze jezuiccy w Chinach, idealizacja władcy

One of the central elements of the missionary strategy of the Society of Jesus in the early modern period lay in its effort to shape societies through their political and intellectual elites. The Jesuits operated on the assumption that the conversion – or at least the goodwill – of the ruler might open the way to a broader diffusion of Christianity among his subjects. This modus operandi, observable across different parts of the world, found particularly clear expression in the Jesuit missions of East Asia. Within this hierarchical vision of social order, a decisive role

was assigned to the monarch, whose disposition, in the eyes of the missionaries, could tip the balance between the success and the failure of their evangelising enterprise.

In Jesuit historical and moral reflection, exemplary rulers – judged both negatively and positively – played a central role. Figures such as Sardanapalus and Nero functioned as classical exempla of tyranny and the moral corruption of power. Set against them were idealised monarchs, who in Jesuit writings were presented as models of the Christian ruler: just, prudent, and attentive to the common good. Among these figures was Louis XIV,[2] and in the context of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, Sigismund III Vasa.[3] This conception of authority, however, has a much older genealogy and reaches back to the Christian historiographical tradition, in which the ideal monarch was portrayed as an instrument of Divine Providence. A classical example of such a narrative remains Eusebius of Caesarea's *Vita Constantini,* in which Emperor Constantine the Great is presented as a ruler chosen by God to fulfil His designs.[4]

Similar mechanisms of idealising the ruler may also be observed in the medieval historiographical tradition of Central Europe. In his *Cronica et gesta ducum sive principum Polonorum*, Gallus Anonymous portrays Bolesław the Brave as an almost exemplary monarch – powerful, just, and capable of ensuring order within the realm. In his account of the reign, he emphasises such qualities as courage, generosity, concern for the Church, and the ability to maintain unity and stability in the kingdom. In this way, a characteristic feature of premodern historiography

2 The motif of the ideal monarch also appears in the work of the French Jesuit Joachim Bouvet (1656–1730). Two of his works from 1697, dedicated respectively to Louis XIV and to Louis, Duke of Burgundy, and his consort, belong to the Jesuit tradition of presenting the monarch as a model of perfect rulership: Joachim Bouvet, *Portrait historique de l'empereur de la Chine, présenté au roy* (Paris: Estienne Michallet, 1697); *idem*, *L'Estat présent de la Chine, en figures. Dédié à Monseigneur le Duc & à Madame la Duchesse de Bourgogne* (Paris: Pierre Giffart, 1697). The strong attachment of French Jesuits active in China to the French monarchy is also evidenced by the example of Joseph-Marie Amiot, who resided in the Middle Kingdom from 1751 and – according to the account of his confrère Louis Pfister – died in 1793 of grief upon hearing of the execution of Louis XVI; see: Louis Pfister, *Notices biographiques et bibliographiques sur les Jésuites de l'ancienne mission de Chine, 1552–1773*, vol. II: *XVIIIe siècle* (Chang-hai: Imprimerie de la Mission Catholique, 1934), 837–860.

3 On the ideal of the Christian monarch in the context of the reign of Sigismund III Vasa, see: Piotr Skarga, *Kazania sejmowe*, ed. Stanisław Kot (Kraków: Krakowska Spółka Wydawnicza, 1925), in which a Polish Jesuit develops the concept of royal authority as established by God and obliged to care for the common good of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth.

4 *The Life or the Blessed Emperor Constantine, in Four Books, from 306 to 337 A. D. by Eusebius Pamphilus* (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, 1845).

comes into focus: the ruler appears not merely as a political actor, but as a moral point of reference for the entire community.[5]

In the Middle Kingdom, an essential element of the religious and political order was the concept of the sage-ruler, rooted in the classical Confucian tradition. In Chinese historiography, the earliest emperors were portrayed as ideal rulers who, through wisdom and moral excellence, were able to ensure harmony within the state. This mode of interpreting China's past was further developed, among others, by Martino Martini (1614–1661) in his work *Sinicae historiae decas prima*. In this work, the Italian Jesuit not only systematised the legendary accounts of such emperors as Fuxi (Chinese: 伏羲) and Huangdi (Chinese: 黃帝), but also presented them as historico-symbolic figures whose activity expressed a striving for order, virtue, and the harmony of the world. Martini interpreted this tradition not merely as a testimony to ancient wisdom, but also as an expression of knowledge accessible through the light of reason, in accordance with the Christian concept of natural theology.[6]

A similar understanding of authority also developed within the sphere of Neo-Confucian Korean culture. Studies of the monarchy of the Chosŏn dynasty emphasise the significance of the idea of the king as a moral guardian of both social and cosmic order. He was regarded above all as an ethical model for the entire community, whose personal virtue and continual self-cultivation were believed to have a direct impact on the well-being of his subjects and the stability of the state. This concept was rooted in the Confucian model of the sage-ruler, whose task was not only to govern, but above all to maintain harmony between the moral and the social order. This idea is particularly evident during the reign of King Yŏngjo (Kor. 영조; Hanja: 英祖), the twenty-first ruler of the Yi dynasty, who reigned from 1724 to 1776. As JaHyun Kim Haboush has shown, in eighteenth-century Korea his image was consciously shaped in accordance with the Confucian ideal of the sage-ruler. Yŏngjo consistently drew upon the rhetoric of moral governance, presenting his reign

5 Gall Anonim, *Kronika polska*, trans. Roman Grodecki, ed. Marian Plezia (Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków–Gdańsk: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich – Wydawnictwo, 1989).

6 In *Sinicae historiae decas prima*, Martino Martini intended to present the history of the Chinese emperors – from legendary rulers such as Fuxi (ca. 2852–2737 BC) to his own time, that is, the reign of the first emperor of the Manchu Qing dynasty, Shunzhi (1638–1661). Ultimately, however, he brought his narrative only to the end of the Western Han dynasty, concluding it with the reign of Emperor Ai (7–1 BC): Martino Martini, *Opera Omnia*, vol. 4, t. 1-2, *Sinicae Historiae Decas Prima*, ed. Franco Demarchi, Giuliano Bertuccioli a cura di Federico Masini, Louisa M. Paternicò (Università degli Studi di Trento, 2010).

as an effort to restore harmony within the state after a period of intense factional conflict, which in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries had deeply divided the elite of scholar-officials. In court narratives, he was portrayed as a monarch striving to overcome factional divisions through an appeal to the principles of the Confucian moral order. In this context, his actions – both in the symbolic sphere and in concrete administrative reforms – were interpreted as an attempt to realise the classical Confucian model of governance, in which the authority of the ruler rests not only on dynastic legitimacy, but above all on personal virtue, moral charisma, and the capacity to maintain social and political harmony within the state.[7]

In the case of China, particular attention among early modern historians has been drawn to the figure of the Kangxi Emperor (Ch. 康熙), who in numerous Jesuit accounts was portrayed as an exceptionally capable ruler and one open to knowledge. This is likewise emphasised by Jonathan Spence in his studies devoted to the Qing period. Kangxi reigned for an exceptionally long time – from 1661 to 1722 – and his rule ranks among the longest in the history of the Middle Kingdom. In modern historiography, it is often noted that this period brought the empire a significant degree of political stability and a consolidation of the administrative apparatus. Spence further observes that Kangxi is regarded as one of the most outstanding rulers in Chinese history, and that his reign is frequently compared with those of such European monarchs as Louis XIV[8] and Peter the Great. One of the most characteristic features of the emperor was his insatiable intellectual curiosity and his wide-ranging scholarly interests. He was particularly engaged by such fields as astronomy, mathematics, mechanics, cartography, and medicine, and his court became a centre of numerous scientific undertakings carried out

7 JaHyun Kim Haboush, *The Confucian Kingship in Korea. Yŏngjo and the Politics of Sagacity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 1–11.

8 The comparison between the Kangxi Emperor and Louis XIV is entirely justified, as both rulers may be regarded as parallel examples of absolute monarchs, embodying the apogee of the power of the Qing dynasty and the French monarchy. Both ascended the throne at a very young age and reigned for an exceptionally long time, while also acting as patrons of science and the arts. Kangxi showed a keen interest in Western astronomy and medicine and extended his protection to the Jesuits active at the imperial court, whereas Louis XIV supported the activities of French missions in Asia. Both also conducted numerous military campaigns and were proficient in several languages, although their styles of governance and modes of royal representation differed markedly: Kangxi was regarded as a restrained and frugal ruler, while Louis XIV was renowned for his ostentatious splendour and the elaborate ceremonial of his court. See further: Philippe Mansel, *King of the World: The Life of Louis XIV* (London: Penguin Books, 2022).

by scholars gathered around him. At the same time, he remained faithful to the traditional model of the Confucian monarch, who, as the "Son of Heaven," fulfilled the role of intermediary between the cosmic order and the human world. In this symbolic capacity, the emperor stood at the centre of the political and ritual order of the empire, combining the direction of state administration with the performance of numerous ceremonial duties associated with the cult of Heaven and dynastic tradition.[9]

The reign of the Kangxi Emperor also coincided with a period of intense contacts between China and Europe. Numerous Jesuits were active at his court, serving as astronomers, cartographers, physicians, and technical advisers. The emperor held their knowledge in high esteem and made use of it in various state undertakings, including the reform of the calendar and in cartographic projects.[10] These contacts were reflected in numerous European accounts of the emperor and his court. In many of them, Kangxi was portrayed as a prudent ruler, curious about the world and favourably disposed towards scholars, which contributed to the consolidation of a distinctly idealised image of him in Jesuit writings.[11]

9 Jonathan Spence, *Emperor of China. Self-portrait of K'ang-hsi* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974), XI–XXV.

10 Already Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), during his missionary activity in the Middle Kingdom, understood that the path to the imperial court lay through scientific expertise, especially in the fields of mathematics and astronomy, upon which matters of the calendar and the ordering of the state depended. The effectiveness of this strategy was confirmed by the work of his successors – Adam Schall von Bell (1591–1666) and Ferdinand Verbiest (1623–1688) – who, under the Qing dynasty, particularly during the reign of the Kangxi Emperor, held high positions in the Imperial Astronomical Bureau. The emperor's trust was also manifested in the Kangxi Edict of Toleration (1692), which permitted the free propagation of Christianity and may be interpreted as a political and cultural confirmation of the effectiveness of Ricci's method. For more on the strategy of the Italian Jesuit, based on gaining the trust of Chinese elites through scientific competence, see: Michela Fontana, *Matteo Ricci: A Jesuit in the Ming Court* (Lanham–Boulder–New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2011).

11 Spence, *Emperor of China*, XVIII–XIX. In the context of the reign of the Kangxi Emperor, the study by Jonathan D. Spence devoted to the emperor's relationship with Ts'ao Yin – an official belonging to the circle of so-called bondservants – is also of particular interest. Spence demonstrates that Kangxi employed them as trusted officials of the Imperial Household, entrusting them with important tasks in the provinces and making use of the information they provided about the situation in the empire. In this way, the ruler was able to exercise control over the state apparatus without relying solely on the formal structures of the bureaucracy. This system reinforced the personal character of imperial authority and allowed him to depend on a circle of loyal collaborators directly connected to the Imperial Household. Such relationships present Kangxi as a ruler actively engaged in administrative affairs and consciously constructing a network of trusted agents to implement his policies. See further: Jonathan Spence, *Ts'ao Yin and the K'ang-hsi Emperor. Bondservant and Master* (New Haven–London: Yale University Press, 1965).

This article argues that Szpot's portrayal of Kangxi should be understood not merely as descriptive, but as a deliberate rhetorical construction embedded in Jesuit strategies of political accommodation. An interesting example of such a portrayal of the emperor may be found in the manuscript of Tomasz Ignacy Dunin Szpot, catalogued as Jap. Sin. 111 in the Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (ARSI). The Polish Jesuit based his account primarily on reports provided by his confrères residing at the Chinese court. He explicitly notes that he drew upon the letters of Father Antoine Thomas (1644–1709), as well as upon a characterization of the emperor composed by Father Joachim Bouvet, who, after leaving Beijing in 1693, brought his description of the ruler to Europe – first to Paris, and subsequently to Rome. Szpot collected these materials and supplemented them with additional information drawn from later missionary correspondence. On this basis, he composed the first part of his manuscript, entitled *De virtutibus & studiis Europaeis imperatoris Sinarum Camhi*, in which he focuses on presenting the virtues and scholarly interests of the Kangxi Emperor. At the outset, he offers a brief description of the ruler's person, cast in a panegyrical tone:

> The Emperor Camhi, or Canghi [Kangxi – HW], had as his father the most illustrious prince Xunchi [Shunzhi – HW], the first emperor of China from among the Tatars known as the Manchus. The very name Camhi signifies "peaceful", a meaning he himself confirmed through his deeds, restoring peace both in China and in Tartary, within the realm and beyond its borders. Born of such a father, Camhi received – alongside other gifts of body and fortune – also the distinguished qualities of character with which he had been endowed by nature. In his person there was never anything that the watchful eye of an observer might deem unworthy of so exalted a throne, to which he had been raised upon the death of his father while still a boy not yet ten years of age. Upon reaching manhood, his stature was between the moderate and the tall, and his whole bearing seemed to breathe a royal and majestic spirit. All the features of his face were in harmonious proportion: his eyes keen, lively, and somewhat larger than those of most Tatars; his nose likewise slightly aquiline, gently curved at the tip; and, in sum, his whole countenance seemed to address the beholder with a certain grace worthy of an emperor. Within such a body there dwelt that great soul – would that it might one day be Christian! – which we here describe. Divine generosity endowed it with a felicitous memory, a keen and penetrating intellect, a spirit prepared for every turn of fortune, and a capacity most suited to the undertaking and execution of designs; and – what in a ruler of so vast an empire is particularly worthy of admiration – an inexhaustible

> zeal and a desire for the pursuit of knowledge amid the many burdens of state [trans. Hanna Wadas][12].

After presenting the emperor's appearance and offering a brief, distinctly idealising characterisation of his person, Dunin–Szpot proceeds to describe the ruler's military and hunting skills. He emphasises the extraordinary proficiency of the Son of Heaven in the use of various kinds of weapons – both traditional and more recent, known in China and in Europe – which elicited admiration even among the highest dignitaries of the court and seasoned military commanders. Particular attention is also given to the emperor's skill in horsemanship, an ability – he notes – highly esteemed in Manchu culture. In Szpot's account, Kangxi, from an early age, distinguished himself by courage, confidence, and remarkable dexterity both in riding and in the handling of weapons on horseback.[13] The description of these abilities is cast in a distinctly hyperbolic tone, characteristic of the idealised image of the ruler:

> He makes use of a bow which none of the dignitaries is able to draw; he, however, not only bends it with ease, but directs it with such skill that, whether on foot or on horseback – whether the horse stands still or gallops – he scarcely ever looses an arrow, with either his right or his left hand, that does not return having pierced its quarry, even when it is a bird in the swiftest flight [trans. Hanna Wadas].[14]

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12 "Imperator Camhi vel Canghi Patrem habuit Principem Nobilissimum Xunchi primum Imperatorem Sinarum è Tartaris Mantchou dictis. Nomen ipsius Camhi, pacificum significat, quod ille factis ipsis pacificatâ domi forisque Sinâ et Tartariâ illustravit. Ex eo Patre nascendo Camhi cum alia Corporis et fortunae bona, tum indolem optimam à Natura sortitus est. Nihil in ipsius persona unquam comparuit, quod minus dignum tam insigni solio, in quod à Patre suo moriente nondum decennis puer assumptus fuit, observatur oculus invenisset, statura illi, dum in virum evasit, mediocrem inter et proceram media, isque totius Corporis habitus, qui Regium et augustum animum spirare videtur. Lineamenta vultûs omnia aptissime sibi cohaerentia: oculi acuti, vividi, ac caeteris plerisque Tartaris paulò grandiores, natus item aliquantum aduncus, et in acumen leniter inflexus: tota denique facies, gratias quasdam Imperatore dignas intuentibus loquitur. In tali Corpore domum sibi posuit magna illa anima, utinam aliquando Christiana! quam hic describimus: cui memoriam felicem, acre et perspicax ingenium, spiritus ad omnes aequè fortunae casus paratos, mentem suscipiendis atque promovendis consiliis aptissimam, quodvè prae caeteris mirandum est in tanti Imperii Principe ardorem et sitim, inter multiplices curas Imperii addiscendarum scientiarum inexplebilem Divina contulit liberalitas [manuscript transcription: Hanna Wadas]." ARSI, Jap. Sin 111, f. 1r–1v.

13 ARSI, Jap. Sin. 111, f. 1v–2r.

14 "Eo arcu utitur, quem nullus è primoribus curvare valeat, quem tamen ille et flectit facile, et tam dextrè dirigit, ut sive pedes, sive equo infidens, seu morante seu currente equo, dextrâ et sinistra, nunquam fere iagittam emittat, quae cum praeda confossa non

Tomasz Dunin Szpot further observes that, alongside these practical and technical accomplishments, the Kangxi Emperor earned distinction through his scholarly pursuits, which focused on the study of the Chinese classics:

> There is no kind of writing in China that he has not mastered; no branch of learning that he has not acquired in a most perfect manner; no book held in greater authority among Chinese scholars that he himself has not read, nor anything that he has ever read in them which he has not retained in memory. In the art of eloquence and of poetry, which flourishes in China both in the Chinese and in the Tatar language, he has attained such proficiency that no one employs these two tongues with greater refinement, nor passes sounder judgement on the works composed in either. All the works of Confucius, all those authentic books which the Chinese revere as sacred volumes, as well as the entire history, both Chinese and Tatar, he retains in his memory with such ease that nothing drawn from them remains unknown to him [trans. Hanna Wadas][15].

The Polish Jesuit also recounts an anecdote that brings into sharp relief the extraordinary memory of the "Son of Heaven." According to Szpot's account, this faculty was so highly developed that the emperor retained with effortless ease not only the books he had read, but also the people he had encountered and the information he had heard, preserving them in his memory even after the passage of many years:

> As for his memory – to say something further of it here – by means of which he mastered all the branches of learning, both Chinese and European, to which he devoted himself, it may without doubt be affirmed that there is nothing that he has once seen, heard, or read which he does not remember, and that together with even the smallest details, the persons, and their names, even if the greatest number of affairs were to distract his attention or though a very long time should have passed. This was experienced both

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redeat ad ipsam etiam ex avibus pernicissimè volantibus [manuscript transcription: Hanna Wadas]." ARSI, Jap. Sin. 111, f. 1v.

15 "Nullum apud Sinas genus est literarum, quod ille non calleat, nulla Scientia, quàm ille perfectè non possideat, nullus liber maioris inter Doctores Sinenses authoritatis, quem ipse non legerit, adeoque quae unquam in iis legisset non meminerit. Eloquentiae Poeticaeque artis, quae apud Sinas viget, tam lingua Sinica, quàm Tartarica, eam peritiam acquisivit, ut nemo illo cultuque utraque linguâ loquatur, nemo qui de illis operibus, quae utroque idiomate exarantur, meliùs iudicium et censuram ferat. Omnia Confutii Opera, omnes autographos illos libros, quos Sinae, tanquam Sacra Volumina venerantur, omnem historiam cum Sinicam tum Tartaricam eâ felicitate memoriae tenet, ut nihil eum, quidquid ex ipsis proferatur, lateat [manuscript transcription: Hanna Wadas]." Jap. Sin. 111, f. 2r.

> by our other Fathers (whom, when he saw them in the provinces during his visitations, he never allowed their names, the features of their faces, their stature, nor the words they had spoken in private conversation with him to escape his memory; so that, when he visited the same provinces a second time and our men came to greet him, he addressed each of them by name), as well as by Father Ferdinand Verbiest. For on one occasion, when he was accompanying the emperor on a journey to Tartary and a certain bird flew over them, its Flemish name, which Ferdinand then gave in response to the emperor's question, remained so fixed in his memory that, when after several years the emperor undertook the same journey again and a bird of the same kind flew over them, Ferdinand – who had almost forgotten his native tongue and therefore hesitated, not knowing what word to utter in reply to the ruler's question about the name of that bird – was instructed by the emperor himself. For he, with a smile, perceiving his hesitation, supplied the Flemish word by which [that bird – HW] was to be named [trans. Hanna Wadas].[16]

As Szpot relates, Ferdinand Verbiest is said on that occasion to have felt a certain embarrassment at the limitations of his own memory, and at the same time a sense of admiration for the singular generosity of God, who had endowed the emperor with such extraordinary abilities. By virtue of these gifts, the ruler was capable not only of governing so vast an empire, but – so the Flemish missionary believed – might also have contributed to the propagation of the Christian religion, both through his own example and among his subjects. Ferdinand Verbiest thus entertained the hope that, just as the emperor had not forgotten

16 "Et quantum ad memoriam ipsius, ut aliquid hîc de illa dicamus, attinet, quâ ille omnes scientias tum Sinicas tum Europaeas, quibus studuit possedit, illud proculdubio affirmari potest; ut nihil sit quod ille aut viderat semel aut audiverat, legeratvè, cuius ipse cum minimis etiam circumstantiis, personis, eorumque nominibus, quantalibet occupationum multitudo mentem distraxerit, aut quantumvis longum temporis intercesserit intervallum, non meminisset. Quod quidem cum alii Nostri Patres, (quos cum in Provinciis, dum eas visitabat, vidisset, nunquam eorum nominum quibus vocarentur, lineamentorum, et staturae corporis quae haberent, atque dictorum, quae in familiari colloquio cum ipso protulerint memoriam sibi passus est excidere, ita, ut cum secundò easdem Provincias lustrasset nostrique ad eum salutandum venissent proprio quemque nomine appellârit) tum Pater Ferdinandus Verbiest fuit expertus. Cum enim quodam tempore cum in Tartariam discedentem comitaretur, et quaedam Avis eos praetervolaret, illius nomen Belgicum, quod ipsi sciscitanti tum dixerat Ferdinandus, ita inhaesit memoriae, ut cum elapso aliquot annorum spatio, idem iter remetiretur Imperator, eiusdemque speciei Ales praetervolaret, oblito iam penè maternae linguae Ferdinando, ideoque cunctantae ac haerentae, quid ad Principis interrogationem vocabuli, quo vocaretur illa volucris proferret, ipse Imperator subridens ad eius cunctationem docuit, quomodo appellaretur prolato vocabulo Belgico" [manuscript transcription: Hanna Wadas]. ARSI, Jap. Sin. 111, f. 2v–3r.

a single word once heard, he might in time also recall the efforts of the missionaries undertaken at his court, allowing the law of God to spread within that empire without hindrance. To this remarkable memory – Szpot emphasises – was joined a particular acuity of mind and maturity of judgement, by virtue of which the emperor possessed the ability to discern the truth even when it lay concealed. In Verbiest's view, this meant that, were the ruler to embrace Christianity, he might not only permit the free preaching of the Gospel, but also bring it about that the entire Chinese and Manchu empire would come under the "sweet yoke of Christ."[17]

In the further course of his account, Tomasz Dunin Szpot turns to the emperor's interest in the European sciences and to the role of the Jesuits, who served as his instructors in mathematics, astronomy, and music. As the Polish Jesuit relates, the ruler's zeal for knowledge in these fields was such that he chose Ferdinand Verbiest as his teacher. Under his guidance, over the course of some two years, he became acquainted with Euclid's *Elements*, the use of the principal mathematical instruments, as well as selected topics in geometry, statics, and astronomy. To this end, Verbiest prepared for the "Son of Heaven" special treatises addressing the more elementary topics, designed to facilitate the consolidation of the material; he also constructed and installed in the so-called Mathematical Tower (Turri Mathematica) new astronomical instruments for observing the movements of celestial bodies and phenomena such as eclipses. Soon thereafter, the Kangxi Emperor developed an interest in European music. Its principles were imparted to him by Thomas Pereira (1645–1708), who composed treatises on the subject in Chinese and oversaw the construction of appropriate instruments, through which he introduced the emperor to the principles of European harmony and the art of melodic composition.[18] These studies were, however, temporarily interrupted by the armed conflicts that shook the state during this period. Even so – as Szpot emphasises – the emperor continued to return to the knowledge he had acquired, gradually extending it as circumstances allowed, even amidst political turmoil. Once the fighting had ceased and

17 Lat. *suave iugum Christi*. A reference to the Gospel of Matthew (Mt 11:30): "Iugum enim meum suave est, et onus meum leve." In the King James Bible: "For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." ARSI, Jap. Sin. 111, fols. 3r–3v.

18 For a broader discussion of the activities of Thomas Pereira at the court of the Kangxi Emperor, especially in the transmission of knowledge of European music theory and the composition of musical treatises in Chinese, see: Sheryl Chow, "A Localised Boundary Object: Seventeenth–Century Western Music Theory in China", *Early Music History* 39 (2020): 75–113.

peace was restored in the empire, allowing both the ruler and his subjects to recover from the hardships of war, the Kangxi Emperor resumed his study of the European sciences with renewed zeal.[19]

The analysis of the manuscript demonstrates that the portrayal of Emperor Kangxi in the account of Tomasz Ignacy Dunin Szpot conforms to a model of ruler idealization characteristic of Jesuit literature. He is presented as a monarch endowed with an almost complete constellation of virtues associated with the ideal sovereign: exceptional memory, intellectual acuity, a marked devotion to learning, military capability, and the capacity to exercise prudent governance. This portrayal is distinctly panegyrical in character and reflects a broader tendency in missionary accounts, wherein rulers favourable to Jesuit activity were represented as near-ideal figures. It should further be noted that the first part of the manuscript Jap. Sin. 111 devoted to Emperor Kangxi comprises thirty-one folios, in which the Polish Jesuit recounts subsequent developments in his reign and examines various aspects of the governance of the Manchu ruler. In the present article, particular attention is devoted to those passages that foreground the virtues and attributes of the Chinese monarch, as it is precisely these that most fully illuminate the mechanism of idealization at work in the narrative. Consequently, in the light of the account, Emperor Kangxi emerges as an almost perfect ruler, whose virtues cohere into a harmonious whole, such that in his person – as the Polish Jesuit concludes – one may discern everywhere the presence of a great emperor:

> To this admirable zeal for the acquisition of knowledge in so great a ruler were joined other virtues as well, and in such concord and harmony that, whether one considers the art of governing, the care devoted to the management of his own household, or the diligence in mastering his emotions, one finds everywhere in his person a great emperor [trans. Hanna Wadas].[20]

The idealised image of Kangxi that emerges from Szpot's account is not simply a description, but a carefully shaped construction, one that draws upon a wider intellectual tradition. What we encounter here is not only a record of the emperor, but also a reflection of how early modern Jesuits made sense of non-European political authority by translating it

19 ARSI, Jap. Sin. 111, f. 3v– 4r.

20 "Huic sciendi ardori mirando in tanto Principe, caeterae Virtutes respondebant, et quidem tanta consensione ac unione inter se, ut sive artem regnandi, sive domesticam regendae familiae curam, sive moderandorum suorum affectuum diligentiam in ipsius persona spectes, ibique magnum Imperatorem invenies [manuscript transcription: Hanna Wadas]." ARSI, Jap. Sin. 111, f. 5v.

into categories familiar to their own world. In this portrayal, the figure of Kangxi moves between two traditions: the Confucian vision of the sage-ruler, in which the authority exercised outwardly mirrors an inner discipline of wisdom, and a Western conviction that true sovereignty must be grounded in learning, as expressed in the Latin maxim that *rex illiteratus quasi asinus coronatus*.

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Jan Mikołaj Smogulecki: Family Background, Public Career, and Missionary Activity of a Polish Jesuit in China[1]

Jan Mikołaj Smogulecki: pochodzenie rodzinne, kariera publiczna i działalność misyjna polskiego jezuity w Chinach

Abstract

The article presents the life of Jan Mikołaj Smogulecki (1610–1656), a Polish Jesuit, scholar, and missionary active in China in the seventeenth century. The text analyzes three main aspects of his life: his family background, public activity, and missionary work. He came from the noble Grzymała family. His father was the Bydgoszcz starosta Maciej Smogulecki, and his mother was Zofia from the Zebrzydowski family. He studied at the Jesuit college in Braniewo, the Lubrański Academy in Poznań, and at

1 This research was funded by the state budget under the programme of the Minister of Education and Science, *National Programme for the Development of the Humanities* (project no. NPRH/U22/SP/0021/2023/12), entitled *Historiae Sinarum Imperii and Collectanea Historiae Sinensis by Tomasz Szpot Dunin SJ – the Polish Contribution to the Study of Chinese Culture and History in the Early Modern Period*. The funding amount was PLN 1,566,263.42, which is also the total value of the project.

European universities, including Freiburg, Rome, and Padua. He studied mathematics, astronomy, philosophy, and law. At a young age he began a political career – he served as the starosta of Nakło and participated in the public life of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. Despite promising prospects for further political advancement, he resigned from his offices and joined the Society of Jesus in 1636. After receiving priestly ordination, Smogulecki requested permission to undertake missionary work in the Far East. In 1644 he set out for Asia and, after a long journey, reached China. There he carried out both missionary and scientific activities – teaching mathematics and astronomy, which enabled him to establish contacts with Chinese scholars and officials. He died in 1656 in the city of Chaokim. He was an outstanding scholar and missionary who combined scientific knowledge with religious activity. Thanks to his abilities and education, he played an important role in the dialogue between European and Chinese culture and in the development of Jesuit missions in China.

Keywords: Jan Mikołaj Smogulecki, Jesuits, China, missions, Tomasz Dunin Szpot.

Abstrakt

Artykuł przedstawia życie Jana Mikołaja Smoguleckiego (1610–1656) – polskiego jezuity, uczonego i misjonarza działającego w Chinach w XVII wieku. Tekst analizuje trzy główne obszary jego życia: pochodzenie rodzinne, działalność publiczną oraz działalność misyjną. Wywodził się on ze szlacheckiego rodu Grzymalitów. Jego ojcem był starosta bydgoski Maciej Smogulecki, a matką Zofia z Zebrzydowskich. Uczył się w kolegium jezuickim w Braniewie, w Akademii Lubrańskiego w Poznaniu oraz na uczelniach europejskich (m.in. we Fryburgu, Rzymie i Padwie). Studiował matematykę, astronomię, filozofię i prawo. W młodym wieku rozpoczął karierę polityczną – był starostą nakielskim i uczestniczył w życiu publicznym państwa polsko-litewskiego. Mimo perspektyw rozwoju kariery politycznej zrezygnował z urzędów i w 1636 r. wstąpił do Towarzystwa Jezusowego. Po przyjęciu święceń kapłańskich Smogulecki poprosił o możliwość wyjazdu na misje na Daleki Wschód. W 1644 r. wyruszył do Azji i po długiej podróży dotarł do Chin. Tam prowadził działalność misyjną oraz naukową – nauczał matematyki i astronomii, dzięki czemu nawiązywał kontakty z chińskimi uczonymi i urzędnikami. Zmarł w 1656 r. w mieście Chaokim. Był wybitnym uczonym i misjonarzem, który połączył wiedzę naukową z działalnością religijną. Dzięki swoim zdolnościom i edukacji odegrał ważną rolę w dialogu między kulturą europejską i chińską oraz w rozwoju misji jezuickich w Chinach.

Słowa klucze: Jan Mikołaj Smogulecki, jezuici, Chiny, misje, Tomasz Dunin Szpot.

History is a discipline that allows the researcher, in a remarkably natural way, to move from the study of the history of his own homeland to investigations of events shaping not only the history of Europe but also the history of the world. This is confirmed, among other things, by the example of the present author. In the course of research conducted several years ago on the biography of Mikołaj Zebrzydowski – a rebel and insurgent, a man who unquestionably influenced the fate of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth – it became apparent that the materials collected at that time could serve as a starting point for studies on the life and activity of his grandson, Jan Mikołaj Smogulecki, a religious who left a lasting mark on the history of the Society of Jesus, particularly in the history of the Christian missionary enterprises carried out by the sons of St. Ignatius of Loyola in the Far East.

The subtitle included in the title of this article specifies three research areas whose discussion constitutes the aim of the present study: the first concerns family background, the second public career, and the third missionary activity. The first area will be examined on the basis of written and printed sources that have largely remained unused until now. The second will rely primarily on the existing scholarly literature, while the third will focus on the analysis of an exceptionally valuable source – *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* by the Polish Jesuit Tomasz Dunin Szpot – which until only a few years ago was unknown and unused both in Polish and in international scholarship.[2]

2 For Tomasz Dunin Szpot and his work devoted to the history of China, see: "Szpot Dunin Tomasz Ignacy" in *Encyklopedia wiedzy o jezuitach na ziemiach Polski i Litwy (1564–1995)*, ed. Ludwik Grzebień (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2004), 665; 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; Thierry Meynard, "For the record: The Canton exile of the missionaries (1666–1671) by the Polish Jesuit Szpot Dunin", *Annales Missiologici Posnanienses* 25 (2020): 147–185; Andrzej Wadas, "Źródła autorytetu i wpływu jezuitów na dworze cesarzy Wanli (1572–1620), Shunzi (1644–1661) i Kangxi (1661–1722) i w szerszych kręgach społeczeństwa chińskiego w świetle dzieła Tomasza Dunina Szpota (1644–1713)", *Perspektywy Kultury* 43/4/1 (2023): 215–227; Gościwit Malinowski, "Etnografia Tatarów Wschodnich (Mandżurów) i Zachodnich (Mongołów) w dziele *Historia Sinarum* Tomasza Szpota Dunina", in *Jezuici. Nauka, kultura, duchowość*, ed. Waldemar Graczyk, Jolanta M. Marszalska (Warszawa: Instytut De Republica, 2024), 701–713; 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; 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): 336–357. Moreover, in 2023 the scholarly journal *Rocznik Filozoficzny Ignatianum* published a special issue devoted to the works of Dunin Szpot and to the Jesuit missions in China; it includes

Jan Mikołaj Smogulecki is not an unknown figure. Biographical entries devoted to him can be found in the scholarly literature, among others in the *Polish Biographical Dictionary* (*Polski Słownik Biograficzny*),[3] the *Encyclopedia of Knowledge about the Jesuits* (*Encyklopedia wiedzy o jezuitach*),[4] and the *Dictionary of Ming Biography*.[5] He has been discussed, among others, by Tadeusz Rojek,[6] Dorota Żołądź-Strzelczyk,[7] Duc Ha Nguyen[8] and Jan Konior.[9] However, these authors have largely drawn on the article by Edward Kosibowicz,[10] as was rightly observed

several articles addressing this subject: 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; Gościwit Malinowski, "Fryderyk Kazimierz Wolff SJ (1643–1708) i Tomasz Dunin Szpot SJ (1644–1713) – polscy jezuici jako pośrednicy kulturowi w czasach poselstwa cara Piotra I do Europy (1697–1698)", *Rocznik Filozoficzny Ignatianum* 29/4 (2023): 101–110; 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; Andrzej Wadas, "*Gravissima pericula*: Rok 1606 jako brzemienny w wydarzenia dla zakonu jezuickiego w świetle dziejów powszechnych oraz *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* Tomasza Szpota Dunina (1644–1713)", *Rocznik Filozoficzny Ignatianum* 29/4 (2023): 15–38; 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.

3 Ludwik Grzebień, "Smogulecki (Smogolecki, Smogoleński, Nicolo Smogulec) Jan Mikołaj (Mikołaj) h. Grzymała, nazwisko przybrane: Mo Ni-co, Mou Ni-co Jou-To (1610–1656)", in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, vol. 39 (Warszawa–Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 1999–2000), 232–234.

4 "Smogulecki Jan Mikołaj", in *Encyklopedia wiedzy o jezuitach na ziemiach Polski i Litwy (1564–1995)*, ed. Ludwik Grzebień (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2004), 626.

5 Bolesław Szcześniak, "Smogulecki Jan Mikołaj", in *Dictionary of Ming biography. 1368–1644*, vol. 2, ed. Goodrich L. Carrington, Fang Zhaoying (New York–London: Columbia University Press, 1976), 1205–1206.

6 Tadeusz Rojek, "Przyjaciel mandarynów", in *idem*, *Sławni i nieznani* (Warszawa: Nasza Księgarnia, 1975), 137–144.

7 Dorota Żołądź-Strzelczyk, "Praca w winnicy Pańskiej: dwaj polscy jezuici-misjonarze XVII wieku", in *Jezuicka ars historica. Prace ofiarowane Księdzu Profesorowi Ludwikowi Grzebieniowi SJ*, ed. Marek Inglot, Stanisław Obirek (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2001), 655–667.

8 Ha Nguyen Duc, *Polscy misjonarze na Dalekim Wschodzie w XVII–XVIII wieku* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Neriton, 2006), 73–81.

9 Jan Konior, *Historia polsko-chińskich kontaktów kulturowych w XVII w. (na przykładzie misji jezuickich)* (Kraków: Akademia Ignatianum – Wydawnictwo WAM, 2013), 243–253.

10 Edward Kosibowicz, "Zapomniany misjonarz polski ks. J[an] S[mogulecki] TJ", *Przegląd Powszechny* 181/46 (1929): 148–172. This article was subsequently translated and published in French: Edward Kosibowicz, "Un missionaire polonais oubliê. Le Pêre Jean Nicolas Smogulecki SJ, missionaire en Chine au XVIIe siècle", *Revue d'Histoire des Missions* 6 (1929): 335–360 and later reprinted in: Plattner Felix A., *Gdy Europa szukała*

by Monika Miazek-Męczyńska, who in recent years has also turned her attention to Jan Mikołaj Smogulecki and has introduced into the scholarly literature a number of important and previously unknown pieces of information.[11]

Family

The Smogulecki family belonged to the Grzymała clan (Grzymalici), one of the most powerful heraldic clans of medieval Poland, whose members inhabited the regions of Greater Poland in the broad sense. This is noted, among others, by three Polish heraldists: Bartłomiej Paprocki (16th century),[12] Szymon Okolski (17th century),[13] and Kacper Niesiecki (18th century).[14] The first of these does not mention the Smogulecki family; this may be explained by the fact that at the end of the sixteenth century a family bearing this toponymic surname was most likely not yet known to the heraldist.[15] The second of the aforementioned authors states that the Smogulecki family lived in Greater Poland, "distinguished by fame and prosperity,"[16] a claim that is also confirmed by the third heraldist, who, however, relied largely on the works of his predecessors.[17] The ancestral seat of the Smogulecki family – from which the family derived its surname – was the locality of Smogulec in the Pałuki region.[18] In Okolski's opinion, the most eminent representative of the family was Maciej,

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Azji, trans. Antoni Starzeński (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Apostolstwa Modlitwy, 1975), 324–345.

11 Monika Miazek-Męczyńska, "Michał Piotr Boym i Jan Mikołaj Smogulecki – dwie jezuickie drogi do Państwa Środka", *Nurt SVD* 2 (2024): 34–45.

12 Bartosz Paprocki, *Herby rycerstwa polskiego*, ed. Kazimierz J. Turowski (Kraków: Biblioteka Polska, 1858), 614–619.

13 Szymon Okolski, *Orbis Polonus* […] *in quo antiqua Sarmatarum gentilitia, pervetvstæ nobilitatis Polonae insignia, vetera et nova indigenatus meritorum praemia et arma, specificantur et relucent* […], vol. I (Cracoviae: In Officina Typographica Francisci Caesarij, 1641), 267–274.

14 *Herbarz Polski Kaspra Niesieckiego SJ powiększony dodatkami z późniejszych autorów, rekopismów, dowodów urzędowych*, T. 8, wyd. Jan Nepomucen Bobrowicz (Lipsk: nakł. i dr. Breitkopfa i Haertela, 1841), 421–423.

15 Paprocki, *Herby*, 614–619.

16 Okolski, *Orbis Polonus*, vol. 1, 273–274.

17 *Herbarz Polski Kaspra Niesieckiego*, vol. 8, 421–423.

18 *Słownik geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich*, vol. X, ed. Filip Sulimierski, Bronisław Chlebowski, Władysław Walewski (Warszawa: druk. "Wieku" Nowy Świat nr. 61, 1889), 891.

the starosta of Bydgoszcz, whom he described as "a man of extraordinary learning, which he readily combined with religious zeal and love of the fatherland, and who gave remarkable testimony to his knowledge in books published in print."[19] Niesiecki, in turn, regarded as the most distinguished members of the Smogulecki family – besides the aforementioned starosta of Bydgoszcz – also his son, Jan Mikołaj, the starosta of Nakło, who after several years of public activity entered the Society of Jesus and departed as a missionary to the Far East.[20] Consequently, the Jesuit heraldist devoted the greatest attention to these two representatives of the Smogulecki family, mentioning other members only briefly: Jan, the elder brother of Maciej, the starosta of Bydgoszcz, Maciej's two sons, Jan Wojciech and Maciej, the brothers of Jan Mikołaj, Jan Jakub and Florian, and the sons of Jan Jakub, Franciszek and Mikołaj, the latter described without a clear indication of the relationships linking him to the other members of the family.[21]

The father of Jan Mikołaj – Maciej – was, in Okolski's opinion, "a man of extraordinary learning, which he readily combined with religious zeal and love of the fatherland, and who gave remarkable testimony to his knowledge in books published in print."[22] Niesiecki expressed a similar view of him, considering him a learned man, a judgment confirmed, among other things, by the content of a political pamphlet he authored: *O exorbitancyach, które niektórzy świeccy nowi politycy stanowi duchownemu zadają zdanie szlachcica starożytnego* ("On the Exorbitances Which Certain Secular New Politicians Attribute to the Clerical Estate: The Opinion of an Ancient Nobleman").[23] From the content of this polemical treatise – whose purpose was the defense of the rights and privileges of the Church – one may conclude, as Niesiecki writes, that

19 Okolski, *Orbis Polonus*, vol. I, 273.

20 *Herbarz Polski Kaspra Niesieckiego*, vol. 8, 421.

21 *Ibidem*, 422–423.

22 Okolski, *Orbis Polonus*, vol. I, 273. For a more detailed discussion of Maciej Smogulecki, see: Krzysztof Chłapowski, "Smogulecki (Smogolecki) Maciej h. Grzymała (zm. 1617 r.)", in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, vol. 39 (Warszawa–Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 1999–2000), 234–236; Edward Ozorowski, "Smogulecki (Smogolecki, Smogoleński) Maciej h. Grzymała (+1617)", in *Słownik Polskich Teologów Katolickich*, vol. 4, ed. Hieronim E. Wyczawski (Warszawa: Akademia Teologii Katolickiej, 1983), 113.

23 Mikołaj Smogulecki, *O exorbitancyach, które niektórzy świeccy nowi politycy stanowi duchownemu zadają zdanie szlachcica starożytnego* (Kraków: w drukarni Andrzeia Piotrkowczyka, 1632). It should be noted that the work was first published in Kalisz in 1619, reissued there in 1622, and later printed in Kraków in 1632: *Herbarz Polski Kaspra Niesieckiego*, vol. 8, 421.

"anyone may infer about Maciej that he possessed both wit and keen judgment, an uncommon knowledge of law – both ecclesiastical and imperial as well as native – and an excellent refinement in theology." This "refinement," that is, the intellectual formation which predisposed Smogulecki to participate in theological disputations, was the result of four years of studies in Rome, during which he also became acquainted with history, both ancient and national, as well as with the writings of the Church Fathers.[24] However, it was not theology, and thus not service to the Church, but rather politics and service to the state that the father of the future Jesuit chose as his life's path. Having obtained the office of starosta of Bydgoszcz in 1600,[25] he began an active public career, for – as Niesiecki recorded – "such high learning made him capable of many functions in this fatherland." The development of Smogulecki's political career, for whom "King Sigismund III […] was already preparing […] the royal seal," was nevertheless halted by a sudden illness, the ultimate consequence of which was his death in 1617, "at the very moment," as Niesiecki noted, "when he was rising to the highest honours."[26]

The mother of the Jesuit was Zofia of the Zebrzydowski family, the daughter of Mikołaj, the Voivode of Kraków, and Dorota of the Herburt family. After the death of Maciej Smogulecki, she remarried Stanisław Niemojewski, the Castellan of Chełmno. According to Niesiecki, however, the wives of the two nobles were two different daughters of Zebrzydowski and Dorota Herburt: the first – whose name was unknown to the Jesuit heraldist – was said to have married the Castellan of Chełmno, Niemojewski, while the second, named Teresa, was supposed to have married the starosta of Bydgoszcz, Smogulecki. In reality, the wife of both nobles was Zofia, while the husband of Teresa of the Niemojewski family was the nephew of the Bydgoszcz starosta – also named Maciej.[27]

24 *Herbarz Polski Kaspra Niesieckiego*, vol. 8, 421.

25 The appointment took place on 16 August 1600 and followed the death of his predecessor, Jan Kościelecki: Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych (AGAD), Metryka Koronna (MK), vol. 145, k. 208-209v; *Urzędnicy dawnej Rzeczypospolitej XII–XVIII wieku. Spisy*, ed. Antoni Gąsiorowski, vol. VI: *Kujawy i ziemia dobrzyńska*, part 2: *Urzędnicy kujawscy i dobrzyńscy XVI–XVIII wieku. Spisy*, ed. Krzysztof Mikulski, Wojciech Stanek (Kórnik: Biblioteka Kórnicka, 1990), nr 495.

26 *Herbarz Polski Kaspra Niesieckiego*, vol. 8, 421. Maciej Smogulecki most likely died before 20 December 1617, as on that date Andrzej Przyjemski was appointed starosta of Bydgoszcz, an office previously held by Smogulecki. AGAD, MK, vol. 161, k. 195v-197; *Urzędnicy dawnej Rzeczypospolitej XII–XVIII wieku. Spisy*, ed. Antoni Gąsiorowski, vol. VI: *Kujawy i ziemia dobrzyńska*, part 2: *Urzędnicy kujawscy i dobrzyńscy*, no. 496.

27 For further information on the marriage of Maciej Smogulecki, starosta of Bydgoszcz, see: Tomasz Graff, Bartłomiej M. Wołyniec, Elżbieta E. Wróbel, *Mikołaj Zebrzydowski*

Thus, the coincidence of the names of the two Smoguleckis caused the error that appeared in Niesiecki's work to be repeated for many years. Even modern scholars studying the figure of the Polish missionary have not avoided this mistake, following the Jesuit heraldist in claiming that the mother of Jan Mikołaj was – never in fact existing –Teresa of the Zebrzydowski family.[28]

Jan Mikołaj was the eldest of the three sons of Maciej and Zofia of the Zebrzydowski family. His younger brothers were Jan Jakub, the starosta of Nakło (d. 1639), and Florian Michał (d. after 1645), about whom Okolski wrote that although he was still studying abroad at the turn of the 1630s and 1640s, upon returning to his homeland he "would become a future ornament and support of the fatherland."[29] It seems, however, that already during his studies abroad he decided to enter the clerical state, for while in Rome in August 1638 he received the tonsure.[30] With regard to the other brother, the Dominican heraldist stated that "the brilliance of his personal virtue and the proven piety of his conduct, adorned without any suspicion in matters of faith, made him particularly worthy of recommendation." In his life he was guided by love for his homeland, caring for its welfare by every possible means. One manifestation of this was his long years of study abroad in Flanders, France, and Italy, from where he returned in order to serve King Władysław IV faithfully and loyally – first as a courtier and later as the starosta of Nakło.[31] He assumed this office sometime between 19 July 1636 – when Maciej Smogulecki appeared for the last time in the Nakło municipal court records with the title of starosta – and 27 April 1637, when Jan Jakub was first mentioned in the same records as the starosta of Nakło.[32]

1552–1620. Szkic biograficzny (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Księgarnia Akademicka, 2020), 26. For the marriage of his nephew, also named Maciej, to Teresa of the Niemojewski family, see: Teki Dworzaczka: Grodzkie i ziemskie – Poznań – Rezygnacje – XVII wiek – Part 1, reg. 227 (No. 1424) 1649; Zap. Tryb. Piotrk., 588 (No. 29) 1638.

28 *Herbarz Polski Kaspra Niesieckiego*, vol. 8, 421. This erroneous information was subsequently repeated, among others, in Ozorowski, "Smogulecki", 113; "Smogulecki Jan Mikołaj", 626; Ha Nguyen, *Polscy misjonarze*, 75; Miazek-Męczyńska, "Michał Piotr Boym", 36.

29 Okolski, *Orbis Polonus*, vol. I, 273.

30 *Klerycy z ziem polskich, litewskich i pruskich święceni w Rzymie (XVI – pocz. XX w.)*, ed. Stanisław Jujeczka (Wrocław: Uniwersytet Wrocławski, 2018), no. 199.

31 Okolski, *Orbis Polonus*, vol. I, 273.

32 *Urzędnicy dawnej Rzeczypospolitej XII–XVIII wiek*u. *Spisy*, ed. Antoni Gąsiorowski, vol. I: *Wielkopolska (Województwa poznańskie i kaliskie)*, part 2: *Urzędnicy wielkopolscy XVI–XVIII wieku. Spisy*, ed. Adam Bieniaszewski (Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków–Gdańsk–Łódź: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1987), no. 685.

Characterizing Jan Jakub, the Dominican heraldist further remarked that "he lacked no virtue." According to Okolski, he was distinguished by genuine piety, particularly by his devotion to the Virgin Mary, which he "solemnly manifested by introducing the Archconfraternity of the Most Holy Rosary into the church in Wysocza, with numerous ceremonies, the participation of the clergy, and solemn celebrations." He was renowned for his love of the poor and of religious persons, especially – as Okolski emphasized – of the Dominican Order, which he supported with particular generosity and sincere affection.[33] According to information provided by Niesiecki, Jan Jakub married Zofia Anna Niemojewska, the daughter of Stanisław, the Castellan of Chełmno.[34] The couple had two sons: Mikołaj (c. 1634–1676), later the Castellan of Gdańsk, who married Anna Maria Chlewicka,[35] and Franciszek (d. 1667), who devoted himself to a military career.[36] According to Niesiecki, he "first tempered his knightly courage in foreign camps," and after returning to his homeland he successively became a rotmistrz (cavalry captain) and a colonel, "whom no enemy could defeat," but – as he noted – "envy alone overcame him."[37] In this envy the Jesuit heraldist saw the cause of the events that led to the murder of Franciszek while he was on his way to the session of the Sejm in 1667.[38]

In addition to the above-mentioned members of the Smogulecki family, the heraldic-genealogical compendium authored by Niesiecki also contains information concerning Jan Smogulecki (d. after 1629), the elder brother of Maciej,[39] the starosta of Bydgoszcz, who after his brother's death assumed guardianship over his three sons.[40] In the opinion of the Jesuit heraldist, he was particularly well disposed toward the Jesuits, which he demonstrated by supporting the establishment of the residence of the Society of Jesus in Bydgoszcz in 1618. He married a woman from the Żaliński family, whose first name is unknown, with whom he had

33 Okolski, *Orbis Polonus*, vol. I, 273.

34 *Herbarz Polski Kaspra Niesieckiego*, vol. 8, 422.

35 For a detailed discussion of Mikołaj Smogulecki, see: Jarosław Dumanowski, "Smogulecki Mikołaj h. Grzymała (ok. 1634–1676)", in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, vol. 39 (Warszawa–Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 1999–2000), 236–238.

36 For a detailed discussion of Mikołaj Smogulecki, see: Marek Wagner, "Smogulecki Franciszek h. Grzymała (zm. 1667)", in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, vol. 39 (Warszawa–Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 1999–2000), 231–232.

37 *Herbarz Polski Kaspra Niesieckiego*, vol. 8, 422.

38 Wagner, "Smogulecki Franciszek", 232.

39 *Herbarz Polski Kaspra Niesieckiego*, vol. 8, 422.

40 Teki Dworzaczka: Grodzkie i ziemskie – Kcynia: reg. 4400 (No. 19) (Iud.) 1629.

two sons: starosta of Nakło Maciej,[41] who, as has already been mentioned, married Teresa of the Niemojewski family, and Jan Wojciech, who married Ewa Zbyszewska.[42] According to Niesiecki, the first of the brothers was "a military man who served under the royal banner at no small personal expense," while the second was "a knightly man who at Chocim against Osman the Turk gave the first proof of his martial courage, and afterwards did not diminish it in other occasions."[43]

Public Activity

All authors writing about Jan Mikołaj agree that he was born in Kraków in 1610,[44] although no research confirming this claim has ever been conducted. In 1617, after the death of his father, he and his brothers came under the guardianship of their uncle Jan,[45] who sent Jan Mikołaj to the Jesuit college in Braniewo (1621). There the future Jesuit joined the Marian Sodality,[46] and subsequently (1622) enrolled at the Lubrański Academy in Poznań.[47] In 1625 Jan Mikołaj left for Freiburg to pursue studies in mathematics and astronomy.[48] There, in the following year, he published a work devoted to sunspots –*Sol illustratus ac propugnatus* […].[49] In 1627 he began philosophical studies at the Collegio Romano, which he completed after three years, obtaining the degree of Doctor of

41 *Urzędnicy dawnej Rzeczypospolitej XII–XVIII wieku. Spisy*, red. Antoni Gąsiorowski, vol. I: *Wielkopolska (Województwa poznańskie i kaliskie)*, part 2: *Urzędnicy wielkopolscy*, no. 684.

42 *Herbarz Polski Kaspra Niesieckiego*, vol. 8, 422.

43 *Ibidem*, 422.

44 "Smogulecki Jan Mikołaj", 626; Grzebień, "Smogulecki […] Jan Mikołaj", 232; Ha Nguyen, *Polscy misjonarze*, 75.

45 In the scholarly literature, it is sometimes claimed that after the death of his father Jan Mikołaj was placed under the care of his mother: Ha Nguyen, *Polscy misjonarze*, 75; Konior, *Historia polsko-chińskich kontaktów*, 243.

46 He began his studies in Braniewo together with his cousin Maciej; see: Grzebień, "Smogulecki […] Jan Mikołaj", 232; Ha Nguyen, *Polscy misjonarze*, 75–76; Miazek-Męczyńska, "Michał Piotr Boym", 36.

47 Grzebień, "Smogulecki […] Jan Mikołaj", 232; Ha Nguyen, *Polscy misjonarze*, 76; Miazek-Męczyńska, "Michał Piotr Boym", 36.

48 "Smogulecki Jan Mikołaj", 626; Grzebień, "Smogulecki […] Jan Mikołaj", 232; Ha Nguyen, *Polscy misjonarze*, 76; Miazek-Męczyńska, "Michał Piotr Boym", 36.

49 Jan Mikołaj Smogulecki, *Sol Illustratus ac Propugnatus* […] (Friburgi–Brisgoiae: excudebat Theodorus Meyer, 1626).

Philosophy.[50] In May 1627 he was recorded as a lay provizor of the Polish church dedicated to St. Stanislaus.[51] He later moved to the University of Padua, where he studied law for two years.[52] His education is also mentioned in the annual catalogue of the Society of Jesus from 1648, which records: "Ioannes Nicolaus Smogulecki 39 a. agens, 12 Societatis; praeter studia philosophiae (3a.) et theologiae (4a.) studuit (2a.) utriuque iuri."[53] Consequently, by the age of twenty Jan Mikołaj could boast the completion of studies in philosophy as well as extensive and well-grounded knowledge of law, mathematics, and astronomy – knowledge which, as the subsequent years of his life demonstrated, he carefully employed both for political and missionary purposes.

Most likely in the first half of 1631 Jan Mikołaj returned to his homeland, where he began a career at the royal court and in the state administration. In August 1631, while serving as a royal courtier, he was appointed starosta of Nakło,[54] an office he held for slightly more than two years, since at the end of December 1633 he ceded it to his cousin Maciej.[55] He took an active part in the work of the parliament, participating in the Convocation Sejm in Warsaw in 1632,[56] the Coronation Sejm of Władysław IV Vasa in Kraków in 1633,[57] and the Extraordinary Sejm in

50 "Smogulecki Jan Mikołaj", 626; Grzebień, "Smogulecki […] Jan Mikołaj", 232; Ha Nguyen, *Polscy misjonarze*, 76; Miazek-Męczyńska, "Michał Piotr Boym", 36.

51 Józef Skrabski, *Polacy w Rzymie i w Loreto w świetle materiałów archiwalnych w archiwum kościoła i hospicjum polskiego w Rzymie (XVII–XIX wiek). Spis Polaków w hospicjum polskim w Rzymie (XVII–XVIII wiek)* (Kraków: Towarzystwo Naukowe Societas Vistulana, 2024), 417.

52 "Smogulecki Jan Mikołaj", 626; Grzebień, "Smogulecki […] Jan Mikołaj", 232; Ha Nguyen, *Polscy misjonarze*, 76–77; Miazek-Męczyńska, "Michał Piotr Boym", 36. See also: *Archiwum nacji polskiej w Uniwersytecie Padewskim. Metryka nacji polskiej w Uniwersytecie Padewskim (1592–1745)*, T. 1, oprac. Henryk Barycz (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1971), 79.

53 Ha Nguyen, *Polscy misjonarze*, 75.

54 He was appointed starosta of Nakło on 19 August 1631 following the cession of the office by Stefan Gembicki; see: AGAD, MK, vol. 178, k. 376-377v; *Urzędnicy dawnej Rzeczypospolitej XII–XVIII wieku:. Spisy*, ed. Antoni Gąsiorowski, vol. I: *Wielkopolska (Województwa poznańskie i kaliskie)*, part 2: *Urzędnicy wielkopolscy*, no. 683.

55 The cession took place on 23 December 1633; see: AGAD, MK, vol. 180, k. 247-247v; *Urzędnicy dawnej Rzeczypospolitej XII–XVIII wieku: Spisy*, ed. Antoni Gąsiorowski, vol. I: *Wielkopolska (Województwa poznańskie i kaliskie)*, part 2: *Urzędnicy wielkopolscy*, no. 684.

56 *Volumina Constitutionum*, vol. III: *1611–1640*, part 2: *1627–1640*, ed. Stanisław Grodziski, Marcin Kwiecień, Anna Karabowicz (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sejmowe, 2013), 161.

57 *Ibidem*, 195.

Warsaw in 1634.[58] During the first of these parliamentary assemblies he was appointed to the commission for the inspection of the royal treasury: "that the Treasury of the Commonwealth, where the insignia as well as the jewels and the archives of the Kingdom are kept, be inspected; for this inspection, by the authority of the present assembly, we appoint their lordships the voivodes of Kraków and Poznań, Vilnius and Sandomierz, Kalisz and Trakai, and their lordship […] Mikołaj Smogulecki, starosta of Nakło […]". Together with him eight other representatives of the Chamber of Deputies were also appointed to the commission.[59] During the sessions of the Extraordinary Sejm in Warsaw in 1634, Smogulecki was in turn elected to a commission tasked with paying the wages of the "Muscovite and Ukrainian troops."[60] The claim that two years later he was elected to the Crown Tribunal must, however, be regarded as incorrect, although it is mentioned, among others, by Ludwik Grzebień.[61] For in 1636 it was his brother, Jan Jakub – then starosta of Nakło – who was elected deputy from the Poznań Voivodeship.[62]

In characterizing Jan Mikołaj, the Jesuit genealogist and heraldist Kacper Niesiecki noted that "when yet greater honours in this fatherland were awaiting him, he, despising all these things and yielding the starosta of Nakło to his brother (sic!), entered the Jesuit Order."[63] However, he did not specify the motivations that guided the young nobleman, who was at the beginning of a promising political career. According to Ludwik Grzebień, the reason lay in family relations – more precisely, in a certain aversion to intra-family relations – though this does not seem to be accurate.[64] Monika Miazek-Męczyńska, on the other hand, argues that one can only speculate that "the education received from Jesuit teachers in Braniewo, Freiburg, and Rome went beyond strictly academic boundaries, and that the fascination with knowledge, which undoubt-

58 *Ibidem*, 240.

59 The aforementioned eight representatives of the Chamber of Deputies were: Hieronim Broniewski; Zygmunt Koniecpolski, judge of the Sieradz land court; Marcjan Chełmski, standard-bearer of Kraków; Hieronim Przyłęcki, stolnik of Kraków; Krzysztof Ossoliński of Tęczyn, podkomorzy of Sandomierz; Krzysztof Sapieha, Lithuanian krajczy (carver); Krzysztof Kiszka, Lithuanian cześnik (cup-bearer); and Konstanty Szujski, land writer of Brest; see: *Volumina Constitutionum*, vol. III: *1611–1640*, part 2: *1627–1640*, 155–156.

60 *Volumina Constitutionum*, vol. III: *1611–1640*, part 2: *1627–1640*, 240.

61 Grzebień, "Smogulecki […] Jan Mikołaj", 232.

62 *Deputaci Trybunału Koronnego 1578–1794. Spis*, part II: *1621–1660*, ed. Dariusz Kupisz (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sejmowe, 2017), 132.

63 *Herbarz Polski Kaspra Niesieckiego*, vol. 8, 421.

64 Grzebień, "Smogulecki […] Jan Mikołaj", 232.

edly animated the mind of the young Jan Smogulecki, became during his studies intertwined with a fascination with Ignatian spirituality."[65] This view appears more convincing, as it is consistent with the characterization of Jan Mikołaj's family environment presented above. From this it follows that both the father and the uncle of the future Jesuit were closely connected in their lives with the Society of Jesus: Maciej through the education he received from the Jesuits, and Jan through the generous support he offered them. It should therefore come as no surprise that Jan Mikołaj also became connected with the Jesuits, among other things through many years of education, and that the piety represented by the sons of St. Ignatius of Loyola attracted him more strongly than, for example, Dominican spirituality, which was closer to his brother Jan Jakub.

Jan Mikołaj first approached the Jesuits in 1633, but at that time he was not admitted to the novitiate.[66] In the following years he repeatedly renewed his request to be admitted to the Society of Jesus, eventually achieving his goal. On 14 December 1636 he was admitted to the novitiate in Kraków.[67] Between 1638 and 1640 he studied theology at the College of Sts. Peter and Paul in Kraków, where he became acquainted, among others, with Michał Boym.[68] He then continued his studies for the next two years (1640–1642) at the Collegio Romano, to whose walls he returned after a ten-year absence.[69] In 1641, in the Eternal City, he received priestly ordination,[70] and in 1643 he solemnly pronounced the four religious vows.[71] From the very beginning of his stay in the Eternal City the idea of dedicating himself to missionary activity matured within him. This is mentioned, among others, by Niesiecki: "as soon as he completed his theological studies in Rome, he obtained from the Father General the mission to which he had bound himself by vow – to the Indies and to China."[72]

65 Miazek-Męczyńska, "Michał Piotr Boym", 37.

66 Grzebień, "Smogulecki […] Jan Mikołaj", 232.

67 "Smogulecki Jan Mikołaj", 626; Grzebień, "Smogulecki […] Jan Mikołaj", 232; Ha Nguyen, *Polscy misjonarze*, 77.

68 Monika Miazek-Męczyńska, *Indipetae Polonae – kołatanie do drzwi misji chińskiej* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 2015), 149, footnote 44.

69 "Smogulecki Jan Mikołaj", 626; Grzebień, "Smogulecki […] Jan Mikołaj", 232.

70 "Smogulecki Jan Mikołaj", 626; Grzebień, "Smogulecki […] Jan Mikołaj", 232.

71 "Smogulecki Jan Mikołaj", 626; Grzebień, "Smogulecki […] Jan Mikołaj", 232.

72 *Herbarz Polski Kaspra Niesieckiego*, vol. 8, 422.

Missionary Activity

Jan Mikołaj Smogulecki first expressed his desire to depart for the missions in an eight-point letter sent on 6 June 1641 to the Superior General of the Society of Jesus, Mutio Vitelleschi. In the first point he stated that he had been called to the Society of Jesus also for this reason: "in order to have the opportunity to devote myself to the conversion of the unbelievers." In the fourth and fifth points he argued that he saw no need to return to his homeland, since he was an orphan and the remaining members of his family were not well disposed toward him. In the sixth point he emphasized that the Order should not be concerned about the financial matters connected with sending him to the Far East, for – as he wrote – "as regards the costs of the journey, I shall not be a burden […] to the Society […]." Thus, three principal motives guided the Jesuit who was petitioning the General for permission to depart on the missions: religious, familial, and economic.

The selection of religious for missionary work in Asia – as Monika Miazek-Męczyńska notes – did not follow the same criteria as the standard recruitment of new candidates for ordinary pastoral work within the Order, but rather adhered to more detailed, one might even say more stringent, requirements. "The decisions of the superiors were determined not only by the candidate's spiritual formation and religious zeal, but also by his age, health, linguistic abilities, knowledge of the exact sciences, and practical craft skills." As a result, only a few were able to meet all the demands imposed by the authorities of the Order.[73] The nobleman originating from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, situated on the frontiers of Christendom, proved to be one who fulfilled these requirements. Thanks to his background and careful education, he perfectly matched the profile of the learned missionary so highly valued for the effective conduct of evangelization in China, where science constituted the first sphere of communication between the Jesuits and the mandarins.[74] In the meantime, he also donated to the Society of Jesus the sum of 40,000 złotys, which – according to what he himself wrote to the Superior General – was intended to secure the costs of his journey to the Far East. As a result, in 1643 the authorities of the Order granted Jan Mikołaj permission to depart for the missions.[75]

73 Miazek-Męczyńska, "Michał Piotr Boym", 37.

74 *Ibidem*, 37.

75 *Herbarz Polski Kaspra Niesieckiego*, vol. 8, 422.

Leaving the Eternal City, Jan Mikołaj set out for Portugal, where he spent several months preparing for the journey ahead. For some time he stayed, among other places, at the court of King John IV the Restorer of the House of Braganza, who – as Niesiecki recorded – "indeed wished to dissuade him from these holy intentions and to retain him at his court, being captivated by the fine qualities with which nature had endowed him; yet [Jan Mikołaj], through earnest supplications, freed himself from the royal regard directed toward him."[76] Equipped with the necessary books and scientific instruments, on 12 April 1644 he boarded a ship bound for Macau under the name "Joannes Nicolaus Sgomoleschi (sic!)." Several other missionaries from various parts of Europe travelled with him: Ludovicus Moura and Alvaro de Semedo from Portugal, Barholomaeus Sequeira from Spain, Joannes Rafael and Franciscus Sinamo from Italy, Ignatius Lagote from Flanders, and Henricus Vanurliden from the Netherlands.[77] Most of them reached Batavia – then the center of Dutch colonial activity – between the end of September and the beginning of October. There, residing in the house of a Portuguese merchant, Jan Mikołaj waited for an improvement in weather conditions that would allow him to continue the journey toward China. During his stay on the island, on 2 January 1645 he wrote a letter describing the nine-month voyage, which had been marked by illness, storms, hunger, thirst, and even the death of fellow travelers. He also described events connected with the popular uprising in China, the Manchu attack on Peking, the fall of the Ming dynasty, and the wars between its successors and the Manchu forces. In doing so, he demonstrated a good knowledge of the political situation in China, most likely drawing information from merchants staying in Batavia as well as from Jesuits who, after the Dutch capture of Malacca, had to wait there for ships bound for China.[78] There – as Niesiecki noted – "amid countless hardships and constant struggle with poverty and deprivation, he gathered the apostolic harvest for several years, until in those labors he exhausted his life."[79]

Jan Mikołaj began his activity in China in 1646 in the province of Kiangnan. A year later he moved to Hangzhou, where he began learning the language and acquainting himself with local customs. During the siege of Nanjing by Manchu forces, he and his companions were

76 *Ibidem*, 422.

77 Antonio Franco, *Synopis Annalium Societatis Jesu in Lusitania ab Anno 1540 usque ad Annum 1725* (Augustae-Vindelicorum – Graecii, 1726), ann. 1644.

78 Ha Nguyen, *Polscy misjonarze*, 79.

79 *Herbarz Polski Kaspra Niesieckiego*, vol. 8, 421–422.

forced to flee to the city of Kienyang. They did not remain there long, however, as the local population accused the Jesuits of sympathizing with the Manchus and threatened them with death.[80] The complexity of the situation in which the missionaries found themselves was described in his work by Tomasz Dunin Szpot, who drew attention, among other things, to the fact that the missionaries, standing in the face of almost certain death, were saved in a manner that seemed almost miraculous:

> In this turmoil, when throughout the whole city massacres, wounds, and the cries of those searching for the Tatars in order to put them to death were spreading, a certain Christian military prefect – Chinese indeed, yet serving under the command of the Tatars – took refuge in the church. He did so not because he feared death, but in order, through holy confession, to prepare himself to receive it as a Christian. When the rebels learned of his presence, they immediately came to the church. The Fathers received them with very courteous words and declared that there was no one in the temple professing loyalty to the Tatars. They therefore left the church and went on to continue their search for Tatars. However, after a few days, having obtained more certain information from their scouts, they again rushed to the church and, breaking down the gate, dragged out the Christian prefect – already well prepared for death – together with his servant, and after subjecting them to cruel torments, deprived them of their heads. They then plundered the house of the Fathers, and the missionaries themselves – considered allies of the Tatars – were seized together with two servants of the house and led to the place appointed for execution, in order to be beheaded. The Fathers were already certain that they must die and therefore, on the way, having mutually prepared their souls in the manner required by the final moment of life, Father Dacunha silently commended his struggle to God, while Father Smogoleński, filled with joy of spirit that he was to die for the cause of God, sang in a loud and joyful voice some psalm or hymn in his Polish language. It was not, however, the will of God that those should perish at that time to whom other labors in the spreading of the Law of God were still destined. When they arrived at the place of execution and, in the presence of one of the commanders of the rebel troops, fell to the ground awaiting the stroke of the sword, two pagan craftsmen, acquaintances of the Fathers, seeing them in such a condition, stepped forward and addressed the prefect: 'Sir,' they said, 'these are not Tatars, but scholars from the great West, men of the best life, of great virtue and learning, always recognized, esteemed, and visited as such by the great mandarins of this city and province.' It seemed as though God Himself had spoken through the mouths of the craftsmen to the heart of the prefect. As soon as he heard that they were scholars

80 Grzebień, "Smogulecki […] Jan Mikołaj", 233.

> from the great West, he ordered that their chains be removed, as well as those of their servants, and that they be escorted with honor back to the church – not so much rejoicing that their lives had been saved as grieving that they had lost the opportunity to glorify God through their own death. Having been delivered from death and restored to the church, they first made efforts – according to the Chinese custom of courtesy – to pay visits to the dignitaries and commanders of the rebels, rendering them the honors due. By God's providence this was so pleasing to those mandarins that all those whom they had preceded with this mark of respect afterwards visited their house in order to return the honors. Moreover, the governor of the city sent them a document of security and inviolability, called *Kaoxi*, by which, after that terrible turmoil, peace returned and fear of the people and soldiers ceased. The danger of famine, however, did not cease; it would have destroyed them, since the soldiers had plundered the house and deprived it of the means of subsistence – had it not been for the prompt piety of the Christians, who abundantly supplied them with food and all necessary provisions.[81]

As a consequence of the subsequent events, the Fathers went to the city of Kienning, having lost all their personal belongings, including the mathematical and astronomical instruments that Father Jan Mikołaj had brought with him from Europe.[82] "Two Fathers of our Society," wrote Martino Martini in *De bello Tartarico*, "had already been sent somewhat earlier out of the city by a marvelous Providence of God: Father Simon de Cunha, a Portuguese, and Father Jan Mikołaj Smogolecki, a Pole – like Lot saved from Sodom, a name which particularly suits that city on account of its shameful licentiousness."[83] Tomasz Dunin Szpot most likely drew upon Martini's account of these events, placing in his own work a paraphrase of a passage from *De bello Tartarico*: "At that time Fathers Dacunha and Smogoleński were staying outside the city; it seemed as though the hand of God had led them out – like the righteous Lot from Sodom – so that they might not be buried in the same ashes together

81 Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (ARSI), Jap. Sin. 103, ff. 62v–63r.

82 Grzebień, "Smogulecki […] Jan Mikołaj", 233. For the loss of Smogulecki's mathematical instruments, see: ARSI, Jap. Sin. 103, f. 63v.

83 Martino Martini, *De bello Tartarico. Historia in qua, quo pacto Tartarii hac nostra aetate Sinicum Imperium invaserint ac fere totum occuparint narrator, eorumque mores breviter describuntur* (Antverpiae: Johannes Janssonius, 1654), 111–112. See also the Italian edition: Martino Martini, "De bello Tartarico Historia", a cura di Davor Antonucci, in Martino Martini, *Opera omnia*, Vol. V: *De bello Tartarico Historia e altri scritti*, a cura di Federica Masini, Luisa M. Paternico, Davor Antonucci (Trento: Universita degli Studi di Trento, 2013), 290–291.

with the burned city and church."[84] Szpot's account, however, is more extensive, which would suggest that in gathering materials for his *Historiae Sinarum* he also made use of other Jesuit sources. In a further part of his work he notes that the Jesuits went to "the city of Kienyam, which still, though wavering, remained under the authority of the rebels." The prefect standing at the head of the city administration, having learned that Father Smogulecki was engaged in mathematical studies, "invited him and his companion to his palace, received them very kindly, assigned them chambers for residence, and – when they accepted this at his courteous insistence – generously provided them with everything necessary for a comfortable life."[85]

The situation became more complicated, however, when Father da Cunha departed from the city and travelled to the towns of Vùyxan and Cungan in order to visit the Christians living there. The local inhabitants interpreted this as an act of espionage on behalf of the Tatars, believing that da Cunha had left the city in order to inform the invaders about the situation within the city and the strength of its defenses. As a result, Father Smogulecki – who was still residing in the palace of the city prefect – was condemned to death by the local population. On the day appointed for his execution the rebels burst into the palace of the mandarin, yet – as Szpot relates – "even in this danger the hand of God came to his aid through the courage and mercy of a certain pagan who, having learned of the soldiers' intentions, risked his own life, rushed into the palace, led the Father out through a secret passage, and concealed him in his own house from the fury of the troops."[86] Szpot concludes his account by noting that the Jesuits suffered greatly "both from hunger and from the lack of other necessities, even clothing and garments protecting them from the winter cold; they scarcely possessed anything with which to cover their bodies. Yet in these afflictions God comforted them: partly through the charity of pagans, who, seeing their poverty, themselves offered them means of subsistence and clothing; partly through conversions to the holy faith, when they washed some, together with their entire families, in the sacramental baptism; and also through the piety and zeal of the neophytes whom they visited scattered in various places."[87]

According to Fr. Ludwik Grzebień, between 1647 and 1651 the Polish missionary worked in the province of Fujian, first under the direction of

84 ARSI, Jap. Sin. 103, f. 63v.

85 *Ibidem*, f. 63v.

86 *Ibidem*, f. 63v.

87 *Ibidem*, ff. 63v–64r.

Father Giulio Aleni and later under the aforementioned Simon da Cunha.[88] During this period he also travelled to Nanjing, where he taught the Chinese mathematics and astronomy. He also became acquainted with the Chinese mathematician Lie Fong-tsu, who became his disciple. This Chinese scholar published two astronomical works under the name of his master (*Mu Ni-co*): *Calculation of Eclipses According to Western Methods* and *On the Harmony of Chinese and Western Astronomy*. In these works logarithmic calculation was applied in China for the first time.[89]

In 1653 Emperor Shunzhi summoned Smogulecki to Peking, to which he came from Nanjing, although he did not remain at the imperial court for long.[90] This is mentioned, among others, by Tomasz Dunin Szpot, who states unequivocally in his work: "Father Jan Mikołaj Smogoleński was summoned from Nanjing to Peking" in order to assist Father Adam Schall in astronomical matters.[91] According to Szpot's account, he was presented by Schall to Emperor Shunzhi and was granted residence near the so-called Western Church as well as an annual stipend from the imperial treasury.[92] During his stay in Peking, Father Jan Mikołaj – as Szpot writes – "was a man of great aspirations and an ardent supporter of spreading the faith throughout the entire East; he was already considering in his mind an expedition to Tartary, where it was intended to introduce the Christian faith, a matter that had begun to occupy the attention of the superiors of the Chinese mission."[93] Consequently, he began to study the Tatar language – which, in Szpot's opinion, was much easier than Chinese – and after making considerable progress in it, he presented a petition to the emperor through Father Schall:

> "Since His Imperial Majesty so greatly favors the Christian religion and the proclamation of the most holy law of the Lord of Heaven – as his royal deeds testify – may it please him, by his special grace, to permit me to go to Tartary in order to proclaim there the faith in the Lord of Heaven, the Creator of the earth and the Ruler of the universe, and through preaching to make His holy law known to those peoples."[94]

88 Grzebień, "Smogulecki […] Jan Mikołaj", 233. See also: ARSI, Jap. Sin. 103, f. 104v.

89 Ha Nguyen, *Polscy misjonarze*, 80.

90 Grzebień, "Smogulecki […] Jan Mikołaj", 233. Smogulecki's stay in Nanjing is noted by Tomasz Dunin Szpot: "In Nankin Provincia Nankin laborarunt Patres: in Metropoli Nicolaus Smogoleński, Polonus […]": ARSI, Jap. Sin. 103, f. 88v.

91 ARSI, Jap. Sin. 103, f. 91r. Por. *Ibidem*, f. 104v.

92 ARSI, Jap. Sin. 103, f. 91r.

93 *Ibidem*, f. 92v–93r.

94 *Ibidem*, f. 98r.

According to Fr. Ludwik Grzebień, during the audience the Polish missionary "presented to the emperor a plan for the evangelization of Manchuria, requesting permission to travel to those regions." Having received *litterae patentes* from the emperor, he then set out on his journey, making use of the support of the mandarins.[95] This event is also mentioned in *Historica narratio de initio et progressu missionis Societatis Iesu apud Chonensem*, where it is recorded, among other things, that "Father Nicolaus Purgoleski [sic!], a Pole, was received at the royal court so that from there he might have a secured passage to the Tatars […] enjoying a certain protection."[96] However, an analysis of the work of Tomasz Dunin Szpot indicates that the opinion cited above by Grzebień is incorrect. In the pages of *Historiae Sinarum* one may find information that Father Jan Mikołaj was indeed received by the emperor, but that "the enemies of the faith did not fail to employ their stratagems here as well, and in order that the feet of the preachers of the Gospel might not reach that kingdom, they persuaded the ruler by their arguments that he should rather entrust him with teaching the law of the Lord of Heaven in selected provinces of the Chinese Empire than allow him to enter the abandoned Tartary."[97] Consequently, the emperor declared that he did not wish to expose him to the "Tatar dangers," since Tartary "is a desert land, where he would either die of hunger or be devoured by wild beasts." Instead, the whole of China – inhabited by a civilized and developed people" – was opened to Father Jan Mikołaj. According to the imperial rescript, Father Jan Mikołaj could go wherever he wished; and in every place to which he came he would have the right to proclaim the law of the Lord of Heaven, and no one whom he encountered would hinder or oppose him."[98] The information provided by Szpot is confirmed in the work *Historica narratio de initio et progressu missionis Societatis Jesu apud Chinensem*, where it is recorded that during the audience the emperor addressed Smogulecki with the following words: "I do not advise you to go there, but my entire empire stands open before you. Go wherever you wish, and wherever you deem it appropriate, sow the law of God!"[99] As a consequence, Father Jan Mikołaj had to leave Peking and proceeded

95 Grzebień, "Smogulecki […] Jan Mikołaj", 233.

96 *Historica narratio de initio et progressu misionis Societatis Jesu apud Chinensem, ac praesertim in Regia Pequinensi* (Viennae: Typis Matthaei Cosmorovij, Sacrae Caesareae Majestatis Aulae Typographi, 1665), 172.

97 ARSI, Jap. Sin. 103, f. 98r.

98 *Ibidem*, f. 98r.

99 *Historica narratio de initio*, 172.

to the province of Quantum, "with the aim of preparing the possibility of entering the provinces of Queicheu and Yunnan, to which the light of the Gospel had not yet reached."[100]

Having received from Emperor Shunzhi the right to preach the Word of God throughout the whole of China – rather than in Tartary, which was only sparsely inhabited – Father Jan Mikołaj went to the city of Quamcheufù, the capital of the province of Quantum, where, "as a person pleasing to the emperor, he was treated with particular favor and great honors by the governor of the province."[101] For some time, however, he remained in the city against his own will – as Szpot relates – "both because of the requests of the governor, who detained him there, and because of the military disturbances between the Tatars and King Yumlie, which closed to him the road to the provinces of Quamsi, Queicheu, and Yunnan, to which he desired to go with the Gospel."[102] In this context Tomasz Dunin Szpot states that "God reserved for Father Jan Mikołaj Smogoleński, a Pole, as the final of the labors he undertook for the glory of God in China," the restoration of the Jesuit mission on the island of Hainan. For while he was staying in Quamcheufù he learned that the efforts of the superiors of the Japanese province to send missionaries to the island had not been successful, and therefore he himself – as Szpot reports – undertook this task.

According to the account in *Historiae Sinarum*, he wrote a letter to Macau requesting that several Fathers be selected whom he himself could lead by land toward the island.[103] In the further part of his work, Szpot reports that Father Jan Mikołaj's letter was received in Macau "as if it were a voice sent from heaven," and therefore two Fathers were immediately designated for the mission: Andrzej Lubelli and Jan Chrzciciel Brandus. It soon became apparent, however, that both of them were in too poor a state of health to endure the hardships of an overland journey. Consequently, Father Maciej à Maia was chosen in place of Father Lubelli, while Father Brandus – thanks to his persistent requests – ultimately obtained permission to depart as well.[104]

The missionaries met Father Jan Mikołaj in Canton, from where, together and in the company of a certain mandarin, surrounded by a large military escort, they set out on their journey. A brief description of this

100 ARSI, Jap. Sin. 103, f. 98r.

101 *Ibidem*, f. 103r.

102 *Ibidem*, f. 103r.

103 *Ibidem*, f. 103r.

104 *Ibidem*, f. 103v.

journey was included in the work of Tomasz Dunin Szpot, who recorded that "after overcoming the dangers of the rivers and the ambushes of bandits lying in wait for the silver which the mandarin was transporting as soldiers' pay to Hainan, they safely reached the island,"[105] and on 22 June 1656 they arrived at its capital, Kiumcheu.[106]

The place in Kiumcheu where the Jesuits stayed was "the vestibule, or portico, of one of the largest pagan temples, renowned throughout the city as a monastery of the strict observance of the bonzes."[107] This resulted from the fact that – as Szpot explains – in China there were generally no public inns intended for travelers. Consequently, those who did not have friends or relatives in a given city with whom they could stay were compelled to seek lodging in the vestibules of temples. An exception was made only for mandarins who, when travelling with imperial orders to the prefects of cities and the governors of provinces, made use of public palaces built for imperial envoys.[108] Their guests could also reside there if they possessed a special invitation. Such invitations were received by Father Jan Mikołaj both from the mandarin accompanying the Jesuits and from the governor of the island. However, he declined the offered hospitality. According to the account provided by Szpot, he did so out of consideration for his fellow brethren, since the accommodation offered to him would not have sufficed for himself, the two other Fathers, and their servants. Therefore, he preferred to stay together with his companions in a place accessible to all rather than enjoy the comforts offered to him alone.[109]

After some time the Fathers took up residence in a house they had purchased and began efforts to recover the church and the Jesuit residence in the city of Tingan, which ultimately proved successful.[110] In these efforts to regain both properties, the esteem enjoyed by Father Smogulecki among the highest mandarins of the island played a significant and effective role. Thanks to this influence, the governor of the island issued an edict ordering that the properties be returned to the missionaries. The prefect of the city, however, defended his claims and did everything possible to obstruct the execution of this order. Nevertheless, as Szpot recorded in his work, "by God's providence the cause was

105 *Ibidem*, f. 103v.

106 Ha Nguyen, *Polscy misjonarze*, 81.

107 ARSI, Jap. Sin. 103, f. 103v.

108 *Ibidem*, f. 103v.

109 *Ibidem*, f. 103v.

110 *Ibidem*, f. 104r.

also assisted by a certain mandarin who had embraced Christianity at the court of King Yumlie, where he had served as a military commander on the island." According to Szpot, he retained this position even under Tatar rule, to which he transferred his allegiance when the governor appointed by c, together with the whole island of Hainan, acknowledged the authority of the new emperor. At the time when Father Smogulecki and his companions were still lodging in the portico of the temple, he was among the first to visit them. According to Szpot's account in *Historiae Sinarum*, "his arrival, his profession of faith, and the many testimonies of his love for God, steadfastness in the Christian religion, and concern for the salvation of his own soul filled the Fathers with great joy."[111]

As a consequence of these events, Father Jan Mikołaj began preparations for his return journey.[112] Taking advantage of the presence of his fellow brethren – as Szpot records – he confessed to one of them the sins of his entire life. This was prompted by the fact – as Szpot further explains – that among the many hardships encountered by the missionary, the greatest and most painful was solitude, which made it impossible for him to receive sacramental confession either before celebrating Holy Mass or in the face of death. For this reason Father Jan Mikołaj was said to have repeatedly expressed his fear that he might meet the same fate as many other Fathers – to die without receiving the sacraments.[113]

Father Jan Mikołaj's journey toward the mainland was soon interrupted by a storm that forced the ship carrying him to return to the port of Kiumcheu, from where he went back to the house he had only recently left.[114] As a result, his fellow brethren urged Father Jan Mikołaj "to remain with them on the island, where he would find a very extensive field for spreading the holy faith, suited to his zeal, and at the same time enjoy the longed-for consolation of constantly living with another priest – a collaborator in the work of the Lord – whose assistance he could also make use of for the needs of his own soul." They added that his return to Kiumcheu appeared to them to be a clear sign of God's will, whose intervention they perceived in the stormy sea that had forced Smogulecki to return to the island and to his brethren.[115] Having heard these arguments, however, the Jesuit – according to Szpot's account – replied to his fellow brethren that remaining on the island of Hainan

111 *Ibidem*, f. 105r.

112 *Ibidem*, f. 104r.

113 *Ibidem*, f. 104r.

114 *Ibidem*, ff. 104r–104v.

115 *Ibidem*, f. 104v.

did not lie within his power, for God was calling him elsewhere to labor. "For if," Smogulecki was said to have declared, "for the sake of the small number of inhabitants of this island he were to abandon the care of so many Christians scattered throughout the whole Chinese Empire, who like sheep without a shepherd seek someone who will open pastures for them and defend them from the wolves of the pagans, then his conscience would be tormented by the gravest reproaches."[116] Thus, after giving this answer to his brethren, he left Hainan for the second time and, having successfully crossed the strait, reached the mainland.

The following days showed that this was to be Father Jan Mikołaj's final journey. On his way to Canton he stopped in the city of Chaokim, in the house of a mandarin who was well disposed toward him. There, after a brief illness, he died on 17 September 1656.[117] A few days later the mandarin in whose house he had died organized a solemn funeral for Father Jan Mikołaj. His body was buried with honors in a grave located outside the walls of the city of Chaokim, and a procession of mandarins took part in the ceremony.[118]

Conclusion

It was surely a funeral filled with speeches and recollections in which the deceased was remembered as a man who – as Szpot writes – was distinguished both by "an outstanding intellect and virtue, as well as by a particular zeal in spreading the glory of God throughout the whole East."[119] Two virtues dominated his religious life. The first was a profound humility of spirit, the second a special devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. This meant that Father Jan Mikołaj "continually humbled himself – accusing himself, condemning himself, and asking others for forgiveness for the faults which he believed he had committed in daily interactions, although no one else even noticed them." The filial trust – which, as Szpot writes, Father Jan Mikołaj placed in the Mother of God – led him to believe that with her help he would be able to accomplish any task entrusted to him.[120] A perfect example of this was the mission he carried out in Nanjing, where for several years he devoted himself to pastoral

116 *Ibidem*, f. 104v.

117 *Ibidem*, f. 104v. See also: Ha Nguyen, *Polscy misjonarze*, 81.

118 ARSI, Jap. Sin. 103, f. 104v.

119 *Ibidem*, f. 104v.

120 *Ibidem*, f. 105r.

work, "greatly increasing the Christian community and fostering in the neophytes piety and a fervent concern for the fulfillment of Christian duties." He accomplished all this both "through his great prudence and diligence",[121] and for the greater glory of God.[122] This brief description, summarizing the life of Father Jan Mikołaj and based on the work of Tomasz Dunin Szpot, clearly demonstrates how significant a figure in the history of China this nobleman from Greater Poland was – the grandson of a rebel and insurgent who abandoned a political career to enter the Society of Jesus. He was a man who unquestionably influenced the development of Christianity in the Far East, a missionary who left his mark on world history, and without whom the Jesuit mission in China would never have taken the form that we know today.

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The Style of Tomasz Dunin Szpot, S.J., in *Historiae Sinarum Imperii*: Early Modern Learned Latin as a Language of Describing and Interpreting China

Styl Tomasza Dunina Szpota SJ w *Historiae Sinarum Imperii*. Nowożytna łacina erudycyjna jako język opisu i interpretacji świata chińskiego[1]

Abstract

The article attempts to analyze the style of Tomasz Dunin Szpot SJ on the basis of his work *Historiae Sinarum Imperii*. It demonstrates that the author employs a highly self-conscious form of early modern scholarly Latin, combining academic rigor, classical periodic rhetoric, and missionary-theological narration. Szpot's style fulfills cognitive, persuasive, and

1 This research was funded by the state budget under the programme of the Minister of Education and Science, *National Programme for the Development of the Humanities* (project no. NPRH/U22/SP/0021/2023/12), entitled *Historiae Sinarum Imperii and Collectanea Historiae Sinensis by Tomasz Szpot Dunin SJ – the Polish Contribution to the Study of Chinese Culture and History in the Early Modern Period*. The funding amount was PLN 1,566,263.42, which is also the total value of the project.

interpretative functions: it enables the translation of Chinese realities into the language of Latin culture and endows the history of China with a providential meaning. The analysis is based on numerous quotations from the original text, illustrating the author's syntax, vocabulary, rhetorical figures, and conceptual strategies.

Keywords: Tomasz Dunin Szpot SJ, *Historiae Sinarum Imperii*, early modern Latin, Jesuits in China, Latin style, missionary rhetoric, historiography.

Abstrakt

Artykuł stanowi próbę analizy stylu Tomasza Dunina Szpota SJ na podstawie dzieła *Historiae Sinarum Imperii*. Wykazuje, iż autor posługuje się wysoce świadomą formą nowożytnej łaciny erudycyjnej, łączącą rygor naukowy, klasyczną retorykę okresu oraz narrację misyjno-teologiczną. Styl Szpota pełni funkcję poznawczą, perswazyjną i interpretacyjną: umożliwia translację realiów chińskich na język kultury łacińskiej oraz nadaje dziejom Chin sens opatrznościowy. Analiza opiera się na licznych cytatach z oryginału, ukazujących składnię, leksykę, figury retoryczne oraz strategie konceptualne autora.

Słowa klucze: Tomasz Dunin Szpot SJ, *Historiae Sinarum Imperii*, łacina nowożytna, jezuici w Chinach, styl łaciński, retoryka misyjna, historiografia.

Tomasz Szpot Dunin's *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* represents one of the fullest examples of a Latin language treatment of China, as well as one of the most stylistically complex works of the seventeenth century.[2] The text includes multiple literary genres, and makes no pretense toward neutrality. Instead, its language reveals a multi-layered construction, in which academic rigor, classical rhetoric and a theological interpretation of history create a solid, tense narrative style. The tension between documentation and interpretation, between description and meaning, comprises the key to understanding both the author's style and the purposes of his work. Szpot's style serves to both impart information and fill an epistemological role: it orders a foreign reality, imparts meaning to it and incorporates it into the conceptual universe of learned Latin culture.

Already in the opening sections of the *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* the author reveals his encyclopedic ambitions. His description of the Chinese Empire begins with a precise definition of its geographical situation, employing the simple language of cartography, lacking emotion and stylistic tropes:

2 The English translation is by John Jefferson.

> Amplitudo Imperii Sinici inter mare quod ipsi ad Austrum est et Murum Magnum à Septemtrione continetur inter gradus latitudinis poli Borealis vigesimum secundum et quadragesimum quartum. (Jap. Sin. 102, f. 1r)

This sentence resembles a scholarly definition. It lacks subjective judgements, employing numerical data, geographic terminology and an informative syntax. The style is reminiscent of early-modern atlases and geographical compendia, in which the world is presented as a measurable, describable and ordered whole. Descriptions of provinces, borders and islands are laid out in a similar tone. This description of Haynan island provides an example:

> insula Haynan sceptris Sinicis subiecta… sub gradibus poli borealis decimo octavo, nono, vigesimo et vigesimo primo à Natura collocata. (Jap. Sin. 102, f. 1r)

This sort of description not only informs, it conveys precision, incorporating China into the European system of geographic knowledge, rendering it a portion of the mappable world. At the same time, the academic rigor does not result in a stylistic aridity. Szpot often moves from dry description to rhetorical amplification, particularly in moments he judges as possessing great symbolic significance. This is clear in his description of the Great Wall, defined as

> [...] opus illud immortale, quod Sinarum opes et magnificentiam sui Conditoris per tot retro saecula demonstravit, etiamnum demonstrat, demonstrabitque postea. (Jap. Sin. 102, f. 1r)

In this sentence one sees features of classical rhetorical prose: the anaphoric repetition of the verb *demonstrare*, the temporal triad consisting of past, present and future. Yet the clause also moves with a rousing rhythm. The wall is not merely an architectural object or a defensive structure, it becomes a monumental symbol of civilizational endurance and historical greatness. Style becomes a tool for judgment.

A particular feature of Szpot's prose is formalism, which appears in the sections dedicated to law, administration, and institutions. The author often adopts a normative, somewhat legislative tone, imbuing his statements with the status of general principles. When he describes the legal custom that obtained after the end of a dynasty, he formulates it in a style reminiscent of a law code:

> Lex est in Sina, ut deficiente atque adeò extinctâ regnante Familia, omnes Coloni… libertatem suam adipiscantur. (Jap. Sin. 103, f. 36r)

The construction of the sentence, beginning with the impersonal formula *Lex est*, resembles a legal article or definition in a juridical treatise. There is no emotion or commentary. The style suggests the objectivity and systematic order of the Chinese state, and at the same time allows the European reader to interpret an alien reality in terms known from the traditions of Roman law. Such formalism coexists with an elaborate rhetorical syntax typical of Latin scholarly prose. Szpot uses multiple complex sentences in which the density of information is precisely controlled through classical syntax. Sentences that are repeatedly complex, full of interjections and additions, create a demanding but logically coherent narrative. Such constructions, often based on ablative absolutes and indirect discourse (accusative plus infinitive), allow the author to condense the message without sacrificing rhetorical elegance. This is particularly evident in fragments of a moral and religious nature, such as the sentence:

> Haec Domus Domini caeli non habet mancipia, nec pagos nec oppida, et qui ad illam habitant, non habent alias possessiones, quam virtutem et ex illa celeberrimum nomen. (Jap. Sin. 103, f. 36r)

A series of negations and syntactic parallelism culminating in the concept of *virtus* give this passage a rhythm and sublimity typical of the classical period and close to the homiletic prose of the Church Fathers.

The most essential aspect of Szpot's style remains his theological interpretation of history. The history of China is not a series of accidental historical events, but a stage for Divine Providence. The fall of the Ming dynasty, for example, becomes a clear part of the divine plan:

> Divini igitur consilii opus fuit, ut inveteratae in suis malis Familiae Taimingae […] praeparaverit Gentem extra Sinam. (Jap. Sin. 103, f. 35 v.)

The language in this fragment is clearly theological. Abstract ideas appear, and historical processes are subordinated to the logic of salvation. The style plays a semantic role here, lending events a significance far beyond pure factography and incorporating them into the Christian view of world history.

A similar mechanism is apparent in the descriptions of missionary activity, which often take on the narrative of a heroic story. The Fathers of the Society of Jesus are presented in the story as heroes of the Faith,

who have undertaken a difficult and dangerous expedition and have sailed thousands of miles across a stormy sea to spread the Christian faith in China:

> [...] inter pericula vitae, octo millium leucarum Oceanum emensus, ad claustra Imperii pervenit. (Jap. Sin. 102, f. 80v)
>
> [...] relictâ suâ Patriâ octodecim millia milliarium procellosi et periculosi Oceani conficere non dubitaverit; ut in Sina Literatorum Patria Literatus et ipse vivere posset. (Jap. Sin. 102, f. 106r)
>
> [...] emensis inter gravissima vitae pericula, octogenis millibus milliarium procellosi Oceani. (Jap. Sin. 102, f. 161v)
>
> [...] commisimus nos Navigationi per furentis Oceani, octodecim millium leucarum, inter syrtes et scopulos spatia, et iudicavimus nos feliciter impendere pecuniam, tempus, afflictiones, aerumnas, vitam, modo appelleremus in Sinam. (Jap. Sin. 102, f. 213v)
>
> [...] relictâ Patria, [...] per tot pericula exantlata Oceani, itinere octoginta millium milliarium, in Sinam pervenerunt. (Jap. Sin. 103, f. 40v)

The rhythm and word choice as well as the focus on the effort, risk, perseverance and difficulties of the journey place the missionary in an epic, almost hagiographical framework, though one based in historical and geographical realities. The style augments the ideological message, presenting the mission as simultaneously heroic and providential.

Szpot's use of Latin takes on particular significance in this context, in which he employs Latin as a tool of cultural translation. The author is forced to describe ideas and realities, which have no ready correspondents in classical Latin. He does this through phonetic adaptation, transliteration, and semantic reinterpretation. When he writes about the Chinese notion of *Tian,* he states:

> Hunc, cùm praestantius atque nobilius nomen in sua lingua reperire non possent, vocarunt Tien, Caelum (Jap. Sin. 102, f. 3r)

The Latin word *caelum* is not a neutral equivalent here, but one rife with Christian metaphysical connotations. In this way Szpot's Latin not only translates, but interprets and theologizes a foreign concept, bringing it into the European conceptual system.

A similar pursuit is visible in the juxtaposition of Confucius with ancient philosophers, with Szpot dubbing him "Princeps vestrae Philosophiae" (Jap. Sin. 102, f. 127v). This comparison is not accidental, but

consciously places Chinese thought within the patristic *praeparatio evangelica*, wherein pagan philosophy comprises a preparation for revelation. Style becomes a tool for cultural dialogue, but this dialogue has an asymmetric character and is subordinated to a Christian teleology.

In light of the above observations Tomasz Szpot Dunin's style is a model of global early modern Latin, capable of describing the world on an intercontinental scale. This Latin combines academic precision with rhetorical elegance and a theological interpretation of history, creating a language which not only describes reality, but organizes and evaluates it. The *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* is thus not only a source of knowledge about China, but also a testimony to the European attempt to intellectually grasp the non-European world with the tools of the classical philological tradition and Christian historical thought. Szpot's style – dense, demanding and multi-layered – is an integral part of this cognitive project, and without its analysis, it is impossible to fully understand the meaning of the work.

Problems with critically editing and translating Tomasz Dunin Szpot's *Historiae Sinarum Imperii*

The attempt to prepare a critical edition of Tomasz Dunin Szpot's *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* and translate it into a modern language reveals a complex tangle of philological, linguistic and cultural problems that go beyond the standard difficulties associated with editing early modern Latin. Szpot's text is not only a historical account written in a classical language, but a testimony to the role of Latin as a tool of global knowledge in the seventeenth century. His language is situated on the border of the classical tradition, Renaissance humanism and Baroque missionary prose, which makes it particularly demanding for both editor and translator.

The main problem in creating a critical edition is the variable notation, which in Szpot's work is not accidental. Spelling and capitalization fluctuate, which can sometimes be interpreted as a conscious semantic strategy. Differences such as *Imperator* and *imperator*, *Murus Magnus* and *murus magnus*, *Mandarinus* and *mandarinus* appear within the same volume and even in close textual proximity. They are not only the result of the author's negligence, but can reflect a hierarchy of concepts; capitalization is sometimes reserved for institutions of a formal or dignified nature, lowercase for descriptive uses. The editor is faced with the decision whether to keep this variability as a feature of the author's style

or to unify it in the name of modern editorial standards. In the case of Szpot, each normalization carries the risk of losing shades of meaning.

A separate challenge is the transliteration and identification of proper names. Szpot consistently adapts Chinese personal, geographical and ethnic names to Latin phonetics and inflection, using forms such as *Quantum*, *Fokien*, *Vanlye*, *Humquam* or *Xunchi*. Without additional commentary, these forms are often inscrutable to the modern reader. Their identification with the names used in contemporary sinology can be difficult and sometimes ambiguous. The editor must decide whether to leave the Latin form unexplained or to introduce a critical apparatus that allows it to be unambiguously identified. The creation of a parallel corpus of names that would allow one to trace the relationship between the Latin form, the Chinese original, and the modern transcription seems a practical necessity.

Translation presents even greater difficulties. Szpot's Latin is not semantically neutral. Its rhetorical and theological connotations often go beyond the dictionary equivalents. Particularly problematic are passages in which the author interprets Chinese concepts using Christian terminology. When Szpot writes about the concept of *Tian*, stating that the Chinese "vocaverunt Tien, Caelum," he is not merely translating, but reinterpreting. The Latin *Caelum* carries biblical and metaphysical connotations that are not identical with the Chinese understanding of *Tian*. The translator is faced with a dilemma: whether to render the term literally, risking anachronism, or to mark the semantic difference at the expense of a smooth translation.

Similar difficulties apply to religious and philosophical terminology. Szpot willingly juxtaposes Chinese thought with Greco-Roman and patristic philosophy, describing Confucius as "Princeps vestrae Philosophiae". Such a stylistic device has a clear persuasive purpose, but in translation it can be perceived as overly normative or Eurocentric. However, the translator's task is not to neutralize this perspective, but to make the reader aware of it. The translation must therefore maintain the tension between description and interpretation, which is characteristic of Szpot's style.

Another problem is posed by the long, multi-layered, complex Latin periods, characteristic of Szpot's prose. These sentences, based on classical periodic syntax, often contain several levels of information, numerous interjections and parenthetical expressions. Their literal reproduction in a modern language threatens syntactic overload and loss of legibility. On the other hand, the excessive breakdown of periods into shorter sentences risks destroying the rhythm and logic of the argument, weakening the

rhetorical power of the text. Therefore, the translator must each time strike a compromise, balancing between fidelity to the original structure and the functionality of the translation.

Passages of a theological nature, in which Szpot interprets history in Providential terms, are particularly delicate. The sentence "Divini igitur consilii opus fuit, ut inveteratae in suis malis Familiae Taimingae..." (Jap. Sin. 103, f. 35 v.) is not just a description of political events, but an expression of a specific vision of history. A translation that would try to soften the theological, emphatic nature of this language would falsely represent the meaning of the work. The translation of the *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* cannot be a neutral historical report; it must preserve the author's perspective, even if it is alien to the contemporary audience.

All of these difficulties lead to the conclusion that the *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* demands a new type of critical edition, combining the tools of classical philology with consideration for cultural translation. Such an edition should include extensive linguistic, historical and cultural commentary, enabling the reader to understand both the facts and the way in which they were interpreted by the author. Only then will it be possible to fully appreciate Szpot's work as one of the key texts of early modern Europe's approach to China.

Historiae Sinarum Imperii by Tomasz Dunin Szpot SJ as an example of early modern global Latin

An analysis of the stylistic, structural, editorial and translation problems of the *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* allows us to look at the work of Tomasz Dunin Szpot SJ not only as one of the many Jesuit sources concerning China, but as a text of exceptional importance for the history of early modern intellectual culture. It is a work in which Latin – a language formed in the ancient world and which developed over the centuries – is used to describe a global reality radically different from the one in which it originally arose. In this sense, the *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* is one of the most vivid examples of Latin as the language for accessing knowledge of the world in the seventeenth century.

Stylistic analysis shows that Szpot's prose is not homogeneous or haphazard. Its structure is based on a dynamic tension between scholarly rigor and rhetorical amplification, between factual description and a theological interpretation of history. The author uses Latin with a high degree of stylistic awareness, drawing on both the classical historiographical tradition and Baroque missionary rhetoric. This language allows

him to simultaneously document the Chinese reality and give it meaning within the framework of the Christian vision of universal history. Style is not an ornament here, but a tool of cognition and interpretation. Of particular importance is the fact that Szpot does not limit himself to describing China as an exotic "other world". On the contrary, he consistently incorporates China into the universal, truly catholic framework of the rational and moral order known to Latin culture. He does this through the language of law, administration and philosophy, as well as through conscious juxtaposition of Chinese thought with Greco-Roman and patristic traditions. Thanks to these efforts, the *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* is not only an account of China, but an attempt to "translate" it intellectually into the language of European learned culture.

From a historical linguistic perspective, Szpot's work shows the moment when early modern Latin reaches its full adaptive capabilities. Latin becomes a language of cultural translation, capable of describing unknown institutions, religious concepts and geographical realities. It simultaneously reveals the limits of this project. The reinterpretation of Chinese concepts or the incorporation of Chinese philosophy into the *praeparatio evangelica* framework shows that this translation is not neutral, but laden with a European theological and axiological perspective. It is in this tension between cognition and interpretation that the full complexity of early modern global Latin is revealed.

The *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* requires a special philological approach. The variable orthography, ambiguous transliteration of proper names, multi-layered periodic syntax and strong theological character of the language mean that any attempt to modernize the text risks the loss of nuance. Szpot's work is not readily suitable for editorial standardization or translation "smoothing". On the contrary, it demands a critical edition that preserves internal tensions and allows the reader to see both the richness and limitations of the early modern European perspective. In this context, the *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* appears as a borderline text: standing at the junction of epochs, cultures and intellectual traditions. On the one hand, it is rooted in classical Latin and the humanistic ideal of science, on the other it is cosmopolitan and open to the new cognitive challenges of the seventeenth century. An analysis of Szpot's style allows us to see that early modern missionary historiography was not only a tool of religious propaganda, but also an area of intensive linguistic and intellectual experimentation.

Tomasz Dunin Szpot's *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* deserves a permanent place in the study of early modern Latin, global history and the history of the European reception of China. This work not only documents

the meeting of two civilizations, but also shows how seventeenth-century Europe tried to understand, describe and interpret this encounter using a language that for centuries was considered a universal medium of knowledge. In this sense, Szpot's Latin remains not only a witness to a bygone era, but also an important point of reference for contemporary reflection on cultural translation, the history of ideas and the limits of language in the description of the world.

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The Significance of Modern Digital Methods for the Study of Jesuit Missions in China[1]

Znaczenie nowoczesnych metod cyfrowych dla badań nad misjami jezuickimi w Chinach

Abstract

This article addresses the application of modern digital tools in research on the Jesuit missionary heritage in China, using the project of a critical edition of *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* (HSE) by Tomasz Szpot Dunin, SJ, as a case study. Drawing on the theoretical assumptions of digital humanities – understood not as a separate discipline but as a research strategy – the author analyzes the complete "digital workflow" employed in the project: from digitization and HTR (Handwritten Text Recognition) transcription, through text structuring and critical editing in the Classical Text Editor (CTE) environment, to advanced corpus analysis and the experimental use of large language models (LLMs) and RAG technology.

1 This research was funded by the state budget under the programme of the Minister of Education and Science, *National Programme for the Development of the Humanities* (project no. NPRH/U22/SP/0021/2023/12), entitled *Historiae Sinarum Imperii and Collectanea Historiae Sinensis by Tomasz Szpot Dunin SJ – the Polish Contribution to the Study of Chinese Culture and History in the Early Modern Period*. The funding amount was PLN 1,566,263.42, which is also the total value of the project.

The aim of the article is to demonstrate that the integration of technology into the research process does not replace the scholar but rather expands researchers' cognitive capacities, enabling efficient interpretation of sources of considerable scale and complexity. In this context, the new possibilities available to researchers of archival texts using digital humanities methods are as significant as the careful selection of tools and technologies appropriate to the established research objectives.

Keywords: digital humanities, Jesuit missions, HTR, Transkribus, critical edition, LLM, RAG, large language models, Classical Text Editor, *Historiae Sinarum Imperii*, Tomasz Szpot Dunin

Abstrakt

Niniejszy artykuł podejmuje problematykę zastosowania nowoczesnych narzędzi cyfrowych w badaniach nad dziedzictwem jezuickim w zakresie misji w Chinach na przykładzie projektu edycji krytycznej dzieła *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* (HSE) Tomasza Szpota Dunina SJ. Wychodząc od teoretycznych założeń humanistyki cyfrowej, rozumianej nie jako odrębna dyscyplina, lecz strategia badawcza, autor analizuje kompletny „cyfrowy workflow" wykorzystywany w projekcie, od digitalizacji i transkrypcji HTR (Handwritten Text Recognition), przez strukturyzację i krytyczną edycję tekstu w środowisku Classical Text Editor (CTE), aż po zaawansowaną analizę korpusową i eksperymentalne wykorzystanie modeli językowych (LLM) i technologii RAG. Celem pracy jest wykazanie, że integracja technologii w procesie badawczym nie prowadzi do zastąpienia badacza, lecz do poszerzenia jego zasobów poznawczych, co pozwala na wydajną interpretację źródeł o znacznej objętości i złożoności. Nowe możliwości, które otwierają się przed badaczem tekstów archiwalnych wykorzystującym metody z zakresu humanistyki cyfrowej, są w tymże kontekście tak samo istotne jak właściwe dobranie środków i technologii odpowiednich do realizowania ustalonych celów badawczych.

Słowa klucze: humanistyka cyfrowa, misje jezuickie, HTR, Transkribus, edycja krytyczna, LLM, RAG, duże modele językowe, Classical Text Editor, *Historiae Sinarum Imperii*, Tomasz Szpot Dunin.

Historiae Sinarum Imperii: Source Context

The archives of the Society of Jesus are among the most important repositories of knowledge on early modern culture, particularly with regard to Jesuit missions in the Far East. Of special significance within these holdings are documents relating to the China mission, which testify

to a unique encounter between Eastern and Western cultures: between European science and Christianity on the one hand, and the Confucian tradition on the other. They also illuminate the many cultural dilemmas involved in Jesuit accommodation in the Far East.

Among the materials preserved in the Roman Archives of the Society of Jesus (ARSI), the legacy of the Polish Jesuit Tomasz Szpot Dunin, SJ (1644/1645–1713), deserves particular attention. His remarkably extensive works – most notably *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* and *Collectanea Historiae Sinensis* – are not merely chronicle-style accounts of events surrounding the transition from the Ming to the Qing dynasty, but also form a highly complex corpus of geographical, ethnographic, and theological knowledge.

These manuscripts pose a significant research challenge not only because of the richness of their content, but also because of their physical form. They consist of large-scale volumes, together exceeding one thousand folio pages, written in a heterogeneous Latin and interwoven with Chinese terminology cited by the author, often using non-standard transliteration systems. The state of preservation of the material – characterized by localized abrasions, ink bleed-through, and variations in handwriting – combined with marginal annotations written in a very small script, further complicates the process of traditional reading and manual transcription of the original text.

Working with such an extensive and heterogeneous body of source material, in which many folios contain dense marginalia, deletions, authorial corrections, and multilingual terminology, presents the research team with a number of significant challenges. Traditional philological and historical methods, while remaining an indispensable foundation of scholarly practice, often prove insufficiently efficient in terms of time and operations when confronted with the sheer scale of the data[2] (amounting, in a sense, to the "big data" of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries). Manual transcription, indexing, collation, and categorization of such a vast corpus within a traditional, linear workflow thus becomes an extremely labor-intensive process, potentially delaying substantive analysis and, consequently, the publication of research results together with critical editions and translations of the source texts.

In response to the many challenges posed by the source material, numerous solutions have emerged, not only of a technological nature but also methodological, allowing researchers to plan their work in scholarly projects more efficiently and systematically. One such solution is the

2 Ann M. Blair, *Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information before the Modern Age* (New Haven–London: Yale University Press, 2010), 132–133.

implementation of a specific digital humanities strategy in the processing and editing of archival data. This does not involve merely transferring work to a computer or digitalization understood simply as taking photographs of manuscripts, but rather designing a coherent "digital workflow"[3] that enables more efficient achievement of the research goals. This process naturally encompasses the entire life cycle of the document: from its high-resolution digital capture, through machine-assisted reading using dedicated HTR software, the structuring of data in critical editions with editors such as the Classical Text Editor (CTE), to semantic analysis and exploration of the collected data supported by artificial intelligence. In recent years (2020–2025), new advances in generative AI have increasingly played a role across the tools and methods of digital humanities.[4] This approach allows not only for the optimization of working time, but also for the possibility of formulating new research questions and expanding the set of tools available to the researcher in direct engagement with the source material.[5]

Digital humanities as a research strategy

Before proceeding to a detailed discussion of the specific technological solutions applied in the *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* project, it is necessary to outline the theoretical framework that structures our approach to new technologies supporting historical research. Digital humanities is often, in general discourse, mistakenly reduced to the use of particular software tools, the creation of websites, databases, or digital repositories. Such an instrumental understanding, however, significantly oversimplifies the nature of the ongoing transformations in the methodology of the humanities, brought about both by well-established solutions that have been in use for years and by entirely new technologies that are only now finding their place within the toolkit of the modern humanist. As I have argued in an earlier publication, digital humanities should be understood

3 In the sense of a comprehensive strategy for organizing research work using digital tools, encompassing the preparation of resources appropriate to the research goal, as well as the full sequence of interconnected stages of data processing and source analysis.

4 Jiangfeng Liu, Xinglan Ma, Lanyu Wang, Lei Pei, "How can generative artificial intelligence techniques facilitate intelligent research into ancient books?," *Proceedings of the ACM on Computing and Cultural Heritage* 7/4 (2024): 1–57.

5 Silke Schwandt (ed.), *Digital Methods in the Humanities: Challenges, Ideas, Perspectives* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2021).

less as a set of concrete technical instructions addressed to the user of a more or less complex information system, and more as a transdisciplinary methodological and epistemological approach.[6] Its core lies in the modeling and representation of humanities data in a way that enables their processing by quantitative methods and, to some extent, by qualitative or hybrid approaches. This, in turn, may lead not only to increased efficiency in scholarly work, but also to new research insights that are often difficult to obtain through intuition alone or through traditional close reading.[7] This approach, as should always be emphasized, does not stand in opposition to humanities research conducted predominantly with traditional methods – such as manual transcription combined with typesetting using simple text editors – but rather constitutes its natural extension and reinforcement, as well as a logical continuation in an era that offers researchers an unprecedented range of powerful tools and methodological possibilities.[8]

In the context of working on the manuscripts of Tomasz Szpot Dunin, the adopted strategy aligns with the author's proprietary 3A classification model, which distinguishes three principal functions of digital tools within the research process, and at the same time defines categories of their usefulness corresponding to successive stages of work on source texts with the use of new technologies: Automation, Aggregation, and Augmentation.

1. **Automation** serves to accelerate routine, repetitive, and time-consuming tasks such as text transcription (HTR), preliminary part-of-speech tagging, the identification of named entities, or the extraction of semantic entities from the source material (NER). Its primary aim is to free up the researcher's cognitive and temporal resources, allowing them to be devoted instead to conceptual, analytical, and interpretative work.
2. **Aggregation** enables the organization and structuring of vast volumes of data into complex, searchable databases or digital critical editions. In a scholarly landscape where the primary challenge

6 Tomasz Śmigla, "Humanistyka cyfrowa jako strategia badawcza: typologie narzędzi, model pracy i przykład edycji tekstu źródłowego," *Rocznik Filozoficzny Ignatianum* 31/3 (2025): 321–344.

7 Danuta Smołucha, *Humanistyka cyfrowa w badaniach kulturowych. Analiza zjawiska na wybranych przykładach* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Akademii Ignatianum, 2021).

8 Magdalena Szpunar, *Humanistyka współczesna, Słowniki społeczne*, vol. 11, ed. Bogusława Bodzioch-Bryła (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ignatianum, 2024), 132–133.

is no longer the lack of access to sources but rather their overabundance and fragmentation, aggregation tools make it possible to bring order to informational chaos and to construct coherent narratives. In the context of the *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* (HSE) project, aggregation tools include, among others, software used for the typesetting and critical editing of source texts, as well as tools that support the preparation of translations and scholarly commentaries.

3. **Augmentation**, which is a somewhat more complex process, can be understood in general terms as the extension or enhancement of the researcher's cognitive capacities. This may take place, for example, through data visualization, quantitative analysis (such as stylometry or frequency analysis), or semantic exploration and searching of texts using basic NLP algorithms or large language models. Such approaches can reveal patterns, trends, and anomalies that would likely remain invisible to a scholar working with the sources without the support of an appropriate set of digital tools.

The application of this type of division, which can be used to classify categories of tools suitable for use by modern humanists, makes it possible to design the research process efficiently on the way to achieving the intended goals, regardless of which specific tools or technological solutions are involved. It is important to note that, due to the very rapid development of the technological landscape and the associated hardware and software, the methodological foundations for the use of particular tools and programs in digital humanities remain largely unchanged. The hybrid paradigm outlined here assumes that technology, from the very beginning of research planning, is not a "black box" that produces ready-made answers in a quasi-magical way, but rather a precisely selected instrument whose effectiveness depends directly on the quality of the input data and on the critical judgment and decisions of the expert – whether historian or philologist – regarding its use. In this model, the researcher does not become a "machine operator," but an architect of the research process, who consciously selects tools appropriate to the specificity of the problem while retaining full control over the structure and organization of the research workflow and the interpretation of its results.

Automation of the research process: from scan to text

The starting point for all analytical activities is the transformation of the physical document into digital form. In the case of the *Historia*

Sinarum Imperii project, this process began with a renewed initial digitization of the source material. Previously available digital copies, produced according to older standards, were characterized by low resolution, which caused significant difficulties in implementing semi-automatic text transcription using HTR models. Effective application of handwriting recognition algorithms requires a clear separation of ink lines from the paper background; therefore, the quality of the input material – most importantly the high resolution of the prepared images – is of crucial importance. The use of professional manuscript-scanning equipment, commissioned privately, made it possible to obtain high-quality image files covering the first two volumes of HSE. These scans, produced at high DPI resolution and with a high level of detail preserved, became an indispensable foundation for the first stage of applying HTR algorithms.

Adaptation of HTR models in the Transkribus environment

HTR technology stands, in a sense, in contrast to classical OCR (Optical Character Recognition), which dominates work with printed texts and operates on entirely different principles. Rather than recognizing individual, segmented letters through pattern matching, HTR most often relies on convolutional neural networks (CNNs) to analyze entire lines of text sequentially.[9] The system learns the specific characteristics of an individual author's handwriting, the contextual occurrence of characters in relation to one another, and typical ligatures. Such solutions also make it possible to easily identify and tag side texts and marginalia, separating them from the main body of the document. The platform selected for this task was Transkribus, developed by the READ-COOP consortium, which has become a de facto standard in many archival and editorial projects.[10] Other solutions of this type include, for example, eScriptorium.[11] At present, there exists a wide range of base and hybrid

9 READ-COOP, *OCR vs. HTR or "What is AI, actually?*, Transkribus blog, 9 May 2021, https://blog.transkribus.org/en/insights/ocr-vs-htr.

10 Joe Nockels, Paul Gooding, Sarah Ames, Melissa Terras, "Understanding the application of handwritten text recognition technology in heritage contexts: a systematic review of Transkribus in published research," *Archival Science* 22/3 (2022): 367–392.

11 eScriptorium Documentation, *eScriptorium Documentation – About this documentation*, Read the Docs, https://escriptorium.readthedocs.io/en/latest/ (accessed on: 18.12.2025).

methods for handwritten text recognition, differing in performance, intended use cases, and levels of accuracy.[12]

The experience gained from implementing HTR in the *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* project clearly illustrates the difference between generic and dedicated approaches, as well as the importance of selecting an appropriate base model. In the preliminary phase, a comparative experiment was conducted in which several ready-made, publicly available HTR models were tested. One of them was *The German Giant I*, a model trained on an extensive corpus of nearly three million lines of text and fifteen million words, encompassing German and Latin writings from the sixteenth to the twenty-first centuries. Despite its impressive training base, the model proved largely unreliable: in initial tests it achieved a character error rate (CER) of 8.30%. In practice, this meant that a significant number of incorrectly recognized words required manual correction, rendering the process relatively inefficient in terms of time. In parallel, models dedicated specifically to Latin were tested, including *Pylaia_NeoLatin_Ravenstein* and *Italian Administrative Hands 1550–1700*. Although these performed somewhat better with respect to overall letter forms, none of them provided the level of precision required for efficient scholarly editing. In particular, they generated numerous errors in the interpretation of complex ligatures, abbreviations, and numerals.

A breakthrough came with the strategic decision to fine-tune a custom model using the infrastructure provided by Transkribus. This process – fine-tuning – required the research team to prepare so-called ground truth data,[13] which involved the careful manual transcription of a representative sample of the source material. For the training of the first model, pages of varying degrees of difficulty were selected, together amounting to 21,310 words (approximately 2,800 lines of text, corresponding to about fifty manuscript pages). This material served as training data for the base model, enabling it to adapt to the accurate classification of the distinctive features of Szpot Dunin's handwriting – figuratively speaking, his way of forming the letter *s*, joining prepositions with words, employing specific ligature patterns, and, more broadly, the characteristic "hand" evident in his manuscript writing.

12 Husam Ahmad AlHamad, Mohammad Shehab, Moh'd Khaled Y. Shambour, Muhannad A. Abu-Hashem, Ala Abuthawabeh, Hussain Al-Aqrabi, Mohammad Sh. Daoud, Fatima B. Shannaq, "Handwritten Recognition Techniques: A Comprehensive Review," *Symmetry* 16/6 (2024): 681.

13 Fine-tuning is, in machine-learning terminology, the process of further training an existing model on reference data (in the case of the Transkribus environment, ground truth) in order to adapt it to the specifics of a particular task.

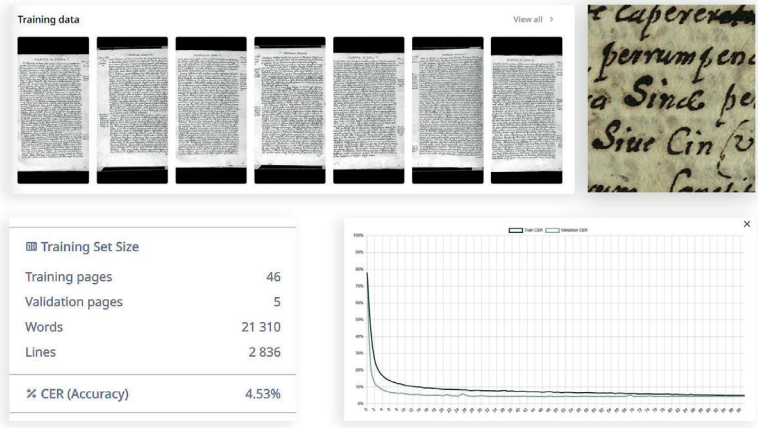


Fig. 1. Fine-tuning process of the HTR model in the Transkribus environment: training dataset (Ground Truth) consisting of manually transcribed manuscript pages (top), statistics of the first training set (bottom left), and learning curves illustrating the decrease in Character Error Rate (CER) on the training and validation sets (bottom right). Source: Resources of the *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* project.

The results of training the custom model were significant. The error rate on the validation set (the portion of data excluded from training for verification purposes) dropped dramatically from the initial >8% CER observed when using default experimental models to 4.53% CER in the first version of the fine-tuned model. In subsequent training cycles, after preparing a larger amount of Ground Truth pages, it was possible to reduce the CER to 3–4% across successive test trials. At this level of accuracy (when the system makes an error approximately once every few dozen characters), the role of the human shifts from manually transcribing the authorial text and painstakingly verifying their own work to acting as a "proofreader" of an already highly efficient HTR system, which significantly reduces the time required to process a single page of text. Analysis of the learning curves indicated that the error rate stabilizes relatively quickly when consistent, high-quality training data are provided, confirming the thesis that the time invested in preparing the initial Ground Truth dataset is one of the most cost-effective elements of the automation strategy, yielding multiple returns when processing hundreds of manuscript pages.

Segmentation challenges and new horizons (Vision-Language Models)

Contemporary digital humanities continue to evolve rapidly, and the boundaries of technological possibilities are shifting dynamically. While text recognition itself has reached a relatively high level of accuracy, a significant challenge in Szpot's volumes – and more broadly in many early modern manuscripts – remains layout analysis. These manuscripts feature highly complex topography: the main text rarely exists in isolation and is surrounded by dense networks of marginal notes, headings, corrections, and authorial annotations. Traditional HTR engines, which rely on simple baseline detection algorithms, often fail in such environments, frequently merging marginalia with the main column or losing the correct reading order. This necessitates painstaking manual correction of text regions by the researcher before running text recognition.

In response to these challenges, new opportunities arise for leveraging the latest advancements at the intersection of computer vision and natural language processing, namely the so-called Vision-Language Models (VLMs). Recent publications, such as *Early evidence of how LLMs outperform traditional systems on OCR/HTR tasks*,[14] *An HTR-LLM Workflow for High-Accuracy Transcription and Analysis of Abbreviated Latin Court Hand*,[15] and *Unlocking the Archives: Using Large Language Models to Transcribe Handwritten Historical Documents*,[16] point to the enormous potential of this technology. Models such as Florence-2 (developed by Microsoft) and multimodal versions of Mistral models (e.g., Pixtral) represent a new approach to semi-automatic reading of manuscript folios. They do not "read" text line by line in a mechanical fashion; instead, they analyze the image holistically, semantically "understanding" the visual structure of the document. They can identify a block of text as a marginal note not only based on its position but also through visual context (e.g., smaller letter size, angle of writing, narrative style, etc.) as well as linguistic context. This, with a high degree of certainty, represents a direction

14 Seorin Kim, Julien Baudru, Wouter Ryckbosch, Hugues Bersini, Vincent Ginis, *Early evidence of how LLMs outperform traditional systems on OCR/HTR tasks for historical records*, arXiv, 20 January 2025, arXiv:2501.11623.

15 Joshua D. Isom, *An HTR-LLM workflow for high-accuracy transcription and analysis of abbreviated Latin court hand*, arXiv, 5 July 2025, arXiv:2507.04132.

16 Mark Humphries, Lianne C. Leddy, Quinn Downton, Meredith Legace, John McConnell, Isabella Murray & Elizabeth Spence, *Unlocking the Archives: Using Large Language Models to Transcribe Handwritten Historical Documents*, arXiv, 2 November 2024, arXiv:2411.03340.

that could positively impact the preliminary document processing stage in the near future, eliminating the need for simplified algorithmic detection of text regions and enabling fully automated page structuring in combination with transcription and translation processes. In many cases, VLM-based solutions prove surprisingly efficient compared to CNN-based dedicated applications such as Transkribus.[17] Similarly, multimodal LLMs are already being applied to simpler tasks such as extracting text from printed documents or those containing elements of handwritten text.[18]

During work on the *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* material, a method of double HTR→VLM confirmation was also employed. In this mode of visual source analysis, the first stage of transcription is carried out in the Transkribus environment using a fine-tuned HTR model; the second stage is handled by a multimodal large language model with image-processing capabilities (in this specific case, GPT-5); and the third stage belongs to the researcher, who performs the final correction in consultation with the original source folios. At the first stage, the researcher receives an initial version of the automatic transcription of a folio generated by Transkribus. At the second stage, the scan of that folio, together with the preliminary transcription output, is passed to the VLM, along with a prompt adapted to the specific model, instructing it to correct the transcription on the basis of the attached image of the source text within the inference environment. At the final stage, through comparative analysis, the researcher performs the definitive correction of the transcript, working simultaneously with the original source folio, the initial HTR transcription, and the reference working correction produced by the VLM. This process significantly facilitates and accelerates work with the text, while also minimizing the risk of transcription errors by multiplying points of reference – effectively resembling a consultation between the transcriber and multiple researchers working in parallel on the same text.

17 Giorgia Crosilla, Lukas Klic & Giovanni Colavizza, Benchmarking Large Language Models for Handwritten Text Recognition, arXiv, 19 March 2025, arXiv:2503.15195.

18 For example: Wei Luo, *Multimodal-LLM as A Reliable Tool for Information Extraction from Historical Documents: A Digital Humanities Approach to Swedish Patent Cards (1945–1975), master's thesis*, Uppsala University, 2025, 30 HE, 70 pp., Theses within Digital Humanities 56.

Aggregation and structure: challenges of critical editing

Raw text, even when obtained with a high level of accuracy on the order of 96–97%, naturally constitutes only the foundation of a scholarly or critical edition of a source. For such material to become useful to the academic community, it must be structured, equipped with a critical apparatus, verified, and prepared for publication. Within the 3A model, this process belongs to the category of aggregation. In the case of *Historiae Sinarum Imperii*, the choice of tools for this stage was dictated by specific philological requirements which – due to the need for a smooth workflow in the creation and editing of footnotes, indices, marginalia, and, more broadly, the critical apparatus – ruled out the use of standard office software. Popular word processors such as Microsoft Word, and even advanced DTP layout programs like Adobe InDesign or Scribus (an open-source solution), often offer limited capabilities for the dynamic management of multiple layers of annotations and textual variants, or are ill-suited to flexible work on complex, densely annotated material – an issue of crucial importance in projects of this kind. The problem becomes even more pronounced when it is necessary to combine the Latin alphabet with Chinese ideographs in Unicode and to handle sophisticated forms of critical formatting.

The solution adopted in the project – which forms the core of the aggregation stage – is a relatively niche tool: Classical Text Editor (CTE), developed by Stefan Hagel at the Austrian Academy of Sciences.[19] It is specialist software designed from the ground up for humanists and editors of classical sources.[20] What distinguishes CTE is that it treats the text not as a linear sequence of characters, but as a relational database. Each word in the main text is assigned a unique identifier to which multiple layers of information can be "attached." This makes it possible to create an edition in which independent critical apparatuses can coexist in parallel:

- *Apparatus criticus* – recording variant readings, deletions, and authorial corrections;
- *Apparatus fontium* – identifying cited sources;
- *Apparatus commentarii* – containing historical and philological explanations.

19 Classical Text Editor, *Classical Text Editor*, Austrian Academy of Sciences – CTE, https://cte.oeaw.ac.at/ (accessed on: 18.12.2025).

20 Stephan Hagel, "The Classical Text Editor: An attempt to provide for both printed and digital editions," in *Digital Philology and Medieval Texts*, eds. Arianna Ciula, Francesco Stella (University of Michigan: Pacini, 2007), 77–84.

Crucially, from the standpoint of work efficiency, CTE enables work in a WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) mode, offering the researcher a constant preview of the final page layout with correctly formatted, multi-level footnotes and line numbering. This eliminates a common problem in the humanities – the discrepancy between the working version of an edited text and the typeset version – and makes work on annotations simpler and more efficient. In *Historiae Sinarum Imperii*, Chinese names occur extremely frequently, introduced by the author in phonetic notation using seventeenth-century transcription systems that are difficult to identify today and require classification and clarification at the stage of compiling indexes of names, places, and persons appearing in the text. In a critical edition, it is necessary to provide modern equivalents in the Pinyin system as well as in the original Hanzi characters. In this context, CTE ensures stable handling of mixed scripts. The tool also allows the export of the finished layout to PDF (print-ready) or TEI XML format, opening the way to further digital publication without the need for an additional typesetting stage. The implementation of CTE within the project thus fulfills the postulate of aggregation in its fullest sense: it integrates the results of automatic HTR transcription with the researcher's unique expert knowledge into a single, coherent, and stable publishing whole, enabling the professional presentation of the results of source-text analysis.

Augmentation – new analytical perspectives

The third and final category of the usefulness of digital tools in humanities research marks an exceptionally interesting stage of work in our workflow. This stage is augmentation. While automation contributes to optimizing the time devoted to a given stage of research, and aggregation introduces a degree of order that enables the collection, categorization, and classification of source data, augmentation aims to contribute to the generation of new knowledge on their basis. It consists in using a digital corpus to formulate new research questions. Once the full text of just the first two volumes of *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* has been obtained (with a volume of nearly 250 recto verso leaves per volume, corresponding to approximately 500 pages of text), it becomes possible to apply digital tools for macro-scale analysis (distant reading), complementing the traditional expert-led analysis (close reading).[21]

21 Stefan Jänicke, Greta Franzini, Muhammad Faisal Cheema, Gerik Scheuermann, "Visual Text Analysis in Digital Humanities," *Computer Graphics Forum* 36/6 (2017): 226–250.

Corpus tools – AntConc and Voyant tools

One of the more popular free tools for so-called text mining – encompassing, among other things, corpus, semantic, and linguistic analysis across large-scale textual datasets – are AntConc[22] and Voyant Tools.[23] AntConc, for example, allows for rapid searching of large language corpora in order to identify linguistic and thematic patterns. The software offers, among other features, a Keyword in Context (KWIC) function, which makes it possible to track and analyze how an author constructs a narrative and how (that is, in what immediate context) key figures or objects are described. Another important function of AntConc (as well as of virtually any corpus analysis program) is the N-gram search engine, which identifies recurring sequences of words occurring in the text. This type of functionality is useful, for instance, in identifying and standardizing specific geographical terminology, but also in more detailed exploration of a source with regard to the co-occurrence of particular lexical constructions or phrases built around a single core concept. A further crucial component is the collocation analysis module. It reveals words that most frequently co-occur with a given search term, providing the user with frequency coefficients for joint occurrence as well as the probability of their appearance in immediate proximity. In addition, the software offers capabilities such as cluster analysis and straightforward visualization of the most frequently occurring terms in the form of tag clouds. Text mining, along with many of the methods it encompasses, is widely used across numerous humanities disciplines that engage with large textual corpora, including historical, anthropological, and cultural studies, as well as research in the field of scholarly text analysis.[24]

22 Laurence Anthony, *AntConc: A Freeware Corpus Analysis Toolkit for Concordancing and Text Analysis*, *LaurenceAnthony.net*, https://www.laurenceanthony.net/software/antconc/ (accessed on: 10.12.2025); AntConc Documentation, *Introduction – AntConc Manual*, *Read the Docs*, https://antconc-manual.readthedocs.io/en/latest/intro.html (accessed on: 10.01.2025).

23 Lexos/Voyant Tools Team, *Voyant Tools, https://voyant-tools.org/* (accessed on: 10.12.2025); A. Miller, Text Mining Digital Humanities Projects: Assessing Content Analysis Capabilities of Voyant Tools, *Journal of Web Librarianship* 12/3 (2018): 169–197.

24 Mark Etheridge, Alex M. Boulton, "Excavating Archaeological Texts: Applying Digital Humanities to the Study of Archaeological Thought and Banal Nationalism," *Internet Archaeology* 53 (2020): 1–30.

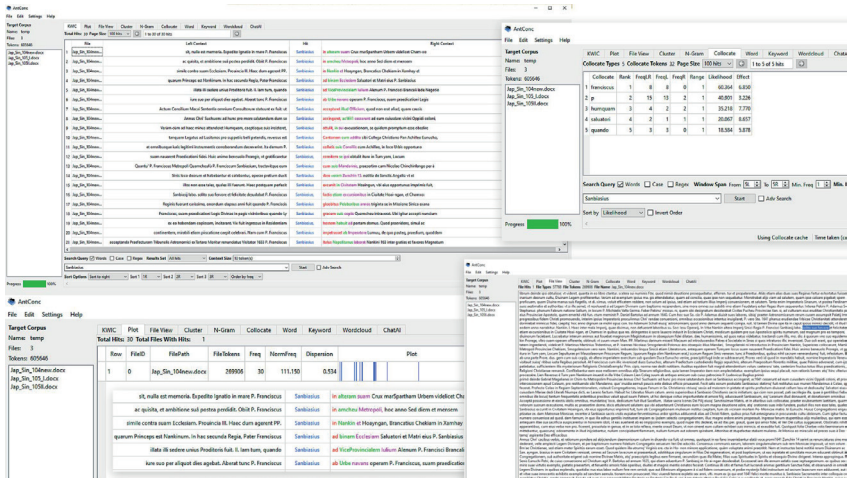


Fig. 2. Corpus analysis in the AntConc environment: KWIC search results view for the entity "Sanbiasius" (left), collocation analysis with a ranking of co-occurring lexemes (upper right), and a visualization of the distribution of the term's occurrences within the corpus (lower left). Source: Resources of the *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* project.

To provide a simple and illustrative example of the use of some of the most elementary tools of semantic analysis applied to a textual corpus, one may refer to a text-mining case that takes a person-entity as its point of departure. The ability to retrieve all occurrences of the surname "Sanbiasius" across the imported datasets made it possible, in the example illustrated above, to generate simple distribution charts that visually indicate which parts of the work (and which corpus documents) describe this figure and where such descriptions occur with the greatest density. Collocation analysis also yields particularly interesting results in this context. It quickly and visually reveals several important points of reference within the text. Franciscus Sanbiasius frequently appears in the vicinity of words such as Nankin (one of the places of his activity), *fervor* (zeal), and terms related to pastoral effectiveness (*felicitate*, *conversio*, *fructus*). The use of such basic analytical tools to examine a selected persona thus allows for the establishment of foundations for a kind of preliminary reconstruction of the figure's "rhetorical profile" as perceived by the author. A tool similar to AntConc, but published in an open-source model, is the already mentioned Voyant Tools, available as a web application and also usable locally. Voyant Tools additionally offers significantly expanded possibilities for the visualization of textual data without the need to install software on the end device, making it

a highly attractive entry point into semantic and structural linguistic analysis for researchers who have not previously had the opportunity to incorporate such tools into their work.[25]

The use of LLM and RAG technologies

At present, the most avant-garde area of augmentation is the use of Large Language Models (LLMs) for source analysis through Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG) technology.[26] This approach constitutes a direct response to a fundamental problem of generative models such as GPT-5, Claude, or Gemini: the risk of so-called "hallucinations." Trained on vast quantities of data, these models tend to generate content that sounds highly credible and fluent, yet may be factually incorrect. In the work of a historian – where fidelity to source texts is, by its very nature, a paramount value – this phenomenon disqualifies the straightforward use of most publicly available inference environments with their default settings.

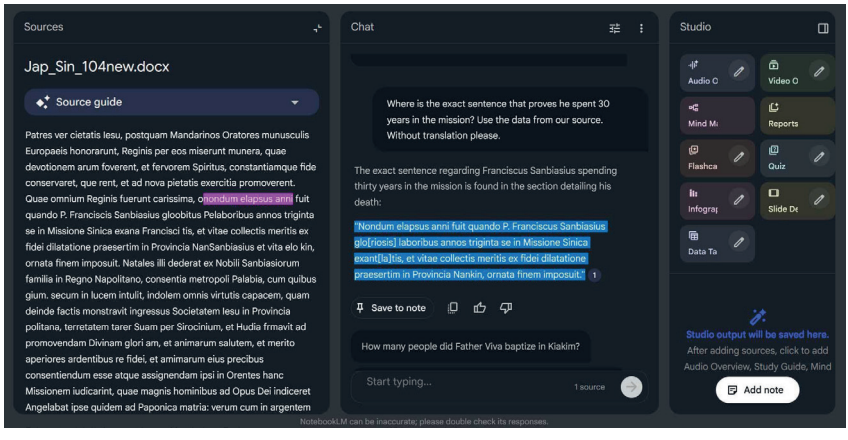


Fig. 3. Application of the Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG) architecture in Google NotebookLM: a natural-language query and the model's response grounded in source material through dynamic citations. Source: Resources of the *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* project.

25 Ella Alhudithi, "Review of Voyant tools: See through your text," *Language Learning & Technology* 25/3 (October 2021): 43–50.

26 Kim Martineau, *What is retrieval-augmented generation?*, IBM Research, 22 August 2023, https://research.ibm.com/blog/retrieval-augmented-generation-RAG.

RAG technology partially mitigates this problem by fundamentally changing the mode of interaction with the model, enabling it to draw on an external, verified knowledge base – in our case, the edited and preliminarily corrected transcription of the first volumes of *Historiae Sinarum Imperii*. An excellent example of the practical application of this technology at the exploratory stage is the use of Google NotebookLM.[27] As illustrated in the example above, based on the imported source file Jap_Sin_104 (a raw transcript of one of the Latin-language volumes), the system enables rapid interaction with the text without the need to manually configure complex RAG pipelines[28] and vector databases. A simple natural-language query concerning the figure of Fr. Franciscus Sanbiasius ("Find all the information you can about the figure…") resulted, within a matter of seconds, in the generation of a preliminary biographical note ready for inspection and verification. Crucially from the standpoint of historical methodology, the model not only correctly identified the date and place of the missionary's death (Canton, 1649) and his affiliation with the Neapolitan province in accordance with the source, but also accompanied each of these pieces of information with an interactive footnote (citation) linking directly to the fragment of the source text that substantiates the claim. This mechanism – visible in the interface as numbered references – fulfills the postulate of "grounding" AI-generated knowledge in evidentiary material, allowing the researcher to immediately verify the correctness of the response firsthand. In this way, the tool functions as a dynamic semantic index, enabling the synthesis of information dispersed across hundreds of manuscript pages and accessing it through natural language queries. This constitutes a classic example of augmentation: the researcher is not relieved of interpretive responsibility, but is instead granted immediate access to a preliminary synthesis of facts whose manual preparation would otherwise require many hours of archival research.

To fully understand the potential and limitations of this solution, it is worth taking a closer look at how the technology operates by explaining the technical aspects of RAG in a brief and accessible manner. First, the source text – in our case, the transcription of Szpot's work – is divided into smaller fragments (so-called chunks), which are then transformed by a specialized model (an embedder) into sequences of numbers known

27 Google, *Learn about NotebookLM*, Google Support, https://support.google.com/notebooklm/answer/16164461 (accessed on: 10.01.2025).

28 A pipeline, in general terms, refers to a data-processing architecture based on the sequential linking of independent components (e.g., an embedder, a vector search engine, and a generative model).

as vectors or embeddings. These vectors represent the semantic meaning of the text; put simply, within this space the words "Nankin" and "province" will be mathematically closer to each other than "Nankin" and "Rome." When a researcher poses a query, it too is converted into a vector. The system then searches the database to find those fragments of the source text whose vectors are "closest" to the query vector (this is typically measured using so-called cosine similarity). Only these selected, most relevant fragments of the manuscript are then passed to the generative model (LLM), together with a system instruction requiring that the response be formulated exclusively on their basis.[29] It is precisely this mechanism that makes RAG so effective in working with historical sources and largely resistant to model "hallucinations," curbing its "creativity" in favor of fidelity to the supplied context. RAG technology and its derivatives are already being used relatively frequently in projects related to archival studies, as well as in the management of large textual databases across various areas of humanities research.[30]

While tools such as NotebookLM and other popular applications implementing RAG, offered via model interfaces from companies like OpenAI, Google, or Anthropic, provide a low entry threshold and impressive exploratory capabilities, when working with archival materials of particular significance, data sovereignty and privacy become crucial and non-negotiable concerns. Using commercial "cloud-based" solutions – i.e., off-site inference relative to the infrastructure of institutions or organizations conducting research on such materials – requires transmitting transcriptions to external servers. In the case of unpublished critical editions or sensitive materials, this can often be problematic or raise concerns regarding data security.[31] For this reason, within the developed workflow, parallel to tests on public platforms, local model-based

29 Patrick Lewis, Ethan Perez, Aleksandra Piktus, Fabio Petroni, Vladimir Karpukhin, Naman Goyal, Heinrich Küttler, Mike Lewis, Wen-tau Yih, Tim Rocktäschel, Sebastian Riedel, Douwe Kiela, *Retrieval-Augmented Generation for Knowledge-Intensive NLP Tasks*, arXiv, 22 May 2020, arXiv:2005.11401.

30 Yaming Fu, Jie Song, Xinran Zhang, Jingyun Bi, "Innovative practice of archival data development workflow in the AGI era: a case study of scientist archives project," *Information Research: an international electronic journal* 30, iConf (2025): 349–360; Ha Dung Nguyen, Thi-Hoang Anh Nguyen, Thanh Binh Nguyen, *A Proposed Large Language Model-Based Smart Search for Archive System*, arXiv, 13 January 2025, arXiv:2501.07024.

31 Sonali Tyagi, Yufeng Gong, Umit Karabiyik, "Forensic analysis and privacy implications of LLM mobile apps: a case study of ChatGPT, Copilot, and Gemini," *Forensic Science International: Digital Investigation* 54 (2025): 301974; Oliver Cartwright, Harriet Dunbar, Theo Radcliffe, *Evaluating Privacy Compliance in Commercial Large Language Models – ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini,* Research Square, preprint, 26 July 2024.

solutions are being explored. By using software such as LM Studio or Ollama, it is possible to run open-source language models (e.g., from the LLaMA 3 or Mistral families, as well as many other models currently being released by various organizations and companies, practically quarter by quarter[32]) directly on a researcher's workstation without any network connection.[33] Thanks to quantization techniques, which reduce a model's memory requirements with minimal loss of quality, even modern consumer GPUs with relatively modest video memory (>16GB) can handle many useful, though simplified, local RAG implementations.[34] This allows full confidentiality of the examined manuscripts while still taking advantage of the benefits offered by smaller, fully private LLMs or VLMs. Such a working model – local, relatively secure, and fully controlled by the researcher – represents the intended direction for the development of the digital historian's toolkit in the coming years. A remaining challenge, too extensive to address in detail here, is still the significant disparity in size and complexity – and therefore in performance and quality of responses – among the various open-source models currently available. Accessibility also remains an issue: larger, more advanced models require investment in hardware with substantial RAM/VRAM, which can exclude researchers who do not have the infrastructure to engage in these kinds of experiments.[35]

A second aspect of this problem is, naturally, the relatively higher entry threshold associated with local solutions. Interfaces of publicly available tools are generally far more accessible to users who are not well-versed in the technological aspects of LLM operation, whereas locally

32 ApX Machine Learning, *Local LLMs Directory – Latest Local Language Models*, *ApX Machine Learning*, https://apxml.com/models?sort=release_date (accessed on: 10.01.2025). The page contains a catalog of LLMs/VLMs adapted for local use, including information on their number of parameters, maximum context length in tokens, and release date.

33 Teemu Kivimäki, *Usability Evaluation of the Local Large Language Models*, master's thesis, University of Turku, 2025, https://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fife2025061670380; Tom Smigla, *List of Local LLM Software Compatible with NVIDIA and AMD Cards*, TechTactician.com, 7 October 2025, https://techtactician.com/list-of-local-llm-software-compatible-with-nvidia-and-amd-cards/.

34 Elias Frantar, Saleh Ashkboos, Torsten Hoefler & Dan Alistarh, *GPTQ: Accurate Post-Training Quantization for Generative Pre-trained Transformers*, arXiv, 31 October 2022, arXiv:2210.17323v1.

35 Tom Smigla, *LLMs & Their Size in VRAM Explained – Quantizations, Context, KV-Cache*, TechTactician.com, 28 June 2025, https://techtactician.com/llm-gpu-vram-requirements-explained/. An original article explaining how the size of language models translates into GPU (VRAM) / RAM requirements, and how quantization techniques and caching affect memory demand.

hosted tools often require the researcher to possess broader technical knowledge compared to popular web applications such as ChatGPT or Google AI Studio, as well as active engagement in deploying and configuring the environment in a manner appropriate to their research objectives. These are just some of the factors that make publicly available solutions still the most commonly used option for exploring the use of LLMs and VLMs in the context of digital humanities methodologies.

Conclusion

The digital research ecosystem presented in this article – which spans from scanning, through transcription using HTR models, to structuring and editing texts in the Classical Text Editor, followed by exploration with corpus analysis software, and ultimately the use of Large Language Models (LLMs) – represents a practical realization of the principles of digital humanities in terms of consciously planning and constructing a workflow tailored to the researcher's needs. The tools and tasks aligned with the logic of the 3A model are not intended to replace the researcher but to equip them with instruments appropriate to the capabilities offered by continuously evolving technologies. The solutions discussed here, along with dozens of others available on the market or emerging in the future, do not constitute a "magic button" that solves interpretive or analytical problems. Rather, they provide new lenses through which historical sources can be examined at different scales and with greater precision, and, in many cases, significantly relieve the researcher from repetitive and laborious aspects of their work. The future of research on Jesuit missions, and more broadly of early modern history in the context of the ever-growing volume of available sources, lies in the skillful synthesis of traditional erudition with technological possibilities. The workflow developed for *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* demonstrates that, with a consciously designed research process, the machine can become the historian's most valuable ally in the pursuit of deeper understanding, transforming the historian from a reader into an architect of knowledge.

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BOOK REVIEWS

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BOOK REVIEWS

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Ines G. Županov, *Jesuit Missions in Coastal and South India (1543–1773): Between Mission and Empire* (Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2025), 133 pp.

The monograph by Ines G. Županov, *Jesuit Missions in Coastal and South India (1543–1773): Between Mission and Empire*, published in 2025 as part of the series *Brill Research Perspectives in Jesuit Studies* (vol. 23), offers a synthetic account of the history of Jesuit missions in coastal and South India from the mid-sixteenth century until the suppression of the Society of Jesus in 1773. The author, affiliated with the French Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique in Paris, attempts a comprehensive treatment of a phenomenon that has most often been addressed in a fragmentary manner in the historiography – either within the framework of colonial history or in studies of Catholic missionary activity. The volume comprises 133 pages and is available in both print and electronic formats. Despite its relatively modest length, it represents an ambitious attempt to present a multifaceted account of Jesuit activity in a region that played a crucial role in the early modern globalization of Christianity.

The primary aim of the study is to trace the development and transformations of Jesuit missions in India from the arrival of Francis Xavier in Goa in 1543 to the suppression of the order by Pope Clement XIV in 1773. Županov seeks to demonstrate the complexity of missionary processes unfolding within the context of intense interactions between European

colonial empires and the local social and religious structures of the Indian subcontinent. Particular attention is devoted to the tension between evangelizing activity and colonial interests, especially Portuguese and French, showing that Jesuit missions operated in a space where religion, politics, and economy were inextricably intertwined. At the same time, the author reflects on the transformation of Christianity from a religion firmly rooted in European cultural practices into a global religion capable of adapting to diverse cultural and social contexts. One of the central interpretative premises of the study is the understanding of missions as a kind of cultural laboratory in which new forms of religious identity were shaped and existing social categories reinterpreted. Missionaries operating in South India were required to navigate continuously between the expectations of European ecclesiastical institutions and the realities of local societies, characterized by complex caste structures and diverse religious traditions. In this context, Županov convincingly argues that Jesuit activity did not consist merely in the straightforward transfer of European models of religiosity, but rather in the creation of new forms of Christian practice emerging from a process of negotiation between doctrinal norms and local social conditions.

The structure of the volume is synthetic in character and is organized into seven chapters, which guide the reader from a theoretical introduction to an analysis of specific aspects of missionary activity. The introduction establishes the chronological and methodological framework of the study and introduces the key analytical concepts employed throughout the book. The following chapter is devoted to the historiography of Jesuit missions, tracing the evolution of scholarly approaches from early apologetic narratives to more recent interpretations informed by global history and postcolonial studies. Subsequent chapters focus on particular issues related to the functioning of the missions, including relations between Church and state within the Portuguese system of royal patronage (*padroado*), missionary activity at religious and cultural frontiers, the development of French Jesuit missions in Puducherry, and the Jesuits' contribution to the expansion of scientific knowledge about India. The final chapter addresses the suppression of the order and subsequent attempts to revive missionary activity.

One of the central arguments of the book is that Jesuit missions in South India constituted an important model of apostolic activity that influenced missionary strategies employed in other parts of the world. The author demonstrates that the experiences gained in India – particularly in adapting to local cultures and languages – were subsequently applied in Jesuit work in East Asia, Latin America, and Africa. In this

sense, South India may be viewed as a space of pastoral experimentation, in which various evangelizing strategies were tested and refined. In Županov's interpretation, Jesuit missionaries emerge as highly adaptable actors, whose activity may be metaphorically described as that of "spiritual entrepreneurs." This term underscores their ability to make use of existing social and cultural structures in order to extend the reach of Christianity. As they moved further away from the centers of European colonial power, missionaries displayed increasing flexibility in interpreting religious norms, adapting them to local conditions. Such pragmatism was particularly evident in their approach to the caste system, which in many cases was not rejected but rather incorporated into the structures of local Christian communities.

A particularly insightful aspect of the analysis is the interpretation of the process of conversion within the framework of the Indian caste system. Županov demonstrates that the success of many missions, for instance among the Parava fishing communities, resulted from the effective embedding of Christianity within existing social hierarchies. As a result, communities emerged that the author describes as "Christian castes," which retained certain earlier privileges and social distinctions. This phenomenon suggests that conversion did not entail a complete rupture with pre-existing social structures, but rather their partial transformation. An important theme of the study is also the role of the Jesuits as intermediaries in the transfer of knowledge between Europe and Asia. The author emphasizes that missionary activity was closely intertwined with the production of scholarly knowledge, encompassing fields such as linguistics, cartography, botany, and astronomy. Operating in distant regions of Asia, missionaries gathered information on local languages, belief systems, and the natural environment, which was subsequently transmitted to European centers of learning. In this way, Jesuit activity contributed to the emergence of new forms of knowledge about the non-European world, while simultaneously shaping the development of early modern science.

Particular attention is also given to the analysis of jurisdictional tensions between the Portuguese *padroado* system and the Roman Congregation of Propaganda Fide. The conflict between these institutions constituted a persistent feature of the history of Jesuit missions in India, shaping both the organization of missionary work and the relations between missionaries and local ecclesiastical authorities. Županov demonstrates that these disputes were not merely administrative in nature, but also ideological, as they reflected differing conceptions of the role of the Church within the context of European imperial expansion. From

a methodological perspective, the book is conceived as a historical synthesis based on the analysis of a wide range of sources. The author draws on Jesuit correspondence, theological treatises, inquisitorial records, and early modern scholarly works produced by the missionaries themselves. The use of materials in several European languages as well as in Tamil allows for a more nuanced perspective on the phenomena under study. At the same time, Županov combines a historiographical approach with elements of ethnographic analysis, enabling her to capture the relationship between global processes and local forms of social life.

Against the backdrop of contemporary historiography, the book constitutes a significant contribution to the study of Jesuit missions and the processes of globalization in the early modern period. Particularly noteworthy is its departure from a simplified interpretative framework in which missionary activity is portrayed solely as an instrument of European imperialism. Županov advances a more nuanced perspective, in which missionaries emerge as actors operating within a field of tensions between imperial interests and the dynamics of local societies. Such an approach allows for a more refined understanding of the multifaceted nature of contacts between Europe and Asia from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. At the same time, the author draws attention to the significance of Jesuit activity for the development of European knowledge about India. The analysis demonstrates that many early modern conceptions of the history and culture of the subcontinent – including proto-Indological hypotheses – originated in the reflections of missionaries, who sought to interpret local religious traditions through the lens of European intellectual categories.

Despite its many strengths, the publication is not without certain limitations. The author herself acknowledges that the book is intended as a synthetic overview of key issues rather than a fully exhaustive monograph. As a result, some topics are treated rather briefly, particularly in the case of regions for which fewer source materials have survived. The uneven distribution of emphasis means that certain missions – for example in Mysore or the Portuguese missions of the seventeenth century – are discussed in less detail than others. An additional limitation is the relatively modest length of the volume, which constrains the possibility of a more in-depth analysis of many significant issues. Nevertheless, Županov's book remains a valuable and stimulating synthesis that presents Jesuit missions in India as a key component of early modern globalization. The analysis demonstrates that, although the project of fully Christianizing the Indian subcontinent was not realized, Jesuit activity led to the emergence of enduring Christian communities embedded in

local social structures. This legacy survived the suppression of the order and continued in the educational activities of the Jesuits in India in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Ultimately, the monograph under review presents the encounter between Jesuit missionaries and the cultures of South India as a process whose significance extends beyond the history of religion. It constituted an important moment in the formation of a modern European understanding of Asia, as well as a key stage in the history of global cultural exchanges. By combining a synthetic approach with the analysis of selected case studies, Županov's book offers a valuable contribution for scholars of mission history, global history, and early modern contacts between Europe and Asia.

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Kilian Stumpf, *The Acta Pekinensia or Historical Records of the Maillard de Tournon Legation*, vol. 3: *January 1708 – February 1709*, eds. Paul Rule, Claudia von Collani (Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2024; *Studies in the History of Christianity in East Asia*, 10), viii + 644 pp.

Among the rich sources of the Jesuit Roman Archives concerning the Society's missions in East Asia, there is a volume quoted as *Japonica-Sinica* 138 containing the "Acta Pekinensia," i.e. a 1467-page relation describing the visit in China of the pope Clement XI's envoy, archbishop (later cardinal) Charles Thomas Maillard de Tournon (1668–1710) at the beginning of 18th century.[1] The author of that manuscript was a German Jesuit Kilian Stumpf (1655–1720), a missionary in China from 1694, appointed at that occasion as pontifical notary whose task was to document that

1 More about him in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 67 (Roma: Istituto Treccani, 2006) (online: https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/maillard-de-tournon-carlo-tommaso_(Dizionario-Biografico)/, accessed on: 22.12.2025).

legation.[2] His Latin narration including texts in other languages covers the years 1705–1710, which were a crucial time of the long and complicated history of the Chinese rites and their final condemnation by Rome.

The result of de Tournon's mission is known (Stumpf calls him "the Lord Patriarch, who in matters Chinese is no better informed than a day-old infant;" p. 532), as is the entire history of that controversy, while the limits of this review make impossible even a brief summary of the events described here. The "Acta" will probably not change the already existing historiography or prevailing opinions about the matter in question, however they will undoubtedly enrich our knowledge of it, particularly in what concerns the details.

In 2015 the Macau Ricci Institute and the Jesuit Historical Institute in Rome published an English version of the first part of the "Acta" in the well-known series *Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu*.[3] At that time, also the undersigned author took the liberty of preparing a review of it.[4] The second volume of Stumpf's work appeared in 2019, this time opening a new important series of the publishing house Brill: *Studies in the History of Christianity in East Asia*.[5] Five years later, the readers can enjoy the third and the last part of the "Acta," published again by Brill within the same series. What all those three volumes provide is an English translation, yet one is tempted to quote here rather a Russian proverb saying *Бог любит Троицу*. It literally means "God loves the Trinity," but in this case it is more appropriate to use as its English equivalent "Good things come in threes."

The present part of the "Acta" covers the period January 1708 – February 1709. A very short "Introduction" (pp. 1–5) is followed by the list of the headings and subheadings given by Stumpf to his text. Actually this 20-pages-long enumeration may serve as a summary of what the

2 More about him in *Diccionario Histórico de la Compañía de Jesús. Biográfico-temático*, vol. IV (Roma: Institutum Historicum S.I. – Madrid, Universidad Pontificia Comillas, 2001), 3151–3652.

3 Kilian Stumpf, *The Acta Pekinensia or Historical Records of the Maillard de Tournon Legation: First Transcribed Edition and English Annotated Translation*, vol. 1: *December 1705 - August 1706*, eds. Paul Rule, Claudia von Collani (Roma: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu – Macau, Macau Ricci Institute, 2015; *Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu – Nova Series*, 9).

4 Robert Danieluk, "Review of *The Acta Pekinensia or Historical Records of the Maillard de Tournon Legation*, by Kilian Stumpf," eds. Paul Rule and Claudia von Collani, *Annales Missiologici Posnanienses* 22 (2017), 167–169.

5 Kilian Stumpf, *The Acta Pekinensia or Historical Records of the Maillard de Tournon Legation*, vol. 2: *September 1706 – December 1707*, eds. Paul Rule, Claudia von Collani (Leiden–Boston, Brill, 2019; *Studies in the History of Christianity in East Asia*, 1).

German Jesuit wrote concerning the events of that time. Another useful tool for using this rather large book is the index at the end (pp. 626–644) listing the names, places and concepts (also in Chinese), which the readers will appreciate together with the bibliography (pp. 615–625) and the numerous footnotes with which the editors accompany the text helping us to understand it better. The "Acta" themselves start at p. 29 and go until p. 614.

Based on his privileged place of observer but also one of the protagonists of the described events, Stumpf recalls here what happened during this last part of the unhappy legation of Maillard de Tournon and the echoes those vicissitudes had in different ecclesiastical and missionary milieux.

After the legate's decree against the Chinese rites from January 1707 (about it, see pp. 338–339) the missionaries found themselves in a very difficult situation: on the one hand they had to obey the ecclesiastical authority, on the other hand they could expect punishment from the emperor and his administration if they disrespect the rites. Indeed, the classical Greek figure of being caught between Scylla and Charybdis might be appropriate to speak about those months and years. We know how all that ends[6]. "I do not want to add either a prologue or my own epilogue" – writes Stumpf at the end of what he reports concerning April 1708 – "since the reader is aware of what has already been related above, and from this he is able to conclude for himself with which of the parties truth and justice reside" (p. 174).

With all that, the German Jesuit's narration helps us to enter the feelings that all the protagonists were living when the result of the controversy was not sure yet. It is not necessary to quote here all apparently contradictory statements concerning the rites, issued by Rome during several decades preceding the events described here. At the beginning of 18th century, it was all but clear how all those discussions would end.

What is particular in this section of the "Acta" is that their author abundantly uses letters which were of interest for the events he was referring to. Usually he does not just quotes them, but brings entire texts of such documents, always with his annotation confirming their faithfulness to the originals, e. gr. "That this agrees with the original, I so witness. Fr. Kilian Stumpf, SJ, Notary Apostolic" (p. 451) or "This agrees with the

6 See a summary of the history of the Chinese rites controversy in William V. Bangert, *A History of the Society of Jesus*, 2nd ed. (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1986), 334–346, and Joseph Sebes, "Ritos chinos, controversia," in *Diccionario Histórico de la Compañía de Jesús. Biográfico-temático*, vol. IV (Roma: Institutum Historicum S. I. – Madrid, Universidad Pontificia Comillas, 2001), 3367–3372.

original text, and even the grammatical mistakes have not been corrected" (p. 115).

In his narration, Stumpf offers even examples of his sense of humor, which is sometimes – let's say it – slightly ironic as in the case of speaking about the members of the Paris Foreign Missions Society, who considered the Jesuits in China excommunicated, but nevertheless accepted their hospitality and their financial help (p. 74), or when he ironically quotes the parable of the dishonest steward from the Gospel according to Luke, praised by Jesus because of his ability to manage a difficult situation, in the context of changing the documents important for the issue under discussion:

> For although the Lord in Luke 16 praises the person who knows and acts like this, he did not instruct the college of the apostles to carry this practice into the Church, nor is anything of the kind to be found in canonical documents of the church, old or new (p. 121).

No one will criticize small typing mistakes that happen to everyone using the computer's keyboard quickly, but to respect the literary genre of the review allowing such remarks: the year of St. Francis Xavier's death is 1552 and not 1652 as we read in the footnote 5 at p. 183 (the editors themselves give the correct date on p. 305, footnote 14). Besides that, Robert Bellarmine was canonized in 1930 and declared doctor of the Church a year later, while the footnote 2 on p. 386 says that both events happened in 1930[7]. As for the day of the liturgical commemoration of saint Francis Borgia, it is now October 3 and no more October 10 as it used to be (p. 460, footnote 31).

Another small remark concerning the methodology: Since 2019, the new official name of the Vatican Archives is *Archivum Apostolicum Vaticanum*, thus it is appropriate to quote it as "AAV" in replacement of the former abbreviation "ASV," which appears in the book at p. VIII and in the footnote 39 at p. 39 where we find the old name *Archivum Secretum Vaticanum*.

There is no doubt that the present volume, exactly as its predecessors quoted above, will be of great help to all who study the Jesuit mission in China, especially its particular chapter which was the rites controversy. A Polish Jesuit Tomasz Ignacy Szpot Dunin (ca. 1645–1713) – for many

7 See more about this in the present author's article "Un lungo cammino verso l'altare: la causa di beatificazione e di canonizzazione di Roberto Bellarmino," in *Ripensare Bellarmino. Tra teologia, filosofia e storia*, eds. Scott Brodeur et al. (Roma: Pontificia Università Gregoriana; Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2023), 315–333.

years in Rome as confessor in the Vatican Basilica of Saint Peter and the author of a handwritten history of the China mission (currently prepared for publication) – referring to this controversy used the strong word of "tragedy."[8] Yet, as in case of all tragedies, it is important not to forget them. Only this could stop new tragedies to come, provided that we learn from the history – *magistra vitae*…

What else to say about this book? A positive opinion of one contemporary reader of it, who was José Soares, the Jesuit vice-provincial of China, reads:

> […] the facts as narrated by Father Kilian Stumpf, Procurator of the Chinese Vice-Province, relating to events in Beijing are narrated with total accuracy. Those things however which the same Father states happened elsewhere, or were described elsewhere on the basis of authentic documents, I testify were so taken, because I have seen and read the documents myself, and have ordered them to be preserved in the archives […]. (p. 551)

To sum up: maybe the most appropriate way of finishing this review is to quote the Editors who write at p. 5: "perhaps the best approach to this remarkable work is simply to read and enjoy it."

8 Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, Jap. Sin. 105-I, f. 15r. More about Szpot in 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.

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