The Historiography of the Jesuits in China

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The main challenge in writing a survey of the historiography of the Jesuits in China is to determine what is most important in such a veritable flood of publications over four and a half centuries. During such a long period of time also notions of history and history writing have undergone changes of fashion and method and the scene of the action—China—has changed dramatically.

The Jesuits accompanied the first early modern incursions of Europeans into China in the late Ming and one of its founding fathers, St. Francis Xavier, died attempting to enter China in 1552. They established themselves firmly in China after many attempts firstly in Macao in the 1560s and then in Guangdong in 1582. From 1601, they had a house in Beijing. They survived the dynastic transition to the Manchu (Qing) and flourished in the mid Qing period only to fall from favor with both Rome and the Qing emperors over the Chinese Rites Controversy in the early eighteenth century. In the mid-nineteenth century, the Jesuits returned to a fast changing China and contributed to those changes through their educational activities and significantly through separate “national” Jesuit missions rather than an international common “Jesuit” one. After the 1911 revolution, the now highly institutionalized Jesuit enterprise was challenged and eventually destroyed by first the nationalist revolution then the Communist one.

The history of the Jesuit mission in China is therefore inseparable except notionally and artificially from the complex history of China's transition from a pre-modern polity to a modern one, and from a comparatively isolated traditional society to a vital part of our global society. Yet it has until recently been so separated and isolated.
Furthermore, and generally speaking, the history of the Jesuits in China until recently has been written by Jesuits, especially by the missionaries themselves. Should histories by Jesuits be treated the same way as histories of the Jesuits? The question has sometimes been posed as one of objectivity but just as the notion of completely objective history has largely disappeared under the pressure of modern psychology, philosophy, and postmodern theory so has the superiority of outsider over insider history. This is not the place for an excursus into the general theory of history but perhaps I could simply quote and endorse the wise words of a great Jesuit historian of the China mission, himself a latter-day member of that mission, Henri Bernard-Maître (1889–1975): “Neither the ‘edifying’ letters, nor the ‘non-edifying’ letters suffice to write the history of the missions, the true living history which reconstitutes the life of the missionary.”

To arrive at such living history at least a certain empathy is necessary as well as the standard attributes of a historian: enterprise and energy in seeking sources, critical distance and an ability to write, and a community of scholarship embracing outsiders as well as insiders.

Today for the first time such a community exists. The history of the Jesuit China mission today is above all a cooperative effort of Jesuits and non-Jesuits, Chinese and Western, women and men, those who share the values of the subjects of their research and those who reject them. But it was not always so.

Official Histories

It should be emphasized that the Jesuits have always been prolific historians of their own activities and perhaps nowhere more than regarding China. The motives for this have and no doubt will continue to be questioned: self-aggrandisement or self-critique? The greater glory of God or of the Society? But the practice is universal and continuing.

The Society of Jesus insisted from its very beginnings on the production of reports on the activities of its members. These annual letters (Annuae) and other specific reports on events and apostolic activities were primarily intended for the centre—the superior general and his assistants—but from very early began to be copied and circulated, often in printed form.

Even if we exclude the unpublished ones, do such printed reports qualify as histories? Many are quite long, include submissions from various Jesuit houses and missions and are fine literary productions obviously written with the possibility of publication in mind. Their writers were well educated in the canons of Renaissance humanist history writing. They are more than chronicles or in-house newsletters and although they stray into hagiography at times this is not more marked than in many other histories of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They are generally not uncritical or naïve. The Jesuits were pioneers in critical hagiography as witness the Bollandists.
Such published mission letters were often reprinted in local editions, translated into languages other than the original Latin, included in collections of voyages and the new scholarly periodicals that were read by the educated and well-informed. It would be impossible as well as unprofitable to attempt to trace here the proliferation of even those devoted to China.4

Regarding China, a few of the earliest ones achieved particular notoriety and wide circulation, probably as much for what they reported on a Chinese empire hitherto hardly known to Europeans as for their appeal to a devout European Catholic public. Such, for example, was the annual letter, published in Rome in 1603, of the rector of the Macao college, Valentim Carvalho (1559–1630).5 Although the format is a report on what were then the three centres of the mission in 1601, some twenty years after the opening of China proper, and so treated Macau, Nanjing, and Shaozhou, it contains in its 108 pages much “curious” as well as “edifying” information to use the illuminating distinction of the later French Jesuit collections.6 It is particularly significant for its account of the second and successful attempt by Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), to establish a residence in Beijing.7 It is, of course, second-hand regarding events inside China but contains much interesting detail not found in other extant writings. It provides, for example, a graphic account of a typhoon which hit Macao, it discusses travel by waterways through China, the Chinese system of government, and the impact of European scientific ideas on Chinese scholars. It would be hard to deny it the label of “history,” nor “mission history” since mission by definition involves what is being “missioned.”

Another early letter which was widely circulated and translated into several languages was Diego de Pantoja’s (1571–1618) letter from Peking of March 9, 1602 to the provincial of Toledo, Luis de Guzmán (1544–1605).8 It is probably the first Jesuit letter from China to appear in English since Samuel Purchas (c.1577 –1626) included it in Purchas His Pilgrimes (1625 edition). It is extremely optimistic about the prospects for the China mission but also gives a quite realistic appraisal of the problems facing Christianity in China. Pantoja’s long letter was the first to give an explicit and detailed presentation of the “Ricci method” of cultivation of the officials and through them the emperor using Western science and philosophy, geographical information, and astronomical expertise. And it reported that inquiries made of caravans of Turks and Moors coming along the Silk Route to Peking suggested that China was Marco Polo’s (1254–1324) Cathay and Peking his “Cambalu,” an important step in geography and geopolitics.

Even some of the shorter early examples are histories as well as being historical, i.e. critical evaluations of events as well as chronicles of what happened. One such is the annua for 1606 and 16079 written by Ricci who by now was not only firmly embedded in Beijing but was the superior of the mission responsible for reporting on its achievements. While only forty-seven pages in the printed version it gives a comprehensive survey of the state of the mission interestingly excluding Macao which he seems to regard as outside the real China. It is written in the same clear expository style as is found in his famous memoirs which he began to write about this time. There is a strong emphasis on his Chinese collaborators, lay as well as the Chinese Jesuit brothers, and on women as well as men. Towards the end, there is a short passage on the famous journey of Brother Bento de Góis (1562–1607) from India to northwest
China via central Asia, which demonstrated that the China opened up by to the West by the Portuguese was indeed identical with Cathay and which sparked further Jesuit attempts to discover Marco Polo’s Christians.

These and many other letters were included in the growing number of Jesuit compilations of letters from Asia, which often included introductions and linking passages that attempted to convert letters into historical narrative. Francisco Colin (1592–1660), the Jesuit provincial for the Philippines, incorporated considerable material on China in his 1663 work, *Labor evangelica*, and is nicely described in the title as having “historied” (*historiado*) and “removed” (*sacado*) items from the archives to make up his work. This too is what the Jesuit Fernão Guerreiro (c.1550–1617) did in his five volumes published in Évora and Lisbon in 1603 to 1611.10

In a sense, all this work was “official” either following internal bureaucratic procedures of the Society, or at least subject to strict internal and external censorship. But much was “official” also in the sense of being commissioned or at least encouraged by the Jesuit superiors. Very early such official Jesuit historiography began with Jesuits often holding positions in the Gesù or the Roman College undertaking by permission or direction histories either of the whole Society or of particular regions or periods. Giovanni Pietro Maffei (1533–1603), the first of many to discuss China, was not only the biographer of Ignatius of Loyola (c.1491–1556) but wrote two works on the Jesuits in the Indies. This was before the Jesuits had broken through the barriers that prevented their entry into China, nevertheless he noted the importance of China in the eyes of St. Francis Xavier and sought information from the Jesuits in Macao who had begun to accompany Portuguese merchants up river to Canton. In the *Rerum a Societate Jesu in Oriente gestarum volumen*, he quotes part of a letter of Manuel Teixeira from Macao (dated March 4, 1569). Teixeira had just returned “from China” where he was part of an abortive Portuguese embassy. “To get into China we must learn the language,” he writes, “cultivate officials and try to reach the king.”11 In his major work, the *Historiarum Indicarum libri xvi* (Vienna, 1588; and many later editions), Maffei devotes one book to China which gathers all the information, often unfortunately misinformation, he could find about China. He even examined the Chinese books in the Laurentian Library in Florence, which, alas, he could not read. China was definitely part of his “Indies” but not yet the Jesuit Indies.

Another early general Jesuit history present China as seen through Spanish Jesuit eyes, that is from Manila and Japan. Luis de Guzmán’s *Historia de las misiones que han hecho los religiosos de la Compañía de Jesús, para predicar el sancto Evangelio en la India Oriental, en la China y Japón* (Alcalá, 1601) gives over Book Four to China and the recent advance of the mission into the interior of China. However, his hero is not Matteo Ricci who is barely mentioned but Michele Ruggieri (1543–1607), a Neapolitan and therefore a Spanish subject, and most of his history deals with the visit of Alonso Sánchez (1547–93) to Macao in 1582 to bring the Macao Portuguese the “good news” that they were now subjects of the Spanish king which he, following Sánchez, reports they received with joy. He does not go on to describe Sánchez’s later adventures attempting to persuade the Spanish to invade China which almost got him expelled from the Society of Jesus.
Pierre du Jarric’s (1566–1617) three-volume French compendium of the Jesuit missions in the Indies up until 1610 covers the opening of the China mission but is entirely derived from the work of his Jesuit predecessors and a visit to the Jesuit procurator for the Indies in Rome. While not original, it has considerable literary merit and had influence on the view of the Chinese as irreligious, even atheistic, which came to prevail in France with serious consequences. Although a Jesuit historian of Jesuit adventures, Jarric and other like him also have a nationalistic tendency—let’s catch up with the Portuguese—and their emphasis lies as much on what Lach and Van Kley call “ethnohistory” as on mission history, on the Chinese as on the Jesuits.

The official *Historia Societatis Jesu* (History of the Society of Jesus) began to appear in 1615 with Niccolò Orlandini’s (1554–1606) posthumous *Pars prima*, but by the suppression of the Society had only reached 1633. Like many such productions it is annalistic rather than interpretative and useful more as a program or map for historical research than a resource in itself.

Fortunately, however, the greatest and most prolific Jesuit historian of the seventeenth century had a special interest in China and produced a masterpiece on the China mission: Daniello Bartoli’s (1608–85) *La Cina* (1663). It is but part of a part of a much larger work—the third part of the Asian section of his *Dell'Historia della Compagnia di Giesu*—and in the first edition the China section alone runs to 1152 quarto pages. It is written in a fine evocative style and in a language, which might be described to modify the adage—as *lingua lombarda in bocca romana* (Lombard language in Roman pronunciation). When it was issued as the first four volumes of the 1825 edition of the collected works of Bartoli, the literary critic Pietro Giordani (1774–1848) wrote to its Turin publisher Giacinto Marietti: “You were very wise to commence with *La Cina* which is, of all the works of Bartoli, the most suited to attract the reader by the beauty of the material and the style.”

Bartoli was despite his literary ideals an archival historian who based his work on all the Roman archives available to him. My experience is that of George Dunne (1905–98) who followed in his tracks through the documentation for the late Ming and found him “nearly always correct.” I myself have often found details which I had not seen elsewhere and occasionally later come across the source he used, no longer extant in Rome but still in Lisbon or elsewhere. Josef Wicki (1904–93) made a comparison of the notes used by Bartoli for the Indian section of his history which are still in the Roman archives and found to his surprise that he had accurately, even exactly, copied them, without, of course, giving citations such as a modern historian would give. “It seemed,” he writes, “unlikely that Bartoli could have read all the manuscripts in their original language and in such a short time. But this was what he did,” and this in addition to reading all the published sources, at least those in Italian and Latin. He also probably interrogated the various procurators who came from China to Rome in the 1650s.
Bartoli wisely chose to end his narrative with the fall of the Ming, and did not discuss the Manchu conquest or the 1650s and early 60s. The latter, however, as we shall see, is more than adequately covered by the historian missionaries. On the other hand, unlike many historians of the China mission, he gives full coverage in *China* to Indochina where the mission was manned from Macao and which he plausibly argued was linked to China by “closeness, vassalage and a similar form of religion.”

“Official” history in the sense of Jesuit-sponsored history took different forms in the restored Society of Jesus. From the late nineteenth century the Monumenta Historica Societatis Jesu series, now published by the Jesuit Historical Institute in Rome, published series of Jesuit documents but it was not until 2002 that the first volume of the Monumenta Sinica sub-series appeared and no more has been published. In the Monumenta new series, two volumes have recently been published relating to China. However, the Ricci Institutes in Taipei, Paris, San Francisco, and Macao have to a large extent assumed a semi-official role in publishing on the Jesuit mission in China just as their predecessors in Shanghai did in their famous sinological series, the Variétés Sinologiques. Similarly the Institute for Advanced Jesuit Studies and Institute of Jesuit Sources at Boston College are contributing to a growth industry in publishing sources and studies in the field. And several other universities in Europe and the United States have created formal or de facto centers studying the Jesuits in China. The two handbooks of Christianity in China in the Brill Handbooks of Oriental Studies series, both of which have much material on the Jesuits, are partly at least due to such institutional support, Leuven University for Volume One: 655–1800; and the University of San Francisco for Volume Two: 1800–present.

Such institutions have been responsible for the publication of the standard and indispensable aids to historical research on the Jesuit mission in China. Shanghai gave us Louis Pfister’s *Notices biographiques*; Rome, Joseph Dehergne’s *Répertoire des jésuites de Chine de 1552 à 1800*. Today, they provide ever expanding research aids through their websites and electronic publications.

Over the last fifty years the field has expanded from a handful of isolated scholars to an international community linked by the usual academic networks of conferences and journals. A growing army of scholars, mostly lay, have seen the crucial role the Jesuits played in Sino-Western relations and taken this as the focus of their research. The old Jesuit archives and other collections of material including artefacts, even in China, are now open to scholars. More remains to be done in cataloguing, digitizing, and correlating the collections scattered throughout Europe, the Americas, and Asia but information technology has opened up possibilities undreamed of by the pioneers slaving away in dusty archives. However, the very volume of historical sources available at the click of a mouse presents its own problems of selection and close reading and drains our most precious modern resource—time. The kinds of services that specialist institutes can provide in locating and prioritizing research materials is indispensable and international organizations such as the Society of Jesus still play an important role in this joint effort.
In the following sections of this survey, I will discuss the major contributions to the history of the Jesuit missions in China in a chronological but again necessarily summary and incomplete fashion. My selection of histories for analysis is avowedly personal and aimed at illustrating historiographical methods and fashions rather than an exhaustive listing. My apologies to friends and colleagues who may justifiably feel aggrieved at their omission.

**China Mission Precursors**

Any discussion of the China mission of the Jesuit order must begin with a man who never got to China but died trying to: St. Francis Xavier. His shadow lies over the old mission (before 1773) and much later. Hence the history of Xavier is not a matter just of passing interest. Fortunately we now have excellent editions of Xaveriana, especially the letters, and a four-volume biography by Georg Schurhammer (1882–1971) that exhaustively covers his life and times. There are of course very many biographies of Xavier but curiously there remain historiographical lacunae, not the least a serious re-examination of his methods and views on the salvation of non-Christians. It seems now that Xavier's contribution was not in mission methods—his were in constant flux and never tried out in China—but in inspiration and personal charisma. His alleged “top-down” strategy was never exclusive or even predominant: the majority of Xavier's converts throughout Asia, as after him in China, were peasants and townsfolk reached by itinerant preaching and native helpers.

However, one historiographical revolution has been to fill in the missing years by documentation and discussion of the many attempts made between the death of Xavier in 1552 and the first successful attempt to reside in Canton by Michele Ruggieri in 1581. Joseph Sebes (1916–90) in his work on the surviving letters relating to the twenty-five odd attempts by would-be missionaries to piggy-back on the Portuguese traders visits to the biannual Canton trade fairs effectively exploded the claim that the Jesuits gave up on China for forty years. More could be done on this question—and it has a relatively unexplored Macao dimension as well as the Jesuit one—but the outlines and orientation have been surely laid out by Henri Bernard in *Aux portes de la Chine* and by Sebes. Quite appropriately neither neglects the members of other religious orders, Franciscans, Dominicans, and Augustinians who were equally engaged in this enterprise. And a full treatment needs to take in the mission to Japan as well since it was both a rival and collaborator, and jointly controlled from Macao.

**The Ming Period (1581–1644)**

Leaving aside Bartoli and the Jesuit writers contemporary to events mentioned earlier, the outstanding contributions to the general history of this period are the Jesuits Henri Bernard-Maître and George Dunne. Bernard-Maître had the advantage of access in China in the 1930s and 40s to archives and libraries later closed to researchers and not yet fully accessible—if they survived war and revolution. His two-volume study of Matteo Ricci and his times as well
George Dunne came to his work on the Ming dynasty mission by a curious roundabout route well described in his autobiography. Finding himself in exile in Rome due to his outspoken advocacy of racial equality in his native United States he used his time in the Jesuit Curia to revive an earlier project and an earlier China missionary vocation. The result was his history, *Generation of Giants*. The title, apart from its tone, may be misleading in other respects. Some would argue for the early Qing period as equally or more important. However, it is fully documented and he was not afraid to publish what he found. Where the Gregorian University professor of sinology and ex-missionary, Pasquale M.D’Elia (1890–1963), had been scandalized by the mere hint by Bartoli that Nicolas Trigault (1577–1628) may have had a breakdown due to the stress of the controversy over the Chinese terms for God, Dunne produced the clear proof in a decoded letter that Trigault had suicided. Dunne’s work is “popular” history in style but fully documented and often original.

Popular too is the most widely circulated biography of Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) by Vincent Cronin (1924–2011), a succinct well written summary of the massive three-volume *Fonti Ricciane*. The work by Matteo Ricci edited by D’Elia in the *Fonti* is undoubtedly the most important book in the historiography of the Jesuit mission in China, and this edition of the original Italian in the Jesuit Roman archives the definitive one. It is not just Ricci’s memoirs but a history, a *storia* as D’Elia titles it. Ricci’s own title in his manuscript is at once prosaic and succinct: “Of the entry of the Jesuits and Christianity into China.”

Until Pietro Tacchi Venturi S.J. (1861–1956) published Ricci’s original manuscript together with Ricci’s letters in 1911 to mark the third centenary of Ricci’s death, the views of the virtual founder of the Jesuit mission in China had been represented or rather misrepresented by Trigault’s Latin version. This was translated by Trigault on his trip to Europe after Ricci’s death and published after further editing by the German Jesuits. It was frequently translated, frequently cited as the standard and authentic story of the early days of the mission. Louis J. Gallagher (1885–1972) published an English translation in 1953 which further distorted Ricci’s views on some key questions of Chinese religion.

The last decade has seen a proliferation of book-length studies on Matteo Ricci as well as innumerable articles which reflect both his iconic status as the China Jesuit and the changes that have occurred in the scholarly study of this fascinating figure. It would be impossible to even list and certainly not to evaluate them in the space available but certain things are soon obvious. Firstly, it is clear that these studies are in many languages, including Chinese: Ricci is a focus of international scholarship. Secondly, those who study Ricci today do so from an extraordinary wide range of perspectives: missiological, scientific, literary, linguistic, and in the wider context of Chinese political and intellectual history. Thirdly, Ricci—and the study of the Jesuit mission in China more generally—has become a mainstream topic in Chinese
studies with many eminent sinologists writing about him and finding him a point of entry into their own special topics. Jonathan Spence’s *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci* (New York: Penguin Books, 1984) is, beneath its scintillating surface, a very serious study of the comparative sensibilities of Chinese and Western humanism.

Some of the best contributions to the commemorations of the fourth centenary of Ricci’s death were from writers with cross-cultural expertise. Ronnie Hsia’s *A Jesuit in the Forbidden City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) combines recent Chinese scholarship on the late Ming with deep knowledge of Ricci’s European background to produce an appropriately balanced portrait of Ricci. And Michela Fontana’s *Matteo Ricci: A Jesuit in the Ming Court* (Milan 2005 in Italian, London 2011 in English), written by a science journalist with long experience in China, is full of stimulating insights.

Probably even more widely read than Trigault in the seventeenth century was Álvaro de Semedo’s (1585–1658) *Chinese Empire*. Only the last of three parts, on *cultura evangelica*, discusses the history of the Jesuit mission in China of which Semedo was the procurator (he was in Europe 1640–44). The longer Spanish edition probably added material from annual letters to Semedo’s text. However, much of the first two parts dealing with the temporal and spiritual states of China presents the developed Jesuit view of Chinese society and religion. Semedo has been cited by Antonio Sisto Rosso (1904–1990) as supporting the anti-Jesuit position on Confucian Rites but Rosso must be relying on the English translation by an anonymous “person of quality” who mistranslates a phrase in the original as “worship” of Confucius.

Recently, the study of the early Jesuits in China from the perspective of the Portuguese and Macao has reached a new sophistication. There are important studies of Macao itself and its role in the China trade—in religion as well as commerce. And Liam Brockey (b.1972) has given us not only a treatment mainly from Portuguese sources of the Jesuit mission but a full study of one of the Macau-based Portuguese Jesuit visitors whose directives had such a decisive influence on the mission.

The centenaries of birth and death of prominent figures among the China Jesuits of the Ming and later have produced numerous biographies, conference volumes, and journal articles over the last few decades, which we cannot even list here. However, perhaps we might observe some interesting trends in these writings. While many remain firmly in an old mission-history genre, many more have moved towards what Paul Cohen calls “China-centred” history but I would prefer to call “Chinese-centred.” The Jesuit missionaries are presented in interaction with the Chinese Christians, as partners, collaborators, or even disciples of Chinese scholars. Many studies are, appropriately, multidisciplinary, using the methodologies of linguistics and ethnology, mathematics, and musicology as well as more traditional historical sub-disciplines as source criticism, hermeneutics, and documentary analysis. This suggests strongly that the future of studies of such multi-disciplinary figures as the Jesuit missionaries in China lies in multi-authored cooperative projects. Ideally, too, such projects should be international,
involving Chinese as well as Western scholars whose linguistic competencies and archival access as well as varying methodological and philosophical approaches might eventually contribute to a new synthesis.\textsuperscript{52}

The Qing— to the Suppression

The invasion of the Manchus (or Eastern Tartars as the Jesuits called them at the time) and consolidation of the Qing dynasty from 1644 was well covered by Jesuit eye-witnesses who wrote accounts of these events which are also histories of the activities and experiences of the missionaries themselves in those troubled times. These have been largely neglected by general historians of China for the obvious reason that they are in Latin, generally extensive and, until the recent advent of website availability, hard to find. Nevertheless they are valuable for historians and mostly elegantly written with many valuable insider perspectives on events at the Chinese court and in the provinces. They would repay translation and commentary not only by historians of the mission but also by sinologists and general historians.

The earliest and archetype is Martino Martini’s (1614–61) \textit{De bello Tartarico historia} (Antwerp, 1654) which has very little to say on how the mission was affected by the invasion, apart from a comment that the victory of the Manchus was a judgment of God on the Ming for their persecution of the nascent Christian church.\textsuperscript{51} Most of the other works on China published by Martini during his period in Europe as procurator for the China mission (1654–57) are on Chinese history and geography (including the famous \textit{Novus atlas Sinicus}). One, however, gives valuable information on the state of the mission since 1610. It is addressed to Cardinal Antonio Barberini (1607–71), prefect of the Congregation de Propaganda Fide, contains statistics on the personnel of the mission and the number of Christians, defends the Jesuit methods in China and lists their writings in Chinese. Although short as its title \textit{Brief Relation} suggests,\textsuperscript{52} it gives a fairly full picture of the Jesuit mission at the point of the dynastic transition.

Two other works by Jesuit missionaries, however, both published in 1673, and both announcing themselves as sequels to Martini’s \textit{De bello Tartarico}, discuss at length and in detail the Manchu invasion, the military struggle within China, the collapse of Ming loyalist resistance in South China, the favor of the first Qing emperor to Christianity in the person of Johann Adam Schall von Bell (1592–1666), and the new persecution involving the trials and house arrest of the missionaries of the 1660s. They nicely complement each other with François de Rougemont’s (b.1641) \textit{Historia Tartaro-Sinica nova},\textsuperscript{53} having more detail on the reign of the first Manchu emperor, Shunzhi (1638–61), and carrying the story to the assumption of power by the young Kangxi emperor (1654–1722) in August 1666 and Giandomenico Gabiani’s (1623–94) \textit{Incrementa Sinica},\textsuperscript{54} ending a year later. Gabiani’s style is heavy and fact-laden, but he translates in full some Chinese documents relating to the trial of the Jesuit astronomers, while Rougemont mostly lives up to what is presumably his publisher’s title: “written with an unusual fidelity, in an easy style, and appropriate documentation.” Both authors were still under house arrest in Canton as they wrote, which must have given them unaccustomed leisure for writing. It is worth reminding ourselves that most missionaries of this period did
not normally have time for writing books except those in Chinese for apostolic purposes and these mostly with the aid of Chinese secretaries who were forbidden access to the Jesuit house prison in Canton.

When the Jesuits and the handful of religious from other orders confined with them were eventually released, they themselves published in Canton, in 1671 in Chinese and Latin, printed in Chinese style from engraved wooden plates, the declaration of their innocence issued by the emperor's council with some accompanying Latin commentary.\textsuperscript{55} This is one of the earliest of such publications and a rare book but available in many European libraries,\textsuperscript{56} and long ago described by Henri Cordier.\textsuperscript{57} Yet historians of China have made little use of this and the other Latin publications and none that I can find in standard works on the Ming/Qing transition.\textsuperscript{58} Many of the Latin writings of the Jesuits are valuable works of history in their own right yet inaccessible to Chinese and increasingly European scholars without translation, ideally direct translation from the Latin.

One of the non-Jesuits under house arrest in Canton was the Spanish Dominican friar, Domingo Navarrete (c.1610–89). On his return to Europe, he published the first major work purporting to expose the failures and methods of the Jesuits in China. His \textit{Tratados} published in Madrid in 1676 is the source-book for most of the Chinese Rites Controversy,\textsuperscript{59} for Jansenists and Gallicans, papal curialists, and aggrieved friars. It figures strongly in the later volumes of the infamous \textit{Morale pratique des jésuites} (8 vols., 1669–95) and his cause has been taken up in more recent times by James S. Cummins.\textsuperscript{60} This is not the place to debate the accuracy of Navarrete's reporting on China and the Jesuits but perhaps we might note a comment by C.R. Boxer, no partisan in the Jesuit vs. Friars struggle, on the \textit{Tratados}: “It is true that Navarrete begins his first chapter with a laboured disclaimer of hostility towards the Company of Jesus, but this formal statement is flatly contradicted by nearly every line which he subsequently wrote.”\textsuperscript{61} Reading Navarrete is entertaining but his every statement needs to be taken with care.

This is a reminder that perhaps the major recurrent issue in the study of the Jesuits in China from at least the mid-seventeenth century is what came to be known as the “Chinese Rites Controversy.” There is a shadow of it as early as Bartoli although a close examination does not, in my view, bear out Lach and Van Kley’s judgment that his work was seriously impacted by it.\textsuperscript{62} From the late 1660s, however, it was unavoidable even if often implicit in writings about the Jesuits in China.

The war of words over rites to Confucius (551–479 BCE) and ancestors in China led to several hundred books between the 1660s and 1710 when Pope Clement XI (r.1700–21) placed on the Index of Forbidden Books any new publications on the subject,\textsuperscript{63} which, needless to say, did not completely stem the flow of such works. However, few of these writings despite their ostensible topic are actually histories of the Jesuit mission. They are of historiographic interest in their almost entirely second-hand sources, their selectivity, repetitiveness, and theological biases; and their remoteness from Chinese realities. The pro-Jesuit writers\textsuperscript{64} presented an
idealized version of Confucius and early Chinese religion while the Jesuits’ opponents sought to blacken the Jesuits as condoning or even advocating views that were simultaneously atheistic and idolatrous, a somewhat curious act of mental acrobatics. While much work remains to disentangle this “thick jungle” of writings, we are perhaps getting close to be able to present if not a definitive, at least a more complete picture of the Chinese Rites Controversy than the polemics of the past allowed. It is also more possible than previously to locate this apparently abstruse argument about Chinese words and practices in a wider context of international politics. This has been done brilliantly by Antonio Vasconcelos de Saldanha in the introductory volume to his collection of documents, De Kangxi para o papa pelo via de Portugal (Lisbon, 2003).

In recent years, the Jesuit mission in the Qing dynasty has become of considerable interest to historians of China as well as historians of Christianity. It is now appreciated that the presence of so many highly educated European observers in China in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and especially in the imperial household in Beijing has produced a uniquely privileged source of information on inner court politics and culture. Studies of the Jesuits who were close to the first two Qing emperors, men such as Adam Schall, Ferdinand Verbiest (1623–88), Tomás Pereira (1645–1708), Antoine Thomas (1644–1709), Jean-François Gerbillon (1654–1707), and Joachim Bouvet (1656–1730) have appeared and been utilized by the general historians of China, Chinese as well as Western. They are increasingly being utilized by scholars seeking to understand the complexities of Qing rule. The Manchus were well aware of being foreigners. Shunzhi and Kangxi seem to have perceived this as a bond with the Westerners, while their successors saw it as an undesirable connection despite the usefulness of the Jesuits as scientists, artists, architects, and medical doctors. It is quite unthinkable that a later emperor than Kangxi would have appointed two Jesuits to participate in treaty negotiations with a European enemy, but this is what that emperor did when he sent Pereira and Gerbillon in 1689 to meet the Russians to help delimit the border. Joseph Sebes has published Pereira’s important diary of these negotiations. In the later years of his reign, however, when the same emperor entrusted the Jesuits with a survey and mapping expedition of the Chinese Empire, he deliberately kept them away from politically sensitive border areas suspecting, with good reason, that China’s European rivals would take an unhealthy interest in such maps.

The first volume of an annotated English translation of a hitherto unpublished manuscript record of the papal legation of Maillard de Tournon (1668–1710) by the German Jesuit Kilian Stumpf (1655–1720) is now available to Western and Chinese scholars. Few of the latter read Latin but many more read English. It is not only an important contribution to the study of the Chinese Rites Controversy, since Tournon played a key role in the condemnation of the rites but it also provides numerous illustrations of the relationship between the emperor and his servants. It also incidentally helps dispel the misapprehension established by some earlier writings such as C.W. Allan, Jesuits at the Court of Peking (Shanghai, 1935) and Arnold
Rowbotham’s Missionary and Mandarin: The Jesuits at the Court of China (Berkeley, 1942) that most of the Jesuits in China were active at the court and that those at the court were mostly mandarins.

The work of Claudia von Collani on Joachim Bouvet is particularly interesting. In several publications, she has explored the long and complex relationship between the Kangxi emperor and his tutor in mathematics and anatomy. They shed much light on the personalities of both men and on the cultural gap between them. Kangxi overcame the opposition of the Jesuit superiors to Bouvet’s chimerical pursuit of the biblical patriarchs in the persons of the Chinese sage-kings but severely dressed him down for abandoning a cartographical expedition simply because he had a fall from his horse.

The activities of the Jesuits in Kangxi’s court were extraordinarily varied but their motivation always service and protection of the wider Chinese Christian enterprise. When reading the letter files in the Jesuit Roman Archives for the years around 1700, I was struck by the number of letters to Tomás Pereira from non-Jesuits, friars and members of other congregations who appear in their various orders’ published and unpublished collections of documents from the period as severe critics of Pereira, requesting his interventions with officials and the emperor; often too they write to thank him for his success. In a world that operated on guanxi [personal connections] the Jesuits had mastered the art and used it for the benefit not only of their own order but that of all missionaries and all Christians.

The scientific side of that interaction between Jesuits and the Chinese court has, especially since Joseph Needham drew attention to it in his Science and Civilization in China, become a new scholarly industry. Catherine Jami and Han Qi are leaders in that field. And Florence Hsia in Sojourners in a Strange Land has provided an excellent overview with due emphasis on the Jesuit background. Art historians have added an awareness of the influence of Jesuit artists at the Qing court on court painting to the existing knowledge of the Jesuits as transmitters to Europe of chinoiserie in painting, porcelain, and garden design. Scholarly contacts too have begun to attract attention based on close examination of the Jesuit translations of Confucian classics.

Strangely, though, not much serious work has been done on mutual influences in spirituality and religious practices between Jesuits and the Chinese religions. Perhaps there was little and the traditional dominant narrative of hostility and competition except for Confucianism—from the late seventeenth century invariably represented as a philosophy not a religion—represents the reality. Perhaps in the implicit “accommodation” model of the Jesuits this was a step too far. But what did Jesuits who dutifully made their daily Ignatian meditations think of Buddhist meditation? What did they think of the Christian chants and devotional practices of their flocks? The spiritual diaries and reflections of individual missionaries were apparently at that time automatically burned on the death of the priest or brother. But it is possible to read between the lines of many of the surviving records an alternative narrative of mutual curiosity and spiritual exploration which is still to find full expression in the historiography of
the mission. And many of the religious writings of the Jesuits in Chinese listed in, for example, the catalogue of Chinese books of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, call for analysis. A history of the spirituality of the Jesuits and Chinese Christians is long overdue.

Neglected, too, is the economics of the mission: a few studies of patrons of the China mission, Dauril Alden's *The Making of an Enterprise* (Stanford, 1996) on the economics of the Jesuits in the Portuguese world generally and Brockey's fascinating glimpses into Palmeiro's trading ventures are a beginning but many questions remain unanswered. When I was a beginner in the area, the then Roman archivist, Edmond Lamalle (1900–89), expounded to me his theory that the economic archives had been systematically destroyed at the time of the suppression lest they provide ammunition for the enemies of the Society. This may well be so but many partial statements of accounts remain and could be utilized even if only to explode myths of Jesuit wealth and hidden treasure.

After the disaster of the papal Chinese Rites decisions against the Jesuit position in the early eighteenth century, a steady decline in the China mission began. There were recurrent local persecutions, the Jesuits were barely tolerated in Beijing for their usefulness in compiling the annual imperial calendar and the Qianlong emperor's (1711–99) garden projects and new missionaries could enter China only surreptitiously. One result however was that many Jesuits in China had leisure for serious sinological research and communication with learned societies in Europe. Many of these writings, in their margins as it were, contain valuable insights on mission history.

The greatest of these Jesuit sinologists was undoubtedly Antoine Gaubil (1689–1759) who corresponded with many savants and scientists in Europe and wrote works on Chinese astronomy, chronology, and history, which were published in Europe, some by learned societies of which he was a corresponding member. However, his contributions to the history of the China mission were mainly confined to private letters only published in 1970.76

It was also the time of the great series of published missionary letters in France and Germany: the *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses écrites des missions étrangères*, which appeared in Paris in thirty-four volumes, from 1703 to 1776 and was frequently reprinted and the *Neue Welt-Bott mit allerhand nachrichten deren Missionarien Soc. Jesu* (1728–58). Despite suspicions of editing to fit an ever more defensive Jesuit “image,” with a few exceptions, when checked against the originals, there has been little or no distortion of the text, only omissions for reasons of length or repetition. However, the selection of letters for publication by the Jesuit editors was seriously affected by the aftermath of the Chinese Rites Controversy and the swelling anti-Jesuit movement which resulted in the suppression of the Society of Jesus. It was not the time for frank admissions of failures or doubts expressed about methods.

One such editor was Jean-Baptiste du Halde (1674–1743) who edited the *Lettres édifiantes* from 1711 to 1743 and incorporated much published and unpublished material from the China mission in his great *Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique, et physique de l'empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie chinoise* (Paris, 1735).77 The result was a work that led
Voltaire (1694–1778) to comment that the best work on China was written by a Jesuit who had never been there. The focus is, of course, China itself, not the mission, but there is an implicit and scarcely disguised justification of his colleagues in China in his “description” of Chinese religion. Du Halde also published in the *Description* several Jesuit travel accounts that are informative on mission matters as well as descriptive of often remote parts of China.

The two great works of Jesuit sinology written during these years of reduced evangelical activity were not published until after the demise of the mission and of the majority of their authors and were ineptly edited. Neither, moreover, serves directly as a contribution to the history of the Jesuit mission in China. Joseph Moyriac de Mailla’s (1669–1748) *Histoire générale de la Chine ou annales de cet empire*, 13 vols. (Paris, 1777–85) was a translation from a standard compendium of Chinese history with additions from other Chinese histories for the Ming and Qing. The Jesuits get occasional mention in the later volumes but solely in the context of political events.

From de Mailla’s history, as from the sixteen volumes of the *Mémoires*, much can be discovered about the mindset and values of the later missionaries of the pre-suppression period. They could only have been written by educated Europeans (in two cases Chinese Jesuits educated in Europe) but there is little trace of specifically Jesuit ideas or intentions.

The Restored Society of Jesus in China

The century or so of Jesuit missionary activity in China from the 1840s to 1949 is not marked by major works of history about this period of the mission. There are memoirs, chronicles of specific missions, a growing interest in the early experience of their predecessors. The material for a history of the new missions is abundant in periodicals designed for edification and entertainment, and hence to attract donations. The archives are both large and far less informative than in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, especially once modern transport, the telegraph, and telephone made direct and frequent contact with headquarters possible. And they are scattered and often unindexed. There has not, however, to my knowledge, been extensive oral history research on the Jesuits like that on the Maryknoll missionaries. Nor has there been a systematic examination of the visual record—photographs, documentary film and, with some notable exceptions, art and architecture.

Despite the intentions of the Jesuit superior general Jan Roothaan (in office, 1829–53) who sent some French Jesuits to Shanghai in 1842 to recreate the old international mission, the new missions in China soon fragmented into distinct national missions each dependent on a European, later also American, province for manpower and resources. Hence the writing of history of the Jesuits in China in the modern period is similarly fragmented into national segments. Most such histories are mission history in the old sense, chronological rather than analytic, tending to the hagiographic and “edifying,” written by mission promoters rather than trained historians. They are obviously of use to later historians and have been wrongly
neglected by the historians of China, despite the fact that missionaries were very often the only outside observers of events in remote areas of China during the turbulent years of foreign intrusion and internal revolution.\(^3\)

There is still no general book-length overview of Jesuit missions in China since 1842 although some useful perspectives have appeared in periodicals dedicated to missions and China, such as *Monumenta Serica*. One promising line is the differences in approach of the missionaries of the various national missions despite their common Jesuit training and presumed common aims. This sits easily with studies of Western imperialism and Chinese nationalism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Just as political historians have for the most part neglected the role of Christian ideas in Chinese nationalism, mission historians have often ignored the solid reasons for the association of Christianity with Western aggression and exploitation. Finally, there is a considerable literature on Christianity under Chinese Communism, some of it by or about Jesuits, Western and Chinese.\(^4\) This too awaits a systematic treatment exploiting the archival resources and asking questions such as whether the Jesuit reaction to persecution and trials was different to the general one.

It is, of course, too early and too politically sensitive to attempt a history of the engagement of the Society of Jesus with China since the late 1970s. However one important aspect of this has been a recovery of the past. The writing of history is, in an important sense, part of the making of history. And we have not yet, whatever the pundits tell us, reached the end of history.

Paul Rule

Notes

1. Translated from Henri Bernard, *Aux portes de la Chine: Les missionnaires du seizième siècle, 1514–1580* (Tientsin: Hautes Etudes, 1934), xiv. (Note that in the text he will be always named as Bernard-Maitre, the surname he adopted in mid-career to distinguish himself from another member of his province.)


3. For more on the Bollandists, see Gerrit Vanden Bosch's essay on the Jesuits in the Lower Countries in this collection.


7. “Del secondo viaggio che i nostri fecero alla corte di Pechino,” 18–58. In fact at the time of writing (January 25, 1602), Carvalho had not yet received news that they had been allowed to stay in the capital.

8. It appeared in many collections, and many languages, the first publication being Évora, 1603 in Fernão Guerreiro’s *Relação annual*. See Cordier, *Bibliotheca Sinica*, cols. 801–4, who, however, omits this edition from his list and gives the earliest as the Spanish edition (Valladolid, 1604).


10. These were reprinted in a modern edition in the Scriptores Rerum Lusitanorum series by Artur Viegas (pseudonym of an exiled Jesuit, Antonio Vieira): *Relação anual das coisas que fizeram os padres da Companhia de Jesus nas suas missões do Japão, China, Cataio... nos anos de 1600 a 1609* (Coimbra/Lisbon: Imprensa da Universidade, 1930–42).


12. *Histoire des choses plus mémorables advenues tant en Indes Orientales, que autre païs de la descouverte des Portugais, en l’établissement et progres de la foy christienne et catholique, et principalement de ce que les religieux de la Compagnie de Jésus y ont faict, & enduré pour la mesme fin; depuis qu’ils y sont entrez jusques à l’an 1610* (Bourdeaux: Millages, 1608–14).


15. Letter in the Introduction to Book 2 of *La Cina*, in Opere, XVI.


18. There is in the Jesuit Roman Archives (Fondo Gesuitico 722/9) a document dated Rome, December 15, 1654, in which he gives Martino Martini wise advice on how to present his case to the papal officials: don’t try to outwit them with canon law but concentrate on the facts of the case and your first-hand knowledge of Chinese conditions.

19. “Vicinità, vassallaggio” and “una somigliante forma di religione” (in the note to the reader, A’ lettori, at the beginning of La Cina).


27. Several biographers have indulged in flights of fancy on Xavier’s supposed torments at the thought of the damnation of those he had not evangelized based on a misreading of a passage in one of his last letters (from Cochin, January 29, 1552), which actually deals with the inability of Christian converts to retrospectively save their ancestors. Wicki and Schurhammer have in several articles discussed Xavier’s mission methods but not, to my recollection, the theology of religions implicit in them.


30. Apart from the numerous works of Charles Boxer, there is an excellent summary in Andrew Ross, A Vision Betrayed (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994).


38. Published by the Libreria dello Stato, Rome 1942–49.


40. Della entrata della Compagnia di Giesu e christianità nella Cina.

41. De christiana expeditione apud Sinas a Societate Jesu suscep ta, ex Matthaei Ricij commentariis libri v (Augsburg: Mangium, 1615).


This work has a curious publishing history. It was written in Portuguese, published first in Spanish as *Imperio de la China i la cultura evangélica en él, por los religiosos de la Compañía de Jesús* (Madrid, 1642); then there is a shorter Italian version, *Relatione della grande monarchia della China* (Rome 1643); and later in English (1655) and French (1673) editions. Only in 1994 was it re-translated into Portuguese and published in Macao.


46. “At set times he is worshipped with very great ceremony” (*The History of the Great and Renowned Monarchy of China* [London, 1655], 48). The Spanish and Italian have, respectively, “es muy reverenciado” and “e riverito.”

47. For example, Jin Guo Ping and Wu Zhiliang, *Revisitir os primordios de Macau* (Macau: Instituto Português de Oriente/Fundacão Oriente, 2000).


51. *De bello Tartarico*, 29. Later editions have a short appendix containing news of the fate of the mission as reported in a letter of Francesco Brancati, S.J. (from Nanjing, November 14, 1851).


54. *Incrementa Sinicae ecclesiae a Tartaris oppugnatae, accurata & contestata narratione exhibita...* (Vienna: Voigt, 1673).

55. *Innocentia victrix sive sententias comitiorum Imperij Sinici pro innocentia christianae religionis lata juridicè per annum 1669 & iussu R.P.Antonij de Gouvea Soc.is Iesu, ibidem v. provincialis Sinico-Latinè exposita...*

56. It was reprinted by the IPOR in Lisbon in 1999.

58. Lynn Struve published a very brief extract from Martini in her anthology Voices from the Ming-Qing Cataclysm (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).


63. By a decree of October 25 of that year. A complete dedicated bibliography on the Chinese Rites is yet to be compiled although the Bibliotheca Sinica, Bibliotheca missionum and Jesuit bibliographies such as those of the Backer brothers consolidated in Carlos Sommervogel's great Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jésus, 12 vols. (Bruxelles/Paris, 1890–1932) provide most of the raw material for such a work. If the scope were extended to the scholarly journals of Europe and to modern times it would prove to be a bibliographic monster. Perhaps the answer is again web publication.

64. Not by any means all Jesuits. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716) was an ardent supporter of the Jesuit view on Chinese culture and hence the rites question (see, especially his Novissima Sinica [Leipzig, 1697]) and Voltaire, although by no means a Jesuitophile, saw the China Jesuits as allies in his enlightenment project.


66. A very good example of what can be done by fusing Jesuit with official Chinese records is Jonathan Spence, Emperor of China (London: Cape, 1974).


Apart from many articles see her books P. Joachim Bouvet, S.J.: Seine Leben und sein Werk (Nettetal: Steyler, 1985); Eine wissenschaftliche Akademie für China (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1989); and her edition of Bouvet's Journal des voyages (Taipei: Taipei Ricci Institute, 2005).

This is well illustrated in Artur Wardega and António Vasconcelos de Saldanha, eds. In the Light and Shadow of an Emperor: Tomás Pereira, SJ (1645–1708): The Kangxi Emperor and the Jesuit Mission in China (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2012).


Thierry Meynard has written two important studies: Confucius Sinarum Philosophus (1687): The First Translation of the Confucian Classics (Rome: Jesuit Historical Institute, 2011) and The Jesuit Reading of Confucius: The First Complete Translation of the Lunyu (1687) Published in the West (Leiden: Brill, 2015).


The extent of our loss is apparent from Noël Golvers’s study of the surviving “spiritual accounts” of one missionary, François de Rougemont S.J., Missionary in Ch’ang-su (Chiang-nan) (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1999).


An English translation was published in London in 1741 under the somewhat misleading title of The General History of China.

See Isabelle Landry-Deron, La preuve par la Chine: La description de J.-B. du Halde, jésuite, 1735 (Paris: Editions EHESS, 2002).


Mémoires concernant l’histoire, les sciences, les arts, les moeurs, les usages, etc, des chinois, par les missionnaires de Pekin (Paris: 1776–91), 1814.


83. It is to be hoped that the San Francisco Ricci Institute project on Christian records in remote areas will bring some of these valuable sources to the attention of a wider audience. See Wu Xiaoxin, ed., *Narratives from the Hinterlands: Perspectives, Methodologies and Trends in the Study of Christianity in China* (Guilin: Guilin University Press, 2014).

84. An outstanding example is Claudia Deveaux's *Bamboo Swaying in the Wind* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2000), based on extensive interviews with George Wong, S.J. See also Barry Martinson, *Celestial Dragon: A Life and Selected Writings of Fr. Francis Rouleau* (Taipei: Taipei Ricci Institute, 1998).