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Missionary Writings during the Canton Exile (1666–1671): Crisis in the Manchu-Christian Relationship

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Abstract: During their Canton exile (1666–1671), European missionaries wrote an impressive number of reports and letters which have not been systematically studied until now. After presenting a detailed analysis of the institutional background of the 25 missionaries who arrived in Canton, we analyze the first internal reports about the Calendar Case. Then, we discuss three important Jesuit works by Gabiani, Grelon and Rougemont, who attributed the crisis to the opposition of the Manchus to Christianity. The distrust of the Canton Jesuits towards the Manchus throws a new light into the approach of Christianity towards politics and religion in China.

Keywords: Jesuits; Manchus; Canton; Calendar Case

1. Introduction

Since their arrival in China in 1582, missionaries wrote extensively about what they learnt from their host country and the development of the Catholic mission, but the literary production of the missionaries was often limited to reports and letters due to lack of time, and only a few of them engaged in writing books with the authorization of their religious superior. The period of five years, from 25 March 1666 to 8 September 1671, represents a peak in their literary activities when twenty-five missionaries spent a forced exile in Canton due to a nationwide prohibition of Christianity. Unable to leave freely from their residence, they spent most of their time debating about the missionary policies to adopt in the future, and since they could not find common agreement on several points, they sent hundreds of reports and letters to express their stance to their religious superiors in Macao, Manila, Rome, as well as to the Propaganda Fide which was supervising the missions. This resulted in twenty books, with some published as early as 1671 while others were delayed until 1700. Building upon the archival works of Joseph Dehergne (1982) and Noël Golvers (2015), we consulted from 2020 to 2023 the Roman Archives of the Society of Jesus (ARSI), the Archive of the Propaganda Fide (APF) and the National Library Vittore Emmanuele (BVE), all three in Rome, as well as the Bibliothèque Nationale France (BNF) and the Jesuit Archives in Vanves, near Paris.

Since the missionaries were far from being a uniform group, on the basis of original documents, we shall first outline their diversity according to their institutional belonging: Jesuits of the Vice-Province of China, Jesuits of the Japanese Province, and Dominican and Franciscan Friars. These three groups in Canton held at times very divergent views on the China mission.

The missionary writings during the Canton exile cover a wide range of texts on various issues related to the Catholic missions in early Qing China, including the controversies on the Chinese rites, the debates on liturgical matters (like wearing a hat during Mass) and on the Chinese clergy, the discussions about native religions and practices (like Buddhist vegetarianism), the translations of the Confucian Classics, and books of Chinese history.

This article addresses only two kinds of missionary writings in Canton: the letters and reports on the Calendar Case written in 1666 and 1667 at the beginning of the Canton exile, and the histories of the Qing written by the missionaries from 1667 to 1670. Since there is



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no study analyzing the internal reports of the missionaries about the Calendar Case, we introduce here in a systematic way the Jesuit, Dominican and Franciscan reports. A few missionaries attempted to explain the Calendar Case by placing it within the larger frame of a Manchu-Christian relationship built twenty-two years before, in 1644, when the German Jesuit Adam Schall (1591–1666) agreed to work for the Qing Court. In *Jesuit Mission and Submission*, Swen analyzed the close relationship between the Jesuits and the Qing court and how the Jesuits in the Calendar Case were caught in the power struggle between the Chinese and the Manchus (Swen 2022). However, Swen overlooked how the Calendar Case deeply shook the confidence in the Manchus for the Jesuits who were sent in exile to Canton. In the darkest hour of the persecution, the Jesuits Gabiani, Grelon and Rougemont came to question the legitimacy of the Manchu-Christian relationship, and they presented to European readers the history of the young Qing dynasty as a period of darkness that God was about to subdue. By discussing the works of Gabiani, Grelon and Rougemont together, we shall be able to underline their anti-Manchu stance and the consequences for the direction of the China mission. The bibliography at the end comprises the documents written in Canton, with their publication reference when available.

2. Setting the Stage in Canton and the First Reports on the Mission

In this section, based on catalogues of religious personals, we shall present the three groups of missionaries in Canton. According to financial reports, the Vice-Province depended mostly on donations from Europe, but its involvement in international trade was felt then as contrary to Roman regulations, and important decisions were made in this regard. We shall also present an important event for the Vice-Province, the election of Intorcetta as procurator, or delegate, to go to Rome, with the vote of 22 postulates, or suggestions, to the Superior General in Rome. This section ends with presenting Jesuit letters that give a glimpse on their life in Canton.

Among the 25 missionaries who arrived in Canton on March 1666, we can distinguish three groups. The largest group was made of the 19 Jesuits belonging to the Vice-Province of China. The ARSI hold five catalogues of the Vice-Province from 1666 to 1669, one for 1666, one for 1667, one for 1668 and two for 1669 (Catalogues 1666, 1667, 1668, 1669a, 1669b), but we could not find catalogues for 1670 and 1671. The territory of the Jesuit Vice-Province included all of China, except Guangdong, Guangxi and Hainan, which were attached to the Japanese Province of the Jesuits. Before staying in Canton, the 19 Jesuits were mostly active in Nanjing, Zhejiang, Jiangsu and Jiangxi, while a few worked in Shandong, Shanxi, Shaanxi and Hubei. There were also four Jesuits of the Vice-Province (Schall, Verbiest, Buglio and Magalhães) who remained prisoners in Beijing. During the Canton exile, the Jesuits in Beijing and Canton kept communicating, but we need to keep in mind that letters took three to six months to arrive.

Some Jesuits in Canton like Michel Trigault, Pietro Canevari, Inácio da Costa and António de Gouvea already had a rich experience from more than 30 years of residing in China. There was also a significant group of ten Jesuits with ten years of experience or less in China, and a few among this younger generation were the most active in further pushing the accommodation policy, especially Intorcetta, the youngest of all (other like-minded fellows were Couplet, Gabiani, Herdtrich and Rougemont). However, among the younger Jesuits, a group of four French Jesuits (Augery, the two Motel brothers and especially Grelon) fought against the accommodation policy.

According to the catalogues, the core group of the 19 Jesuits remained quite stable during the five years. Inácio da Costa was the first to die in Canton, in May 1666, and one year later, in September 1667, Michel Trigault died. Almost at the end of his captivity, in May 1671, Brancati passed away, so there was a total of three Jesuits of the Vice-Province who died in Canton during their exile. Because Intorcetta was elected as procurator, he left Canton on 1 September 1668, but was replaced by the French Jesuit Germain Macret coming from Macao.

The French Jesuit Jacques Le Faure exercised his charge of Vice-Provincial in Canton until July 1666, then was succeeded by the Portuguese Feliciano Pacheco. Here, we present a chart of the 19 Jesuits of the Vice-Province arranged by age in 1666 (Table 1).

Table 1. Chart of the 19 Jesuits of the Vice-Province in Canton in 1666, arranged by age; by the author Thierry Meynard.

Name	Nation	Chinese Name	Year of Birth	Age/ Year of Arrival in China	Province in China	Age at Arrival in Canton	Age/ Year of Death	Remarks
Gouvea, António de	Portugal	何大化	1592	44 1636	福建	74	85 1677	Shifted to Japanese Province and superior of the residence from July 1666; shifted back to Vice-Province, Vice-Provincial, 1669–1672
Canevari, Pietro	Italy	聶伯多	1596	34 1630	杭州、福建、江西	70	79 1675	
Trigault, Michel	Flanders	金弥格	1602	28 1630	山西	64	65 1667.9.30	Died in Canton
Costa, Inácio da	Portugal	郭纳爵	1603	30 1633	江西	63	63 1666.5.11	Died in Canton
Brancati, Francesco	Sicily	潘国光	1607	29 1636	上海	59	1671.4.25	Died in Canton
Ferrariis, Giovanni Francesco	Italy	李方西	1609	31 1640	陝西	57	62 1671	Secretary of Vice-Provincial
Le Faure, Jacques	France	刘迪我	1613	43 1656	上海、福建、山东、南京	53	62 1675	Vice-Provincial until July 1666
Valat, Jean	France	汪儒望	1614	37 1651	山东	52	82 1696	
Augery, Humbert	France	洪度贞	1618	38 1656	浙江	48	55 1673	
Grelon, Adrien	France	聂仲迁	1618	38 1656	江西	48	77 1695	
Motel, Claude	France	穆格我	1618	39 1657	杭州、陝西	48	53 1671	
Motel, Jacques	France	穆迪我	1619	37 1656	胡北	47	73 1692	
Jorge, Manuel	Portugal	张玛诺	1621	30 1651	江南、南京	45	56 1677	
Pacheco, Feliciano	Portugal	成际理	1622	29 1651	上海、江南、淮安	44	55 1687	Vice-Provincial from July 1666 to July 1669
Gabiani, Giandomenico	Italy	毕嘉	1623	33 1656	江南	43	71 1694	Minister of the house
Couplet, Philippe	Flanders	柏应理	1623	36 1659	南京	43	70 1693	
Rougemont, François de	Flanders	鲁日滿	1624	34 1658	南京	42	52 1676	
Herdtrich, Christian	Austria	恩理格	1625	35 1660	山西、河南	41	59 1684	
Intorcetta, Prospero	Sicily	殷铎泽	1625	34 1659	江西	41	72 1696	Left Canton on 1.9.1668, replaced by Macret

In terms of nationalities, the French were the most numerous with six Jesuits. There were five Italians, among whom were two Sicilians (Brancati and Intorcetta) attached to the Spanish crown. There were also four Portuguese, three Flemish and one Austrian.

Besides the 19 Jesuits of the Vice-Province, the second group of Jesuits was much smaller. Indeed, two Jesuits belonged to the Japanese Province, with their Provincial residing in Macao. Since the city of Canton was attached to the Japanese Province, the Jesuits of the Vice-Province were guests of the Japanese Province in the residence of Canton. Though the Vice-Province of China and the Japanese Province enjoyed autonomy in distributing manpower and allocating financial resources, both depended on a Jesuit Visitor for important policies, who was often a member of the Japanese Province. Even an impartial visitor would have faced difficulties because the boundaries of power were not clearly defined. In September 1666, Luís Da Gama (1610–1672), the Visitor for Japan and China from 1664 to 1670 who was based in Macao, sent regulations for the residence of Canton: all the guests could not leave the residence, buy books, request alms or receive money without the authorization of the local superior. Even the Vice-Provincial of China was submitted to the authority of the local superior. The Vice-Provincial could freely assign confessors to the Jesuits of the Vice-Province, but he could impose external penalties only if he had informed the local superior (Da Gama, 1666). This double jurisdiction under the same roof was the source of conflicts among the Jesuits of the Vice-Province and those of the Japanese Province.

The Italian Jesuit Andrea-Giovanni Lubelli (Lu Ande, 1611–1685) was quite familiar with Canton, where he had worked since 1659. Before being arrested in 1665, he was the superior of Canton and was named superior again in July 1669. Another member of the Japanese Province was the Portuguese Stanislas Torrente (瞿笃德, 1616–1681) who was superior of Canton in 1664 before being sent to Hainan. He was arrested in 1665 and went to Beijing for trial with the other missionaries.

As we just said, in July 1666, Pacheco was named Vice-Provincial of China as the replacement of Le Faure. With so many missionaries in the residence of Canton, a man of experience was needed as superior of the community. The eldest Jesuit, the Portuguese Gouvea, was chosen as superior. Since the residence belonged to the Japanese Province, Gouvea was transferred to the Japanese Province. Three years later, in July 1669, Gouvea was named Vice-Provincial as the replacement of Pacheco, and thus, he returned to the Vice-Province. Lubelli was named superior of the Jesuit residence of Canton in July 1669.

During the Canton stay, three members of the Japanese Province arrived from outside: in 1668, the Italian Carlo Della Rocca (石嘉乐, 1612–1670) arrived from Hainan, and in summer 1669, the Macanese Jesuit Brother Cai Anduo (蔡按铎, António Fernandez, c. 1620–1670) and the Chinese Priest Zheng Weixin (鄭维信, Manuel Sequeira, 1633–1673) came together from Macao. Therefore, in the second half of 1669, there were five Jesuits of the Japanese Province in Canton. However, both Della Rocca and Cai Anduo died in Canton in 1670.

Along with the 21 Jesuits of the Vice-Province of China and of the Japanese Province, three Dominican and one Franciscan Friars formed the third group of missionaries. The friars were not under the Portuguese *padroado*, but under the more heavy-handed Spanish *patronato*. They had come to China through New Spain (Mexico) and the Philippines, which was military conquered by the king of Spain. Since their entry into China in 1631, the friars were in close contact with the Jesuits and collaborated in some regions, but very soon, the Rites Controversy created a deep division and distrust. The Spanish Domingo Fernandez de Navarrete (敏明我, 1618–1689) is very famous for his opposition to the Chinese Rites. He was previously active in Fujian and Zhejiang. On 9 December 1669, he secretly left Canton and returned to Europe, where he published his works in opposition to the Chinese rites. Two other Dominicans in Canton were the Spanish Felipe Leonardo (许斐录, 1628–1677) and the Sicilian Domenico Sarpetri (薩佩里, 1623–1682 or 1683). Both had worked at Lanxi (兰溪), in the Zhejiang Province, where they were captured in 1665. On 13 April 1671, almost at the end of their captivity in Canton, Francisco Varo (万济国,

1627–1687) also arrived in Canton. Finally, there was a Spanish Franciscan Antonio de Caballero de Santa María (利安当, 1602–1669), a veteran of the mission, who arrived in China in 1633, with extensive experience in Shandong. He played a key role in the controversies of Canton, becoming a close associate of Navarrete in fighting against the Chinese Rites. He died in Canton on 13 May 1669.

During the first two years in Canton, in 1666 and 1667, the missionaries showed a great spirit of fraternal unity. For example, Navarrete wrote in October 1666 to the Jesuit Superior General in Rome to express his thanks to the Jesuits for their support (Navarrete, 1666). In September 1667, he wrote to the Jesuits in Beijing and praised them for their faith, personal practice of prayers and mortifications, for their numerous works published in China, and for their wisdom amid dangers (Navarrete, 1667).

Similarly, Sarpetri describes in 1666 the good relationship among the missionaries, with a spirit of charity uniting them despite their diversity of nationalities and organizations. Because Sarpetri sided with the Jesuits on the Rites Controversies, Navarrete later explained that Sarpetri supported the Jesuits because he was, in fact, the nephew of the Jesuit Brancati. Based on Navarrete, Cummins affirms this several times,¹ but recently, Daniel Canaris has doubted Navarrete's claim to be trustful (see [Canaris n.d.](#)). Based on this letter from 1666, we can confirm that Sarpetri was not related by blood to Brancati, but both were from Palermo, and even before going to China, Sarpetri exchanged correspondence with Brancati and considered him as an uncle in a moral sense (Sarpetri, 1666). The moral influence of Brancati over Sarpetri became apparent in Canton when Sarpetri disobeyed his religious superior, Navarrete, and openly sided with the Jesuits in favor of the Chinese Rites.

Clearly, the three groups present in Canton followed different policies. The Vice-Province of China inherited from Ricci the accommodation policy and allowed Chinese Catholics to practice Chinese Rites. The Japanese Province historically had raised serious doubts on some important aspects of Ricci's accommodation policy, especially the use of the term Shangdi to express God. Due to the prohibition of Christianity in Japan, which resulted in martyrdom for many Japanese Christians and several European missionaries, the Japanese Province further emphasized the testimony of faith by self-sacrifice. From 1666 to 1669, the Vice-Provincial, the Visitor in Macao and the superior of the Jesuit residence of Canton (belonging to the Japanese Province) were all Portuguese. However, not all individuals neatly followed the policies of their organizations. For example, the French Jesuit Grelon was strongly opposed to accommodating Chinese fasting and the Chinese hat. Also, the Dominican Sarpetri sided with the Jesuits on the question of Chinese terms and rites, as mentioned above.

The few Chinese staying in the Canton residence were connected to the three groups mentioned above. The Jesuit priest Zheng Weixin ministered to local Christians around Canton, while the Macanese Brother Cai Anduo took care of the sick in the residence. The Catholic Wan Qiyuan (万其渊, Paul Banhes, 1635–1700) also played an important role in the production of bilingual works in Chinese and Latin. Intorcetta knew him already in Jiangxi before 1665, and he asked him to come to Canton, where he arrived before 15 August 1667, printing the first half of the *Politico-Moralis*. Wan left Canton with Intorcetta on 1 September 1668, and in Goa, they completed the second half of *Politico-Moralis*. While Intorcetta proceeded to Europe, Wan returned to Canton in 1669, where he printed the *Innocentia victrix*. From the *Controversias* of Navarrete, we also learn about the *xiucai* (秀才, *bachiler*) Marcos Zhang. He was from Nanjing and was baptized by Brancati. He arrived in Canton sometime after March 1666. The Dominican Luo Wenzhao (罗文韶, 1617–1691) was the only Chinese priest in China before the arrival of Zheng Weixin in 1669. Luo could move freely in China, regularly visiting the missionaries who were captive in Canton. If we count a few cooks or helpers, the Jesuit residence of Canton would have accommodated some 30 people in the period. The residence was next to Dayuantang (大原堂), or Church of the Great Origin, and located in the suburbs of the city, outside the West Gate (西门).

Besides the annual catalogues of the Vice-Province, the ARSI also hold a few records concerning financial matters written by the Portuguese Jesuit Brother Manuel Dos Reis (1634–1669), who was both the procurator of the Japanese Province and of the Vice-Province of China since 1661 until his death in 1669. In a case of a conflict of interests, the Jesuits of the Vice-Province would suspect him of favoring the Japanese Province to which he belonged. The first document by Dos Reis is a book of incomes and expenses from 18 December 1661 to the end of June 1667 (Dos Reis, 1667). It clearly shows that the Vice-Province of China through the Procurator in Macao was involved in trade with the Portuguese merchant Francisco Vieira de Figueredo (1624–1667). Since their arrival in East Asia, Jesuits were deeply involved in international trade, but they were facing growing criticisms, especially from the Vatican. Another document by Dos Reis is a list of things brought by Intorcetta from Macao to Rome, including money (947 taels and 4.000 patacas) and goods: yellow clothes (*pano amarello*), sandalwood (*sandalo*), lead (*chumbo*), pepper (*pimenta*), incense (*incenço*), rhino horns (*pontas de Abada*) and coral (Dos Reis, 1668). In 1668, Intorcetta wrote a document confirming and explaining the requests of the Vice-Province voted in 1666, and its Chapter 2 explains that the Vice-Province was financially sound and could obtain independence from the Japanese Province. Intorcetta argued that the Vice-Province already had the funds for three major residences (*collegii*) in Beijing, Nanjing and Hangzhou and to sustain a total of 60 missionaries in China (Intorcetta, 1668a). When Gouvea was named Vice-Provincial in 1669, he prepared a financial report listing the assets (*Catalogus rerum*) of the Vice-Province for the year 1669, and the figures correspond to what Intorcetta wrote in 1668. The Jesuits of the Vice-Province decided at the unanimity in Canton to stop trade activities (Gouvea, 1669). This decision was surely made to align with the more recent regulations of the Vatican and was made possible because regular and stable financial resources were already enough to sustain the mission.

At the beginning of October 1666, the professed Jesuits of the Vice-Province (those who had made the four final vows) held a formal meeting. Out of the 19 Jesuits of the Vice-Province in Canton, Da Costa had already died, and three Jesuits being spiritual coadjutors (Canevari, Augery, Jacques Motel) were not qualified to attend. Obviously, the three Beijing Jesuits could not join. So, the 14 Jesuits left had to deal with two main tasks. First, they needed to choose a procurator, or a delegate, to go to Rome to report to the Superior General. They elected through secret ballots the youngest of them, Intorcetta. Second, they had to discuss and vote on requests to the Superior General. On 12 October 1666, they agreed on a total of 22 requests, which were approved by the Vice-Provincial Pacheco and prepared by the secretary Jean Valat. The first request asked for a full separation of the Vice-Province from the Japanese Province, and the second request, for the return of Guangdong, Guangxi and Hainan, while the fourth request asked for the elimination of the role of the Visitor in Macao. Those requests represent bold moves for a full independence from the Japanese Province. Apparently, the Jesuits of the Vice-Province were not sure about obtaining their independence, and other requests asked only to forbid the Visitor from interfering in decisions related to the China mission. Another request asked for clarification whether the Jesuits of the Vice-Province residing in Canton had to submit to the local superior or to the Vice-Provincial (Pacheco, 1666).

As mentioned above, before departing for Europe, Intorcetta as procurator wrote a rationale confirming and explaining specific requests according to the mind of the Vice-Provincial Pacheco. Due to the cultural and political differences between China and Japan, and the neglect of the Jesuits of the Japanese Province in Hainan in studying the language and culture, Intorcetta argued for a permanent separation from the Japanese Province, as well as the return of Guangdong and Guangxi to the Vice-Province (Intorcetta, 1668).

According to the Jesuit Constitutions, all local and major superiors had to send an annual letter to the Superior General, but very often, they entrusted someone else with the task. We could not find traces of the Annual Letters of the Vice-Province for the years 1666, 1667 and 1668. Gouvea entrusted Grelon to write the Annual Letter of 1669, a letter that is well known since it was published in Grelon's *Suite de l'histoire*. It relays events in

Beijing from February to October 1669. Grelon mentions the post mortem rehabilitation of Schall in October 1669 and the death of Caballero (13 May 1669), who is praised for his virtues and faith (Grelon, 1669). Later, Gouvea entrusted the same Grelon to write the events covering 1669 and 1670. This letter is much longer but was not published. Grelon narrates the decisive events that happened in Beijing at the end of 1669 and their unfolding in 1670, especially the efforts of Verbiest to rehabilitate the public's reverence towards European astronomy. Grelon discusses appointing to the Chinese communities without priests some lay prefects with their assistants like in the sodalities of Europe. He also discusses the baptism of infants, Extreme Unction, the gatherings on Sundays and feast days, and the veneration of the image of the Virgin. Grelon noticed the free worship in Canton with many faithful attending Mass despite the legal ban; he narrates how the Chinese Dominican [Luo Wenzao] freely visited the communities elsewhere and suggests that there may be advantages in the future to having Jesuit Chinese priests. The report tells us about the communities managed by the Jesuits in Shanghai and South China and the communities managed by the Dominicans in Fujian. He mentions the secret departure of Navarrete from Canton [9 December 1669] creating a danger for all, as well as the deaths of Carlo Della Rocca and Cai Anduo. The Jesuits in Canton were also receiving the material help of Candida Xu (Grelon, 1670b).

The Annual Letter of the Residence of Canton for the year 1670 was written by Lubelli for the Japanese Province. It gives us more information on the local situation in Canton, such as the deaths in 1670 of two members of the Japanese Province in Canton, Della Rocca and Cai Anduo. We learn that Lubelli went on missions outside Canton three times. The report describes the conversion of a few individuals including two widows of a high officer of the local king (*mandarin do Regulo*, i.e., Shang Kexi, 尚可喜) through the intermediary of a Christian medical doctor called Thome. We also learn that “black people” have their own Church in the suburbs of Canton (Lubelli, 1670). This probably refers to Indians who left Macao during the economic blockade by China, coming to Canton to earn their living.

3. Writing Internal Reports on the Calendar Case

After having presented the missionaries in exile in Canton, we now turn to their writings. As said in the introduction, we shall only discuss the two kinds of writing that deal with the Calendar Case and their reading of the Qing history. The first intellectual and literary activity of the missionaries in Canton was to report on the Calendar Case in Beijing and their own exile in Canton. In the first years of the reign of Shunzhi (順治, 1644–1661), Schall seemed to have obtained a secure position in Beijing. He could boast a strong personal relationship with the emperor, and his work at the Astronomical Bureau (欽天監) was greatly appreciated. But how to explain the complete reversal of the situation in 1664, only 3 years after the unexpected death of Shunzhi at age 25? The direct cause for this reversal is closely linked to Yang Guangxian (楊光先, 1597–1669) who instigated the Calendar Case. Yang attacked Christianity in general and European astronomy in particular as incompatible with the Chinese tradition. But more devastatingly to the Jesuits, Yang accused Schall of having chosen an inauspicious day for the burial of a member of the imperial family. This was a clear act of sedition against the emperor himself. Besides Yang Guangxian's attack, there are indirect causes of the Calendar Case, like differences between Chinese and Western astronomy and internal fights about the young Kangxi emperor.² In consequence, all the missionaries in China, except a few Dominicans in hiding, were arrested and brought to Beijing. Schall and some Chinese Christians working at the Astronomical Bureau were condemned to death. The Chinese were executed, and Schall was finally spared, remaining in custody in Beijing with three other Jesuits, but he died soon after anyway. All the other missionaries were condemned to exile to Macao, but eventually remained in Canton.

Not long after the missionaries arrived in Canton on 25 March 1666, they started writing reports to inform Europe about the tragic fate of their mission. Noël Golvers had mentioned a few of those reports (see [Golvers 2015](#)), but here, we propose a more complete list, taking into consideration manuscript reports by Lubelli, Jorge and Caballero, to which we

also added a couple of derivative works. Since the reports are built upon each other, we present them in a chronological way.

While in captivity in Beijing in 1665, Caballero had already started writing a report in Spanish on the persecution at the request of the Franciscans in Macao, but he completed it only on 30 April 1666 in Canton, one month after his arrival (Caballero, 1666a). He made another version, completed on 11 September 1667, expanding it to events in Canton in the years 1666 and 1667 (Caballero, 1667). Caballero narrates the events of the persecution which he attributes to Yang Guangxian and to his two anti-Christian books. Caballero translates into Spanish many headings of the accusations brought by Yang against Christianity. Though Caballero was ministering to the common people in Shandong, he still justifies the missionary policy of the Jesuits working with the elite, including within the Astronomical Bureau. Caballero was greatly indebted to Schall, who helped Caballero establish himself in Shandong, so it was only natural for Caballero to show support to Schall. As we shall see, the legitimacy of working at the Astronomical Bureau became a conflictual question among missionaries.

In the final days of 1666, Lubelli completed a short narration in Portuguese for the Japanese Provincial (Lubelli, 1666). One month later, Jorge completed a longer narration of the events, again in Portuguese, which was commissioned by Da Gama to be the official report sent to the Superior General in Rome (Jorge, 1667). In their reports, Caballero, Lubelli and Jorge focus on the events between 1664 and 1666. Brancati completed his own report in Italian much later, in October 1668, and he starts the narration with the decision by Xu Guangqi (徐光啓, 1562–1633) to have Jesuits working for the reform of the calendar under the Chongzhen (崇禎) emperor (r. 1627–1633) during the Ming dynasty. Exactly as Caballero did two years earlier, Brancati makes the case that Schall and his involvement in the Astronomical Bureau were not the cause for the persecution, and he wishes the Jesuit order to continue supporting the China mission (Brancati, 1668). Around the same time, the Dominican Leonardo wrote his own report of the events between 1664 and 1666 (Leonardo, 1668a).

The five reports written by the Canton missionaries (three in Portuguese, one in Italian and one in Spanish) overlap in many places. Their immediate purpose was to inform their religious organizations outside the mainland about what happened to the China mission, narrating events in Beijing from 1664 up to September 1665, and the travel to Canton and their life in exile since March 1666. Those internal reports were not intended for publication and do not waste time explaining things which are known to the addressees. In the reports by the Franciscan Caballero and by the Jesuit Brancati, there is no attempt to question the collaboration of the missionaries with the Manchus, but on the contrary, the work of Schall within the Astronomical Bureau is justified. As we shall see next, when some missionaries wrote the history of Christianity under the Manchus in Canton, they would precisely question this relationship.

4. Writing the Spiritual History of Christianity under the Manchus

After their reports on the immediate events of the Calendar Case, some missionaries engaged in a more ambitious project, writing the first twenty-four years of the history of the Qing dynasty since 1644. In this section, we shall first discuss reports on natural disasters drawn from local gazettes, and how these disasters were interpreted as omens indicating God's punishments against the Manchus because of the persecution. We shall analyze how Gabiani, Grelon and Rougemont put the blame of the persecution on the Manchus and the consequences to be drawn for the future path of the Church.

In 1668, the missionaries had been already captive in Canton for two years. Meanwhile, Adam Schall died in Beijing on 15 August 1666, and since then, no positive news emerged from Beijing. Under circumstances of complete passivity and abandonment, missionaries in Canton were scrutinizing the omens of the times. Unexpectedly, their most important source of information came from the provincial gazettes reporting on natural

disasters in the country. The year 1668 was of special significance for the missionaries, and four of them listed natural disasters as omens.

Herdtrich wrote to Gabriel Łętkowski (1630–1659), a Polish Jesuit based in Goa, about the portents or miracles that happened in China in summer 1668. There was a strong earthquake in Shandong on 25 and 26 July, which was felt up to Nanjing, where a stone appeared with four mysterious characters. On 26 August, Lugouqiao (卢沟桥), a bridge built during the Song dynasty, collapsed and a stone appeared with 20 Chinese characters. On 11 and 19 August, heavy rain in Beijing destroyed thousands of houses (Herdtrich, 1668). Nicolas Standaert shows that the event refers to the Tancheng (郯城) earthquake in Shandong of 25 July 1668 (Standaert 2022).

Caballero seems to have extended the search for omens to ten years earlier, perhaps relying on his own memory or on notes taken at the time. Writing to the Propaganda Fide in Rome, he made a list of omens from 1658 to 1668, including the earthquake that struck North China on 16 April 1665. For Caballero, the earthquake was sent by divine providence, and Schall was freed from jail (Caballero, 1668). Sarpetri's account in Italian has the same span of ten years, from 1658 to 1668, and his account appears to be drawn from Herdtrich and Caballero (Sarpetri, 1668a). In 1669, Couplet also sent to two Jesuits in Holland, a letter in Dutch with a list of omens (Couplet, 1669).

The missionaries worked together in searching for information in the local gazettes, compiling them and translating them into several European languages, probably with the help of a local Chinese who bought the gazettes in Canton and pointed out the relevant passages. From the point of view of the Chinese teaching of the “mutual interaction between heaven and humans” (天人感应), natural disasters were signs of a moral or political disorder, and they may have announced a change in government. The missionaries Christianized the omens as signs that God was going to intervene in Chinese history to end the persecution and prepare the victory of Christianity. As we shall see, for their European readers, Grelon, Rougemont and Intorcetta incorporated those omens into the larger history of the Qing dynasty, blending secular narration with divine signs.

The missionaries exiled in Canton were aware that events were continuing to unfold in the capital and their fate depended on the decision of the court. Magalhães, Buglio and Verbiest kept sending regular letters to the Canton missionaries.³ Other information was passed through special messengers, for example, at the end of 1666 (Grelon, 1667, p. 314). The Beijing Jesuits wanted the Canton Jesuits to relay information to Europe. Verbiest played in this regard an important role since he instructed Rougemont to give an account of the events of the Calendar Case. The works of Gabiani, Grelon and Rougemont are said to be reports or letters addressed to the Jesuit Superior General in Rome, but unlike the internal reports discussed above, their length, structure and style reveal that those works were written for a wide readership in Europe to gather moral and financial support for the Chinese mission under difficult circumstances. For their European readers, the Canton Jesuits needed to position the Calendar Case within a larger historical and theological frame. Indeed, the involvement of Schall in the Astronomical Bureau can be traced back to the inception of the Qing when Schall offered his services to the new dynasty to establish the calendar, and the persecution of 1665 should be interpreted within this longstanding and yet problematic relationship between the Qing and Christianity. Was Schall correct in recognizing and collaborating with the Qing dynasty, while other Jesuits like Michał Boym (1612–1659) had supported the Southern Ming? In the background, there is the complex issue of the relationship between Christianity and the presiding political power. Was Schall correct in accepting an official position at the Astronomical Bureau, even if this implied accepting some superstitious practices of divination? This raises the question of the legitimate missionary policies to be used for the conversion of China. Also, did God allow the current persecution to prepare a more resounding victory of Christianity over its enemies in China? This questions the legitimacy of the intellectual apostolate versus the testimony of faith.

When Gabiani, Grelon and Rougemont reframed the Calendar Case within the dynastic history of the Qing, they were surely aware of continuing Martini's *De bello tartarico historia* (Coloniae, 1654), but while Martini describes the dynastic transition, the accounts of the Canton Jesuits mostly describe the history of the Catholic mission from 1644 to the 1660s as the history of the Qing dynasty. This fusion of the history of Christianity under the Manchus with the dynastic history of the Qing was not meant to seal an alliance between Christianity and the Qing, but on the contrary, to reveal a crisis. Contrary to Martini's optimism about the future of Christianity under the Manchus, the three Canton Jesuits saw the Manchus as obstructing the progress of Christianity, and their intent was to bend dynastic history towards divine history, showing that God intervened, especially in 1668, with so many natural disasters in North China as reported in provincial gazettes. The missionaries superimposed a theological reading on secular history, attempting to convince their readers that all the twists of Qing history would end with the victory of Christianity.⁴

Gabiani wrote in 1666 that he was working on his *Incrementa Sinicae ecclesiae, a Tartaris oppugnata*, based on "real facts" and official documents in his hands (Gabiani, 1666). On 8 December 1667, after almost two years of work, he completed the work, and in an accompanying letter to the Superior General, he mentioned that Intorcetta would bring it to him (Gabiani, 1667a). However, Intorcetta's journey was delayed, and Gabiani wrote again the following year that Intorcetta was about to leave through the Portuguese route, with another copy being sent through the Spanish route (Gabiani, 1668). Gabiani's work starts with the conquest of China by the Manchus in 1644, and it ends with the death of Trigault on 30 September 1667 in Canton. It constitutes the most detailed account, running over 607 pages and with several Chinese documents related to the trial in Beijing which are translated in full; in comparison, Grelon's work has 413 pages and Rougemont's, 327 pages. As Gabiani's title says, the growth or progress of the Chinese Church was "attacked" (*oppugnata*) by the Tartars, or Manchus. Compared to the internal reports which express that the Church was persecuted under the Manchu rule, Gabiani directly imputes the persecution to their opposition to Christianity, as if the Han Chinese did not have a role in the persecution. Gabiani depicts Schall as a martyr of the faith even though he did not shed his blood like the five Chinese Catholics put to death, nor did Schall die in jail like Domingo Coronado. Yet, Gabiani was cautious about Schall's martyrdom, which needed to be authenticated and approved by Rome. The work was approved and sponsored by the Austrian Province and published in Wien in 1673 (Gabiani, 1667b).

While Gabiani was writing his report in Latin, Grelon was working on a report in French, as we learned from a letter co-signed by Couplet and Rougemont and dated 10 November 1666 (Couplet and Rougemont, 1666). There was some degree of collaboration between Gabiani and Grelon, who were sharing similar sources. Grelon narrates events from the complete conquest of China by Shunzhi in 1651 to the personal rule by Kangxi in 1669. Grelon finished the manuscript of his *Histoire de la Chine sous la domination des Tartares* in December 1668, and the book was printed in Paris in 1671. While Gabiani's title expresses the opposition between the Chinese Church and the Manchus, Grelon's title, *History of China under the Control of the Manchus*, does not express the opposition so forcefully. However, Grelon makes the point that Schall had initially refused an official position at the court but was finally forced to accept the imperial request (Grelon, 1667). Based on four letters received from the Beijing Jesuits, Grelon continued his narration, which he sent to the Confessor of Louis XIV in two batches, the first in November 1669 and the second at the end of 1670. Since *Histoire de la Chine* was already printed in 1671, its complement was printed separately in 1672 as a *Suite* or follow-up. Compared to the unfinished narration by Gabiani, the narration by Grelon with the *Suite* offers the advantage of presenting a complete account of the Calendar Case up to its resolution (Grelon, 1670a).

In the letter by Couplet and Rougemont of 10 November 1666, mentions are made of Gabiani's work in Latin and of Grelon's work in French, but nothing is said about Rougemont's own work which he completed much later, in December 1668, and was published as *Historia Tartaro-sinica nova* in Leuven in 1673. However, Rougemont says in the pref-

ace to the Superior General that Matthias de Maia had instructed him to write the events of the Vice-Province from 1659 to 1662, that is, events before the Calendar Case. Later, probably in 1666, Verbiest asked him to write a history of the persecution since 1665. Like Gabiani and Grelon, Rougemont expanded the historical scope to the period from 1644 to 1668, which was intended as “a new history” to continue Martini’s *De bello tartarico historia*. Rougemont’s title does not express an opposition between the Manchus and the Chinese like in the titles of Gabiani and Grelon, and he uses the combined term of Manchu-Chinese (*Tartaro-sinica*).⁵ Yet, Rougemont expresses in the preface to the Superior General his hope that God’s providence defeats the plans of the enemies, referring here not to Manchus in general but to the Manchu faction led by prince Oboi, which was opposed to Christianity. The history of the Qing is tightly connected to Christianity since its very beginning through the figure of Schall, up to the assumption of power of Kangxi in 1669 with the resolution of the Calendar Case in favor of the Jesuits. While the narration of Gabiani covered events up to the middle of 1667, Rougemont extends the narration by one year. Yet, he completed the draft on 16 December 1668, and this does not include the resolution of the crisis with the victory of Verbiest at the Astronomical Bureau in the last days of December 1668. This explains the predictions of Rougemont at the end of his work about God being ready to punish the Manchus in the same way as he had punished the Egyptians (Rougemont, 1668).

In reframing the Calendar Case within the larger history of the Ming–Qing transition, Gabiani, Grelon and Rougemont make the case that the main reason for the proscription of Christianity is the hostility of the Qing court. The three Jesuits share the same dislike for the Tartars or Manchus, who are depicted as cruel and tyrannical. They praise Schall’s courage during his imprisonment, apoplexy and death, making him almost like a martyr of faith. Gabiani and Grelon suggest that Schall was unwise in collaborating too closely with the Manchu court, which lacked the sophistication of the Ming and was unable to appreciate Christianity. For them, the work of Schall at the Astronomical Bureau had exposed the entire mission to the political attack of Yang Guangxian. Since 1648, Magalhães with Buglio, Da Costa and De Ferraris had already expressed to Rome their opposition to Schall’s involvement at the court on three accounts: first, his work necessarily got tainted with the superstitious practices of omens; second, his official position at the court went against the rules of the Jesuits not to accept such positions; and third, his exercise of the office made him lose the Christian virtue of humility. However, in 1655, the Superior General in Rome adopted the opinion of Brancati and other Jesuits in favor of Schall (Pih 1979).

One decade later, the Calendar Case provided an opportunity to reopen the question. As we saw in the internal reports of 1666 and 1667, Caballero and Brancati still justified the work of Schall at the Astronomical Bureau, but Gabiani and Grelon were now questioning more broadly his collaboration with the Manchu court. Gabiani and Grelon were not the only Jesuits in Canton expressing very strong anti-Manchu feelings. In 1668, Ferrariis penned a report about the Chinese hat with harsh words against the Manchus depicted as “barbarian, vulgar, arrogant and insolent people” (see Meynard 2021).

Intorcetta brought to Europe the manuscripts of Gabiani, Grelon and Rougemont, with the intent to print them all over Europe and publicize their core message of martyrdom. He arranged the translation of Rougemont’s work in Portuguese, *Relaçam do estado politico e espiritual do Imperio da China* (Rougemont, 1672), as well as an abbreviated version in Spanish, *Persecucion que movieron los Tartaros* (García, 1671). Intorcetta also published in Italian his own *Compendiosa narratione* (Intorcetta, 1672), mostly derived from Rougemont’s work. In total, Intorcetta managed to publicize the same basic message of Chinese martyrdom in six European intellectual centers (Paris, Lisbon, Rome, Vienna, Leuven and Madrid) and in five languages (Latin, Portuguese, French, Italian and Spanish).

Apparently, the concerns about the attitude of the Qing dynasty towards Christianity and the legitimacy of working at the Astronomical Bureau were swept away when Verbiest restored the authority of European astronomy in December 1668. The full rehabilitation obtained from Kangxi in 1669 opened the door for the Catholic Church to enjoy a long period of fifty years of imperial protection, until the prohibition in 1721 by the same Kangxi

in reaction to the condemnation by the Vatican of the Chinese Rites. The combination of Manchu, Chinese and Western sources today allow for a more refined understanding of the Calendar Case in the early reign of Kangxi, but the research overlooked the lasting consequences of the Calendar Case in the relationship between the Jesuits and the Qing Court. For them, the dramatic events of the Calendar Case with a series of natural disasters in the whole country revealed a fight between God and evil, which would determine the history of China. Their historical accounts turned into a theological interpretation: the persecuted Church in China was about to be saved through divine intervention as so many omens attested. Their reports stress the necessity of founding the Church in China, not so much on astronomical science, not on an excessive reliance on the Manchus, but on the highest testimony of faith. The Japanese Church had their own martyrs, and the Chinese Church could not be properly established without the sacrifice of martyrdom. Schall was not so much seen as a model of evangelization through science, but of martyrdom. The massive campaign of publications in Europe orchestrated by Intorcetta between 1671 and 1673 intended to show that the Chinese Church, far from relying on sciences and political power, was ultimately relying on the highest testimony of martyrdom as the best way to plant Christianity on Chinese soil.

Though some Jesuits were hoping for a collapse of the Qing dynasty through divine intervention, all of them were legitimist in the sense that they strived to comply with the legitimate political order, in that case, the Qing state. Unlike the Canton Jesuits, Navarrete did not criticize the Manchus as barbaric, though he thought that the Han Chinese had a superior civilization, but he criticized them for in his view being tyrannical and imposing on the Chinese a foreign rule. He saw the Manchu emperors as illegitimate usurpers (see [Lack and Van Kley 1993](#), see also [Schindler 2022](#)). Against the Jesuits who considered the Chinese Rites as political or civic, and therefore compatible with Christianity, Navarrete like Caballero held that the Chinese Rites were idolatrous. The logical consequence was that the Christian literati would not have to obey the legal prescriptions of the Jiding (祭丁) ritual to Confucius, and in order to preserve its purity, Christianity would have to accept being considered by the Manchu authorities as an evil cult, or *xiejiao* (邪教), forcing Catholicism to be illegal ([Meynard 2022](#)). Navarrete could reach such a radical stance because he viewed the Manchu rule in general as a tyranny.

We should mention here two related works by the Beijing Jesuits, though published much later. *Nouvelle Relation de la Chine* by Magalhães (1688) makes some short allusions to the Calendar Case like the second funeral of Schall in December 1669 (p. 272), and more importantly, he presents the Manchu's conquest as "almost bloodless", though he had personally witnessed the bloodiest episode of all in Sichuan ([Van Kley 1973](#), p. 577). Around 1680, Verbiest wrote his *Astronomia Europaea sub imperatore Tartaro Sinico Câm Hý ppellate ex umbra in lucem revocata* (Verbiest 1687), with the first seven chapters telling the events of the Calendar Case in 1668 and 1669. Verbiest was certainly among the most knowledgeable of the missionaries about astronomy, and his report describes many events at the court which we would not have known otherwise, also translating Chinese documents that are not extant anymore. While the Canton Jesuits described the conflict as a spiritual fight, Verbiest presented it as a scientific dispute.

5. Conclusions

The missionaries exiled in Canton shared similar training and a common mission, but belonged to three different groups: the Jesuits of the Vice-Province of China, the Jesuits of the Japanese Province, and the Dominican and Franciscan Friars. The exceptional circumstances of their five years of semi-captivity in Canton gave the possibility for an important literary production which has perhaps no antecedent in the history of Christian missions. The restrictions imposed on the missionary were somehow a blessing, allowing them the opportunity to better understand Chinese culture and society. In the early phase of their captivity, in 1666 and 1667, the writings of the missionaries focused on internal reports about the Calendar Case to inform their superiors about their situation. The Cal-

endar Case reopened the dispute which had happened twenty years before about Schall and his involvement at the Astronomical Bureau. At that time, Ferrariis had previously sided against Schall, while Brancati and Caballero supported him. When Gabiani, Grelon and Rougemont arrived in China, Rome had already approved the work of Schall, but the Calendar Case reopened the question of the degree of involvement of Christianity with the Manchus. When Gabiani, Grelon and Rougemont wrote the history of the Qing in Canton, they presented the Calendar Case as a spiritual battle between God and evil, with Gabiani and Grelon clearly picturing the Manchus on the side of evil. They would read in the local Chinese gazettes signs that God was about to intervene and believed that the present suffering of the Church in China was only a preparation for the coming victory of Christianity. The distrust of those Canton Jesuits towards the Manchus shines a new light on their approach to politics and religion. They envisioned a new road for Christianity in China, not based on their services rendered to the Manchu emperor, but on their testimony of faith, like in Japan. In this regard, their histories of the Qing dynasty should not be understood as purely secular, but mostly spiritual, intended to move the hearts and to gather support in Europe for the mission at a time of crisis.

Except Navarrete, who considered the Manchu emperor as a tyrant, all the missionaries in China were legitimist. Also, when Kangxi re-established the Jesuits at the Astronomical Bureau in 1669, all the Jesuits recognized his moral and political authority, and even Gabiani, Grelon and Rougemont went on to praise Kangxi, opening again the model of Christianity in China developing under imperial protection. Yet their writings in Canton in the years 1666 to 1668 indicate the ever-present possibility of a different path if the persecution arose again.

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Notes

- ¹ Cummins, *The Travels and Controversies*, 2: 415, 418, 419.
- ² For a recent discussion, see [Jami \(2015\)](#).
- ³ Among the correspondences of Verbiest were letters sent to Pacheco on 1st September 1666, to Grelon on 18 April 1668, to Couplet on 23 January 1670, to Rougemont on 23 January 1670, to Couplet on 20 August 1670, to Rougemont on 20 August 1670, to Le Faure on 20 August 1670 and to Gouvea on 1 January 1671. See [Golvers \(2017\)](#).
- ⁴ We should mention that the *Historica Narratio* was compiled by the Austrian Jesuit Michael Sicuten, using letters by Adam Schall about his work at the court in Beijing, but this work was first published in Wien in 1665 and is not mentioned by the Jesuits in Canton. An expanded edition in 1672 tells the story up to 1669.
- ⁵ The term “*Tartarus-sinicus*” appeared in print for the first time in Kircher’s *China Illustrata* (Amsterdam, 1667) but Rougemont may have created the word before and independently. For Kircher, the Manchu invasion interrupts the successful progress of Christianity. See [Givon \(2019\)](#).

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