

In the Light and Shadow of an Emperor:
Tomás Pereira, SJ (1645–1708), the Kangxi
Emperor and the Jesuit Mission in China

Edited by

Artur K. Wardega, SJ,
and António Vasconcelos de Saldanha

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P U B L I S H I N G

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UBI DUX, IBI CURIA:
KANGXI'S IMPERIAL HUNTS
AND THE JESUITS AS COURTIER

EUGENIO MENEGON

**Introduction: imperial tours, imperial hunts,
and the Jesuits as courtiers**

In early 1682, in the wake of the pacification of the Three Feudatories, the Kangxi emperor decided to celebrate this major victory in the Qing struggle to solidify the empire with a large 'imperial tour of inspection' to Liaodong, or 'Eastern Tartary' as missionary sources called it. This expedition was a symbolic journey to the roots of the Emperor's Manchu ancestry in order to sacrifice to the ancestral souls at the imperial tombs and thank them for the recent triumph over the dynasty's internal enemies. This was not the first time the Emperor had planned a similar tour, but the grandiose scale of this expedition reveals its singular symbolic value. An enormous retinue of possibly as many as seventy thousand people accompanied the emperor, his heir apparent Prince 胤礽 Yinreng (1674–1725), then ten years old, and four of his consorts. This was a major logistic enterprise, requiring vast economic resources and minute coordination. By orchestrating such a gigantic operation, Kangxi and his court were unmistakably displaying the assured power of the winner of the war with the Feudatories, while also reaffirming the rulers' Manchu identity. Such tours of inspection, especially those beyond the Wall, doubled also as hunting expeditions. The Emperor certainly loved roaming in the wilderness and chasing prey, but far from being simple occasions for diversion, these journeys always had direct military and political aims. Besides being, as in 1682, acts of filial piety and ethno-dynastic homage, the tours were covert military operations, affording drilling opportunity for the troops of the Eight Banners. Moreover, through these activities outside the stifling etiquette of the palace, the emperor could display his persona to a large number of Manchu, Mongol, and Han Chinese courtiers

following the imperial train, meet on the road his own subjects, and buttress connections with the tribal chiefs of peoples beyond the Wall (especially Mongols), traditional allies, but also competitors, of the Manchus.¹

Recent research has shown the importance of imperial touring in state formation during the High Qing period. The Kangxi and Qianlong emperors used touring as an important-symbolic tool to affirm the centrality of the imperial person and of his household in ruling China, in what scholars have called 'patrimonial-bureaucratic monarchy'. They also employed tours, especially those beyond the Wall, to affirm the centrality of the Manchu ethnic component for the dynasty. This agenda of ethnic marking was in part achieved through the incorporation of 'Tartary', as contemporary Europeans called the lands later on loosely called 'Manchuria', in Qing China's imperial imaginary.² The incorporation was achieved through ritual methods (visits and sacrifices at the Manchu imperial ancestral tombs and the ancient foundational sites of the Manchu people), and through physical mapping of the region. This latter objective, in particular, saw the collaboration of court Jesuits, who either accompanied the emperors on their tours as observer-participants, or were sent to 'Tartary' to engage in geographic surveying as part of special expeditions. Hunting expeditions also functioned as conduits to pursue the broad political, military and ideological aims of imperial touring.

For the first time in 1682, Kangxi ordered also one of the court Jesuits, Ferdinand Verbiest, to follow him during the journey beyond the Wall. In the following years, more Jesuits would be invited to travel in the imperial train during similar tours, some of which were specifically labelled 'Autumn Hunts': Verbiest was ordered to join again with Filippo Grimaldi in 1683; Tomás Pereira in 1685; François Gerbillon on three occasions during the 1690s. Verbiest, Pereira and Gerbillon have left us accounts of those travels.³

¹ On the Kangxi emperor's tours, see Jonathan Spence, *Emperor of China: Self-Portrait of K'ang-Hsi* (New York: Vintage Books-Random House, 1975), 11-13; Michael Chang, *A Court on Horseback: Imperial Touring and the Construction of Qing Rule, 1680-1785* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Asia Center and Harvard University Press, 2007), 75-86.

² See Chang, *A Court on Horseback*; Mark C. Elliott, 'The Limits of Tartary: Manchuria in Imperial and National Geographies', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 59/3 (2000), 603-46; Natalie Köhle, 'Why Did the Kangxi Emperor Go to Wutai Shan? Patronage, Pilgrimage, and the Place of Tibetan Buddhism at the Early Qing Court', *Late Imperial China*, 29/1 (2008), 73-119.

³ On Verbiest's and Pereira's journeys, see below; cf. also Tatiana A. Pang, 'An Evaluation of F. Verbiest's Account of his Journey to Manchuria in 1682, Its

An examination of some of these reports, produced during the middle Kangxi reign, can contribute to the literature on imperial touring, while also offering a fresh perspective on court life using sources that Evelyn Rawski has defined as being 'frequently unique in their perspective, and valuable for that reason.'⁴ New admirable scholarship on the Qing foundational period and the reigns of the three great emperors of the eighteenth century, Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong, has revisited and reframed the sinicization model of traditional historiography and shown the importance of the Inner Asian elements in Qing rulership. Evelyn Rawski's institutional study offers a macro-historical picture of the relationship between the emperor, his immediate lineage, the Manchu and Mongol nobility, the Lamaist clergy, the bondservants of the Imperial Household Department, and the vast palace personnel. The picture that emerges reminds us of a solar system, and the emperor-sun remains, at least during the eighteenth century, the supreme arbiter of court life, distributing honours and positions to his slaves (*aha* / 奴才 *nucái*), who have apparently no autonomy. Rawski defines the Qing court nobility as 'service nobility': 'Despite their European-sounding titles and unlike their European counterparts, the Qing nobility were firmly subordinated to the

Errors and Problems', in Willy Vande Walle and Noël Golvers, eds., *The History of the Relations between the Low Countries and China in the Qing Era (1644-1911)* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003), 59-72; and Willy F. Vande Walle, 'Geographical Intelligence on the Tartar Lands in Pereyra's Time: The Peking-Moscow-Amsterdam Connection', in *Tomás Pereira, S.J. (1645-1708): Life, Work and World*, ed. Luís Felipe Barreto (Lisbon: Centro Cultural Científico de Macau, 2010), 375-432. On Gerbillon's journeys, see Jean Baptiste Du Halde, *Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique, et physique de l'empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie chinoise, enrichie des cartes générales et particulières de ces pays, de la carte générale & des cartes particulières du Thibet, & de la Corée, & ornée d'un grand nombre de figures et de vignettes gravées en taille-douce* (Paris: P.G. Lemercier, 1735), 4 vols.; and Yves de Thomaz de Bossierre, *Jean Francois Gerbillon S.J. (1654-1707): Un des cinq mathématiciens envoyés en Chine par Louis XIV* (Leuven: Ferdinand Verbiest Foundation, China-Europe Institute, KU Leuven, 1994). The lay painter Giovanni Gherardini has also left descriptions of his participation in Kangxi's imperial hunts; see, e.g., his letter dated February 1700, transcript in Giuseppe Campori, 'Un pittore modenese nella China (1698)', *Atti e memorie delle RR. deputazioni di storia patria per le provincie dell'Emilia*, Nuova Serie, 4/2 (1879-80), 5-6; cf. Elisabetta Corsi, 'Gherardini, Giovanni', in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* (Rome: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, 1999), liii, 596. Thanks to Marco Musillo for alerting me to this letter.

⁴ Evelyn S. Rawski, *The Last Emperors: A Social History of Qing Imperial Institutions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 13.

throne. Qing peers had no autonomy. ... The Qing peers constituted a service nobility, whose power derived entirely from the throne.⁵ Similarly, the Han Chinese bureaucrats had little leeway vis-à-vis the throne. Tension remained between the emperor, supported by the Inner Court bureaucracy, and the traditional bureaucracy, usually dominated by Han. Still ideologically under the sway of the Confucian ministerial (臣 *chen*) model, the Outer Court bureaucrats offered some resistance to the throne in the form of bureaucratic blockage and moral lecturing, but their resistance, at least during the eighteenth century, has been seen as mostly futile. Most scholars accept this institutional and ceremonial triumph of Qing 'personalism' and autocratic control, coupled with increasing Manchu ethnic dominance. Even the members of the inner court and of the Manchu establishment seem virtually lacking any agency, despite the recognition that the system of direct imperial control underwent increasing bureaucratization through the establishment of the Grand Council and the streamlining of the Eight Banners during the Yongzheng and Qianlong reigns.⁶

One can hardly contend with the weight of the historical record and solid recent scholarship. Rather, I would like to use the 'unique perspective' of Jesuit sources on imperial tours and hunts as a first step in shifting the focus away from the shining light of the emperor-sun and his autocratic gravitational power to examine instead the satellites in court life and their existence in the shadows. Within the constraining pecking order of the court, families of the nobility, palace servants, and the vast world that surrounded the imperial institution (including the Jesuit servants of the emperor) continued to work feverishly to carve out spaces of power and influence. Within that system and its rigid and pitiless rules, they maintained a limited degree of agency.⁷ Specific occasions and periods

⁵ Rawski, *The Last Emperors*, 81.

⁶ For English-language discussions of tensions in the process of bureaucratization of the Qing monarchy, see, e.g., Beatrice S. Bartlett, *Monarchs and Ministers: The Grand Council in Mid-Ch'ing China, 1723–1820* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Philip A. Kuhn, *Soulstealers: The Chinese Sorcery Scare of 1768* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990); Elliot, *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); Rawski, *The Last Emperors*.

⁷ A similar concern with the agency of the nobility in its relationship to the Sun King Louis XIV can be found in the recent study by Frédérique Leferme-Falguières, *Les courtisans: Une société de spectacle sous l'ancien régime* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2007), 13: 'More than being simply a spectator, [the nobility] was an essential actor of the royal representation, which it contributed to diffuse. Because of its service within the royal house, it was the

offer better glimpses than others on the daily activities of court actors, engaged as they were in a continuous struggle to gain influence and material advantages, create alliances, form friendships, collect information to their advantage, and curry favour with the emperor and other prominent figures in the palace constellation. These privileged moments reveal also the more human, both heart-warming and tragic, sides of court life: friendships did develop, intellectual connections did flourish, spiritual and religious bonding did occur. Even tragic falls from imperial grace did not prevent the clandestine continuation of human bonds, at times in contravention of the imperial will.

The Kangxi reign offers a particularly good vantage point from which to observe these human dynamics, especially during the period of factionalism that characterized the latter part of the reign. Missionary reports have their own unique perspective to offer. Such sources covering the period of imperial favour towards the Jesuits in the earlier part of the Kangxi reign are reasonably rich. They become even more extensive and detailed following two contentious diplomatic-religious missions by papal legates in 1705–06 and 1720–21, and during the succession struggle that claimed the life of the Portuguese Jesuit João Mourão (1681–1726) and of members of the Sunu noble clan who had converted to Christianity.⁸

This wealth of inside information is often absent from Chinese sources. Missionary reports were written in European languages for propaganda purposes, both to encourage patronage and fund-raising, and to defend the Jesuits in the theological battles of the Chinese Rites Controversy. However, some of the missives were conceived as confidential reports to relate to superiors, and more rarely to lay governments, the internal matters of the Chinese church, but also the implications that court life had for the church and Chinese-European relations in general. These reports escaped imperial attention and leaked out of the Qing empire information on trivial as well as sensitive (if not always strategically

main organizer of the ceremonial. Finally, it contributed to the elaboration of etiquette'. In spite of important differences between the French and Qing courts, I share Leferme-Falguières's frustration at the excessive attention showered on the monarch, to the detriment of the court environment.

⁸ For sources on these episodes, see, e.g., Paul Rule, 'The Acta Pekinensia Project', *Sino-Western Cultural Relations Journal*, 30 (2008), 17–29; Pasquale D'Elia, *Il lontano confino e la tragica morte del P. João Mourão s.i., missionario in Cina (1681–1726) nella storia e nella leggenda, secondo documenti in gran parte inediti* (Lisbon: Agência-Geral do Ultramar, 1963); Eugenio Menegon, 'Surniama, Tragoedia. Religious and Political Martyrdom in the Yongzheng Period', paper presented at the Symposium on the History of Christianity in China, Hong Kong, 2–4 October, 1996.

important) topics of court life and expressed judgements on individuals and policies that no Qing subject would have, in most circumstances, dared to write down for fear of possible political retribution. Even for the Yongzheng and Qianlong periods, when missionaries had lost much of the previous imperial favour, missionary sources continue to offer tantalizing glimpses of the court underworld.

The imperial hunts of the 1680s are a good starting point to observe the intersection of personal interactions and the grand institutional and political objectives of the Qing monarchy. Court life was formalized and ritualized in the extreme. But in Beijing missionaries were often called to the palace to engage in technical and scientific work and in certain periods enjoyed close personal contact with the Emperor himself. Basking in imperial favour, missionaries created a network of support among the intermediaries they worked with, including palace servants, Manchu grandees, and Han officials. Nevertheless, court regulations segregated the foreign priests in specific spaces at specific times, curtailing the opportunities for extensive interactions with other courtiers. When the emperor invited some of the court Jesuits to follow him for months at a time during his hunting expeditions and imperial tours, he not only created an artificial 'space' in which to display his European servants and their skills in front of the travelling court, but he also forced the missionaries to share the company of some of his courtiers and immediate imperial relatives for extended periods of time. These courtiers had the duty to provide for the material needs of the missionaries, while also controlling them. Nonetheless, they also developed personal relations with some of the Europeans during the gruelling and tedious movements of the imperial train. This essay examines some of those relations, tenuously enlaced during cavalcades through 'Tartary'.

Jesuits at the hunt: why?

Early in his reign (1668), Kangxi encountered the opposition of some of his Han high officials to the idea of touring, an activity that Confucian advisors considered wasteful and dangerous. Only in 1671 was he able to engage in his first imperial tour to the Manchu ancestral capital of Mukden. Until his death in 1722, Kangxi travelled almost every year beyond the Wall, often for several months at a time, and in most of those occasions he spent a good part of the journey engaged in hunting. 羅運治 Luo Yunzhi in his study of the 木蘭 Mulan hunting preserve has identified fifty such hunting expeditions in the 欽定熱河志 *Qinding Rehe zhi* (Imperially commissioned gazetteer of Rehe) and in the 東華錄 *Donghua*

lu (Records of the Donghua gate), an unofficial source. Since other imperial tours in the north-east and elsewhere also included hunting forays, the actual number of hunts is in fact higher. Kangxi liked to hunt for birds and small game even in the imperial gardens within the imperial city, as Filippo Grimaldi, SJ, (1638–1712) remarked around 1681.⁹

The hunting culture of the Manchus found inspiration in models established by previous conquerors from Inner Asia, the Khitan, Jurchen and Mongols. As mentioned, the hunt was both a chase for animals and a template for military combat. The decimal units of Chinggis Khan's army were initially devised for the large battue hunts of the Mongols, and in turn they laid the basis for the Manchu military companies (*niru*) comprising about three hundred men each.¹⁰ Ferdinand Verbiest showed awareness of this military dimension of the hunt, and observed that the main objective of the one he joined in 1683 was 'to keep the military during peace in constant movement and practice, to fit it for the exigencies of war.'¹¹ He added that the policy was institutionalized as a routine that

⁹ On the hunting trips, see Luo Yunzhi, 清代木蘭圍場的探討 *Qingdai Mulan weichang de tantao* [An investigation on the hunting grounds at Mulan during the Qing period] (Taipei: Wenshizhe chubanshe, 1989); the testimonial by Filippo Grimaldi can be found in 'Pontos' by the Vice-Provincial of China, 1680–81, Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, *Jap. Sin.* 163, October 1681?, fol. 107r: 'The emperor, as a sign of gratitude for the scientific objects [we made for him], would send through his eunuchs to the Jesuit house the rare and beautiful birds that he had personally killed with arrows in one of the two woods *within the palace*.' (my italics)

¹⁰ See Mark C. Elliott and Ning Chia, 'The Qing Hunt at Mulan', in *New Qing Imperial History: The Making of Inner Asian Empire at Qing Chengde*, ed. James A. Millward et al. (London: Routledge Curzon, 2004), 67–68; cf. Thomas T. Allsen, *The Royal Hunt in Eurasian History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 215.

¹¹ Ferdinand Verbiest, 'Second Letter', in Pierre Joseph d'Orléans, *History of the Two Tartar Conquerors of China: Including the Two Journeys into Tartary of Father Ferdinand Verbiest ... To which is Added Father Pereira's Journey ...* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1854), 121. This letter is an English version of a Dutch translation of a Latin original (!). A contemporary copy of the original Latin report by Verbiest, 'Copia epistolae P. Ferdinandi Verbiest missae ex Aula Pekinensi ad P. Philippum Couplet', Beijing, 4 October 1683, is preserved in the Archives of Propaganda Fide in Rome and was published in Henri Josson and Léopold Willaert, *Correspondance de Ferdinand Verbiest de la Compagnie de Jésus (1623–1688), directeur de l'observatoire de Pékin* (Brussels: Palais des académies, 1938), 422–35. The Latin and English versions are rather similar in general contents, although there are errors of fact in the English version. For example, the 'queen-mother' is called 'regina avia', i.e. queen *grandmother* in the Latin version,

same year, and that behind it was the preoccupation that Manchu troops would be 'infected' by 'Chinese luxury and corruption which might otherwise naturally ensue from the idleness of peace.' Verbiest and modern historians also agree that central to the enterprise was the political agenda of 'keeping ... [the] Western Tartars in obedience, and checking the plots and intrigues of their councils.' This was accomplished through the display of imperial pageantry and military might (and in some cases, armed suppression), the bestowal of gifts, banquets and the prey of the hunt on tribal chiefs and their peoples, as well as the patronage offered to Tibetan lamas in exchange for their collaboration in pacifying the Mongol tribes.¹² Finally, Verbiest mentioned reasons for the hunts that concerned the Emperor himself. By travelling beyond the Wall, Kangxi sought to escape the summer heat of Beijing and to strengthen his health through physical exercise in the wild.¹³

If ethnic, political and military motives were behind imperial tours and hunts, why would Kangxi command the Jesuits to join? None of the reasons Verbiest indicated as the main objectives of the hunts would have required their presence (with possible and partial exception of Gerbillon's later journeys for geographical surveying, not studied in this essay). Indeed, the imperial order issued to Verbiest to join the imperial retinue proceeding to 'Tartary' (Liaodong) in the spring of 1682, a tour that lasted from 23 March to 9 June that year, had nothing to do with

corresponding to the Chinese title of 'Grand Empress Dowager' (太皇太后 Taihuang Taihou) awarded to 孝莊 Xiaozhuang (1613–88). In 1683, this beloved grandmother of Kangxi, mother of the Shunzhi Emperor and a member of the Borjigit clan of the Korcin Mongols, accompanied Kangxi in his hunt, as reported in 康熙起居注 *Kangxi qiju zhu* [Kangxi diaries of activity and repose], ed. 中國第一歷史檔案館 *Zhongguo Di-yi Lishi Dang'anguan* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984), ii, 1018. Verbiest correctly mentions that she was 'ex Tartaris Orientalibus oriunda' (born among the Eastern Tartars), while the English version says she 'sprung from Western Tartary.' The Latin version correctly says that she was seventy years old in 1683, while the English version says fifty. A biography of the Empress can be found in *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period*, ed. Arthur W. Hummel, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1943–44), 300–01. For quotations in this essay, I use the English version in d'Orléans, with modifications based on the Latin original.

¹² Verbiest, 'Second Letter', 123.

¹³ Verbiest, as a good cleric, but probably also influenced by Chinese medical theories, adds that the imperial pursuit of health included avoidance of sexual intercourse and any contact with consorts, who almost never accompanied the Emperor for the two to three months of these journeys; see Verbiest, 'Second Letter', 127.

hunting or military preparedness. Kangxi's command in 1682 explicitly reflected an imperial desire to have at his disposal 'portable science', as the missionary himself reported:

It was the emperor's pleasure that I also should be attached to his suite on this expedition and follow him everywhere; partly that I might with scientific instruments observe and note the atmospheric and terrestrial phenomena, the latitudes, the variation of the needle, and occasionally the height of mountains; and also that I might always be at hand to answer his majesty's questions as to celestial appearances, meteors, and such like.¹⁴

The situation was similar in 1685, when Tomás Pereira received a direct order from Kangxi to join another hunting expedition from 17 June to 29 September. The evening before the departure for the hunt, a dispatch was issued to the missionary, explaining the imperial reasons for inviting him:

After seeing the art of your music, I am so satisfied with it that I can only praise it. But, since I do not understand it and I cannot define it, and since it is against my nature to wish what I ignore, like many of my Chinese do, who being unable to penetrate your books, would flatter [those books] as excellent ones in my presence; and since [this flattery is something] to which I do not have to subject myself, because I can criticize what I deem unworthy, as the experience in many books of mathematics teaches me; and because I can praise in your sciences what is nothing but flattering ignorance among other persons, therefore [I] the Emperor order that you accompany me in this travel, so that during the moments of rest from the hunt, as a form of entertainment, you communicate this art to me; so that, becoming able to do what you do, I may be able to compose books in Chinese to spread this art in my kingdom.¹⁵

¹⁴ See 'Translation of Father Ferdinand Verbiest's first letter from the Dutch', in d'Orléans, *History of the Two Tartar Conquerors*, 104; this is an English translation of a report by Verbiest first published in Dutch in Nicolaas Witsen, *Noord en oost Tartaryen: Behelzende eene beschryving van verscheidene Tartersche en nabuurige gewesten, in de noorder en oostelykste deelen van Aziën en Europa* (Amsterdam: M. Schalekamp, 1785; first edition 1692), i, 185. The original Latin report by Verbiest (probably a contemporary copy), entitled 'P. Ferdinandi Verbiest in Provinciam Liao-tong et Tartaria Orientalem institutum 1682, die 23 Martii', is preserved in the Archives of Propaganda Fide and was published in Josson and Willaert, *Correspondance*, 383–403; a French partial version of the Latin original can be found in Henri Bosmans, 'Ferdinand Verbiest, directeur de l'observatoire de Peking (1623–1688)', *Revue des questions scientifiques*, 3rd ser., 21 (1912), 413–20. Here I quote the English version, after comparison for accuracy with the Latin original.

¹⁵ My translation is based on the Portuguese original report by Tomás Pereira,

As I mentioned at the outset, imperial tours had multiple meanings and audiences, and the presence of the European court experts fit within this multiplicity. The Jesuits as technicians and scientific advisors became part of the touring imagination of Kangxi after the imperial consolidation of the early 1680s. Kangxi's orders to Verbiest and Pereira to join his travels were connected to his desire both to display his foreign experts to his court, and to showcase himself while *controlling* them. As Pereira pithily mentioned, 'ubi dux, ibi curia', 'Where the emperor is, there is the court':¹⁶ the travelling party for the hunts was no less a court than that in Beijing, and in fact it offered a privileged space to combine scientific observation of nature and display of imperial wisdom on a grand scale.

There were at least two different dimensions in this imperial desire for display of the missionaries, their knowledge, and the imperial framing of that knowledge.

First, the emperor wished to continue during his hunts and tours some of the scientific activities he had been engaged in the capital with his Jesuit advisors of several years. This was a way to further publicize his gifts as an all-knowing and virtuous ruler, even when he was on the move. Pereira observed that Kangxi's decision to invite him to play music and teach him musical theory during the hunt stemmed from several previous years of contact with the Emperor. Kangxi had seen how Pereira could make musical notations after listening to a piece only once, and Pereira mentions that the Emperor finally 'overcame himself saying that in China they did not have that art, praising it very much, and giving clear signs that he wished to learn it and that it would be an enormous affront to impede

'Relação da jornada que em companhia do Emperador da China fez o Padre Thomas Pereyra à Tartaria em 1685', Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, *Jap. Sin.* 124, fols. 223r–228v; here fol. 223r. I am not aware of the survival of the imperial dispatch in a Manchu or Chinese version (unless the document is Pereira's literary invention). An English version of Pereira's report in d'Orléans, entitled 'of a Hunting Excursion performed by the present Emperor of China, beyond the Great Wall, in the adjacent district of West Tartary, written by Father Pereira from his personal observation: from which the condition of these desert wastes may be in some measure apprehended,' offers a much abridged and mangled version of this passage; see d'Orléans, *History of the Two Tartar Conquerors*, 132–33: 'Now that I have attentively examined the art of your music, it greatly pleases me. Your wisdom delights me. You must become the companion of my journey, that I may have the enjoyment of your skill while I am hunting.' [The Emperor] desired to have books of science and such like translated into Chinese, saying that his people would study them with special application.'

¹⁶ Pereira, 'Relação da jornada', fol. 223v

it.'¹⁷ Even if we discount the propagandistic nature of Pereira's report, we recognize here one of the famous traits of Kangxi, his willingness to admit ignorance, and the fact that, as he allegedly said, it would have been 'against my nature to wish what I ignore, like many of my Chinese do.'¹⁸ Here, he was declaring that a ruler in the Manchu tradition was certainly superior to those in the traditional Chinese mould for his willingness to be practical, 'experimental', and curious. Kangxi's curiosity moved in many directions, including mathematics and other exact sciences such as astronomy, music, geometry, physics, as well as botany and zoology. His personal scientific jottings in the collection 康熙几暇格物編 *Kangxi jixia gewu bian* (Writings on the investigation of things by the Kangxi emperor during his leisure time) reveal the eclectic nature of the Emperor's mind. The collection's short notes cover a diverse array of subjects, from minerals to animals, from meteorology to flora. Interestingly, besides being derived from bookish knowledge (such as perusal of the 本草綱目 *Bencao gangmu* [Compendium of Materia Medica]), and from reports sent by officials and experts dispatched by the emperor (such as memorials by the official 張鵬翮 Zhang Pengge on his journey to the borders with Russia for diplomatic negotiations), much of the information on the phenomena described in the collection was personally gathered through observation by the Emperor himself during his own journeys around the empire, and especially during his trips in the north-east.¹⁹

Several episodes and copious documentary evidence confirm this imperial tendency towards broad and practical knowledge. One episode is directly connected with Manchu hunting culture and the autumn hunts. After Kangxi saw a zoology book in 'Western characters' in 1679, he ordered the Italian Jesuit Ludovico Buglio (1606–82) to translate into

¹⁷ Ibid., fol. 223r; cf. Ferdinand Verbiest, *The 'Astronomia Europaea' of Ferdinand Verbiest, S.J. (Dillingen, 1687): Text, Translation, Notes and Commentaries*, tr. Noël Golvers (Nettetal: Steyler, 1993), 89–90.

¹⁸ Eventually, Kangxi ordered the compilation of a famous treatise on musical theory, initiated by Pereira and completed by Teodorico Pedrini after the Emperor's death; on Pereira and musical theory see Gerlinde Gild, 'The Introduction of European Musical Theory during the Early Qing Dynasty: The Achievements of Thomas Pereira and Theodorico Pedrini', in *Western Learning and Christianity in China: The Contribution and Impact of Johann Adam Schall von Bell SJ*, ed. Roman Malek (Nettetal: Steyler, 1998), 1189–1200.

¹⁹ See 康熙几暇格物編許注 *Kangxi jixia gewu bian yizhu* [Annotated rendering of *Writings on the investigation of things by the Kangxi Emperor during his leisure time*], ed. 李迪 Li Di (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1993).

Chinese some of its materials related to falcons. Following this command, Buglio composed the treatise 泰西肉攫 *Taixi roujue* (Western birds of prey), which was later included in the imperially sponsored 古今圖書集成 *Gujin tushu jicheng* (Collectanea of ancient and modern illustrated books) under the title 進呈鷹說 *Jincheng ying shuo* (Treatise on falconry offered to the emperor).²⁰ The book was based on relevant sections from Ulysse Aldrovandi's *Historia naturalis*, whose thirteen volumes were available in the Beijing Jesuit library.²¹ The treatise on falcons could be seen as a response to a general imperial fascination for broad knowledge, and an occasion to flatter the Imperial ego. In his preface Buglio, or one of his Chinese helpers, presented the battue hunt and the hunting skills of falcons as metaphors for rulership: –

His Majesty during time of leisure gently investigates with broad mind the classics, the philosophical texts and the histories, and all the books on astronomy, mathematics and geography. As he was exploring penetratingly every minute matter, he saw a book in Western characters on birds and animals, and ordered me to translate all the parts related to the types and behaviours of falcons. This shows that his benevolence goes beyond people, and that he loves animals as well. Indeed, at the Spring and Autumn military exercises [i.e. the hunts] he sets and releases the nets with benevolence [to avoid killing all the prey], and he demonstrates the pursuing ability of falcons. Here lies the utmost authority of rulership.²²

²⁰ See the preface by Buglio, entitled 泰西肉攫自序 'Taixi roujue zixu' [Author's preface to *Western birds of prey*], in 天學集解 *Tianxue jijie* [First collection of Celestial Studies], *juan* 8, 49a; for details on the *Tianxue jijie*, see Adrian Dudink, 'The Rediscovery of a Seventeenth-Century Collection of Chinese Christian Texts: The Manuscript *Tianxue jijie*,' *Sino-Western Cultural Relations Journal*, 15 (1993), 1–26. I would like to thank Ad Dudink for sending me a copy of the preface.

²¹ On this treatise, his sources, and his genesis, see Joseph Dehergne, 'Fauconnerie, plaisir du roi', *Bulletin de l'Université l'Aurore*, 3rd series, 7 (1946), 522–56 (as well as the 'Note bibliographique' in *Bulletin catholique de Pékin*, 8 (1948), correcting this article); and Hubert Verhaeren, 'Les Faucons du P. Buglio', *Bulletin catholique de Pékin* (1947), 68–81. In 1678, Buglio had already composed a treatise on lions on the occasion of the gift by a Portuguese embassy of an African lion to the Qing court, yet another effort to satisfy the imperial zoological curiosity; see Giuliano Bertuccioli, 'A Lion in Peking: Ludovico Buglio and the Embassy to China of Bento Pereira de Faria in 1678', *East and West*, NS 26/1–2 (March 1976), 223–40.

²² Buglio, 'Taixi roujue zixu', *juan* 8, 49a. I would suggest that the book also fulfilled a practical purpose connected with the hunting culture of the Manchus. The treatise not only helped distinguish different types of Western falcons but also

Falconry was one of the most aristocratic and elegant trappings of the entire Eurasian hunting tradition, but here it was also one of several activities revealing Kangxi's scientific mind, as well as his virtues as a ruler mindful of both the human and natural worlds. Precisely what Kangxi would have liked to hear.

This image of the perfect new Qing monarch combined Chinese benevolence (仁 *ren*) with the Manchu martial prowess and pragmatism. It also combined the knowledge of the Chinese humanistic tradition (classics, philosophers and histories) with natural philosophy and sciences, both Chinese and Western. This brings us to the second dimension in the imperial desire to display the missionaries and their knowledge. Kangxi consciously used the presence of the Jesuits as a way to imprint a sense of his imperial superior wisdom upon his courtiers, be they Manchu, Mongol or Han. Catherine Jami has shown how the Emperor delighted in demonstrating his mastery of scientific subjects in front of the court, especially when experimental trial of specific practical knowledge was involved. Kangxi's Jesuit technicians, what Jami calls 'court savants', played the role of supporting actors in a public display of imperial wisdom, calculated to publicly humiliate the courtiers ignorant of science, while exalting the imperial persona, who was the ultimate guardian of the jealously guarded Western knowledge.²³ How else to interpret the Emperor's alleged words to Pereira quoted above, disparaging the flattery of Chinese ignorant courtiers ('many of my Chinese ... [are] unable to penetrate your books, [but] ...- flatter [those books] as excellent ones in my presence')? Kangxi, instead, deemed he could 'praise in [Western] sciences what [was] nothing but flattering ignorance among other persons.' During the 1682 tour in Liaodong, we find a clear example of Kangxi's studied display of Western knowledge, as described by Verbiest:

The night being very clear, the emperor would have me recite the names of all the chief stars which he embraced in his view of the hemisphere, as well

taught how to care for them in case of illness, offering detailed description of bird pathologies and medicines to cure them. Kangxi had a good number of these noble and delicate animals following him during hunts, as Gerbillon testified in 1688, when he counted 20 to 30 falcons during a gathering of courtiers within a hunting expedition. Each falcon was supervised by an individual falconer, and perhaps the veterinarian knowledge introduced by Buglio circulated among these palace servants in charge of the well-being of the birds.^{Gerbillon's} testimony can be found in Du Halde, *Description*, iv, 171 and 165, as cited in Dehergne, 'Fauconnerie', 531.

²³ Catherine Jami, 'Imperial Control and Western Learning: The Kangxi Emperor's Performance', *Late Imperial China*, 23/1 (2002), 28–49.

in the Chinese as in the European language, and he himself *displayed* all the knowledge which he had acquired on the subject. After he had produced a small chart of the stars, which I had some years before prepared for him, he went on to tell by the stars the hour of the night, and *took pleasure in thus displaying his science in the presence and hearing of the great men about him.*²⁴ [my italics]

The 'great men' were listening and looking, and they certainly got the message that in fact there was only one 'great man' among them, whose knowledge and power were real, and not the fruit of flattery or disguised ignorance. Leaving to his courtiers of science to explore the implications of Kangxi's display of technical knowledge, it is now time for me to move away from the sun-empire; as I promised at the outset, to focus on the courtiers. In the final section of this essay I will make some suggestions for further research on the daily life of courtiers and the creation of court networks, focusing in particular on the missionary presence during the imperial tours and hunts. To do so, I will start by concentrating on the Jesuits' point of view on networking, and on their objectives as courtiers.

The Jesuits as courtiers and network builders

Verbiest and Pereira described in some detail the daily routine during the expeditions they participated in the years 1682–83 and 1685. Day in and day out the massive entourage numbering in the tens of thousands of nobles, soldiers and hunters assembled and disassembled tents and encampments. Military exercises, hunting forays in the mountains, meetings with tribal leaders and lamas were some of the activities the Jesuits witnessed. On several occasions the priests received particular favour from the emperor and were invited to join him for scientific experiments or for the chase. Imperial attention meant favour, but also tiring and stressful activities in the presence of the entire court. Verbiest, for example, described the exhaustion he experienced when he was invited by the Emperor to follow him on a particular hunt during the 1683 trip:

[I] ascended on horseback the high mountains, and with [the Emperor] descended again into the valleys.

Returning thereafter after this severe labour (though, after a while, I got accustomed to it) late at night to the tents, I was usually so fatigued as scarcely to be able to stand after dismounting, and through the night was little conscious of the neighing of the horses, the lowing of the oxen, or the

²⁴ D'Orléans, *History of the Two Tartar Conquerors*, 115–16.

bleating of the sheep about our encampment.²⁵ The Jesuits were not particularly enthusiastic about joining these long and arduous journeys, as they feared physical injury and sickness. When Kangxi ordered Verbiest to depart for the hunts, the missionary was already in his late fifties and suffering from several ailments. For this reason after 1683 he was allowed to send some of his confrères in his stead after 1683. Pereira was also afflicted by some unspecified medical condition, and in 1685 asked the Emperor, through the offices of Verbiest, to have always at his disposal during the journey cold water to drink or perhaps to use for ablutions and dry rice to eat to remain healthy (he abstained from meat, mostly). No matter how exhausting the efforts, however, avoiding imperial commands was not an option. As Verbiest mentioned in 1683:

[A]lbeit I often endeavoured to escape from this close company with the emperor, yet by *advice of friends* I was induced to give up the attempt for fear of his displeasure, inasmuch as he had exhibited an extraordinary inclination for me, yea, had distinctly expressed himself that I should always be about his person, like those who were in his most secret confidence and intimate friendship; and all the great mandarins had conformed themselves to this the emperor's pleasure in my behalf.²⁶ [my italics]

Here we notice that Verbiest decided to please the Emperor in all possible ways not only because of his intimate understanding of the imperial mind and of the autocratic nature of the ruling system, but also because of the 'advice of friends.' Who were these friends? Unfortunately, most of the internal correspondence of the China mission, kept in the archives of the Jesuit houses of Beijing and in other residences in China, has long since disappeared. It is in such correspondence that personal details about specific officials and courtiers, including their names, were likely contained. In the surviving correspondence we find only references to the more important acquaintances of the missionaries, since superiors in Europe would have only been marginally interested in learning about the intricacies of court life and bureaucratic life. Much patient work on extant archival sources is still needed to unravel the complex connections of the missionaries at court. But there is no doubt that the Jesuits had a corporate consciousness and a long-term strategic plan that dictated their networking

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 110; cf. Josson and Willaert, *Correspondance*, 391; Bosmans, 'Ferdinand Verbiest', 415.

²⁶ D'Orléans, *History of the Two Tartar Conquerors*, 110; cf. Josson and Willaert, *Correspondance*, 391; Bosmans, 'Ferdinand Verbiest', 416.

efforts. Their objective was to build up and defend the Catholic mission, and to use the emperor and the court to achieve that goal. The missionaries had a limited latitude of action and a marginal position at court, but they deftly employed their situation to gain whatever liberties they could for their missions in the provinces. To achieve this, the court Jesuits had to sacrifice to a large extent their personal missionary vocation and become part of what Noël Golvers calls 'an extra-ordinary professional milieu' of mathematicians, engineers and artisans, or, in Catherine Jami's words, 'court savants'.²⁷

I would add that they also had to learn how to become courtiers *tout court*. Verbiest was among the most brilliant architects of this court strategy, and as one of his early biographers has acknowledged, the Flemish Jesuit was hardly a missionary in the real sense of the word.²⁸ Like him, Pereira, who had been accepted at court thanks to Verbiest's recommendation, used his technical skills to become close to the Emperor, while also cultivating connections with others at the palace and during the hunts. The Jesuits subjected themselves to imperial whim without any resistance because proximity to the Emperor created opportunities for them to strengthen their contacts within the court and to display themselves as imperial favourites.

Let us briefly examine the opportunities for court interaction that Verbiest and Pereira enjoyed during the trips of 1682, 1683, and 1685.

Imperial relatives were the first circle of courtiers the Jesuit came into contact with. Both in 1682 and 1683 Verbiest was assigned to the care of one of the uncles of the emperor, who was also an imperial father-in-law (i.e. the father of one of the imperial consorts). This must have been the maternal uncle of the emperor, 佟國維 Tong Guowei, whose daughter had become an imperial consort in 1677.²⁹ In all likelihood, the same uncle was also put in charge of Pereira in 1685. The man apparently developed such respect for Pereira that he allegedly confessed to the priest

²⁷ See Noël Golvers, 'F. Verbiest, G. Magalhães, T. Pereyra and the Others: The Jesuit Xitang College in Peking (1670–1688) as an Extra-ordinary Professional Milieu', in *Tomás Pereira, S.J. (1645–1708): Life, Work and World*, ed. Luís Felipe Barreto (Lisbon: Centro Científico e Cultural de Macau, 2010), 277–98; and Jami, 'Imperial Control.'

²⁸ 'Missionnaire au sens propre du mot, il le fut fort peu'; see Bosmans, 'Ferdinand Verbiest', 195.

²⁹ D'Orléans, *History of the Two Tartar Conquerors*, 110; cf. Jossen and Willaert, *Correspondance*, 391; Bosmans, 'Ferdinand Verbiest', 416. On Tong Guowei, see Hummel, *Eminent Chinese*, 795; Nicolas Standaert, *The Interweaving of Rituals. Funerals in the Cultural Exchange between China and Europe* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), 278, note 75.

'that after having known me, he did not dare to say any lazy word in my presence.'³⁰ In 1685, the eldest son of Kangxi, Prince 胤禔 Yinti (1672–1734), immobilized by a fall from horse in the main imperial camp, showed special signs of favour to Pereira while the Emperor was away on the chase for around ten days, sending to the Jesuit dishes from his table.³¹

The emperor also created the conditions for further contacts with courtiers. During an evening spent observing and naming stars with Kangxi, for example, 'the sons of two chieftains of the Western [Tartars, i.e. Mongols] and the chief Tartar *kolao* [gelao 閣老]' sat together with Verbiest.³² This set a pattern, so that soon 'to divert the tedium of the journey, not only the nobles, but also the princes of the imperial family courted conversation with me [i.e. Verbiest], and asked me many questions touching the heavens and the stars, and much about meteors, as also about our sea voyages.'³³ Verbiest as well as Pereira used these occasions to talk about Christianity, and the imperial attention thus offered them a space to fulfil their religious mission. But this also meant, more broadly, that missionaries could get acquainted with court figures attracted to Western learning and curious about European customs: 'we reap abundant fruits with similar travels, as many grandees can receive detailed information on our things ...- in a way that otherwise we would have never accomplished. ... There are so many questions they ask us ...- [T]hey would not leave me any respite, and I was so tired of talking. In particular one of them would graciously ask me again and again if I was tired of speaking, since he was not tired to listen at all.'³⁴ The contacts established during the chase would also continue after the return to the capital. 'Two uncles of the emperor, who were the chiefs of the grandees of the realm', for example, visited Verbiest at his residence in Beijing after their return from the journey.³⁵

³⁰ Pereira, 'Relação da jornada', fol. 228r.

³¹ D'Orléans, *History of the Two Tartar Conquerors*, 130; cf. Jossen and Willaert, *Correspondance*, 433. Since Yinti was only a 13 year-old boy at the time, it is likely that his retinue, probably instructed by the Emperor or interpreting his mind, ordered the delivery of the gifts.

³² D'Orléans, *History of the Two Tartar Conquerors*, 115; cf. Jossen and Willaert, *Correspondance*, 397; Bosmans, 'Ferdinand Verbiest', 419.

³³ D'Orléans, *History of the Two Tartar Conquerors*, 117; cf. Jossen and Willaert, *Correspondance*, 398.

³⁴ Pereira, 'Relação da jornada', fol. 228r.

³⁵ D'Orléans, *History of the Two Tartar Conquerors*, 116; cf. Jossen and Willaert, *Correspondance*, 398.

It seems that most if not all the courtiers Verbiest and Pereira socialized with during the hunts were non-Han, and that the environment had little left of the Chinese modes of the capital. Kangxi often talked in Manchu with Verbiest and during a conversation with Pereira solicited the priest's opinion on his Han subjects. In response, Pereira dared to make a disparaging joke about the character of the Han Chinese, an indication that the Inner Asian atmosphere of the hunt made such 'politically incorrect' banter acceptable:

[One of my conversations with the Emperor] was so gallant, that it gave the emperor good reason to laugh for a long time. ... His question was the following: 'What conception do you [Westerners] have of our Chinese?' I replied that they are *skilful thieves*. Since I first gave them the title of 'skilful', the title of 'thieves' did not sound so grievous, since the 'skill' beautified it. I would have not dared to give such an answer if I had not been certain of my success.³⁶ [my italics]

Pereira here betrays a certain cockiness, which derives from his intimacy with the Emperor. Intimacy with the inner chambers of power, however, could also be dangerous, as Pereira observed when describing the arrangement of the imperial encampment:

On the two sides [of the imperial tent] were set up two tents, for the Regulos and Grandees who would have court audiences twice a day, and for more people of the interior [circle] who offer assistance [to the imperial retinue]. For a special honour I also enjoyed this [privilege], going in and out at will. I used [of this privilege], however, with caution, to avoid grieving the envious ones, who here, more than in other places, are dangerous.³⁷

This shows that the Jesuits, while adept at currying favour with the emperor and the nobility, were also aware of the dangers of court life. The envy of other courtiers or the ill-will of princes could potentially damage their position in the eyes of the emperor, or make their life more difficult. During the hunt of 1683, for example, Verbiest and Grimaldi came in competition with visiting lamas, who were paying homage to the Kangxi emperor's grandmother, Grand Empress Dowager Xiaozhuang:

[T]he Tartar priests or lamas ... by reason of the policy pursued in the government of the Tartaries have easy access to the princes and dignitaries, a circumstance which makes the introduction of our faith among these

³⁶ Pereira, 'Relação da jornada', fol. 224v.

³⁷ Pereira, 'Relação da jornada', fol. 224v.

people the more difficult. These priests have much influence with the queen-grandmother, who sprung from Eastern Tartary, and has attained the age of seventy, and they have for many years past enjoyed her warm affection. Inasmuch as this queen is held in great consideration by the emperor, and knows well from these priests that we are strong opponents of the superstition to which she clings, it is a wonder, nay a miracle, at the least a singular proof of God's power and providence, that the emperor should have hitherto treated us with such benignity and with familiarity and honour, even beyond these lamas themselves. Throughout this journey the tent of the queen-grandmother was much frequented by the great men and local authorities, who presented themselves to compliment her and inquire after her health; and as it was suggested to us to imitate their example, we consulted the confidential courtier through whom all our affairs with the emperor were conducted. This adviser having made the emperor acquainted with the case, returned immediately to us with the answer, 'The emperor says that it is unnecessary that you should present yourselves in the queen's tent to pay your respects'. We well understood from this that the queen was little inclined towards us.³⁸

The emperor remained the arbiter of the final decision, and in fact protected the Jesuits from the embarrassment of a possible showdown with the lamas and their patroness.³⁹ But it is significant that someone among the courtiers had suggested to the Jesuits to imitate the lamas' example, and that the missionaries could rely on a 'confidential courtier' (*intimus aulicus*) to ask the emperor for advice.

³⁸ D'Orléans, *History of the Two Tartar Conquerors*, 126; cf. Josson and Willaert, *Correspondance*, 430. I introduced some corrections in the English version.

³⁹ Kangxi would be protective of the Jesuits on other occasions, shielding them from attacks within his inner circle. For example, Kangxi's 庭訓格言 *Tingxun geyan* [Maxims of fatherly advice], a collection written by the emperor for the education of his sons, reports that the heir-apparent Prince Yinreng once ill-treated Pereira, threatening to have the Jesuit's beard shaved to simply show his influence with his father. Kangxi went along with the joke, only to realize he had deeply wounded the missionary. The Emperor concluded with the moral that 'Even when joking about small details one should still be cautious to remain within reason.' For translations of this anecdote, see Catherine Jami, 'Tomé Pereira (1645–1708), Clockmaker, Musician and Interpreter at the Kangxi Court: Portuguese Interests and the Transmission of Science', in *The Jesuits, the Padroado and East Asian Science (1552–1773)*, History of Mathematical Sciences: Portugal and East Asia 3, ed. Luis Saraiva and Catherine Jami (Singapore: World Scientific, 2008), 203; and Ronnie Po-chia Hsia, 'Tomás Pereira, French Jesuits, and the Kangxi Emperor', in *Tomás Pereira, S.J. (1645–1708): Life, Work and World*, ed. Luís Felipe Barreto (Lisbon: Centro Cultural Científico de Macau, 2010), 360.

Conclusion

The exploration of the archival records of the mission over a longer span of time, combined with an examination of Qing records, would reveal many more examples of missionary networking at court, in the capital, and in the provinces.⁴⁰ Obviously, the court missionaries were relatively marginal and subordinate in the Qing-palace world. Nevertheless, their testimony has broader significance, illuminating neglected aspects of court life. The missionary creation of their own set of court connections was a process that continued with variable success for a period of well over a century, and that involved the Jesuits of the Portuguese and French missions, as well as the Propaganda missionaries. It thus offers a window on court life in several Qing reigns. Other sources, as I mentioned at the outset, can offer richer material on specific periods within this long process. This exploration could hopefully uncover some of the 'hidden transcripts' of courtly resistance to what has been variously termed Qing 'bureaucratic patrimonialism', 'personalism', or 'ethno-dynastic autocracy', and thus help us cast some light on the shadowy life of Qing courtiers.⁴¹

⁴⁰ For a recent study of the Jesuit Castiglione as courtier at the Qianlong court, see Marco Musillo, 'Reconciling Two Careers: The Jesuit Memoir of Giuseppe Castiglione Lay Brother and Qing Imperial Painter', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 42/1 (Fall 2008), 44–59.

⁴¹ The concept of 'hidden transcripts' coined by James Scott (see his *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990]), adopted by Evelyn Rawski (see *The Last Emperors*, 187) in her discussion of Qing palace servants, could be used to understand the missionary strategies of survival through networking. Even if missionaries at court were not slaves or serfs in a literal sense, they undoubtedly were subordinates within a hierarchy of power and articulated in physical written 'transcripts' their strategies of resistance and manipulation of the Qing Court to further their religious aims.

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