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**Roman Malek S.V.D.**

on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday  
zu seinem 65. Geburtstag

Volume 1

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS / INHALTSVERZEICHNIS**

**Volume 1 / Band 1**

XV-XXXII	Foreword / Zum Geleit
XXXIII-XXXV	Tabula gratulatoria
XXXVI	Congratulatory Poem to Fr. Roman Malek
XXXVII-XLII	List of Abbreviations / Abkürzungsverzeichnis
XLIII-CVIII	Bibliography of Roman Malek S.V.D. / Bibliographie von Roman Malek SVD

**Chinese Intellectual History / Chinesische Geistesgeschichte**

3-27	Early Sino-European Contacts and the Birth of the Modern Concept of “Religion” Frühe Kontakte zwischen China und Europa und die Entstehung des mo- dernen Religionsbegriffes NICOLAS STANDAERT
29-39	The Dao of Ecology Das Dao der Ökologie PAUL RULE
41-62	老子與道家哲學的成形—在《莊子》中的繼受成形 Laozi and the Formation of Philosophical Daoism. Its Formation as a School in <i>Zhuangzi</i> Laozi und die Formierung des philosophischen Daoismus. Die Schulbil- dung in <i>Zhuangzi</i> JIANG RYH-SHIN 江日新
63-73	Ökonomische Gerechtigkeit im antiken China? Einige verteilungspolitische Denkansätze Economic Justice in Ancient China? A Few Thoughts on Distribution Policy CHRISTIAN SCHWERMANN
75-98	On the Difficult Practice of the Mean in Ordinary Life. Teachings from the <i>Zhongyong</i> Über die schwierige Praxis von Maß und Mitte im Alltagsleben. Lehren aus dem <i>Zhongyong</i> TIZIANA LIPPIELLO
99-109	A Life-long Anxiety and Not the Calamity of Merely One Morning 終身之 憂，無一朝之患. Towards Mengzi's Understanding of Man's Distress and the Problem of Intellectuals in History

„Ein Leben lang besorgt, aber nicht einen Morgen betrübt.“ Zum Problem von eines Menschen Traurigkeit bei Mengzi und der Frage nach dem Intellektuellen in der Geschichte

WOLFGANG KUBIN

**111-135** Chinesische Transzendenzerfahrungen zwischen Vergangenheit und Gegenwart. „Eine frappierende Kontinuität“

Experiences of Transcendence in China between the Past and the Present. “A Striking Continuity”

ZBIGNIEW WESOŁOWSKI S.V.D.

**137-152** Die Anfänge der Chinesischen Medizin. Säkulare Naturwissenschaft als Möglichkeit existentieller Selbstbestimmung

The Origins of Chinese Medicine. Secular Natural Science and the Quest for Existential Autonomy

PAUL U. UNSCHULD

#### History of Christianity in China / Geschichte des Christentums in China

**155-172** Xu Guangqi, Disciple of the Luminous Teaching. A Study of the “Stone Inscription for the Church of the Luminous Teaching” (*Jingjiaotang beiji*) at Jiangzhou, around 1632

Xu Guangqi, Anhänger der Leuchtenden Lehre. Eine Untersuchung der „Steininschrift der Kirche der Leuchtenden Lehre“ (*Jingjiaotang beiji*) in Jiangzhou um 1632

MATTEO NICOLINI-ZANI

**173-185** The Roman Troubles of Michael Boym S.J. Described by Thomas Szpot Dunin in *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* and *Collectanea Historiae Sinensis*

Die Nöte Michael Boym's SJ in Rom gemäß der Darstellung in Thomas Szpot Dunin's *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* and *Collectanea Historiae Sinensis*

MONIKA MIAZEK-MĘCZYŃSKA

**187-204** Education to Filial Piety at the Time of the Kangxi Emperor. A French Translation of the *Yuzhi Xiaojing yanyi xu* in a Manuscript Preserved at Biblioteca Ambrosiana

Erziehung zu kindlicher Pietät zur Zeit des Kangxi Kaisers. Eine französische Übersetzung des *Yuzhi Xiaojing yanyi xu* in einem Manuskript im Besitz der Biblioteca Ambrosiana

CHIARA PICCININI

**205-227** The Chinese Rites Controversy. A Narrative of an Ill-fated Misunderstanding  
Der chinesische Ritenstreit. Die Geschichte eines verhängnisvollen Missverständnisses

GIANNI CRIVELLER P.I.M.E.

**229-276** The True Mother of the China Mission. Kilian Stumpf's "Succincta Chronologica Relatio"

Die wahre Mutter der Chinamission. Kilian Stumpf's „Succincta Chronologica Relatio“

CLAUDIA VON COLLANI

**277-310** Die Rolle der Dyadik in Leibniz' Missionstheorie für China  
The Significance of Dyadic in Leibniz's Theory of Missions for China

RITA WIDMAIER

**311-335** Yongzheng's Conundrum. The Emperor on Christianity, Religions, and Heterodoxy

Der rätselhafte Yongzheng. Der Kaiser über Christentum, Religionen und Heterodoxie

EUGENIO MENEGON

**337-352** A Preliminary Survey of Elijah C. Bridgman's "Heaou King"

Eine vorläufige Betrachtung von Elijah C. Bridgman's „Heaou King“

FENG-CHUAN PAN 潘鳳娟

**353-381** Modernisierung Chinas. Aufgezeigt am Erziehungs- und Bildungswesen in den ersten drei Dekaden des 20. Jahrhunderts

The Modernization of China. Taking the Education System in the First Three Decades of the 20th Century as an Example

KARL JOSEF RIVINIUS S.V.D.

**383-410** The Papacy, Foreign Missionaries, and Chinese Catholics. Conflict and Accommodation between *Maximum Illud* and *Ad Sinarum Gentem*

Papsttum, ausländische Missionare und chinesische Katholiken. Konflikte und Akkommodation im Zeitraum von *Maximum Illud* bis *Ad Sinarum Gentem*

ROLF GERHARD TIEDEMANN

**411-429** Zwischen Scheitern und Hoffnung. T.C. Chao – Die letzten Jahre  
Between Despair and Hope. T.C. Chao – The Final Years

WINFRIED GLÜER

**430** Appendix. Colored Illustration from Eugenio Menegon, “Yongzheng's Conundrum. The Emperor on Christianity, Religions, and Heterodoxy”

## Volume 2 / Band 2

XI-XVI Abbreviations / Abkürzungen

**Christianity in Today's China / Christentum im heutigen China**

**433-466** Rediscovering Christian Life in China during Crucial Years (1978-1983).  
In Honour of Roman Malek

Die Neuentdeckung christlichen Lebens in China in den wichtigen Jahren  
von 1978-1983. Zu Ehren von Roman Malek

ANGELO S. LAZZAROTTO P.I.M.E.

**467-480** Updating the China Mission. Guided by Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis  
Die Chinamission auf den neuesten Stand bringen unter Führung von Papst  
Benedikt XVI und Papst Franziskus

JEROOM HEYNDRICKX C.I.C.M.

**481-505** Fit for Religious Services? The Requirements for Religious Personnel in  
Today's China. With a Special Focus on the Official Protestant Churches

Fit für religiöse Dienstleistungen? Die Anforderungen an religiöses Perso-  
nal im heutigen China mit einem besonderen Fokus auf die offiziellen  
evangelischen Kirchen

EVELINE WARODE

**Other Religions in China / Andere Religionen in China**

**509-526** The Textual Canonization of Guandi

Die Entstehung des Schriftenkanons zu Guandi

VINCENT GOOSSAERT

**527-539** Islam and Confucianism. An Offering to Fr. Malek

Islam und Konfuzianismus. P. Malek zugeeignet

FRANÇOISE AUBIN

**541-569** Der Einfluss der Urbanisierung auf die muslimischen Gemeinschaften in  
China im Spiegel chinesischer Fachzeitschriften

The Influence of Urbanization on Muslim Communities in China as Re-  
flected in Chinese Academic Journals

KATHARINA WENZEL-TEUBER

**571-596** Qianliyan und Shunfeng'er in *xiaoshuo* und anderen Texten der Yuan- und  
Ming-Zeit

Qianliyan und Shunfeng'er in *xiaoshuo* and Other Texts of the Yuan and  
Ming Period

RODERICH PTAK

**597-605** Jews and Jewish Studies in China. Notes for a Bibliography  
Juden und die Forschung über Judentum in China. Notizen für eine Biblio-  
graphie

PIER FRANCESCO FUMAGALLI

**Chinese Language and Literature / Chinesische Sprache und Literatur**

**609-616** Translating King David

Die Übersetzung der Geschichte von König David

IRENE EBER

**617-647** Shandong Drum Songs of the Bible

Biblische Geschichten in Trommelgesängen aus Shandong

MONIKA MOTSCH

**649-664** "Omnia Consummata sunt." Xiang Peiliang's Version of the Biblical Story  
of Jesus between Bethany and Gethsemane

„Omnia Consummata sunt“. Xiang Peiliangs Darstellung der biblischen  
Erzählung von Jesus auf dem Weg von Bethanien nach Gethsemane

MARIÁN GÁLIK

**665-682** "A Fortunate Encounter." Su Xuelin as a Chinese Catholic Writer

„Eine glückliche Begegnung“. Su Xuelin als chinesische Schriftstellerin  
und Katholikin

BARBARA HOSTER

**683-711** „Erst jetzt wusste er, dass es keine einfache Sache war, an Gott zu glau-  
ben“. Die Religion in der Gegenwartsliteratur Chinas

„Only then Did He Realize that It Is Not an Easy Thing to Believe in God.“  
Religion in Contemporary Chinese Literature

THOMAS ZIMMER

**713-726** The Competitiveness of Modern Han-Chinese

Die Wettbewerbsfähigkeit des modernen Han-Chinesisch

LEOPOLD LEEB S.V.D.

**Encounter of Cultures / Begegnung der Kulturen**

**729-759** Buddhistische Malerei im mingzeitlichen Beijing. Begegnungen von Völ-  
kern und Kulturen im Spiegel der Kunst

Buddhist Painting in Ming-dynasty Beijing. Encounters of Peoples and  
Cultures as Reflected in Art

URSULA TOYKA

- 761-787** Communication and Exchange of Knowledge between West and East (17th and 18th c.). The Routes, Illustrated by the Case of the “Via Ostendana”  
Kommunikation und Wissenstransfer zwischen West und Ost im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert. Die Routen am Beispiel der „Via Ostendana“  
NOËL GOLVERS
- 789-809** 明清之际“西学汉籍”的文化意义  
Cultural Significance of the “Chinese Books on Western Learning” in Late Ming and Early Qing  
Die kulturelle Bedeutung „chinesischer Bücher über westliches Wissen“ am Ende der Ming- und zu Beginn der Qing-Dynastie  
ZHANG XIPING 张西平 – REN DAYUAN 任大援
- 811-844** Die Sammlung Kowalewski. Der erste europäische Katalog mongolischer, tibetischer, manjurischer und chinesischer Bücher (1834)  
The Kowalewski Collection. The First European Catalogue of Mongolian, Tibetan, Manchu, and Chinese Books (1834)  
HARTMUT WALRAVENS
- 845-859** Die Neuvermessung einer alten Kultur. *Monumenta Serica* und die wissenschaftliche Beschäftigung mit China und seinen Nachbarn  
Remapping an Ancient Culture. *Monumenta Serica* and the Academic Research on China and Her Neighbours  
HELWIG SCHMIDT-GLINTZER
- 861-871** African Muslims and Christians and Their “Chinese Dream”  
Der „chinesische Traum“ von afrikanischen Muslimen und Christen  
PIOTR ADAMEK S.V.D.
- 873-887** The Mission of Multi-faceted Christianity in a Globalized World  
Die Mission eines vielfältigen Christentums in einer globalisierten Welt  
FRANZ GÜNTHER GESSINGER S.V.D.
- 889-899** Notes on Contributors
- 901-907** Appendix. Colored Illustrations from Ursula Toyka, “Buddhistische Malerei im mingzeitlichen Beijing. Begegnungen von Völkern und Kulturen im Spiegel der Kunst”

#### List of Illustrations and Tables / Verzeichnis der Abbildungen und Tabellen

- Cover Volume 1: Chinese Calligraphy: 紮根於望德中—馬雷凱教授六十五壽辰紀念文集, by Yang Xusheng 楊煦生
- Cover Volume 2: Chinese Calligraphy: 紮根於望德中—馬雷凱教授六十五壽辰紀念文集, by Ren Dayuan 任大援

- Vol. 1 Frontispiece: Prof. Dr. Roman Malek S.V.D. at the European Catholic China Colloquium in Freising, Germany, 18 September 2010 (© China-Zentrum, Sankt Augustin)
- 3-27** Early Sino-European Contacts and the Birth of the Modern Concept of “Religion”  
NICOLAS STANDAERT  
p. 5: The Hierarchical Order of Sciences in the 17th century (pyramid) vs. the Modern Conception of Sciences (pillars or silos)
- 75-98** On the Difficult Practice of the Mean in Ordinary Life. Teachings from the *Zhongyong*  
TIZIANA LIPPIELLO  
p. 83: Preface to *Zhongyong* in: Noël François (ed.), *Sinensis imperii libri classici* sex, Prague 1711
- 155-172** Xu Guangqi, Disciple of the Luminous Teaching. A Study of the “Stone Inscription for the Church of the Luminous Teaching” (*Jingjiaotang beiji*) at Jiangzhou, around 1632  
MATTEO NICOLINI-ZANI  
p. 171: Facsimile of *Jingjiaotang beiji* 景教堂碑記, from *Zhonghua tianxue guji* 中華天學古跡, BnF, Chinois 1322, j. 1, ff. 11a-12a  
p. 172: Facsimile of *Jingjiaotang beiji* 景教堂碑記, from *Zhonghua tianxue guji* 中華天學古跡, BnF, Chinois 1322, j. 1, ff. 12b-14a
- 311-335** Yongzheng’s Conundrum. The Emperor on Christianity, Religions, and Heterodoxy  
EUGENIO MENEGON  
p. 430: Yongzheng’s vermilion endorsement on the memorial by Ignaz Kögler S.J., July 1, 1724 (YZ 2.5.11), reproduced in *QTS*, vol. 1, doc. 43, p. 59
- 481-505** Fit for Religious Services? The Requirements on Religious Personnel in Today’s China. With a Special Focus on the Official Protestant Churches  
EVELINE WARODE  
p. 482: Diagram 1: Clergy/laity ratios of Kaifeng and Nanyang. Source: Compare data as quoted in Duan Qi 2013, p. 254; Wenzel-Teuber 2014, p. 31  
p. 483: Diagram 2: Attendance at religious activities. Source: Compare data of CFPS 2012 as quoted in Lu Yunfeng 2014, p. 23
- 527-539** Islam and Confucianism. An Offering to Fr. Malek  
FRANÇOISE AUBIN  
p. 534: Table: The Three Levels of the Knowledge of God
- 541-569** Der Einfluss der Urbanisierung auf die muslimischen Gemeinschaften in China im Spiegel chinesischer Fachzeitschriften  
KATHARINA WENZEL-TEUBER  
p. 559: Tabelle: Muslimische Gebetsteilnehmer in Shanghai nach Gruppen. (Ge Zhuang 2011, S. 152, Tabelle 1. Zahlen: Islamische Vereinigung Shanghai.)

**617-647** Shandong Drum Songs of the Bible

MONIKA MOTSCH

- p. 642: Fig. 1. Drum Song *The Great Flood* by Fei Jinbiao  
 Fig. 2. Latin imprimatur for *The Great Flood*
- p. 643: Fig. 3. The scene "I am the Angel" in Drum Song *The Great Flood*  
 Fig. 4. Advertisement of the Yanzhou Press for Fei Jinbiao
- p. 644: Fig. 5. *Fabiola* by Cardinal Wiseman (New York 1886)  
 Fig. 6. Chinese Drumsong of *Fabiola* by Fei Jinbiao
- p. 645: Fig. 7. *Valeria* by de Waal (Regensburg 1884)  
 Fig. 8. The Chinese *Valeria*, ed. Fr. Röser
- p. 646: Fig. 9. *The Filial Son*, ed. Fr. Stenz  
 Fig. 10. *The Black Prince*, ed. Fr. Stenz
- p. 647: Fig. 11. The Nonni Fountain in Cologne  
 Fig. 12. The Chinese *Iceland Boys* of Jón Svensson

**713-726** The Competitiveness of Modern Han-Chinese

LEOPOLD LEEB S.V.D.

- p. 713: "Yan: Goutong" 言: 沟通 (Word: Communication). Drawing by Leopold Leeb in: Lei Libo 雷立柏, *Xifangren kan Hanzi de aomiao. Han-Ying duizhao* 西方人看汉字的奥妙—汉英对照. *How a Westerner Sees the Mysteries of Chinese Characters* (Beijing: Zhongguo shuji chubanshe, 2012), p. 13.

**729-759** Buddhistische Malerei im mingzeitlichen Beijing. Begegnungen von Völkern und Kulturen im Spiegel der Kunst

URSULA TOYKA

- p. 901: Abb. 1: „Vajranairāmyā-Maṇḍala“, datiert 1479, 151 x 99,1 cm, Gouache mit Gold auf präparierter Baumwolle, Peabody Museum, Salem, E. 61-1911. © 2009 Peabody Essex Museum. Photograph by Jeffrey R. Dykes
- p. 902: Abb. 2: „Vajradhara-Maṇḍala“, datiert 1479, 153 x 102 cm, Gouache mit Gold auf präparierter Baumwolle, Verbleib unbekannt
- p. 903: Abb. 3: „Vajradhara-Maṇḍala“, Detail: Buddha Vajradhara  
 Abb. 4: „Vajradhara-Maṇḍala“, Detail: Bodhisattva Saḍakṣarilokeśvara
- p. 904: Abb. 5: „Vajradhara-Maṇḍala“, Detail: Buddha Vairocana mit *thathāgata-mudrā*  
 Abb. 6: „Vajradhara-Maṇḍala“, Detail: Bodhisattva Ratnapaṇi  
 Abb. 7: „Vajradhara-Maṇḍala“, Detail: Bodhisattva Vajrapaṇi  
 Abb. 8: „Vajradhara-Maṇḍala“, Detail: Schutzgottheit Bhairava
- p. 905: Abb. 9: „Vajradhara-Maṇḍala“, Detail: Schutzgottheit Prañjara Mahākāla  
 Abb. 10: „Vajradhara-Maṇḍala“, Detail: Schutzgottheit Kuro Mahākāla  
 Abb. 11: „Vajradhara-Maṇḍala“, Detail: Segnender Bodhisattva auf der rechten Bildseite  
 Abb. 12: „Vajradhara-Maṇḍala“, Detail: Segnender Bodhisattva auf der linken Bildseite
- p. 906: Abb. 13: „Tausendarmige Guanyin“, Meister des Fahai si (Wan Fuqing, Wang Shu *et al.*) zugeschrieben, Mitte 15. Jh., Farben mit Tusche und

Gold auf Seide, Gesamtmaße 223 x 117 cm (87 13/16 x 46 1/16 inches), Bildmaße 139 x 81 cm (54 3/4 x 31 7/8 inches), Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Special Chinese and Japanese Fund, Inv. No. 06.1902, Photograph © 2016 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

- p. 907: Abb. 14: „Vajradhara-Maṇḍala“, Detail: 1479 datierte Stiftungsinschrift „Am 15. Tag des 4. Monats im 15. Jahr (der Ära) Chenghua der Großen Ming gestiftet“

der sich selbst als modernen Anhänger dieser philosophischen Strömung betrachtete, kritisiert Steuco insofern, als dieser sich damit begnügt habe, „die antike Philosophie an das Christentum anzupassen“, ohne dabei auch „das philosophische Denken ans Licht“ zu bringen.<sup>160</sup> Eben darum ging es ihm jedoch selbst: um ein gewisses Bemerkens philosophisch relevanter „Spuren der Wahrheit bei den Alten“ und darin das Gewahren „eines gewissen Fortschritts in den Erkenntnissen“.<sup>161</sup> Nicht weniger lag ihm aber an der Aktualität dieses Wissens: Niemals, so stellt er klar, „wäre ich interessiert, einen Autor zu lesen, der heute den Blutkreislauf verwerfen würde“.<sup>162</sup> Dabei wurde sich Leibniz erstens zunehmend bewusster, dass beim analogen Vergleich von altem und neuem Wissen alles auf eine wissenschaftlich nachvollziehbare Methode ankommt und bei den sogenannten positiven Tatsachen (wie der „creatio ex nihilo“) alles auf die Feststellung von deren erkenntnistheoretischem Status der Wahrheit. Zweitens wurde ihm immer klarer, dass zu einer rational akzeptablen Missionstheorie, wie sie in seiner letzten, unvollendeten Abhandlung dargestellt ist, sowohl die geschichtsphilosophische Vorstellung einer „prisca theologia“ als auch die Definition einer natürlichen Theologie als Grundvoraussetzungen gehören.

Ogleich sich Leibniz damit als „der letzte Vertreter der philosophia perennis“ seiner Zeit erweist, wird er dessen ungeachtet aus heutiger Perspektive auch als Vorläufer einer „komparativen Philosophie“ betrachtet, der „fest auf dem Boden der universalen Vernunft“ gestanden und als Erster damit begonnen hätte, „über den europäischen Horizont hinaus (Philosophie) komparativ zu betreiben“.<sup>163</sup>

<sup>160</sup> Vgl. Leibniz an Simon Foucher: „J'ay vû Augustinus Steuchus Jugubinus de perenni philosophia, mais son dessein est principalement d'accommoder les anciens au christianisme [...], plustost que de mettre les pensées de philosophie dans leur jour“ (GP I, S. 395).

<sup>161</sup> Vgl. Leibniz an Rémond, 26. August 1714, in: GP III, S. 624-625.

<sup>162</sup> Vgl. Leibniz an Burnett of Kemney, 18. Juni 1701, in: LAA I, 20 Nr. 185, S. 282 (L<sup>2</sup>).

<sup>163</sup> Vgl. Rolf Elberfeld: „Überlegung zur Grundlegung ‚komparativer Philosophie‘“, *Allgemeine Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 24 (1999), S. 123-154, hier S. 125, Anm. 2, und S. 136, und Wilhelm Halbfass, Art. „Philosophy, Comparative“, in: *HWPPh*, Bd. 7, Sp. 922-924.

## YONGZHENG'S CONUNDRUM THE EMPEROR ON CHRISTIANITY, RELIGIONS, AND HETERODOXY\*

EUGENIO MENEGON

### Yongzheng's Conundrum: In Homage to Roman Malek

Roman Malek has dedicated most of his academic career to the study of Chinese religions, paying particular attention to traditions that the imperial state often saw with suspicion, and labeled as heterodox. In homage to Roman's rich research on Daoism and Christianity in China, in this essay I attempt to address a conundrum: why did the Yongzheng 雍正 Emperor (r. 1722-1735) decide to forbid the proselytization of Christianity in the Chinese provinces in 1724, while he allowed missionaries and Christians to continue their activities in Beijing, practically under his nose? Was this a truly contradictory set of policies?

The following exploration of imperial audiences with court missionaries – accounts that China historians have so far mostly neglected – suggests that in fact the contradiction was only apparent. The simultaneous formal prohibition of Christianity and retention of the foreign priests at court stemmed from both pragmatic governance considerations and the pursuit of Yongzheng's religious ideology of unification of the Three Teachings. These sources offer us glimpses of imperial personal views on religions and “heterodoxy” in intimate settings, and complement what we know from Qing institutional sources (edicts and memorials), helping us disentangle “Yongzheng's conundrum.”

### Yongzheng, Christianity, and Chinese Religions

Catholicism developed in fits and starts in the Chinese empire during the seventeenth and early eighteenth century. By 1700, the Catholic Church in China counted a following of around 250,000 faithful (0,17% of the population at the time), concentrated in China's main economic macro-regions. A setback soon followed this initial efflorescence. In 1724, the Yongzheng Emperor issued a formal prohibition against Christian propagation in the provinces. Yet, he officially retained missionaries to serve the imperial court in Beijing as scientific and artistic experts, and allowed them to keep the capital's churches open. In part because his policy was ambiguously forbidding and allowing Christian activities

\* This essay was first presented on November 17, 2014 at the workshop “Evil in Chinese Religion,” organized by the Harvard Chinese Religion Seminar, and jointly sponsored by the Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies at Harvard University and the Boston University Center for the Study of Asia. I would like to thank Robert Weller, Michael Szonyi, Barend ter Haar, Blaine Gaustad, and all other participants for their feedback.

in the same breath, foreign and Chinese underground priests secretly continued in their technically illegal undertakings in the provinces.

Yongzheng himself must have understood the ambiguity of his position – allowing court missionaries to stay in the capital, but prohibiting any Christian activity elsewhere – and actually permitted this situation to continue, albeit begrudgingly. This imperial attitude towards Christianity, in fact, becomes less paradoxical when we take into consideration three broader contexts: first, the needs of Qing state-building; second, the necessity to reaffirm the emperor's own legitimacy and filiality by appearing not to contradict his father's policies, generally favorable towards the missionaries; and third, the emperor's understanding of the role of religions in society.

### 1. Qing State-building

The requirements of Qing state-building as the rationale to retain the missionaries in the capital are most clearly and succinctly contained in the *Shengyu guangxun* 聖諭廣訓 (Amplifications of the Sacred Edict, 1724) that I will analyze in detail below. A cryptic and ambiguous sentence in the *Shengyu guangxun* reveals the profound contradiction that will continue to weaken and destabilize imperial prohibitions against Christianity: “because these men [i.e., the missionaries] understand mathematics, therefore the government employs them: of this you ought to be aware.”<sup>1</sup> The need of missionary technicians (astronomers, translators, map-makers, mechanics, musicians, physicians, and artists) for state-building and prestige purposes required their presence in Beijing, and created continuous opportunities for the priests and their Christians to flout the law against heterodoxy and to exploit their imperially approved professional identity to keep churches open in the capital, and to support underground Catholic communities empire-wide.

### 2. Legitimacy and Filiality

Yongzheng's condemnation of Christianity represented a break with the past, and any departure from precedent required careful justification in a Confucian context of governance, especially in the fraught climate of Yongzheng's first few years on the throne, when rumors regarding his seizure of power and his legitimacy were swirling around. Deeply disappointed with the quarrels of the Chinese Rites Controversy, the Kangxi Emperor had declared Catholicism unsuitable to China in his later years, and forbidden further missionary activities in the empire. However, he had not acted upon his decrees, in practice delaying and limiting their circulation, and continuing his protection of the missionaries and their churches

<sup>1</sup> An authoritative imperial version is *Shengyu guangxun*, in: *Qingding Siku quanshu huiyao* 欽定四庫全書薈要 (Qianlong reign, reprint Changchun: Jilin chubanshe, 2005); for this passage, see p. 19a. Here I have modified the translation of William Milne, *The Sacred Edict. Containing Sixteen Maxims of the Emperor Kang-Hi, Amplified by His Son, the Emperor Yoong-Ching. Together with a Paraphrase on the Whole, by a Mandarin* (Shanghai: American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1870), p. 72.

in his typical *laissez faire* fashion. Yongzheng's formal indictment of Christianity was a step that not only seemed to contradict the deceased emperor's Confucian attitude of “cherishing men from afar” and his respect of religious pluralism for the sake of peace, but also uncovered deep policy disagreements between the new ruler and his father. He needed to carefully navigate a position straddling between outward filial respect and political realism.

### 3. Chinese Religions and Yongzheng's Relativism

The attitude towards Christianity, finally, should be understood within the broader religious policies of Yongzheng. Early Qing emperors (1644–1735) developed a complex relationship with institutional religious traditions. Kangxi and Yongzheng, in particular, cultivated the image of the Confucian monarch, while also practicing and extending patronage to Tibetan Lamaism, Chan Buddhism, Daoism, and native Manchu shamanism. Recent scholarship has probed the symbolic valiance of Qing religious patronage, showing how such patronage provided powerful ideological support in governing a multi-ethnic and multi-religious empire by exalting the pivotal role of the emperor as a religiously enlightened political leader.<sup>2</sup>

While politically and ideologically connected to state matters, however, religious patronage was also dependent on the personal religious practice of the emperors. Shunzhi, for example, showed a fleeting interest towards Christianity, but directed much of his energy towards Chan Buddhism, as testified in the writings of the monk Muchen Daomin 木陳道忞, and extended his patronage to Chan lineages.<sup>3</sup> Kangxi was curious about different religious traditions and was familiar with Christian concepts through his association with court missionaries. He also extended patronage to Buddhism in his southern tours in the 1680s, and visited and endowed Chan Buddhist temples there, summoning to court their eminent monks to offer lectures. Kangxi had a lenient and pragmatic attitude to religions, as seen in his issuance of the so-called Edict of Toleration of Christianity in 1692, recently studied by several scholars,<sup>4</sup> and in a 1698 edict on Islam:

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Patricia Ann Berger, *Empire of Emptiness. Buddhist Art and Political Authority in Qing China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003).

<sup>3</sup> Chen Yuan 陳垣, “Tang Ruowang yu Mu Chenwen [sic] 湯若望與木陳忞,” in: *Chen Yuan xueshu lunwen ji* 陳垣學術論文集, vol. 1 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), pp. 482–516, partly translated in Tschen Yüan [Chen Yuan; D.W. Yang transl.], “Johann Adam Schall von Bell S.J. und der Bonze Mu Tschen-wen,” *Monumenta Serica* 5 (1940), pp. 316–328; Xie Zhengguang 谢正光, “Xinjun jiuzhu yu yichen – du Muchen Daomin *Beiyouji*” 新君旧主与遗臣—读木陈道忞《北游集》 (The Chief Eunuch, Buddhist Monks, and the Emperors during the Ming-Qing Transition: Readings of the *Journey to the North* by Muchen Daomin), *Zhongguo shehui kexue* 中国社会科学 2009/3, pp. 186–203, 208.

<sup>4</sup> See Zhang Xianqing 张先清, “Kangxi sanshiyi nian rongjiao zhaoling chutan” 康熙三十一年容教诏令初探 (A Preliminary Discussion of the Edict of Toleration in the Thirty-first Year of the Kangxi Reign in the Qing Dynasty), *Lishi yanjiu* 历史研究 2006/5, pp. 72–87;

Even if you pacify the Hui people and then impede their religious practice, would it be possible to convert them to Buddhism, and have them bow and pray before the lamas? Now that the empire is at peace, make things run the way they are. Forcing them to assimilate is definitely not practical.<sup>5</sup>

Yongzheng himself openly referred to his father's tolerant and laissez-faire attitude towards the missionaries and other religious experts, as we read in a 1729 edict. While purposely playing down the status of missionaries and other religious figures as "mere craftsmen and people with assorted skills" – probably more his opinion than his father's – Yongzheng seemed to imply that his predecessor might have been too lax with the foreign priests and other religious types:

The Kangxi Emperor [’s attitude] was profound and inclusive, and he was extremely generous, and there was nothing that he did not tolerate, supporting many lamas, Westerners, as well as Buddhists and Daoists. He regarded them all as no more than craftsmen and people with assorted skills.<sup>6</sup>

Unlike his father and in line with his autocratic tendencies, in the realm of religion Yongzheng was one of the most interventionist among early Qing emperors, chastising his officials when they unduly interfered with religious activities he deemed legitimate, but also promoting or attacking religious leaders he liked or disliked. He engaged in personal religious cultivation with a circle of close officials and Chan masters, and by the end of his reign, he embarked on an attempt to unify Chinese religions. He systematically promoted the idea of the unity of the Three Teachings (Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism), especially through the publication of the *Yuxuan yulu* 御選語錄 (Imperial Selected Sayings) in 1733, a collection of texts of the Three Teachings composed with the help of fifteen of the most trusted imperial princes and advisors. He also started a census of Bud-

Thierry Meynard (Mei Qianli 梅謙立), "Qingchu de Manren, Hanren he Xifangren: 1692 nian rongjiao zhaoling he wenhua duoyuanhua" 清初的滿人、漢人和西方人—1692年宗教詔令和文化多元化 (Manchus, Hans and Westerners in Early Qing. The Edict of Toleration of 1692 and Cultural Pluralism), *Shenzhou jiaoliu* 神州交流 – Chinese Cross Currents, 6 (2009) 2, pp. 104-113; Nicolas Standaert, "The 'Edict of Tolerance'. A Textual History and Reading," in: Artur K. Wardega – António Vasconcelos de Saldanha (eds.), *In the Light and Shadow of an Emperor: Tomás Pereira, SJ (1645–1708), the Kangxi Emperor and the Jesuit Mission in China* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), pp. 308-358.

<sup>5</sup> See *Shengzu Ren huangdi shengxun* 聖祖仁皇帝聖訓, *juan* 60 (1731) as quoted in Tristan G. Brown, "Towards an Understanding of Qianlong's Conception of Islam. A Study of the Dedication Inscriptions of the Fragrant Concubine's Mosque in the Imperial Capital," *Zhongguo wenhua yanjiusuo xuebao* 中國文化研究所學報 (*Journal of Chinese Studies*) 53 (2011), p. 139.

<sup>6</sup> *Shizong Xian huangdi shangyu neige* 世宗憲皇帝上諭內閣 (Grand Secretariat's Imperial Edicts of the Yongzheng Reign), Yunlu 允祿 ed., *juan* 76, pp. 3a-b, edict of January 9, 1729 (YZ 6/12/10), as quoted in Standaert, "The 'Edict of Tolerance'," p. 354: 聖祖仁皇帝廣大包涵天地覆載，無所不容，如喇嘛西洋人以及僧道等類，畜養者甚多。聖祖仁皇帝皆不過以工匠雜藝人等視之。

dhist and Daoist monks in 1735 in an attempt to control their numbers and impose uniform discipline.<sup>7</sup>

His attitude to non-institutional religions and heterodox religious groups, however, was utterly negative, and he openly decried them as dangerous to social stability and political control. This condemnation fit within an agenda of general reform that extended to government procedures, economic policies, popular customs and morals. Scholars have dubbed this reform agenda the imperial "civilizing mission" of the High Qing period, an effort that encompassed the reigns of both Yongzheng and his son Qianlong. Based on the long-standing Confucian idea of *jiaohua* 教化 (transformation of customs through education) or *jiaoyang* 教養 (teaching and cultivation of the people), the Qing civilizing mission entailed the chastisement, regulation, and transformation of the values and practices of the people, to make them loyal imperial subjects.<sup>8</sup>

### 1723–1724: Shifting the Course

The exigencies of state-building required the continued presence of missionary technicians and scientists in Beijing. Moreover, banning them *tout court* would have looked unfilial, – being a complete reversal of Kangxi's policies. Yet, the emperor wanted to rid himself of the remaining vestiges of factional politics and patronage of the late Kangxi era, as well as implement his "civilizing" agenda. Yongzheng decided to let others do some of the dirty work. The emperor knew well that some Han Chinese literati and officials had opposed Christianity in China for a long time, but had been unable to act due to his father's patronage of the

<sup>7</sup> See the succinct summary of Yongzheng's attitude to the "Three Teachings" and Christianity in Pei Huang [Huang Pei 黃培], *Autocracy at Work. A Study of the Yung-Cheng Period, 1723–1735* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1974), pp. 43-50; on his attitude towards the missionaries and foreign powers, and the relevant political context, see Zhuang Jifa 莊吉發, "Qing Shizong jin jiao kao" 清世宗禁教考 (An Examination of the Anti-Religious Campaign of the Yongzheng Emperor), *Dongfang zazhi* 東方雜誌 62 (1981), pp. 26-36, and Feng Erkang 馮爾康, *Yongzheng zhuan* 雍正傳 (Biography of Yongzheng) (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan 2014; original edition Beijing, Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1985), pp. 415-418; on Yongzheng's Chan practice and his policies towards Chan Buddhism, see Jiang Wu, *Enlightenment in Dispute. The Reinvention of Chan Buddhism in Seventeenth-century China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), ch. 7, "The Yongzheng Emperor and Imperial Intervention"; on the personal Buddhist network of Yongzheng as a prince and emperor, see Barend J. ter Haar, "Yongzheng and His Buddhist Abbots," in: *The People and the Dao. New Studies in Chinese Religions in Honour of Daniel L. Overmyer*, ed. Philip Clart and Paul Crowe (Institut Monumenta Serica, Sankt Augustin; Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 2009), pp. 435-480; on the census of monks initiated under Yongzheng and completed under Qianlong, see Vincent Goossaert, "Counting the Monks. The 1736–1739 Census of the Chinese Clergy," *Late Imperial China* 21 (2000) 2, pp. 40-85.

<sup>8</sup> On the Qing "civilizing mission," see Janet M. Theiss, *Disgraceful Matters. The Politics of Chastity in Eighteenth-century China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), pp. 35-37.

missionaries. It was time to let them enact their plan, as it accorded with the new political climate, while giving the impression that he, as emperor, was reigning in his more hawkish officials and remaining magnanimous towards his foreign subjects. Yongzheng allowed the muffled opposition to Christianity brewing during the Kangxi period to finally explode into a full-fledged campaign in 1723–1724.

The neo-Confucian stalwart scholar-official Zhang Boxing 張伯行 (1652–1725), who had denounced the corrupting customs of Christians in Fujian province over a decade earlier, was named president of the Board of Rites in 1723, and thanks to his efforts anti-Christian policy recommendations reached the new emperor. Concurrently, another official who had attempted to forbid Christianity as governor of Zhejiang in 1691, Zhang Penghe 張鵬翮 (1649–1725), received the honorary title of Grand Tutor of the Heir Apparent and was named a grand secretary in January and March 1723, respectively. Zhang Penghe apparently presented three memorials, asking for the proscription of Christianity in the provinces and the continuation of the mission only in Beijing, where the foreign priests could be useful.<sup>9</sup>

The lower officials in the Board of Rites also presented several anti-Christian memorials in the first year of the new emperor's reign. A Manchu official in the Ministry of Rites presented a Manchu language memorial on March 16, 1723 to the emperor, spelling out in detail what would become the new policy on Christianity. The document identified two main "heterodox and treasonous acts" of the Christians, i.e., the neglect of ancestors and family, and the organization of religious networks outside government control:

[Commoners and prominent people alike] who join these teachings *completely neglect their parents, brothers, wives, and daughters, and respect only the Lord of Heaven*. In great numbers they are given printed symbols of the Lord of Heaven to paste on their doors, and this is truly a *treasonous and heterodox act* of great gravity. Without any previous relationship, and without an apparent reason, they distribute money to people, trapping their minds, and they certainly must have some [secret] intention. If we do not forbid [those teachings], they will spread everywhere.

The official then proceeded to outline the rationale for keeping some court missionaries in Beijing as technicians – the "state-building" argument – but also suggested very close monitoring of their activities and contacts in the capital:

*Now, in the compilation offices for the imperial calendar, we still need these [Western] people, and thus they should be allowed to continue their service.* However, with the exclusion of their servants and cooks, no Manchu, Mongol, Chinese banner men (*Hanjun* 漢軍) or Chinese, also including the bondservants (*baoyi* 包衣) and slaves, should be allowed to come and go [from and to their quarters]. Officials and soldiers should be sent to the places where the West-

<sup>9</sup> I discussed these materials in my *Ancestors, Virgins, and Friars. Christianity as a Local Religion in Late Imperial China*, Harvard-Yenching Institute Monograph Series, 69 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center and Harvard University Press, 2009), pp. 118–121.

erners live in the capital to *exert surveillance over them*, and in the provinces local military and civil officials should be given orders to enforce the [full] prohibition.<sup>10</sup>

Christian activities were here understood as related to the larger issues of border defense and ritual propriety. State concerns for military security and the imperial "civilizing mission" framed the outlawing of Christianity, and the recommendation of the Board of Rites left no doubt that military and civil officials in the provinces had to act swiftly. At the same time, state-building needs remained paramount: the Qing still needed Westerners at the Astronomical Directorate and in other functions. This memorial set in motion an empire-wide anti-Christian campaign of the sort not seen since the 1660s. The campaign, prepared by the maneuvering in Beijing, was kick-started by an investigation of the Dominican mission in Fu'an, northeastern Fujian, and extended by early 1724 to the entire country, with the issuance on January 12, 1724 of an official order of expulsion for all foreign priests residing in the provinces.<sup>11</sup>

However, ministerial recommendations and provincial investigations were hardly the motor of the campaign; the Yongzheng Emperor himself was. As a prince he had witnessed the quarrels of the Chinese Rites and his father's loss of trust in the Jesuits and the Church. Catholicism also reeked of political treason to him. The final years of the Kangxi reign had been beset by factional struggles for the accession to the throne, and the Portuguese court Jesuit João Mourão (Mu Jingyuan 穆敬遠, 1681–1726) had sided with one of Yongzheng's brothers, earning the enmity of the future emperor and eventual execution by strangulation. Finally, among the allies of Yongzheng's competitors for the throne were high-ranking Christian members of the family of Sunu, a member of the imperial clan. For the emperor the conversion of Sunu's sons represented the epitome of cultural and political treason and a betrayal of their own Manchu identity. Secret memorials denouncing the conversion of banner men in the capital in 1723 probably only deepened Yongzheng's anxieties for the integrity of Manchu ways. In sum, by January 1724 a coordinated attack masterminded by the emperor himself was being unleashed on the mission.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Zhongguo di yi lishi dang'anguan 中国第一历史档案馆 (ed.), *Yongzheng chao Manwen zhupi zouzhe quan yi* 雍正朝满文朱批奏折全译 (A Complete Translation of the Manchu Language Secret Memorials with Vermilion Endorsements of the Yongzheng Period) (Hefei: Huangshan shushe, 1998), vol. 1, doc. 59, pp. 30–31 (hereafter: *YZM*). All emphases in quotations are mine.

<sup>11</sup> For details and further literature, see Menegon, *Ancestors, Virgins, and Friars*, pp. 116–123.

<sup>12</sup> On policies toward Christianity at the time of Yongzheng's accession, see Eugenio Menegon, "Surniamae Tragoedia. Religious and Political Martyrdom in the Yongzheng Period," Symposium on the History of Christianity in China, Hong Kong Baptist University, 1996, unpublished; see also *HCC* 1, p. 521; Pierre-Emmanuel Roux, "La trinité anti-chrétienne: essai sur la proscription du Catholicisme en Chine, en Corée et au Japon (XVIIe-XIXe siècles)," Doctorat nouveau régime, Histoire et civilisations, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris, 2013, chapt. 1, "La proscription du Catholicisme au XVIIIe siècle: logiques et incohérences d'une répression," pp. 57–71. On João

### The *Shengyu guangxun* (1724)

The publication on February 25, 1724 of the *Shengyu guangxun*, only 14 months after Yongzheng had ascended the throne, was arguably one of the most consequential public pronouncements against Christianity in China. This document shows how seriously the new ruler took his civilizing mission, and how repression of Christianity was part of it. Soldiers (*bing* 兵) and commoners (*min* 民) were the explicit audience of the document, and the fight against heterodox groups featured prominently.<sup>13</sup> The seventh maxim of the Sacred Edict, initially issued by Kangxi, dealt with the suppression of heterodox teachings. Expanding on the seven-character pithy sentence of the original version (“Extirpate heresy to exalt orthodoxy” *chu yiduan yi chong zhengxue* 黜異端以崇正學), Yongzheng’s text expounded at length on the nature of acceptable Buddhist and Daoist ideas and practices, while excoriating the activities of deviant members in those traditions. Then it pointed the finger at some specific heterodox groups, corrupt offshoots of Buddhism and Daoism, declaring them particularly dangerous:

Afterwards, however, there arose a class of wanderers, who, void of any source of dependence, stole the names of these teachings [*Fo* and *dao*], but corrupted their principles. [...] They are seized according to law – their innocent neighbors injured – their own families involved – and the chief of their cabal punished with extreme rigor. What they vainly thought would prove the source of their felicity becomes the spring of their misery. So it was with the White Lotus and Smelling Incense Teachings, which may serve as a lesson to all.<sup>14</sup>

Mourão, see 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* (Lisboa: Agencia-Geral do Ultramar, 1963). On Sunu and his sons, see, e.g., John Witek, “Manchu Christians at the Court of Peking in Early Eighteenth-Century China,” in: Edward Malatesta – Yves Raguin (eds.), *Actes du Ve Colloque International de Sinologie de Chantilly, 15–18 Septembre 1986. Succès et échecs de la rencontre Chine et Occident du XVIe au XXe siècle* (Paris – San Francisco – Taipei: Ricci Institute, 1993), pp. 265–279; and Menegon, “*Surniamae Tragoedia*.” For Manchu language memorials (in Chinese translation) on conversions in the capital, see *YZM*, vol. 1, doc. 59, pp. 30–31; doc. 627, p. 334; doc. 875, p. 488.

<sup>13</sup> See Victor Mair, “Language and Ideology in the Sacred Edict,” in: Andrew J. Nathan – David G. Johnson – Evelyn Sakakida Rawski (eds.), *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), pp. 325–359; Lei Weiping 雷伟平, “‘Shengyu guangxun’ chuanbo yanjiu” 《圣谕广训》传播研究, M.A. thesis in Studies of Chinese Traditional Materials, Huadong Normal University, Shanghai, 2007.

<sup>14</sup> The text continues: “To walk in these by-roads (*zuodao* 左道, heterodoxy) and deceive the people is what the law will not excuse. The evil arts of wizards/mediums (*shi wu xieshu* 師巫邪術) have also a determined punishment. The intention of government in enacting these laws was none other than to prohibit the people from doing evil, and encourage them to do good (禁民為非, 導民為善); to induce them to degrade the corrupt (*xie* 邪), and honor the correct (*zheng* 正); to retire from danger, and be in peace” (夫左道惑眾律所不容, 師巫

The naming of certain condemned traditions may not have been casual at the time, as they probably occupied the mind of the emperor and his close advisors in the inner circle of power that would become the Grand Council, and in the Board of Rites in Beijing. Besides the stock mention of the all-catching category of *Bailianjiao* 白蓮教 (White Lotus Teachings), the text referred to the *Wenxiangjiao* 聞香教 (Smelling Incense Teachings) group, i.e., the *Dachengjiao* 大乘教 (Great Vehicle Teachings), first established by Wang Sen 王森 (1542–1619) in the Ming, and popular in northern China (Zhili) and in the border regions near the capital.<sup>15</sup>

Within this repressive context, the Western Ocean Teachings (*Xiyangjiao* 西洋教), i.e., Catholicism, however, were also expressly mentioned for the first time in the Sacred Edict, a real novelty in such a public document. The *Shengyu guangxun* continued:

So also it was with the *Teachings of the Western Ocean which honor the Lord of Heaven (Tianzhu)*, which equally rank among those that are *non-canonical (bu jing* 不經); but because *these men [i.e., missionaries] understand mathematics, therefore government employs them: of this you ought to be aware.*<sup>16</sup>

Yongzheng explicitly added the name of Catholicism to his very short list of exemplary forbidden groups in the new widely circulated *Shengyu guangxun*, making the tiny foreign Catholic religion known to every villager in the empire, even to those who had never heard of it, or met any Catholic missionary or convert. There is no doubt that Yongzheng’s personal experience with Christianity mattered. Unlike in the case of the White Lotus tradition or *Wenxiang* groups, Yongzheng had first-hand knowledge of the basic contents of the Catholic faith,

邪術, 邦有常刑。朝廷立法之意, 無非禁民為非, 導民為善, 黜邪崇正, 去危就安。 *Shengyu guangxun*, p. 19a, modified translation based on Milne, *The Sacred Edict*, p. 72.

<sup>15</sup> This listing of groups echoed a 1660 anti-heterodoxy document naming *Wuwei* 無為, *Bailian* and *Wenxiang* and a 1673 edict by Kangxi adding the *Dachengjiao* as well. The *Shengyu guangxun* may have simply lifted the old names from these precedents, but I would not exclude that the reference to *Wenxiang* had also contemporary value. This group was active among soldiers and commoners in Beijing and Shandong in the 1720–1730s, and it is likely that officials and officers informed Yongzheng of the group’s influence among the populace and the army surrounding the palace. In 1732, for example, after the issuance of the *Shengyu guangxun*, investigations were conducted in *Shifokou* 石佛口 in Shandong, the center of Wang Seng’s tradition, where one of his descendants was still active; see Ma Xisha 馬西沙 and Han Bingfang 韓秉方, *Zhongguo minjian zongjiao shi* 中國民間宗教史 (A History of Chinese Folk Religions) (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1992), pp. 592–594; Hubert Seiwert in collaboration with Ma Xisha, *Popular Religious Movements and Heterodox Sects in Chinese History* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 399, 458; cf. also Barend J. ter Haar, “The Non-Action Teachings and Christianity: Confusion and Similarities,” in: Philip Clart (ed.), *Chinese and European Perspectives on the Study of Chinese Popular Religions* (Taipei: Boyang Publishing, 2012), pp. 295–328.

<sup>16</sup> 如白蓮、聞香等教皆前車之鑑也。又如西洋教宗天主, 亦屬不經。因其人通曉歷數, 故國家用之。爾等不可不知也。 *Shengyu guangxun*, p. 19a, and Milne, *The Sacred Edict*, p. 72.

and specific political reasons to find it objectionable, as confirmed by his personal involvement in the 1724 nation-wide anti-Christian campaign. I will expand on Yongzheng's political reasons to forbid Christianity later. The emperor also believed in the fundamental unity of religions, and their equivalency in terms of moral tenets. This might account for the relatively neutral adjective used to characterize Christianity at this juncture, reminiscent of the indifferent attitude of Kangxi: Yongzheng's *Shengyu guangxun* simply define Christianity as "non-canonical" (*bu jing*), rather than "evil/heterodox" (*xie 邪*), which would indicate a higher degree of danger for society and the state.<sup>17</sup>

Yongzheng's "Christian policy" further evolved in the following years, and in the coming pages I will trace this evolution in published and unpublished reports that detail the proceedings of several imperial audiences with the court missionaries. While sketching the specific historical circumstances of each audience based on these documents, I will highlight the recurrence of the three contexts I listed above (state-building; legitimacy and filiality; religious policy). This will show that, in spite of adjustments, a red thread connected and sustained the imperial policy towards Christianity from 1723 to 1735, the year of Yongzheng's death.<sup>18</sup>

#### 1724 Audiences (July 1 and November 8)

On July 1, 1724, in the midst of that year's unprecedented empire-wide anti-Christian campaign, the missionaries obtained their first audience with the new emperor. What transpired during that meeting reveals the motivations and reasoning of Yongzheng in implementing his policies. That day the court missionaries presented a request for mercy for their confreres expelled from the provinces, asking that they be concentrated in Canton rather than Macao to await repatriation. They opened the memorial with a subtle reference to precedent, hinting that Yongzheng's predecessors since the Ming dynasty had been tolerant of their presence, and that Christian doctrines were not heterodox:

We your subjects have come by sea to the east for almost two hundred years since Matteo Ricci's time. We are grateful that your Holy Dynasty has been treating us leniently and not as foreigners, so that we have considered China our home. We respect the laws and engage in cultivation, and our principles are not heterodox.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> On the attitude of literati and the Chinese state to Christianity as heterodoxy, including Kangxi's opinion of the "indifferent" role of Christianity in China, see Ad Dudink's essay on opponents to Christianity in *HCC* 1, pp. 503-533; cf. also ter Haar, "The Non-Action Teachings and Christianity."

<sup>18</sup> A still valuable narrative on the vicissitudes of the Beijing mission in the Yongzheng period, based on the letters of Antoine Gubil SJ, is Josef Brucker, "La Mission de Chine de 1722 à 1735. Quelques pages de l'histoire des missionnaires français à Péking au XVIIIe siècle d'après des documents inédits," *Revue des questions historiques* 29 (1881), pp. 491-532.

<sup>19</sup> 竊臣等自利瑪竇航海東來，歷今幾二百年，幸荷聖朝優容無外，故上至如歸。守法焚修，原非左道。The missionaries' Chinese original memorial with the imperial vermilion

Prince Yinxiang 胤祥 (1686-1730), the missionaries' "prince protector," known in missionary sources as the 13th "Regulo" (i.e., the thirteenth son of Kangxi), had suggested this pithy statement and adjusted the tenor of the entire memorial. Prince Yinlu 胤祿 (1695-1767), the 16th Regulo, had finally placed the corrected memorial into the hands of the emperor, and this somewhat irregular procedure produced the desired effect: while the petitioners were waiting outside the palace's gates, the emperor issued an immediate response, penning a vermilion rescript directly on the request, which still exists in the original (see the figure on p. 431). The memorial was shown to the senders outside the gate, stating in clear terms the personal imperial political position on Christianity:

After ascending the throne, all my policies have respected the precedents (*xianzhang jiudian* 憲章舊典) set by [my father] Emperor Shengzu [in order] to bring advantages to the empire, while avoiding evils (*yu tianxia xing li chu bi* 與天下興利除弊). Now, regarding my order to have you removed to Macao, it is all due to the fact that some Westerners residing in Fujian have stirred trouble locally. I took these measures following the requests of my high-ranking officials in charge of frontiers, as well as the memorials prepared at the court. Policy is a matter of public concern (*zheng zhe, gong shi ye* 政者，公事也). Could I possibly show *private favor and mercy* (*si enhui* 私恩惠) to you [missionaries] and discard the opinion of the national government (*guojia zhi yulun* 國家之輿論)? Now you are earnestly begging [for mercy]. I can only issue an edict to the Governor of Guangdong so that he temporarily suspend [the previous orders], while I order local high officials to discuss the matter with attention and deliberate again.<sup>20</sup>

The emperor at first appeared to affirm his legitimacy as dutiful son and monarch, and implicitly endorse the policies of his father. In fact, he was subtly hinting that the missionaries' mention of imperial precedents was inappropriate: in his view, his father's private imperial patronage of the missionaries did not reflect the interests of the state, nor amounted to a coherent religious policy. By

rescript quoted here is reproduced in *Zhongguo di yi lishi dang'anguan* 中國第一歷史檔案館 (ed.), *Qing zhong qianqi Xiyang Tianzhujiao zai Hua huodong dang'an shiliao* 清中前期西洋天主教在華活動檔案史料 (Historical Materials on the Activities of Catholicism in China in the Early Qing) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2003), vol. 1, doc. 43, pp. 58-59 (hereafter *QTS*); cf. also *Zhongguo di yi lishi dang'anguan* 中國第一歷史檔案館 (ed.), *Yongzheng chao Hanwen zhupi zouzhe huibian* 雍正朝漢文硃批奏摺彙編 (A Compilation of Chinese Language Vermilion Rescripted Memorials from the Court of the Yongzheng Emperor) (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1989), vol. 3, doc. 22, pp. 26-27 (hereafter: *YZH*); a copy also in the Roman Archives of the Society of Jesus, ARSI, Jap. Sin. 179, ff. 303r-v, without rescript and with a relevant imperial edict instead; cf. D'Elia, *Il lontano confino*, photograph 9.

<sup>20</sup> 朕自即位以來，諸政悉遵聖祖皇帝憲章舊典，與天下興利除弊。今令爾等往澳門一事，皆由福建省住居西洋人在地方生事惑眾，朕因封疆大臣之請、庭議之奏施行。政者，公事也。朕豈可以私恩惠爾等，以廢國家之輿論乎。今爾等既哀懇乞求，朕亦只可諭廣東督撫暫不催逼，令地方大吏確議再定。This imperial vermilion rescript is reproduced in *QTS*, vol. 1, doc. 43, p. 59; and *YZH*, vol. 3, doc. 22, p. 27.

using the Confucian dyad “public/private” (*gong* 公 / *si* 私) to justify himself, Yongzheng stated that public opinion and interest trumped “private favor and mercy,” while also “blaming” the missionaries’ expulsion on his high officials. How could he go against his bureaucrats’ opinion? Obviously, Yongzheng was being disingenuous. Of course he could! Here he was using the rhetoric of the dutiful Confucian monarch to exonerate himself from possible charges of lack of filiality, political partiality, and arbitrariness, while skillfully depicting himself as less hawkish than his officials.

Pleased by the appropriate remarks of gratitude that French Jesuit Dominique Parennin pronounced at the gates of the palace upon receiving the rescript, Yongzheng decided to admit the postulants into his presence at once. Then he launched into a fifteen-minute speech, later summarized by Parennin (who observed that the discourse seemed to have been prepared in advance).<sup>21</sup> In it the monarch further elaborated his ideas, and actually orally revealed his specific views on Christianity and religion:

*You say that your law is not a false law (fei zuodao 非左道). I believe you. If I thought that it was false, what would have kept me from destroying your churches and expelling you from the empire? False laws are those, which, under the pretext of teaching virtue, fan the spirit of revolt, as that of the Bailian (White Lotus) teaching does.*

Here Yongzheng admitted that Catholicism was not comparable to rebellious heterodox sects, thus implying that retaining the missionaries at court was possible as long as they behaved properly. Nevertheless, he proceeded to highlight the security threat of Christianity as a possible conquest vanguard:

What would you say if I were to send a troop of bonzes and lamas into your country in order to preach their doctrines? How would you receive them? Li Madou 利瑪竇 [Matteo Ricci] came to China in the first year of Wanli.<sup>22</sup> I will

<sup>21</sup> The emperor pronounced his speech in front of the Jesuits Ignaz Kögler, Dominique Parennin, and Joachim Bouvet. The three missionaries, coordinated by Parennin, made a transcript of the speech from memory immediately after the audience, following the emperor’s order to report his words to all their confreres. The French version can be found in M. Louis Aimé-Martin (ed.), *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses concernant l’Asie, l’Afrique et l’Amérique, avec quelques relations nouvelles des missions, et des notes géographiques et historiques* (Paris: Paul Daffis Libraire-Éditeur, 1875–1877; hereafter: *LEC*), vol. 3, pp. 363–64; see also two manuscript copies of a Latin version in ARSI, Jap. Sin. 179, ff. 385r–387r; and one manuscript French version, dated July 8, 1724, sent by Parennin with some additional context to the Vice-Procurator of Propaganda Fide in Beijing, the Discalced Carmelite Rinaldo Romei, in Archivio Storico della Congregazione per l’Evangelizzazione dei Popoli o ‘de Propaganda Fide’, *Scritture Originali della Congregazione Particolare dell’Indie Orientali e Cina* (hereafter: APF, SOCP), vol. 31 (1723–1725), ff. 175–177r. For a translation in English of the published French version, which I followed here, see Jocelyn Marinescu, “Defending Christianity in China. The Jesuit Defense of Christianity in the *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses* and *Ruijianlu* in relation to the Yongzheng Proscription of 1724,” Ph.D. diss., Kansas State University, 2008, pp. 295–299 (apparently based on Demetrius Charles Boulger, *A Short History of China* [London: Allen, 1893], p. 156).

<sup>22</sup> This is imprecise, as Ricci arrived in China in 1582, not in 1573, the first year of Wanli.

not discuss what the Chinese did at that time. *I am not responsible for that.* Then you were very few in numbers, and it almost did not matter. You did not have your people and your churches in all the provinces. It was only *under the reign of my father* that you began to build churches everywhere and your doctrines started to spread rapidly in the empire. We then saw this, and *we dared say nothing on the subject.* But *if you knew how to deceive my father, don’t expect that you can deceive me in the same way.*<sup>23</sup>

Here he not only played down the importance of the Ming precedent (“I am not responsible for that”), but also openly criticized his own father for his tolerance towards the missionaries (“you knew how to deceive my father”), suggesting that already as a prince he had started doubting Kangxi’s wisdom. The next pronouncement showed his knowledge of the proselytizing spirit of Christianity, and of the linkage between Christian religion and political subjection, a fact particularly evident in the Iberian colonial context (such as the nearby Philippines), and certainly known to the emperor through his intelligence:

You wish to make the Chinese Christians, and this is what your law demands. I know this very well. But in this case what would become of us? *Should we not soon become merely the subjects of your kings?* The converts you have made already recognize nobody but you, and in a time of trouble, they would listen to no other voice than yours. *I know that at present we have nothing to fear, but when foreign ships start coming in their thousands and tens of thousands, then it may be that some serious disorders will arise.*

This reference to “foreign ships ... coming in their thousands and tens of thousands” was a prophetic statement, in light of the history of China in the nineteenth century. It also dovetailed well with the final part of the speech, where the emperor made a veiled threat of expulsion against the court missionaries, while underlining that his reasons for doing so would be political and military, rather than ideological and religious:

I permit you ... to reside here [in Beijing] and in Canton, as long as you give us no cause for complaint. But if any should arise, I will not allow you to remain either here or at Canton. I will have none of you in the provinces. [...]

*Do not imagine, in conclusion, that I have anything against you or that I wish to oppress you. You know the manner in which I treated you when I was only a prince. [...]*

*What I do now, I do in my role as emperor.* My only concern is to rule the empire well, and to that end, I apply myself from morning to evening. I do not see even my children or the empress, but only those who are charged in the public administration. This will continue as long as the time of mourning, which lasts three years. After this, I will, perhaps, be able to see you more often.

<sup>23</sup> This passage was famously and approvingly quoted as a display of Yongzheng’s enlightened rule in Voltaire’s *Lettres chinoises, indiennes et tartares*; see *Les Oeuvres complètes de Voltaire, 1775–1776*, vol. 77B, ed. Nicholas Cronk (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2014), p. 158.

In these last sentences, Yongzheng depicted himself as a statesman completely absorbed by the duties of governance, almost a victim under the burdens of rulership, and preoccupied with the future of the empire's boundaries, not with ideological conformity at all costs. He also let the missionaries know that he would be seeing more of them in the future, after the mourning period.

In conclusion, this audience communicated to the missionaries, and indirectly to the European public, that the emperor and his governors cared for oceanic borders and foreign presence in Macao and other ports, and feared that missionaries and their converts could become a potential foreign fifth column within the Qing domains. The issue was not their religion, at least in Yongzheng's personal view: "You say that your law is not a false law. I believe you"; and again "Do not imagine, in conclusion, that I have anything against you or that I wish to oppress you. [...] What I do now, I do in my role as emperor." The 1724 audience was a rare moment of imperial candor: for the first time, missionaries heard a clear, articulate imperial opinion on the prohibition of Christianity as political threat, literally face to face. This speech was also, however, a true feat in political maneuvering, representing the emperor as bound by duty and moral obligations to prohibit Christianity, but also inherently benevolent towards the foreigners as "men from afar." He was not the bad guy.

Yongzheng reiterated and elaborated the same themes in another short audience held on November 8, 1724. Two members of the Propaganda mission, the lay surgeon Dionisio Gagliardi and the priest Nicolò Tomacelli (Chierico Regolare Minore), who had reached Beijing with the papal legate Carlo Ambrasio Mezzabarba in 1720, petitioned to return to Italy. The emperor asked to see them for a farewell audience, well aware that doing so, and bestowing gifts on them, would be a good public relation stunt, since, as he put it, the matter "pertains to my honor" (*interest honoris mei*). After some pleasantries, and towards the end of this fifteen-minute interview, he abruptly returned to the theme of religion. He first offered the example of Muslims in China, a peaceful and integrated group that he refused to persecute, even at the insistence of his officials:

Among the sects to be prohibited they proposed to me the religion of the Muhammedans, so that I would proscribe it. But I replied that the accusers do not consider in fact that the Muhammedans never provoke any disturbance, they propagandize their sect only among their own descendants, and do not oblige anybody to follow it, they accommodate themselves to the customs of the empire, do not offer any cause for accusations, and do not impede the cult and the doctrine of Confucius.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> See "Relatio eorum quae successere circa petitam & obtentam a beundi licentiam pro duobus missionarijs S. Congregationis de Propaganda in Urbem revocatis è Sina anno 1724," ARSI, Fondo Gesuitico, 722.2, f. 74v. Yongzheng's tolerant attitude towards Islam is reflected in several edicts from the period 1724–1730; see Donald Leslie, *Islam in Traditional China. A Short History to 1800* (Belconnen, A.C.T.: Canberra College of Advanced Education, 1986), pp. 123–124.

He then proceeded to incriminate Christianity for its opposition to Confucian and ancestral rites:

I know very little about what was done by us under my Father the Emperor [regarding you Christians. But] I recall having already said as much when I saw you most recently [on July 1]. Your law is not a peaceful one: the literati agitate against it, because you attack their doctrine. Since now I rule the empire, I have the duty to be mindful of their laws, as much as required by reason. I perceive nevertheless that they have reasons to complain about you. I myself, who am Manchu, according to you should abandon the cult of the ancestors, something I do not want to do at all. Actually, if we all were to embrace the European religion as you desire, it would happen to us what happens to the Muscovites, who are even forced to shave their beards.<sup>25</sup>

Then he introduced an idea that would become a refrain in following audiences, i.e., that the Christian God (*Tianzhu*) was simply one divine manifestation among many, including the Buddha and the Jade Emperor: "I do not deny, and grant [the existence] of your *Tianzhu*, but I say that he is the same thing as the Buddha or the Jade Emperor, just under a different name." In the same breadth he concluded with a political point, about the subordination of the clergy to political authorities: "You do not absolutely wish to be regarded as Buddhist monks. However, the empire cannot be controlled by Buddhist monks and lamas, and thus your issue is no less difficult. It is appropriate to proceed slowly, gently and cautiously."<sup>26</sup> This statement advanced a theological point about the unity of the divine and of religions, while also stating the absolute supremacy of the state over any organization. It was yet another piece of Yongzheng's attitude towards religions, and it became in fact more prominent in the coming years.

### 1725 Audiences (October 24 and November 18)

A confirmation that the imperial opinions voiced in 1724 remained consistent over time can be found in the records of two audiences in 1725. On the arrival of two Discalced Carmelites bringing a papal letter of congratulations for the new emperor, an occurrence coinciding with the end of the mourning period for the

<sup>25</sup> See "Relatio," ARSI, Fondo Gesuitico, 722.2, f. 74v. This mention of the Muscovites might be a reference to the order given by Peter the Great in 1698 to his boyars to shave their beards off, followed by a 1705 edict fining elites still sporting beards. Here Yongzheng seems to attribute this policy to Catholicism, rather than to the czar's modernizing agenda, inspired by his tour of Western Europe in the 1690s. Perhaps, he is simply using the example to show the impact of ideological change over society.

<sup>26</sup> "Relatio," ARSI, Fondo Gesuitico, 722.2, f. 74v. Here the sentence "the empire cannot be controlled by Buddhist monks and lamas" is probably in reference to some incidents in 1724–1725, when several Buddhist monks pretended to have been retainers of the emperor when he was a prince, and forged texts to prove it and obtain influence. The emperor issued a decree to the Board of Rites, clarifying that his sympathy for Buddhism did not mean that monks were his political advisors; see Mark McNicholas, *Forgery and Impersonation in Imperial China. Popular Deceptions and the High Qing State* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016), p. 32.

death of his father Kangxi, the emperor summoned the Beijing missionaries to the Yuanmingyuan on October 24, 1725. The Italian Lazarist Teodorico Pedrini (1671–1746), court musician and rival of the Jesuits, thus summarized the exchange:

The emperor said that he had not called us earlier because he was in mourning, as he had not called any bonzes. Now we were allowed to visit him from time to time ... He also said that our Christian religion is good, and when there are evil men like Mu Jingyuan 穆敬遠 (i.e., João Mourão), they should not be considered Christians, like some lamas who were not true lamas. And here he mixed up all other sects, saying that all spurred people to do good.<sup>27</sup>

Clearly, Yongzheng was not only indifferent to Christianity as a religion, but actually believed it was not dissimilar from Buddhism and “all other sects.” The emperor was indeed a proponent of the unity of the Three Teachings. To him, all legitimate teachings shared the goal of spurring people to do good.

During the subsequent official audience of November 18, 1725, when the papal envoys presented the papal letter and gifts, Yongzheng, perhaps with some irony, recognized that the Church was still active in Beijing and Canton, and that such a situation was permanent by his consent:

You Europeans reside in Beijing and Canton. *You proselytize* in these two places, and *I do not forbid you from doing so*. I will also let you go to other places, but why would you want to be in all of China's provinces? ... Two or three here cannot even talk our language, what do they want to do in the provinces? ... If your teachings remain in Beijing and Canton, they will last forever, but not so in the provinces, where Chinese officials are going to accuse you ... *You are not expelled, nor have I given order to destroy your churches, nor have I forbidden your religion.*<sup>28</sup>

The emperor was well aware of the situation in the capital (where 14 Jesuits and 10 papal missionaries remained, and around 6,000 Christians) and Canton (18 Jesuit missionaries, and 34 missionaries from other orders and congregations,

<sup>27</sup> This was one of several audiences in 1725, mostly connected to the arrival of this small papal legation; only in two audiences there was any discussion of religious issues. The source here is a letter by Pedrini, Beijing, November 19, 1725, in APF, SOCP, vol. 32, (1726), ff. 476r-v. For similar accounts, see a letter by Antonie Gaubil SJ, October 27, 1725, in: Antoine Gaubil, *Correspondance de Pékin, 1722–1759*, ed. Renée Simon (Geneve: Libraire Droz, 1970), p. 92; and a manuscript by Rinaldo Romei OCD in the Archives of the Discalced Carmelites in Rome (ms. 207d A and 207f B), ed. Paola Bracaglia, “Per una storia delle relazioni diplomatiche luso-asiatiche: l'ambasciata di due Carmelitani Scalzi all'Imperatore Sung-Chin [sic] 1724. Documentazione Inedita,” B.A. Thesis, Università degli Studi della Tuscia, Viterbo, 2003 (I would like to thank Prof. Mariagrazia Russo for access to this thesis). The sentence “lamas who were not true lamas” is again a likely reference to criminal cases of forged identity by monks in 1724–1725, see McNicholas, *Forgery and Impersonation in Imperial China*, pp. 30–32.

<sup>28</sup> APF, SOCP, vol. 32 (1726), f. 477r.

mostly expelled from other provinces in 1724, and around 10,000 Christians).<sup>29</sup> He was also receiving reports on the provinces. Here again he displayed relative tolerance, going so far as to promise an unlimited permission for Christianity in the two cities crucial for missionary logistics in China, connecting the court missionaries to the maritime network of European powers. In his edict to the pope (November 13, 1725), transmitted on the occasion of his audience with the papal envoys, he publicly enounced this policy:

As for Westerners who reside in China, We shall apply to them the principle that the Emperor should love ten thousand human beings as one. In other words, We shall always direct them to be prudent and quiet. If they really can carefully observe Our laws and maintain order and behave well without transgression, We shall extend to them Our love and clemency.<sup>30</sup>

This was Yongzheng's mantra, for Christians or Muslims alike: be prudent and quiet, and respect the laws. Given the continued activities of underground Christian communities, and the presence of incognito missionaries in the provinces, it was only a matter of time before trouble would ensue, and precipitate further restrictions.

#### 1727 Edict and Audience (May 28 and July 21)

In response to the 1724 prohibition of Christianity, the Portuguese Crown, main patron of the China Catholic missions, planned an embassy to mollify the new emperor. In December 1726 news reached the court that the ambassador Alexandre Metello Souza e Menezes (1687–1766) was in Macao, asking to proceed to Beijing. This enterprise was organized in Lisbon at the urging of the Macao government, which feared that prohibition of Christianity in the provinces and the expulsion of the missionaries would bring to an end the Portuguese presence in China. The fact that the Jesuit João Mourão, a Portuguese subject and a semi-official agent of the Crown, had been imprisoned, also preoccupied King João V. Unbeknownst to the Portuguese, in fact, by the time the embassy reached China, Mourão had already been executed in Xining 西寧 (Qinghai) on August 24, 1726 by imperial order.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> See Fortunato Margiotti, “De missionariorum proscriptioe ex imperio sinico,” in: Margiotti Fortunato – Gaspar Han – Antolín Abad Pérez (eds.), *Sinica Franciscana IX. Relationes et epistolas fratrum minorum Hispanorum in Sinis qui a. 1697–1698 missionem ingressi sunt* (Madrid: apud Centrum Cardenal Cisneros, 1995), pp. lxi-cxvii; Tang Kaijian 汤开建, “Yongzheng jiaonan qijian quzhu chuanjiaoshi zhi Guangzhou shijian shimo kao” 雍正教难期间驱逐传教士至广州事件始末考 (Research on Expulsion of Missionaries to Guangzhou during the Yongzheng Period), *Qingshi yanjiu* 清史研究 2014/2, pp. 1–33.

<sup>30</sup> *Da Qing Shizong xian huangdi shilu* 大清世宗憲皇帝實錄, *juan* 37, pp. 6b–7b, as translated in Fu Lo-shu, *A Documentary Chronicle of Sino-Western Relations* (Tucson: AAS-University of Arizona Press, 1966), vol. 1, p. 144.

<sup>31</sup> On this embassy, see Mariagrazia Russo – António de Vasconcelos de Saldanha, *Embaixada de D. João V de Portugal ao Imperador Yongzheng da China, 1725–1728* (Lisboa: Fundação Oriente, 2005); and Mariagrazia Russo, *A Embaixada enviada por D. João V ao*

The arrival of the embassy, an imposing affair of more than one hundred people, offered Yongzheng the occasion to make known to the world his position on Catholicism. In a famous edict issued on the day of the arrival of Metello in Beijing, May 28, 1727, which coincided with the birthday of the Buddha, the emperor issued "his opinion" (*zhen yi* 朕意), ultimately defining Catholicism as "heterodox" (*yiduan* 異端), albeit with some qualifications. This was to be the final public imperial pronouncement on the topic, and as such it was published in the Capital Gazette (*Jingbao* 京報 or *Dibao* 邸報) and distributed to the entire bureaucracy.<sup>32</sup> He first offered some context, stating that the missionaries engaged in religious diatribes with other religions, and that each judged the other as heterodox:

Today is the birthday of the Buddha; coincidentally the ambassador from Portugal (literally, *Xiyangguo* 西洋國) presents Us a memorial of congratulation. These two events occur simultaneously. For this reason, We embrace the opportunity, now that the ministers in the Court have finished the public business of the day, to proclaim to you Our opinion (朕意). Hitherto, the Buddhists and the Daoists have severely attacked the Westerners' religion and the Westerners in turn severely attacked the errors of the Buddhists and the Daoists. They calumniate each other and denounce each other's religions as heresies (異端). They regard their own doctrine as the only orthodoxy (*zhengdao* 正道), and other teachings as heresies.<sup>33</sup>

After establishing that "heresy" was not an absolute concept among religions, he further relativized it, using Confucius' words to establish the imperial state as the ultimate criteria for heterodoxy:

[Their heresy, however,] is not what our sages called "heresy." Confucius said, "The study of strange doctrines (異端) is harmful indeed!" [*Lunyu* 論語, 2.16]. Does Confucius regard the opinions of people other than himself as a

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*Imperador Yongzheng (1725-1728) através da documentação do Arquivo Distrital de Braga* (Lisboa: Centro Científico e Cultural de Macau, I.P. Ministério da Ciência, Tecnologia e Ensino Superior, 2007).

<sup>32</sup> Parenin summarizes this document within a description of the vicissitudes of the Sunu clan: "un écrit adressé à tous les grands de l'empire et que la gazette a publié ... à l'occasion de la première audience qu'il donna à l'ambassadeur de Portugal." His judgement of Yongzheng's words is scathing: "Il est assez plaisant, dit-il, que le jour même de la naissance de Foë, j'aie vu aux pieds de mon trône un ambassadeur d'Europe. Il se met ensuite à dogmatiser; et, s'érigeant en juge souverain de toutes les religions il se moque de la secte de Foë, et prétend réfuter certains points du christianisme." See *LEC*, vol. 3, p. 436.

<sup>33</sup> *Shizong xian huangdi shangyu neige* 世宗憲皇帝上諭內閣 (hereafter: *Shangyu neige*), *juan* 56, p. 17b, in: *Qinding Siku quanshu*, as translated in Fu Lo-shu, *A Documentary*, vol. 1, pp. 155-157, with my corrections; a complete English version by Thomas Watters, "Discourse on Heresy by a Chinese Emperor," *The Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal* 4 (1872) 9, pp. 225-227; cf. Marinescu, *Defending Christianity*, p. 230, for an analysis of this passage. This is the original text of the key sentence in italics: 此等識見, 皆以同乎己者為正道, 而以異乎己者為異端 ...

"heresy"?! [He certainly does not.] *In employing both Chinese and foreign teachings, we do not consider which are orthodox, but rather whether they harm the manners and morals of the time. Those are all regarded as heterodox.*<sup>34</sup>

Here, Yongzheng declared that he cared little for an abstract or doctrinal meaning of orthodoxy or heterodoxy: it was the impact on social stability and governance that mattered to him. However, in a surprising twist, the emperor, rather than proceed to simply condemn Christianity, further elaborated his relativistic approach to religious and moral teachings. He gave historical examples of heterodox ideas in Buddhism (*Fojiao zhong zhi yiduan* 佛教中之異端), Confucianism (*ru zhong zhi yiduan* 儒中之異端), shamanism and medicine (*wu, yi zhong zhi yiduan* 巫、醫中之異端), concluding that even within orthodox traditions and perfectly acceptable popular practices, one could find aberrations. He then moved on to relativize Christianity in ethnocentric terms:

China has her Chinese teachings, just as the West has Western teachings. Western teachings do not need to be practiced in China; similarly, how can Western countries practice Chinese teachings?<sup>35</sup>

He finally concluded that what was "heterodox" about Christianity was its psychological and spiritual grasp over the common people, seen as a threat to social stability and the ideological foundations of the empire. Yongzheng implied that the idea of God's incarnation, connected to the hope of resurrection for the masses, was a dangerous form of messianism: "If they say that Heaven, for the sake of saving the people, transformed itself into a human being on this earth, they lie wantonly. They use the name of Heaven to seduce and enchant our foolish people into following their religion. This is the heresy of the West! (*Xiyang zhi yiduan* 西洋之異端)."<sup>36</sup>

This specific formulation of the imperial critique of "Western heterodoxy" remained slightly opaque, but Yongzheng's point was not a theological one. The edict in its entirety was clearly inspired by a relativistic view of religions and a practical political preoccupation for stability, which overrode any possibility for a subtler theological or cosmological reflection. On this occasion, the emperor stopped short of issuing any further prohibition of Christianity in addition to those already issued, although he clearly called Catholicism "heterodox" (*yiduan*). The condemnation was not total, however, but simply referred to the socio-political implications of Christian teachings.

<sup>34</sup> *Shangyu neige*, *juan* 56, p. 17b: ... 非聖人之所謂異端也。孔子曰：'攻乎異端，斯害也已。' 孔子豈以異乎己者概斥之為異端乎？凡中國、外國所設之教，用之不以其正，而為世道人心之害者，皆異端也。

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19b: 中國有中國之教，西洋有西洋之教，彼西洋之教不必行于中國，亦如中國之教豈能行于西洋。

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18a: 若云天轉世化人身以救度世人，似此荒誕之詞，乃借天之名，蠱惑狂愚率從其教耳，此則西洋之異端也。

After the departure of the embassy, ten missionaries asked to be received at court to thank the emperor for his gracious reception of the Portuguese envoy. On July 21, 1727, during that audience, Yongzheng again lectured them. He started by scolding them for asking the ambassador to intercede to reopen the provincial missions, forbidding them to ask such questions ever again through diplomatic channels. Then he launched into what was by then becoming a refrain, and a coherent discourse:

Your Law is not necessary here: you worship Heaven, and call him the Lord of Heaven, which means the same. Who does not worship Heaven? We even have a temple dedicated to Heaven here. All teachings, including those of the Confucians, the Bonzes, the Lamas, the Muslims, all worship Heaven. Buddha, the Jade Emperor, Heaven, the Lord of Heaven, all are the same. All people worship Heaven. So what is the use for your teachings in China? You criticize the other sects. Perhaps because one is bad, the other is good? Quite the contrary: *all sects are in the end the same, and all have something good*, and yet within each of these teachings, from those of the literati and other ones to your *Tianzhujiao*, very few fully understand their own doctrine. You first have to know your *heart* (*xin* 心, "heart-mind"), and then you will grasp your own doctrine. Don't we [in China] have your Ten Commandments, too? *All teachings say the same thing, which is to do good*. Would the Lord of Heaven punish someone who does good, even if outside of Christianity?<sup>37</sup>

In his earlier public edict of May 28 of that same year, the emperor had already discussed the idea of the unity of all teachings (not only Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism, but also "non-Chinese" religions such as Tibetan Lamaism, Islam, and Christianity), and had argued that the worship of Heaven was a universal feature of all. Given his penchant for Chan Buddhism, Yongzheng favored the Confucian School of the Mind (*xinxue* 心學), and indeed in the passage above we find a reference to the heart-mind (*xin*), as a way to teach the missionaries a lesson, and humiliate them for ignoring the true meaning of their own religion. This approach confused the missionaries, who commented after the audience that "he spoke with us with firmness, displaying a confusion of all teachings together, scorn for Christianity, us missionaries, and all other teachings and their followers, so arrogant and self-confident, considering himself Master of all teachings."<sup>38</sup> What to the missionaries seemed intellectual and theological arrogance, was nothing but part and parcel of Yongzheng's evolving understanding of the role of religion in the Qing state, deriving from his own spiritual practice in the Chan tradition, and his daily experience in governance.

<sup>37</sup> "Discorso fatto dall'Imperatore a dieci europei, otto P[adri] della Compagnia e due Carmelitani Scalzi, li ventuno di luglio del 1727 in occasione che andarono a ringraziare S.M. de' benefici conferiti al Legato di Portogallo ed insieme a chiedere della salute della M[aestà] S[ua]," APF, SOCP, vol. 33 (1727-1728), f. 420r.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 420v.

### 1728 Audience (June 21)

A year later, on June 21, 1728, a customary visit to greet the emperor gave Yongzheng another occasion to lecture the missionaries. Unlike in preceding audiences, that never lasted very long,<sup>39</sup> this time the emperor conversed for one hour, sitting on pillows with Teodorico Pedrini and Giacinto Giordano of Propaganda, and the Jesuits André Pereira and Domingos Pinheiro. The emperor apparently enjoyed asking questions about Christianity, and refuting what he thought were fallacies that did not accord with his idea of religious unity. Here I offer an excerpt of the conversation, focusing on Pedrini, although Pereira was equally involved in the debate:

*Emperor*: What is the main foundation of your faith?

*Pedrini*: To believe and worship the only Creator of Heaven and Earth.

*Emperor*: And who does not believe in that?! But you attack the Buddha, and the bonzes attack *Tianzhu*, and you quarrel with each other. You must not do this, I told this to the bonzes as well. Your religion, and that of the Buddha, and that of Confucius and the other ones that we have here, all teach to do good: what's the purpose of attacking each other?

[...]

*Pedrini*: [Our God] is the only true god of the world as He created heaven and earth, He is the only one worthy of worship and all the others are false.

*Emperor*: If that is the case, why do you honor me? It would be sufficient to honor your god, and not bother with anything else.

*Pedrini*: We honor Your Majesty because God so ordains, and we would offend God if we did not honor the earthly rulers.

*Emperor*: Thus, you must also honor Buddha. God is like a powerful light, but Buddha and the heads of other religions are like small lamps, and they must be honored as well. Here in China you honor me, but this is no reason to stop honoring your European rulers.

[...]

*Pedrini*: Buddha and the other gods are enemies of the true God, and thus we cannot honor them without offending the true Lord.

*Emperor*: What do you mean by enemies?! They are no enemies at all. [...] Buddha is not an enemy of God. He has created heaven and earth, has neither beginning nor end, and is infinite. I am not talking of the mortal Buddha who

<sup>39</sup> Besides the usual courtesy visits and gift exchanges at court, mentioned in several sources, around June 10-15, 1728 ("no principio da ... 5 luna"), the emperor called the missionaries José Soares, Parenin, Pedrini and Giovanni Giuseppe Costa, and interrogated them on the medicinal properties and the market for opium. This was in response to a memorial from an official in the Ministry of Personnel, a native of Fujian, reporting about the diffusion of "yapien from Holland" in that province and requesting an imperial prohibition; see ARSI, Jap. Sin. 128, f. 165r.

had a father and mother, but of another invisible Buddha, principle of all things.<sup>40</sup>

This exchange shows Yongzheng eagerly promoting his ideas of the unity of teachings, using Buddhism and its cosmological concepts as foundation. He also correlates the worship of God with the honor due to earthly rulers. This seems to suggest, as Pei Huang observed long ago, that to the emperor religious teachings were powerful instruments of political legitimation as well as state-building ideological devices.<sup>41</sup>

### 1733 Audience (March 18)

Apparently there were no substantial audiences between 1728 and 1733, although it was customary for the missionaries to offer greetings to the monarch several times a year in a ceremony they called *cin an* or *zingan*, i.e., *qing'an* 請安 or “rito di salute” (ritual to inquire about the imperial health). On such occasions they were occasionally admitted to the imperial presence, exchanged some pleasantries with the emperor, and were regaled with food. In the aftermath of a large earthquake that destroyed parts of Beijing and killed a large number of its inhabitants on September 30, 1730, the emperor summoned representatives of the missionaries to the Yuanmingyuan on October 5, and showed his support by bestowing relief funds for their damaged churches. However, no discussion of religious issues happened on that occasion.<sup>42</sup>

Next, in August 1732, another quite different disaster struck: the imperial government ordered the deportation of all missionaries still in Canton to Macao, following a memorial by the Governor of Guangdong Ortai, who denounced their proselytizing and accused them of attacks on ancestral symbols.<sup>43</sup> On October 16,

1732, Parennin obtained an audience with four other missionaries, in an attempt to mitigate the consequences of the expulsion, but “they were nothing more than spectators, without any opportunity to talk and reply as necessary to His Majesty.”<sup>44</sup>

The next major audience came in the Spring of 1733. On April 20, 1733, Pedrini wrote a somber letter to the Cardinal Prefect of the Propaganda Fide Congregation in Rome: “I am writing to inform you of an audience we had with the Emperor on March 18 [1733]. I pray God this will be the last one, since on that day the Emperor spoke to us in a tone quite different than in other audiences.”<sup>45</sup> This was not the last audience granted to the missionaries by the emperor before his death in the fall of 1735, but was the last in which Yongzheng engaged in any meaningful conversation with them. As Pedrini mentioned, the tone had now become quite different from the past. After the setback of the 1732 expulsion, the court missionaries sought this audience to ask that at least two or three priests be allowed to return to Canton to serve as procurators for the religious orders in that important international port. On March 18, 1733, at the presence of two “ministers of state” the emperor received eleven missionaries, but rather than entertaining their request, he started berating them for failing to honor their parents and to pay obeisance to their deceased relatives. When the missionaries protested that this was not the case, Yongzheng ordered the ministers to gather Christian texts from the Beijing churches, study the matter, and report to him. The missionaries thought that the ruler was trying to find a pretext to have all of them banished. Yongzheng was probably still influenced by the accusations he had read in Ortai’s memorial. Minor officials conducted perfunctory inspections of the capital’s churches, and collected Christian catechisms for examination, but otherwise no further investigation was conducted.

<sup>40</sup> APF, SOCP, vol. 34 (1729–1730), ff. 218r–221v, Teodorico Pedrini, “Breve relazione d’una udienda data dall’Imperatore a quattro missionarij di Pekino”; this transcript was collated with the version in Archivio della Congregazione della Missione – Roma (ACMR), kindly provided by Gabriele Tarsetti and Fabio Galeffi (Centro ‘Teodorico Pedrini’, Fermo, Italy); a French translation of the ACMR copy, “Courte relation d’une audience accordée par l’Empereur de la Chine à quatre Missionnaires de Pékin,” was published in: *Mémoires de la Congrégation de la mission* (Paris: à la Maison principale de la Congrégation de la Mission, 1866), vol. 7, pp. 340–350. The Jesuit André Pereira compiled a Portuguese version of the conversation based on his recollections, which contains some different language; see ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* 128, ff. 165r–166v. There is no space here for a detailed comparison of the two versions.

<sup>41</sup> See Huang, *Autocracy at Work*, pp. 46–50.

<sup>42</sup> Gaubil confirms that no meetings had happened in a while, as Yongzheng is here quoted saying: “It has been a long time since I saw any of you Europeans, I was worried about you all, and I am relieved to know that you are all safe”; see Gaubil, *Correspondance*, p. 267.

<sup>43</sup> The original memorial in *QTS*, doc. 52, pp. 68–71; see also Yang Wenxin 楊文信 (Yeung Man Shun), “Yongzheng nianjian Tianzhujiao chuanjiaoshi shiye zai Lingnan de fazhan yu cuozhe. Yi 1732 nian quchu Guangzhou chuanjiaoshi wang Aomen zhi shijian wei zhongxin” 雍正年間天主教傳教士事業在嶺南的發展與挫折—以 1732 年去除廣州傳教

士往澳門之時間為中心 (The Development and Frustration of the Catholic Missionary Activities in Guangdong in the Reign of Yongzheng), in: *Zhong-Xi wenhua jiaoliu yu Lingnan shehui bianqian* 中西文化交流與嶺南社會變遷 (East and West Cultural Exchanges and Social Transformation in South China), ed. Zhao Chunchen 趙春晨 – He Dajin 何大進 – Leng Dong 冷東 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2004), pp. 657–677.

<sup>44</sup> See Gaubil, *Correspondance*, p. 340.

<sup>45</sup> Pedrini to the Prefect of Propaganda, April 20, 1733, APF, SOCP, vol. 37 (1735), f. 309r; cf. also *ibid.*, October 21, 1733, ff. 311r–313r; a French translation of a copy of Pedrini’s account in the Archives of the Missions Étrangères de Paris, “Courte relation des paroles dites par l’Empereur le 18 mars 1733,” was published in: *Mémoires de la Congrégation de la mission* (Paris: à la Maison principale de la Congrégation de la Mission, 1866), vol. 7, pp. 353–358. See also several Jesuit reports in Latin and Portuguese on the same audience in Gaubil, *Correspondance*, pp. 351–353 (from the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Rome), and in ARSI, *Jap. Sin.* 128, ff. 191r–v, 192r–193r, 194r–195, 204r–205r, 206r–v, 215r–219r. The Propaganda and Jesuit missionaries bickered so much about the contents of the conversation that Pedrini wrote to the Propaganda Procurator Arcangelo Miralta in Macao: “Here we battled for two months over the audience and the reports about it, so much so that I had to write a whole book of papers about it”; see APF, SOCP, vol. 36 (1732–1734), f. 580v.

Missionary sources report of a few more audiences, but without much substance to them. Six months later (mid-September 1733), five missionaries were summoned to court for a customary greeting audience, the emperor communicated his good health, and immediately dismissed them, without any follow-up. He also briefly met them for the Chinese New Year in 1734 (February 4), and received the newly arrived Jesuits Gabriel Boussel and Pierre Foureau at the Yuanmingyuan on September 19, 1734. So far I have not found references to other meetings before Yongzheng's death on October 8, 1735. We know that secret memorials from Guangdong and Fujian in 1733–1734 denounced connections between Christians and the Philippines, and they alarmed the emperor, who worried about the safety of the coast, foreign encroachment, and the presence of *hanjian* 漢奸 (traitors) sailing between Fujian and Luzon.<sup>46</sup> His coldness in the last two years of his life towards the court missionaries probably derived from these preoccupations (and he was a busy man as well), but he might have also purposely endorsed the status quo, continuing to reduce the space of action for the Church in the provinces, while allowing the priests in Beijing enough breathing space to remain a conduit for channeling state-building technologies from Europe to the Qing government.

### Conclusion

This essay has focused on specific personal pronouncements by the Yongzheng Emperor expressing his attitude to Christianity, and obviously offers a limited view of the issue, but also a fresh perspective, based on forgotten sources. Guided by the agenda of the Qing Confucian civilizing mission (*jiaohua*), the attempt at unification of the Three Teachings, and concerns about court factionalism, native heterodox activities, and European military and commercial threats, the monarch labeled Christians as both religious heretics and political traitors, but also maintained an ambiguity that never resolved the Qing relationship to Christianity.

This approach was not simply based on state-building interests, personal fancy for Western exotica, and diplomatic and political expediency, but also on ideological "relativistic" positions taken by Yongzheng on good and evil, orthodox and heterodox, and the meaning of religion itself. In particular, the imperial project of unification of the Three Teachings, which ultimately equated Christianity with other religions, aimed at imposing a unity of purpose for all religions at the service of the Qing "civilizing project." I would argue on the basis of the sources examined here that this ideological plan played a crucial role in shaping Yongzheng's attitude to Christianity, something the literature on Sino-Western relations has not highlighted enough, so far.

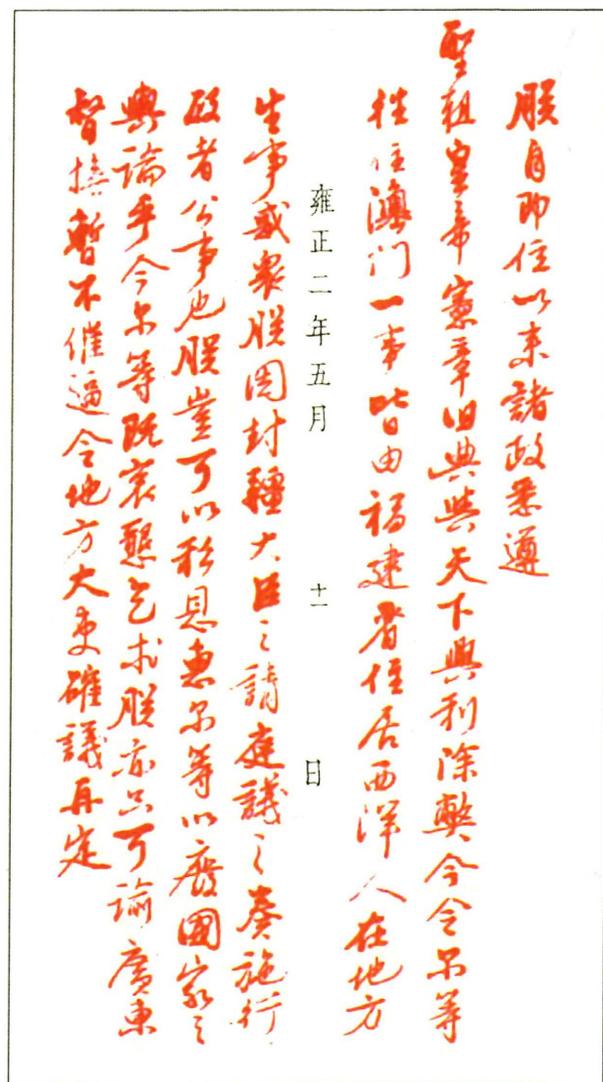
In the end, and in spite of periodic state attacks from 1724 onward, Christianity survived as a minoritarian component of late imperial religious life into the

modern era. While the main reason for Christianity's survival lies in the localization of the faith and in the role of native agents in the provinces, as I have shown in my past work on Fujian, other concomitant factors need to be highlighted and further explored at the imperial core in Beijing, as I did here. The same Qing state that prohibited Christianity in the provinces, also maintained an ambivalent relationship with missionary presence in the capital, an attitude inaugurated by Yongzheng, continued by his son Qianlong 乾隆 (r. 1735–1796), and eventually abandoned by his grandson Jiaqing 嘉慶 (r. 1796–1820).

<sup>46</sup> On these issues, see memorials from the Guangdong and Fujian provincial officials in the 1730s, published in *YZH*, vol. 26.

APPENDIX  
COLORED ILLUSTRATIONS

EUGENIO MENEGON, "Yongzheng's Conundrum. The Emperor on Christianity, Religions, and Heterodoxy," pp. 311-335.



Yongzheng's vermilion endorsement on the memorial by Ignaz Kögler S.J., July 1, 1724 (YZ 2.5.11), reproduced in *QTS*, vol. 1, doc. 43, p. 59.