

Albert Chan. *Chinese Books and Documents in the Jesuit Archives in Rome: A Descriptive Catalogue: Japonica Sinica I-IV.* Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2002. xliii + 626 pp. Bibliographical references and abbreviations, illustrations, indices. \$145.00 (cloth), ISBN 0-7656-0828-6.

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A Gate to the China Materials in the Roman Jesuit Archives

Between the late sixteenth century and the eighteenth century, Catholic missionaries to China--especially Jesuits--were the only foreign observers allowed in the Chinese empire. Besides engaging in their religious work, they also acted as the first Western interpreters of China. The books they published in Latin and in a number of European languages on the history, geography and culture of China, based on first-hand experience and knowledge of the country, offered to the scholars and "curious readers" of Europe a wide range of topics, going from descriptions of the imperial bureaucracy, to the philosophy of Confucius, to Chinese pharmacopoeia. Most of this knowledge was derived from Chinese informants, but also, to a large extent, from Chinese books. Besides consulting them in loco, missionaries also brought or sent Chinese books back to Europe, both as curios and as proof of their labors in Asia. European bibliophiles since the late sixteenth century remained fascinated by these books from China: their physical appearance, the thin, almost transparent paper of their pages, the mysterious Chinese characters, all made these objects a prized collectible. And thus, sometimes by chance, sometimes by design, Chinese books found their way to a number of European royal libraries, as well as to the papal library in Rome.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Rome hosted in the aggregate of its libraries and archives one of the largest concentrations of Chinese materials in Europe. Some important collections assembled through the efforts of scholarly patrons such as Cardinal Girolamo Casanate in the late seventeenth century and Cardinal Stefano Borgia in the second half of the eighteenth century included Chinese holdings, and were occasionally opened to visiting European

"orientalists." Nevertheless, the most active academic centers of European proto-sinology were elsewhere: Paris, Leiden, Berlin, and St. Petersburg.

One of the reasons for the scholarly marginality of Rome in Chinese studies was the narrow focus of the ecclesiastical collections: a large portion of the Chinese materials found there was gathered in the context of the famous--or rather notorious--Chinese Rites Controversy.[1] Starting in the 1650s, Rome became the main site of a bitter theological struggle over missionary strategies in China, pitting the Jesuits and their sympathizers against other religious orders (mainly the Dominicans and the Foreign Mission Society of Paris). The issue of the so-called "Chinese Rites" crystallized the essence of the diatribe: was it possible to allow Chinese Christians to participate in ancestral rituals and in the cult to Confucius, seen as civil ceremonies with no religious meaning, as the Jesuits thought, or was this a way to condone idolatry and superstition, as the Dominicans and their allies believed? Other connected issues were the permissibility of translation of liturgical books and of the liturgy itself into Chinese, and the creation of a Chinese-Christian theological vocabulary.

A steady stream of treatises, letters, and reports from the Chinese missions continued to reach the Eternal City, debating the issue of the Chinese Rites, of liturgy and terminology. Subsequently, disputes ensued in the papal commissions of the Congregation *De Propaganda Fide* (the "Ministry of Missions" of the Catholic church), as well as of the Holy Office, the institution that controlled the purity of the faith and ran the Roman Inquisition. Often, along with reports in Western languages, Catholic books written in Chinese, as well as other books on Chinese philosophy and religion, were brought

back by envoys of the two factions to be used in the battle. These texts were occasionally read by a small number of "old China hands" who had left the mission and traveled back to Rome to defend their respective positions in the papal commissions.

Besides the books housed in the Vatican Library, the two main collections of China-related materials in early eighteenth-century Rome were found in the hands of the Jesuits and the Dominicans. The Jesuits kept their collections in the library of the famous Jesuit "Collegio Romano" (Roman College) and in the central Jesuit archives kept at the "Professed House" (seat of the Jesuit General). The Dominicans, on the other hand, kept theirs in the Biblioteca Casanatense.[3] Even if only a narrow street separated their libraries in the center of Rome, the two groups of priests researching the China materials remained bitter and divisive toward each other.

The old Jesuit China materials today in Rome are mainly divided between two repositories: the Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (ARSI), i.e. the central archives of the Jesuit Order, and the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Roma "Vittorio Emanuele II" (Italian Central National Library, BNCR). These collections are the survivors of the difficult history of the Society of Jesus at the end of the Ancien Regime and into the nineteenth century. In 1773, due to pressures from secular governments all over Europe, and to a mounting wave of opposition from within the church, the papacy decided to dissolve the Society of Jesus. The Archives at the Professed House where the General resided (in today's Piazza del Ges=) were seized by Pontifical authorities, and remained under the control of the Roman Curia. Between 1773 and 1814, some of the documents kept at the Professed House were taken by cardinals and other individuals, and ended up in different collections (such as the archives of Propaganda Fide in Rome, the French National Library, or the Chapter Archives of the Toledo Cathedral, Spain). Whether the China materials were also partly pilfered, we do not know. After the restoration of the Society in 1814, part of the archival documents returned in the hands of the Jesuits, but we know little about those years. In 1873, when the new Italian state suppressed the religious corporations in Rome, the Jesuits first secretly transferred the archives from the Professed House to the nearby Torlonia Palace. Later on, the archives were moved to a depot in the Jesuit

Collegium Germanicum (German College), at the time in the Borromeo Palace (Via del Seminario).[2]

The China materials traveled along. However, between 1890-1893 all archival documents were discreetly transferred to Exaten, the Netherlands, by order of the Jesuit General Luis Martin, who feared further confiscation. During the "Dutch exile" the documents were re-ordered, restored (many by irreversible old methods like the coating of documents with gelatin and cellophane), and inventoried. The documents remained in the Netherlands until 1939, when they were finally transferred again to Rome, in the new General Curia, in Via dei Penitenzieri. In 1993, a new archives building, located in the garden of the Curia, has been opened to the public.

The ARSI Chinese materials also migrated to the Netherlands in 1893, and it is there that they received their present classification. These materials, remarkably well preserved, all came from the old central archives at the Professed House, and not from the Library of the Collegio Romano.[4] The Chinese collection of this latter institution, instead, mostly ended up in the Italian Central National Library of Rome. A colorful episode regarding the library of the Collegio Romano shows how the Jesuits tried with all their forces to resist the confiscation of their materials by the Italian state. In 1877, four years after the Collegio Romano had been occupied by the Italians, thanks to the information offered by a citizen, the authorities discovered a trapdoor in the library leading to a storage room where they found a great number of precious manuscripts (over three thousand), rare books and objects, probably hidden there by the last Jesuit Prefect of the library for safe-keeping. Among them were also some Chinese books, and the manuscript of a Chinese-Portuguese dictionary, which had been studied in 1869 by the Italian orientalist Carlo Valenziani, with the permission of the Jesuits.[5]

Through their covert transfer operations, the Jesuits had better luck in preserving their archival records, including today's ARSI Chinese materials. With the publication of Albert Chan, SJ's *Chinese Books and Documents in the Jesuit Archives in Rome: A Descriptive Catalogue: Japonica Sinica I-IV*, we finally have a complete overview of those Chinese materials. *Chinese Books and Documents* is a handsome hardbound volume of xliii + 626 pages, the publication of which was sponsored by

the China and California Provinces of the Jesuit order, and by the Ricci Institute for Chinese-Western Cultural History at the University of San Francisco, with support from the Henry Luce Foundation. After a brief preface by the author explaining the genesis of the volume in the early 1970s, a list of the books and documents ordered by signaturae (call numbers), and a list of bibliographical references and abbreviations, the text itself starts without preambles, arranged mainly by the signatura of the archival documents and books. Indexes of book titles in Wade-Giles romanization (the system used throughout the volume) of the ancient Chinese printing houses and publishers of the texts, of place names, and of subjects and persons, make searching the volume an easier task. A list of popes, Jesuit Generals, and the China mission superiors during the sixteenth-eighteenth centuries, and a short vita of Albert Chan, SJ close the volume.

The main text (pp. 1-561) is a detailed descriptive catalogue of the materials contained in the ARSI section Japonica Sinica I-IV. While most of the Japonica Sinica section [i.e. Documents from Japan and China, without any roman numeral] in ARSI contains Western-languages manuscript letters and reports from East Asia written by Jesuit missionaries in the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries; the part of Japonica Sinica with roman numerals I-II-III-IV mostly consists of Chinese-language manuscripts and printed books (some Japanese items can also be found, hence the name Japonica).

The present organization of the collection dates to the days of Exaten, although we cannot exclude that it followed some previous archival ordering.[6] Jap. Sin. I (no. 1-224) contains editions of Chinese classical and philosophical writings, mainly in the Confucian tradition, as well as the manuscript and printed writings of Chinese converts, and catechetical printed works by missionaries, grouped by authors. A few Japanese works and some miscellaneous works in Latin are also included. Jap. Sin. II (no. 1-173) gathers mainly Chinese-language works of natural philosophy, sciences, linguistics, as well as miscellaneous works in Latin, imperial and royal edicts, and some catechisms. Jap. Sin. III (no. 1-24) is an assemblage on the translation efforts of the Jesuits in Confucian thought, and of historical and biographical works on the history of the China mission. Finally, Jap. Sin. IV (no. 1-30) is a series

of mostly Latin works on the Jesuit interpretation of the Chinese classics and of Chinese histories and chronologies. Such a diverse collection seems naturally to cluster around enduring themes of the Jesuit engagement with China: the study of the Chinese Confucian classics (to the detriment of serious appreciation for the Buddhist and Daoist traditions); the compilation of texts harmonizing Catholic doctrine with Confucian sensibilities; internal discussions on the problems of rites; the introduction of Western knowledge to the Chinese literati; and the composition of apologetic writings attacking Chinese "superstitions," as well as glorifying the Jesuit enterprise in China.

Obviously, this collection is (and has been) very precious in exploring the Jesuit interpretation of Confucianism and its commentarial sources, the scientific approach of the Jesuits in China, as well as the internal debates between Jesuits and their converts on thorny ritual issues. Many texts are not unique, and other copies or editions of those texts can be found in the Bibliotheque nationale de France (Paris), the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (Vatican City), or elsewhere. But a number of texts in ARSI are unique or very rare, and recently a vast selection of these texts has been offered to the sinological public in the collection edited by Nicolas Standaert and Adrian Dudink, *Yesuhui Luoma Dang'anguan Ming-Qing Tianzhujiao wenxian - Chinese Christian Texts from the Roman Archives of the Society of Jesus* (Taipei: Taipei Ricci Institute, 2002), 12 vols. (For a presentation, see

<<http://www.usfca.edu/ricci/resources/pubs/RASJ%20Order%20form.pdf>>).

Chan's work in fact represents an ideal guide to this collection of primary sources, and to much more. *Chinese Books and Documents* in fact is not simply an inventory of the collection, but rather a descriptive catalogue, and herein lies its value. Many entries run to several pages, and supply a wealth of bibliographic information on the texts (often unique manuscripts), their authors, and the scholarship about them. Only with time, possible omissions or errors (such as identification of individuals mentioned in the sources), deriving from the pioneering nature of this large work and the relative lack of research on certain aspects of the Jesuit mission, may emerge through the effort of scholars.[7] Nevertheless, the quality of the scholarship is high throughout, as we would expect from a careful Ming historian like Albert Chan, trained both in the traditional Chinese curriculum

and in the Western historical method.

I have only two general criticisms, one on the style of the entries, and another on the secondary scholarship employed. First, there is a certain lack of uniformity in the entries, which are sometimes quite long, sometimes too brief, and which offer differing levels of details about the physical form of the texts (number of folios or pages, dimensions of the pages, number of characters per page, etc.) and their provenance.

Secondly, the scholarship cited is not updated to the latest research. After the first draft of the catalogue was completed in the early 1980s, "due to various circumstances" almost two decades elapsed before publication. Chan therefore acknowledges at p. xv that "references to catalogues and studies published after the 1970s are few and mainly restricted to the early 1980s." For an update on the exciting work in this field published in the 1980s and 1990s, readers are advised to turn to the pages of the recent *Handbook of Christianity in China* (edited by Nicolas Standaert; Leiden: Brill, 2001).

In sum, *Chinese Books and Documents* is a rich introduction to a variety of materials, covering the Chinese classics, Christian-Chinese topics, and Chinese religions, and offers a convenient and learned gate to the ARSI materials. It will be a needed addition for any sinological library, and a source of research ideas for years to come in the fields of Chinese-Western relations and of Christianity-in-China.

Notes

[1]. There were exceptions, however. In 1684, the Jesuit Philippe Couplet brought to Rome a collection of Chinese Christian books that was donated to the pope as a propaganda move on behalf of the Jesuit mission. Those books are still housed in the Vatican Library today. Moreover, some cardinals collected "exotic" oriental materials, including Chinese ones, in their private libraries (for example Cardinal Corsini and Cardinal Casanate in the seventeenth century). Later on, Cardinal Stefano Borgia, Prefect of Propaganda Fide, became an avid collector of orientalia and archeological artifacts. His collection of Chinese books is now housed in the Vatican Library; on orientalism in Rome, see, e.g., Paola Orsatti, *Il fondo Borgia della Biblioteca Vaticana e gli studi orientali a Roma tra Sette e Ottocento* (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca

Apostolica Vaticana, 1996); Anna Germano and Marco Nocca, eds., *La collezione Borgia: curiosità e tesori da ogni parte del mondo* (Napoli: Electa, 2001).

[2]. The Archives of the Jesuit General Procurators, kept in the Collegio Romano after the restoration of the Society, however, were confiscated by the Italian government in 1870 following the incorporation of Rome into the Kingdom of Italy. In 1873 they became part of the Royal State Archives of Italy and were returned to the Jesuits only in 1924, forming the so-called "Fondo Gesuitico" in ARSI. After 1873, the modern section of the Jesuit archives moved with the General Curia to Fiesole near Florence, while the early section remained hidden in the German College in Rome. On the history of ARSI, see e.g. Edmond Lamalle, "L'archivio di un grande ordine religioso. L'Archivio Generale della Compagnia di Ges=," *Archiva Ecclesiae* 24-25 (1981-82): pp. 89-120.

[3]. Smaller collections were also kept in some Franciscan convents in Rome, and partly ended up in the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Roma "Vittorio Emanuele II" (BNCR); see Marina Battaglini, "Libri cinesi e giapponesi alla Biblioteca Nazionale [pp. 7-10 "I fondi di origine ecclesiastica"]," in *Pagine dall'Oriente. Libri cinesi e giapponesi della Biblioteca Nazionale*, edited by Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale Vittorio Emanuele II - Roma (Roma: Bardi Editore, 1996), pp. 7-14. On the library of the Collegio Romano, see Ricardo Villoslada, *Storia del Collegio Romano dal suo inizio (1551) alla soppressione della Compagnia di Ges= (1773)* (Roma: Universit= Gregoriana, 1954); Virginia Carini Dainotti, *La Biblioteca Nazionale Vittorio Emanuele al Collegio Romano* (Firenze: Olschki, 1956); on the Chinese materials in the Casanatense, see Eugenio Menegon, "The Casanatense Library (Rome) and its China Materials. A Finding List," *Sino-Western Cultural Relations Journal* XXII (2000): pp. 31-55.

[4]. An eighteenth-century catalogue of the Chinese books in the old Jesuit archives is still preserved in ARSI: *Index librorum Sinensium juxta rerum classes distributus*, Jap. Sin. 152.2, ff. 23r-38r; see Chan, *Chinese Books*, p. 436. A comparison of the Latin renderings of the titles kept then in archives and the today-existing Chinese books and documents could help us reconstruct the history of the collection.

[5]. See Costanzo Bizzocchi, "Il 'ripostiglio' della Biblioteca del Collegio Romano," *Gesuiti della Provincia Romana* 2 (1971): pp. 17-21; Carini Dainotti, *La biblioteca*, pp. 68-71. The Library of the Collegio Romano apparently remained intact between the suppression of the Society and its resurrection in 1814. In 1842, an erudite described the library as still rich with 80,000 volumes; see Moroni's *Dizionario di erudizione storico-ecclesiastica*, as quoted in Villoslada, *Storia*, p. 193. On the present condition of the Chinese collection in the BNCR, see e.g. Battaglini, "Libri cinesi...", pp. 7-10.

[6]. A forthcoming article by Ad Dudink in the journal *Monumenta Serica* (2002 issue) explores the layering of the ARSI Chinese collection and its archival structure. Dr. Dudink was also responsible for overseeing the scholarly editing of Albert Chan's *Chinese Books and Documents*, and making bibliographic improvements and additions throughout. In the same issue of *Monumenta Serica*, Paul Rule will offer a review of Chan's catalogue, including information on the origins of the Japonica Sinica collection in ARSI. A preliminary version of Rule's review is available on the site of the Ricci Institute (University of San Francisco), in PDF format at: http://www.usfca.edu/ricci/resources/pubs/chan_review.pdf.

[7]. For an example of problems in identifying individuals mentioned in ARSI Chinese documents, see the diverging interpretations on the identity of Western missionaries mentioned by their Chinese names in *Jap. Sin.* I (38/42) 41/1c, respectively by Nicolas Standaert, *The Fascinating God. A Challenge to Modern Chinese Theology Presented by a Text on the name of God Written by a 17th century Chinese Student of Theology* (Rome: Editrice Pontificia Universit= Gregoriana, 1995), p. 27, and by Huang Yinong (Huang Yi-Long), "Bei huluede shengyin: jieshao Zhongguo Tianzhujaotou dui 'Liyi wenti' taidu de wenxian" ("Neglected Voices: Literature related to the reaction of contemporary Christians toward the 'Rites Controversy'"), *Tsing Hua Journal of Chinese Studies* NS XXV, no. 2 (1995): pp. 137-160 (see pp. 142-143). Chan, *Chinese Books and Documents*, pp. 63-64 offers yet another interpretation on their identity.

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