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## The Origins of the Jesuit Authority and Influence at the Court of Emperors Wanli (1572–1620), Shunzi (1644–1661) and Kangxi (1661–1722) and in the Wider Circles of the Chinese Society in the Light of the Works of Thomas Szpot Dunin (1644–1713)

### ABSTRACT

The article analyzes the role of authority in the Jesuit *modus operandi* in China in the early modern period as it can be deduced from the works of Tomasz Szpot Dunin SJ. (1644–1713), in particular from his *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* (ARSI, Jap. Sin 102; Jap. Sin. 103) and *Collectanea Historiae Sinensis* (ARSI, Jap. Sin 104; Jap. Sin. 105 I; Jap. Sin. 105 II). The manuscripts contain a detailed description of the Jesuit method of working in a very challenging culturally and politically environment in which the question of authority played a predominant role. For Matteo Ricci and his followers, the goal of their missionary work was to plant Christianity in China, but it could have been done only by everyday efforts to win the acceptance of the court and of the wider circles of the Chinese society. The article enumerates and discusses the seven dimensions of Jesuit authority which are broadly divided into two types, namely, the secular authority (*auctoritas profana*) and the sacred authority (*auctoritas sacra*). The former found its expression primarily in a proper dress code and grooming, dignified posture, solemn facial expression and impeccable social manners. These were combined with limited use of physical force for self-defence and willingness to offer their military expertise when it deemed necessary to promote the missionary goals. Furthermore, the Jesuits lived a virtuous life combined with charity manifested towards the poor, especially in time of natural disasters and social unrest. However, the authority they exercised among the Confucian mandarinates was based on their distinguished literary skills, remarkable command of Chinese and practical understanding of international diplomacy which enabled them to serve as cultural and political brokers. Finally, the Jesuit exercised the latter form of authority was divinely mandated as they were the teachers of the Divine Law (*Magistri Legis Divinae*), which, for the Chinese Emperors, who were regarded as

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the Sons of Heaven (*Tianzi* or *Huangdi*) was tantamount to the knowledge of astronomy.

**KEYWORDS:** Thomas Szpot Dunin, Jesuits, China, Emperor Wanli, Emperor Shunzi, Emperor Kangxi, Authority

#### ABSTRACT

Źródła autorytetu i wpływu jezuitów na dworze cesarzy Wanli (1572–1620), Shunzi (1644–1661) i Kangxi (1661–1722) i w szerszych kręgach społeczeństwa chińskiego w świetle dzieła Tomasza Dunina Szpota (1644–1713)

Artykuł dotyczy roli autorytetu w modus operandi jezuitów w Chinach w epoce nowożytnej w świetle dzieła Tomasza Szpota Dunina SJ (1644–1713), w szczególności jego *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* (ARSI, Jap. Sin. 102; Jap. Sin. 103) oraz *Collectanea Historiae Sinensis* (ARSI, Jap. Sin. 104; Jap. Sin. 105 I; Jap. Sin. 105 II). Powyższe manuskrypty zawierają szczegółowy opis jezuickiej metody pracy w bardzo trudnym środowisku kulturowo-politycznym, w którym kwestia władzy i autorytetu odgrywała dominującą rolę. Dla Matteo Ricciego i jego następców celem pracy misyjnej było krzewienie chrześcijaństwa w Chinach, co można było osiągnąć jedynie dzięki akceptacji dworu cesarskiego oraz szerszych kręgów społeczeństwa chińskiego. W artykule wymieniono siedem wymiarów autorytetu jezuickiego, które można ogólnie podzielić na dwa typy, mianowicie na autorytet świecki (*auctoritas profana*) i autorytet sakralny (*auctoritas sacra*). Ten pierwszy znajdował swe odbicie we właściwym ubiorze i wyglądzie, godnej postawie i poważnym wyrazie twarzy, nienagannych manierach społecznych, ograniczonym użyciu siły fizycznej dla samoobrony w przypadku zagrożenia życia oraz tendencji do wykorzystywania zachodniej wiedzy wojskowej dla promowania misji. Ponadto jezuici prowadzili cnotliwe życie połączone z miłością okazywaną ubogim, zwłaszcza w czasie klęsk żywiołowych i niepokojów społecznych. Jednak autorytet, jakim cieszyli się wśród mandarynatu konfucjańskiego, opierał się głównie na ich wybitnych zdolnościach literackich, dobrej znajomości języka chińskiego i praktycznym zrozumieniu dyplomacji międzynarodowej, co umożliwiało im odgrywanie roli pośredników kulturalnych i politycznych. Wreszcie autorytet jezuitów miał też wymiar sakralny, gdyż byli oni postrzegani jako Nauczyciele Prawa Bożego (*Magistri Legis Divinae*), co dla cesarzy chińskich, uważanych za Synów Niebios (*Tianzi* lub *Huangdi*), było równoznaczne z wiedzą astronomiczną.

**KEYWORDS:** Tomasz Duninn Szpot, jezuici, Chiny, cesarz Wanli, cesarz Shunzi, cesarz Kangxi, autorytet

Authority, to begin with defining the key term used in the title of this paper, is a power to influence action, opinion, or belief of others. It derives from the Latin verb *augere*, which means “to increase, to grow, to fulfill.” In other words, *auctoritas* or *authoritas* (the spelling Szpot adopted) is the influence which emanates from a wise, pious and respectful person and is intrinsically linked to a life lived in service of higher values, be it family, nation or God. As for the Jesuits, they were bound by the *auctoritas catholica*, which combined contemporary *horizontal* practise *with vertical* tradition, what meant that certain customs and modes of behaviour were acceptable only if rooted in universality and antiquity. At the same time, while living in China, they were exposed to a different understanding of authority, which was based on long literary tradition and political culture linked primarily to Confucianism, but also it took into account the heritage of Shamanism, Daoism and Buddhism.<sup>1</sup>

While analyzing various aspects of the Jesuit missionary engagement in the 17th century in China, as perceived by the Polish Jesuit Tomasz Ignacy Szpot Dunin, we can distinguish seven dimensions of their activity, which formed altogether the core of their authority and influence at the court and throughout the country.<sup>2</sup> One of the key issues which casts light on Jesuit spectacular success in China is the interplay between *authoritas* exercised by the missionaries and *potestas* / *potentia* held by Chinese emperors, court officials and local magistrates. The main focus of this paper are the reigns of emperors Wanli, Shunzi and Kangxi as described in *Historiae Sinarum Imperii* (ARSI, Jap. Sin 102; Jap. Sin. 103) and *Collectanea Historiae Sinensis* (Jap. Sin 104; Jap. Sin. 105 I; Jap. Sin. 105 II).<sup>3</sup> The rule of the first one coincided with Matteo Ricci’s missionary enterprise in China, the rule of the last one corresponded to the time the Jesuits reached the apogee of their possibilities in the Middle Kingdom.

If for the sake of the argument we adopt the metaphor of the seven-storey mountain, then at the foot of Jesuit *authoritas* in China we would have force and coercion. By doing so, we are well aware that the Jesuits did not have the support of great powers behind them in the sense the Protestant missionaries had in China during the Opium Wars. The Catholic Iberian Empire of Portugal and Spain was unable to maintain a steady military influence in East-Asia and was already in decline by 1600. The Dutch, another naval power in the region, were openly hostile towards the Jesuits

1 On “Catholic auctoritas”: Fitzgerald, 1999. In Chinese tradition “auctoritas” can be linked to “dao, 道” and “de, 德” (charismatic power). See: Wang, Bao, Guan, 2020; Ching, 1997.

2 On Tomasz Szpot Dunin (ca 1645–1713), his life and legacy see: Danieluk, 2017.

3 On how Szpot uses the terms “authoritas,” “aestimatio,” “honor,” “potestas,” “potentia” in his texts, see: Jap. Sin. 102 f. 11 v; Jap. Sin. 102 f. 12 r; Jap. Sin. 27 v.

and did everything what was in their power to undermine their position in Goa, Macau and Nagasaki (McCoy, 2021; Jap. Sin. 102).

Undoubtedly, the power the Jesuits exercised in China was weak and coercion fragile and they were rather the result of their ingenuity and skillfulness than of the execution of sheer force. Already the first Jesuits who arrived in Southeast Asia had noticed that the people there had a respect for power and wealth and intellectual superiority over others. So, rather than trying to combat this attitude, they tried everywhere and under all circumstances to behave with dignity and on no condition show fear and weakness (Brockey, 2007).<sup>4</sup> On an individual level, however, this strategy was not always enough and the resort to armed self-defense against the attack was on several occasions the only sensible solution to deter enemies. When the Jesuit house was attacked by the Chinese in 1586 under the false accusation raised by an ill-willed Chinese that the Jesuits were involved in slave trade, the missionaries used as the deterrence the two Moors and one Negro, known for their robust body stature, who had been brought before from Goa to protect their mission outposts. According to Szpot, the mere manifestation of this force sufficed to deter the attackers (Jap. Sin. 102).

Not unlike in Japan, the Jesuits in China played the card of the military superiority of the West as an argument in promoting the Catholic faith (Boxer, 1951; Swen, 2021). Some of them used military skills as cannon casters and gunpowder manufacturers. Ferdinand Verbiest, for instance, was assigned by Emperor Kangxi to equip his army with modern Western cannons and out of the total number of nine hundred and five pieces of artillery cast during Kangxi's reign, Verbiest made more than half of them (Shu Liguang, 1994; Young, 1983). A dozen of them were exported from China after the Boxer rebellion and found their way to various European museums: seven of them are in Rome – three in Castel Sant'Angelo and four in Museo di Roma in Trastevere (Stary, 1994). Tomasz Dunin Szpot provides the background for Verbiest's involvement in the preparation of the artillery on the European model for the imperial army. In the entry for the year 1674 he reports that Kangxi was increasingly concerned about the rebellion of the Western Tatars, who were becoming aggressive on the northern frontier. In order to increase the strength of his army, the emperor turned to Verbiest for help. Any scruples of conscience the missionary might have had were diminished both by the impossibility to refuse the imperial command and by the desire to use this opportunity as the means for promoting the Divine Law. Therefore, he supervised the production of large and

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4 About the relation between "authority" and "gravitas" see: Menegon, 2020.

cannons which were suitable to defend city walls, to be used in pitched field battles, and to augment combat strength in naval operations.<sup>5</sup>

China was an agrarian society with a broad peasant base, a merchant and artisan class in the middle and scholar-officials at the top of the structure which was “capped” – as Etienne Balazs put it – by mandarinates (Balazs, 1964). They were a small group of specialists, skilled in statecraft and classically educated. The power they exercised was delegated to them directly by the emperor after their competence had been tested by the state exams. During the Qing Empire there was only around twenty thousand of them to control the whole country (Reischauer & Fairbank, 1960). Since social status and authority was visually expressed in dress code, the first Jesuits in China were surprised to find that Buddhist monks were much less respected than the educated elite. In 1595, Ricci appeared in the robe of typical Chinese literati, wearing the silk garment. Meanwhile, Alessandro Valignano, the Visitor for Japan and China, granted permission to the missionaries to grow beards and long hair.<sup>6</sup> This tonsorial revolution turned out to be more than beneficial for the Jesuits since cutting hair in Ming China was a disgrace. The noble countenance could not be achieved without properly coiled hair into a topknot on the crown of the head and covered by a cap made of horsehair and without a long grey beard, which symbolized wisdom and old age. But there was more to this. The teaching of Confucius himself was that hair was a gift from one’s parents and cutting them was an act of rebellion which went against the basic precepts of filial piety. After the overthrow of the Mings, the Qing rulers introduced a new queue hairstyle, which represented submission to the new dynasty and refusal to adjust to it was punishable by death (Wakeman, 1975; Hildebeitel & Miller, 1998). Szpot takes notice of the fact that during the turmoil of the Manchu-Chinese War some Jesuits managed to avoid death because of their dignified appearance. Such was the case of Father Alvaro Semedo who was staying with a local populace when the Manchu broke into the town. Although his fellow Christians urged him to flee, he did not abandon his congregation. Having secured the consecrated things from the church not to be profaned by the invaders, he decided to put on ecclesiastical vestments and stay inside the church. When the Manchu soldiers entered the temple and saw the kneeling priest with his congregation in front of the altar, they were so impressed by his grey hair and the expression of his face that they refrained themselves from doing him and his flock any harm (Jap. Sin. 103). The aura of authority surrendering the Jesuits, as

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5 See in Szpot: “P. Ferdinandus Verbiest tormenta bellica pro imperatore fundit contra rebelles”: Jap. Sin. 103, f. 171v-172r.

6 See: Gernet, 1985; see also: footnote 6 on page 250.

the masters of ritual, was particularly experienced by the common Chinese people when the missionaries were celebrating in a solemn and dignified manner the Latin Mass (Brockey, 2007).<sup>7</sup>

The third source of the Jesuit authority was their *caritas christiana* which found expression in pastoral and charitable works. It has been emphasized that Jesuits concentrated their activity in large cities, close to the centers of governance. The ultimate aim of this strategy was to win the friendship of people of power and through them reach the emperor in Peking. The Jesuits believed that once the emperor was baptized, the whole society would conform to his decision (Gernet, 1985). Szpot recognizes this dependance and he is aware that nothing happens in China against the will of the Celestial Ruler. Yet, he also knows that the Son of Heaven is surrendered by the concentric rings of power represented by local mandarins, the court mandarinates, the palace eunuchs and the closest members of the imperial family. In order to make any progress in the land where the mere physical presence of a foreigner was barely tolerated, not to mention any evangelical advancement, this small group of missionaries had to be involved in constant intellectual exchange with one of the most sophisticated group of scholars and, what very often went together, with corrupted bureaucrats. It was then the matter of prudence, not negligence, that the pastoral and charitable work was delegated to the catechists, who were much more familiar with the needs of the local population. This absence of the Jesuits in the provinces and, was one of the charges leveled against them by missionaries from the Dominican and Franciscan orders operating in Southeast Asia. Instead, in the works of Thomas Dunin Szpot, there are examples of Jesuit charity service in the times of crisis, both natural and man-made disasters, such as war, pestilence, crop failure or river flooding. When in 1586 some lower parts of Chaokim [Guangzhou 廣州] near the Jesuit house were flooded the fathers welcomed those affected by flood in their house and when the waters receded, they helped the victims to rebuild their homes. The Chaokimians who were unaccustomed to Christian mercy referred to it as “miracle” – *prodigium vocaverunt* (Jap. Sin. 102). This practice often stood in stark contrast to the policies of the Chinese government and the attitude of the local elite, who isolated themselves from the common people in times of hardship. Father Étienne Faber from Avignone well illustrates the point.<sup>8</sup> He worked among the rural

7 See also: F.J. Woo review of Brockey's book (2008); however, Latin Mass was looked at with suspicion by the Chinese authorities: Thierry, 2020.

8 See the entry under “Stephanus Faber” in: *Catalogus Patrum Societatis Iesu qui post obitum S. Francisci Xaverii primo saeculo, sive ab anno 1581, usque ad 1681, in Imperio Sinarum Jesu Christi fidem propagarunt*, 1586; O'Neill & Dominguez, 2001; Brockey, 2007.

population in Shaanxi Province (陝西) in the area affected by a prolonged drought, which, to make the life of the farming community even more miserable, was infested with locust. Faber labored among the local Christians for one month, while the cloud of insects descended on the vegetation driving the farmers to despair. When they turned to Father Fabre for help, he went out to the infested fields and erected there an altar, placed on it the image of Christ and on his knees recited the Litany of the Saints. No sooner had he finished the prayers than the locust fled from the fields of the Christians and attacked the crops of those who blasphemed at the sight of the ceremony. Thomas Szpot Dunin says that Father Fabre enjoyed the fame of the miracle maker among the local Confucian elite as he was also known for his ability to bring about the rain in the time of draught. The rainfall was so abundant that not only the fields were irrigated, but also dry ponds and ditches were filled with water (Jap. Sin. 102). The Chinese peasants perceived the missionaries as shamans and sorcerers who could exercise healing power and bring blessing to their communities. The religious objects they distributed during their peregrinations were treated as amulets that could keep away evil spirits (Woo, 2008).

So even though the Jesuits due to the scarcity of missionaries and the specific *modus operandi* did not make charity work as their priority, the care of the poorest and most disadvantaged was always a part of their teaching. But, as in Europe, they delegated this responsibility to the laity and worked through the devotional groups, such as a Marian sodality, which Matteo Ricci founded at Peking in 1609. These charity associations (*hui*, 會) primarily provided decent burial to deceased church members and offer alms to poor Christians (Brockey, 2007; Woo, 2008). Yet, the most evident proof of Jesuit charity was the influence they had on converts. Paul Xu Guangqi 徐光啓 (1562–1633), the most influential Chinese scholar of the first generation of Christian converts was known not only for his erudition but also for charity<sup>9</sup>. In an eulogy praising his virtues Szpot stresses humility and charity towards the neighbour. Colaas Paulus, as he calls him, was generous to sick, poor and prisoners. His house was open to the poor and beggars which was a thing rather unheard in the highly structured society in which social prestige was linked to classical education, money and power and socializing with the lower classes was shunned by aristocracy. And so it often happened that at mealtime he would give the food from his table to the beggars who happened to visit him without reserving anything for himself. And on numerous occasions he clothed entire families of poor Christians, paid their debts, and

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9 See his biography under Hsü Kuang-ch'i (Hummel, 2010).

financially supported catechists who helped the Fathers of the Society in their evangelical efforts (Jap. Sin. 102).

The fourth source of authority was the command of the Chinese characters as the written language remained the same in the whole country and served as the social glue of the Empire and the whole Sinic zone stretching from Vietnam to Japan. A large number of spoken dialects were not only impossible to master for the itinerant preachers, but they were even regarded as dangerous seditious and prone to rebellion. The standardized form of speech was the one used by the officials and the Jesuit missionaries described it as Mandarin (Defu, 2014).<sup>10</sup> Around the year 1604 a rumor was spread throughout New Spain and the West Indies that the Emperor Wanli with all his Kingdom converted to Christianity and there was a need for more missionaries to come to China. According to Szpot this enthusiasm was spread to the religious communities, which decided to send missionaries to help the Jesuits in their evangelical labors. Some of them journeyed from New Spain to China, however, when they landed at Macao, and with their own eyes they had seen the reality, they quickly realized that those rumors were false and returned home. One of the obstacles the missionaries faced in the Middle Kingdom, except the natural hatred which the Chinese bear against foreigners, was the impenetrability of the language. For Szpot it was clear that those who desired to come to China to the aid of the Jesuits, they first needed to devote themselves to the study of the Chinese language and to the learning of the customs of the country. Without that knowledge there would be more damage done than service to the advancement of Christianity (Jap. Sin. 102). It was beyond doubt that without fluency in Chinese, there would be impossible to work effectively in China among the Confucian elite, who devoted their entire lives to study. Szpot reports that some missionaries had to leave their mission posts in China because they neither could learn the language nor adjust to the Chinese style of life (Jap. Sin. 102). The case of Adam Schall von Bell also indicates how important the mastery of the language was. When he suffered a stroke and lost the ability to speak properly, he could not defend himself against false accusations, which was easily used to his disadvantage (Väth, 1991).

China was too big and too strong to be conquered by force and in a day. Those who wanted to convert the country had to be endowed with great skills and enormous patience. These, in turn, could only be acquired over a long period of time and with conscientious study, the knowledge of the right things and familiarity with the laws and customs of the country. If the Society of Jesus had followed a different path, Szpot argues, there would

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10 On learning Chinese by Matteo Ricci see: Spence, 1984; Fontana, 2011.



have been no preacher of the Gospel and no Christians in China. Already at the beginning of the first volume of *Historia Sinarum* Szpot makes it clear that it was the knowledge of Chinese characters that helped the Jesuits to read the inscription on the famous Nestorian stele from Xi'an, discovered in 1625. Its role could hardly be overestimated in propagation of the Christian doctrine in China as it became the best evidence of the presence of the Christian religion during the Tang dynasty as early as the 7th century. This argument of antiquity, very important in Chinese society which looked into the past for inspiration and justification of its existing institutions and way of life enabled the missionaries to argue that Christian religion can be regarded as an old religion of China (Jap. Sin. 102).

The fifth source of authority was for the Jesuits their impeccable life. Szpot reports that Matteo Ricci, despite accusations and slander, carried no personal grudges against his persecutors. Hence, in spite of previous wrongful convictions, he was able to secure a just verdict from more righteous mandarins. The Polish Jesuit devotes particular space to the great harm which befell Adam Schall von Bell. This meritorious and dedicated Jesuit was falsely accused by his opponents in the court of the minor Emperor Kangxi, who was unable at the time to comprehend the plot directed against the Jesuits. Sick, feeble and innocent, the German missionary was facing *lingchi* – the death by a thousand cuts. According to Szpot, it was God himself who came to his rescue (Jap. Sin. 103).

The sixth source of authority were diplomatic skills. The Jesuits knew the world well and their service was used on several occasions for difficult diplomatic missions by the Chinese rulers. The most notable case was the part they took in signing the treaty of Nerchinsk in 1689. Szpot used in describing these matters mainly a treatise by the Belgian Jesuit Antoine Thomas *Annotationes*, with whom he remained in close contact for many years<sup>11</sup>. Thomas, who headed the Jesuit mission in Peking after Verbiest's death, sent Szpot detailed information about the changing situation of Christians in the Middle Kingdom.

When Emperor Kangxi assumed independent rule, Ferdinand Verbiest became one of his closest associates. Other Jesuits residing in Peking at the time also enjoyed his confidence, due to their knowledge of languages and diplomatic skills. These were put to particular use during the difficult negotiations with Moscow ambassador Golovin in 1689. At that time, by order of the emperor, the interests of the Chinese side were guarded by Jesuits Thomas Pereira and Jean Francois Gerbillon. Thomas Dunin Szpot also describes the circumstances of hosting a Moscow envoy in Peking in the months leading up to the signing of the Treaty of Nerchinsk.

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11 See more on the issue: Sebes, 1962.

Among other things, Kangxi allowed the Moscow envoy to visit the Jesuit House in Peking in 1689. The content of this message shows the great confidence the emperor had in the Jesuit community in the Chinese capital (Jap. Sin. 105 I).

At the end of the meeting the Muscovite envoy asked Ferdinand if he could reciprocate the favour and visit the Church and the House of the Society of Jesus if only the emperor granted him the permission to do so. This token of appreciation was accepted by Ferdinand with eagerness and willingness. While Ferdinand was handing in the petition from the envoy to the emperor, he made the request to His Majesty that he could grant his favour to the envoy from Europe by allowing him to see and appreciate the tokens of his generosity towards the Church and the Jesuit College in Peking, so that he could report about it when he comes back to his country (...) The emperor immediately responded favorably to the request and sent to Ferdinand a Palatine Chao,<sup>12</sup> his own servant, to give him some advice as to with which honors the Muscovite envoy should be received on the day he visits the Temple of the Lord of Heaven and the House of the Fathers. Moreover, the emperor gave the orders to Chao Lao Yè to convey the emperor's wish to the Ministry of Rites that those mandarins who would accompany the envoy to the church should fall on their knees right after they have entered the church and with bowed head worship the Lord of Heaven in His image (...) It was unclear whether by doing that the emperor wanted to break the Tribunal's resistance, as it was always opposing the Law of God, or he wanted to maintain an appearance of being the defender of the Divine Law in his empire in order to gain fame in Europe (Jap. Sin. 105 I, f. 100 r.).

The most important source of authority was for the Jesuits the knowledge of astronomy. The emperor, as Son of Heaven, as the First Farmer under the sun, was the keystone of the correlative cosmology and he bore personal responsibility in the eyes of his subjects for crop failures and other natural disasters that led to famine and pestilence. One of the most important imperial duties, therefore, was the annual compilation of the calendar. The most educated Jesuits were used for this task. This was the highest honor, but at the same time the greatest responsibility, which, in case of failure, could lead to imperial disfavor and even death.<sup>13</sup> Before the beginning of the reform of calendrical astronomy during the Chongzhen

12 Chao Lao Yè, i.e. Zhao Chang, a high Chinese official and the member of the Kangxi inner court circle, a protector of Jesuits. He was a Christian sympathizer at the court of Emperor Kangxi, see: Guopings, 2012.

13 On correlative cosmology understood as reciprocal relation between Emperor's conduct and natural events see: Fairbank & Merle, 2006; Grimm, 2015.

reign (1628-1645), the Jesuit astronomers and their Chinese followers did not formally take part in any test predictions and trial observations of lunar and solar eclipses, although there was certain knowledge in the court circles about the superiority of Western astronomy in this respect. Xu Guangqi predicted a solar eclipse in 1629 based on Western methods. So even though the Chongzhen calendar was not promulgated because of the fall of the Ming, the Jesuit scholars continued to work for the Qing Imperial Directorate of Astronomy and had a profound influence on the imperial Chinese calendar (Jap. Sin. 102; Hsu Cho-Yun, 2012).

To sum up, it is worth noting that already Matteo Ricci, the representative of the first generation of Jesuit missionaries in China, enjoyed high authority and reverence, especially among the scholars. The Confucian literati were touched by his spirituality, moral standard and extraordinary intelligence. The best evidence of the esteem he enjoyed is provided by the circumstances of his death and burial (Standaert, 2008). According to Emperor Wanli's decision, Matteo Ricci's final resting place was to be in Beijing, the city where he spent the last years of his life. Until then, the possibility of burial for foreigners in China had not even been considered; the only exceptions were made for the ambassadors of tribute states loyal to the Mings who died during their official visits. Emperor Wanli's decision on 17 June 1610 was unprecedented in the entire history of China. The solemn funeral of the Italian Jesuit took place on 1 November 1611 (Fontana, 2011). It was organised with the greatest honours a foreigner could receive in China at that time.

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