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REPRESENTING CATHOLIC EUROPE: ALESSANDRO VALIGNANO AND *DE MISSIONE* (1590)

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Abstract: The following article examines the information that *De Missione* (Macau, 1590) means to convey to Japan about Catholic Europe. This work narrates the journey West of four boys from the Arima seminary to pay homage to Gregory XIII and Philip II. *De Missione* contributes to the phenomenon of mutual knowledge and cultural interaction between Europe and Japan, envisioned by Alessandro Valignano. Indeed, this volume aimed to introduce the Western world to the Japanese people by showing them the magnificence and authority of Catholic Europe with its history, society, culture and religion. The appendix contains the unpublished Letters Patent written by Superior General Claudio Acquaviva for the ambassadors, so that they would be welcomed in the residences and colleges of the Society of Jesus on the Italian Peninsula.

Keywords: Jesuits in Japan – Alessandro Valignano – Tenshō Embassy – *De Missione* – Letters Patent – Japan – 16th century

Titre: Représenter l'Europe catholique: Alessandro Valignano et le *De Missione* (1590)

Résumé : La présente contribution se propose d'examiner les informations que *De Missione* (Macao, 1590) entend transmettre sur l'Europe catholique. L'ouvrage raconte le voyage à l'ouest de quatre garçons du séminaire d'Arima pour rendre hommage à Grégoire XIII et Philippe II. *De Missione* contribue au phénomène de connaissance mutuelle et d'interaction culturelle entre l'Europe et le Japon prédéterminé par Alessandro Valignano. En fait, le but de ce volume était de présenter le monde occidental au peuple japonais et de leur montrer la magnificence et l'autorité de l'Europe catholique avec son histoire, sa société, sa culture et sa religion. L'annexe contient les lettres patentes inédites du prévôt général Claudio Acquaviva pour les ambassadeurs, afin qu'ils puissent être accueillis dans les résidences et collèges de la Compagnie de Jésus dans la péninsule italienne.

Mots-clés : Jésuites - Compagnie de Jésus - Alessandro Valignano - Ambassade Tenshō - *De Missione* - lettre d'introduction - Japon - XVI^e siècle

Título: La representación de la Europa católica: Alessandro Valignano y el *De Missione* (1590)

Resumen: El siguiente artículo pretende examinar la información que *De Missione* (Macao, 1590) pretende transmitir sobre la Europa católica. La obra narra el viaje al oeste de cuatro chicos del seminario de Arima para rendir homenaje a Gregorio XIII y a Felipe II. *De Missione* contribuye al fenómeno del conocimiento mutuo

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y la interacción cultural entre Europa y Japón predeterminado por Alessandro Valignano. De hecho, el propósito de este volumen era presentar el mundo occidental a los japoneses y mostrarles la magnificencia y la autoridad de la Europa católica con su historia, sociedad, cultura y religión. El anexo contiene las Cartas Patentes inéditas del preboste general Claudio Acquaviva para los embajadores, para que pudieran ser acogidos en las residencias y colegios de la Compañía de Jesús en la Península italiana.

Palabras clave: Jesuitas - Compañía de Jesús - Alessandro Valignano - Embajada Tenshō - *De Missione* - carta de presentación - Japón - Siglo XVI

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« L'Occident a découvert le Japon à deux reprises: au milieu du XVI^e siècle quand les jésuites, venus dans le sillage des marchands portugais, y pénétrèrent (mais ils furent expulsés au siècle suivant); et trois cents ans plus tard avec l'action navale menée par les États-Unis pour contraindre l'Empire du Soleil-Levant à s'ouvrir au commerce international ».

Lévi-Strauss, *Préface au traité de L. Fróis*, 2018, p. 7

Introduction

1. On February 20, 1582 four Japanese boys – Itō Sukemasu Mancio (c. 1570-1612), Chijiwa Seizaemon Miguel (1569-1633), Nakaura Julião (1567-1633) and Hara Martinho (1569-1639) – departed Nagasaki on a Portuguese carrack captained by Major Inácio de Lima. They were heading towards Europe to pay homage to Gregory XIII (Ugo Boncompagni, r. 1572-1585) and Philip II

(1527-1598)¹. The envoys were accompanied by some Jesuit missionaries including the Portuguese Diogo de Mesquita (1551-1614), who served as their interpreter, mentor, guide and guardian, and Nuno Rodrigues (1539-1604), rector of the College of St. Paul in

¹ See *Itinerario de' Signori Giapponesi*: Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (henceforth ARSI), Japonica-Sinica 22, ff. 59-83. Diogo de Mesquita wrote this report in Italian (ff. 59-63v) and in Spanish (ff. 64-83), where he described the main stages of the ambassadors' journey to Italy. For the trip in Italy itself, it can read Ippolito Voglia (c. 1543-1591). The latter accompanied the young Japanese up to their boarding for the return trip in Genoa (August 8, 1585) and wrote twenty-one letters to the Superior General to inform him of the main events. These epistles are kept in: ARSI, Italiae 159, 112 ff.

Goa²; the Japanese brother, Jorge de Loyola (1562-1589); as well as two native boys chosen as servants: Agostinho of Ōmura and Constantino Dourado (1566-1620). This latter joined the Society of Jesus in Kawachinoura on October 4, 1595 and was ordained priest in Malacca in 1617.

2. Alessandro Valignano, appointed Visitor of the Jesuit missions in the East Indies in 1573, had conceived of this embassy (*Tenshō shōnen shisetsu* 天正少年使節) with the support of three *daimyō* from Kyūshū, who had converted to Christianity: Ōmura Sumitada (1532-1587), baptized in 1563 under the name of Bartolomeu; Ōtomo Yoshishige (1530-1587), baptized in 1578 under the name of Francisco and Arima Harunobu (1567-1612), baptized in 1580 under the name of Protásio.

3. The entire journey to Europe and back lasted roughly eight and a half years. On July 21, 1590 they returned to the port of Nagasaki with Valignano (who had rejoined them in Goa in May 1587) and fourteen Jesuits appointed for the Japanese mission.

4. Valignano intended to send these legates, chosen from the Arima seminary, to demonstrate the successful apostolic activity carried out in East Asia, acting in harmony with the spirit of the Catholic Counter-

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Reformation³. His goal was to ask the Pontiff and the Spanish crown for further financial contributions for continuing the mission and for a monopoly for the Society of Jesus in the archipelago's evangelization (*Ex pastorali officio*, dated January 28, 1585)⁴.

5. Yet, another important reason that compelled Valignano to undertake this "pilgrimage" was his interest in promoting a dialogue among cultures, which constituted a peculiar characteristic of his missionary methodology⁵. Valignano intended both to introduce the Japanese to European civilization and the socio-cultural origins of the foreign Jesuits, as well as to show Westerners the completely different Japanese culture and habits. Europeans were already rather familiar with some socio-cultural aspects of Japan thanks to various documents (letters, reports and accounts) written by Jesuits and sent to Rome to the Father General and his main collaborators. Some of these documents had been published in Europe and circulated in the cultural and religious circles of the time. This delegation thus further contributed to the encounter between these two mutually unknown societies, whose cultures seemed so radically different, as Guido Gualtieri wrote in his *Relationi* printed in 1586 by Francesco Zannetti in Rome.⁶ To continue this process of cultural interaction

² Rodrigues replaced Alessandro Valignano (1539-1606), who has been appointed Provincial of India in 1583. He was sent to Europe to take part in the Procurators Congregation.

³ Valignano's mission had some similarities with the 1514 Portuguese embassy to Rome. This delegation was sent by King Manuel I (1469-1521) to show his obedience to Leo X (Giovanni de' Medici, r. 1513-1521), to publicize the success of the Portuguese project of exploration and colonisation, and «to make a point of the power that Albuquerque's campaigns had allowed him to accumulate». Subrahmanyam 1997, p. 269. During the audience with the Pontiff, a Latin speech was declaimed, in which the author celebrated the greatness of the Portuguese. Some gifts were also given, including a white elephant named Hanno. The members of the *Tenshō*

embassy also brought gifts to Europe, including a precious folding screen depicting the Azuchi castle: *Azuchijō no zu byōbu* 安土城之図屏風, probably made by the Japanese painter Kanō Eitoku (1543-1590), according to the style *rakuchū rakugai zu byōbu* 洛中洛外図屏風 (painted screens with views and scenes of the city of Kyōto). Cavaliere 2008, p. 135.

⁴ Giuseppe Sorge states that Nuno Rodrigues preceded the legates to Rome and most likely solicited the brief *Ex pastorali officio*. Sorge 1988, pp. 44-45.

⁵ See Scheuer 2019, p. 16.

⁶ Povilus 2016, pp. 151-152. Gualtieri's work is entitled: *Relationi della venuta degli ambasciatori giapponesi a Roma, fino alla partita di Lisbona. Con le accoglienze fatte loro da tutti i Principi Christiani, per dove sono passati.*

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and the reciprocal sharing of knowledge between groups with different social, anthropological, political, linguistic and religious heritages, Valignano devised and edited *De Missione Legatorum Iaponensium ad Romanam Curiam...*⁷. This volume was published in Macau in 1590 with the moveable-type printing press purchased by Diogo de Mesquita in Lisbon four years earlier.

6. This work is composed in the form of a dialogue («*dialogi formam*») between the four legates and two of Miguel's cousins, Lino and Leão, who listen with interest to the stories told about the Western world. The text is not based on actual dialogues among the emissaries and the two cousins, but rather on imaginary conversations. *De Missione* was printed in Latin and consists of thirty-four *colloquia* preceded by the *imprimatur* (September 5, 1589) granted by Bishop Leonardo de Sá (d. 1597), the *nihil obstat* (October 4, 1589) signed by Valignano and two companions (Diogo Antunes and Nicolás de Ávila), as well as two letters. The first epistle was drafted by the Visitor and addressed to the students of the Japanese

seminaries («*alumnis Seminariorum Iaponensium*»). The second by Duarte de Sande (1547-1599), Superior of the Chinese mission, as well as the greatest humanist of the Middle and Far East, according to Valignano⁸, was sent to the Superior Claudio Acquaviva (1543-1615).

7. The remainder of this article will focus on the religious, socio-cultural and historical-political information that Valignano wanted to convey with *De Missione* in order «to play an important part in countering the dismissive opinions Japanese held about Europe⁹». Valignano sought to produce an edifying manual for the educated students in their seminaries and colleges, a pedagogical and didactic text¹⁰, «a compendium of useful information based on travelogues¹¹», to practise the Latin language¹² (the official language of the Catholic church)¹³ and to learn the typical aspects of the West, through the voice and experience of Japanese citizens. He wished to describe the richness and magnificence of the «old continent». According to Juan Gil, *De Missione* represents a triumphant exaltation of colonial Europe

⁷ *De Missione Legatorum Iaponensium ad Romanam Curiam, Rebusque; in Europa, ac Toto Itinere Animadversis Dialogus ex ephemeride ipsorum legatorum collectus, et in sermonem latinum versus ab Eduardo de Sande Sacerdote Societatis Iesu*. In Macaensi portu Sinici regni in domo Societatis Iesu cum facultate Ordinarii, et Superiorum. Anno 1590.

⁸ Di Russo 2002, p. 437. See also: Burnett, 1996, pp. 425-470.

⁹ Massarella 2005, p. 340.

¹⁰ Rui Manuel Loureiro writes: «The extensive Latin dialogues, in which the Japanese youths are the various interlocutors, gives an account of the journey of the Japanese delegation to Europe, at the same time serving as a didactic introduction to European civilization and its Asian extension in Goa and Macao». Loureiro 2006, p. 138. See also: Vu Thanh 2017, pp. 1-21.

¹¹ Hosne 2013, p. 54.

¹² In this regard Michael Cooper writes: «Although Valignano does not mention the possibility, *De Missione* would have made an excellent gift to benefactors in Italy, Portugal and Spain; written in the common language of Latin, the book shows no partiality towards any of these three nations». Cooper 2005, p. 199. In fact, the Jesuit mission to Japan during the so-called «Christian century» (1549-1650) was made up mainly of Portuguese, Italian and Spanish missionaries. Cfr. Gonoï 2002, pp. 345-373.

¹³ Valignano encouraged the study of the Latin language, both for the students of the *seminario* and the *collegio*, and as well as for the members of the *noviciado*. He «noted that Latin was very different to Japanese, and thus it was important for the local people to start to learn the language from early childhood to master it. It was reported that in the *seminario* the local students studied Latin for five-and-a-half hours every week day, and also on Saturday mornings». Taida 2017, p. 517. See also: Üçerler 2000, pp. 74-84.

offered to the most cultured élite of the Japanese world¹⁴.

8. The Visitor also managed to have his text translated into Japanese in order to reach a wider audience. He entrusted this project to Jorge de Loyola, who had learned the art of printing in Lisbon and perfected it in Goa, although he died in Macau on August 16, 1589, probably before he could begin¹⁵.

1. *De Missione*: Vehicle for Religious Information

9. Even a cursory glance through the emissaries' travel «diary» reveals a striking amount of information aimed at describing and illustrating Western civilization. *De Missione* not only intended to outline the main stages of the four boys' journey, but also to report on their direct experience of the main characteristics of the European world, including the fundamental aspects of its social, cultural, political, historical, economic and religious life.

10. Religion provided a substantial subject, as there are many discussions of visits to churches, cathedrals, basilicas, shrines, confraternities, and conventual and monastic communities (both male and female). The volume mentions Franciscan and Dominican convents; the Augustinian convent in Lisbon erected in the 13th century and dedicated to Our Lady of Grace; a visit to the famous *Mosteiro dos Jerónimos*, built to celebrate the expedition and return from India of Vasco da Gama (1469-1524)¹⁶; and another to the Benedictine abbey of Polirone of the Cassinese congregation. *De Missione* also alludes to stops at the Carthusian monasteries of Mantua and Pavia. The work refers to various other visits: to the Augustinian

¹⁴ Gil 1994, p. 411.

¹⁵ The first Japanese translation was published in 1942 as *Tenshō nenkan Ken-Ō shisetsu kenbun taiwaroku*, edited by Izui Hisanosuke and printed by Tōyō Bunko (Tōkyō). The second edition, titled *De Sande Tenshō Ken'Ō Shisetsuki*

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cloistered nuns of Montefalco in order to pay homage to the body of Saint Clare of the Cross (1268-1308); to the Urbanist Poor Clares to see the body of Saint Rosa of Viterbo (1233-1251), a Franciscan tertiary; to the Poor Clares of Las Descalzas Reales in Madrid, where the delegates, dressed in Japanese clothes, met with the Empress Mary of Austria (1528-1603); and to the Poor Clares of Bologna. The ambassadors were amazed at the opportunity to contemplate the incorrupt body of Saint Catherine de' Vigri (1413-1463), the foundress and abbess of the *Corpus Domini* monastery in Bologna, seated on a bench. As Miguel says in *Colloquium XXVII*:

We saw besides the holy and incorrupt body of St. Catherine of Bologna, although it is already two hundred years since her death¹⁷; and what is even more astonishing is that it is sitting and, so they say, it still has power in its nerves so that the hands and feet imitate wonderfully the movement of someone living¹⁸.

11. There are some accounts on the veneration of the precious relics, such as the jaw of Saint John the Baptist in the cathedral of Viterbo, some sacred Franciscan objects preserved in Assisi, the *Sacro Catino* (Sacred Bowl) in the cathedral of Genoa and a thorn from the Holy Crown shown to them in Madrid by the grand chamberlain Juan de Borja y Castro (1533-1606), son of the Duke of Gandia. We likewise find references to moments of prayer; to the songs of thanksgiving; to Eucharistic celebration, especially on solemn days and sacraments – for example, the baptism of a Jewish man in Mantua, who took the name of Miguel Mancio, in homage to the two Japanese boys

was printed in 1969 by Yūshōdō Shoten (Tōkyō).

¹⁶ Cooper 2005, p. 47.

¹⁷ The text mistakes the date of St. Catherine's death: she actually died in Bologna on March 9, 1463.

¹⁸ Massarella & Moran 2012, p. 331.

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–,¹⁹ and to particular feasts of the liturgical year. Taken together this information provides the reader with the basic aspects of the Catholic religion, stressing the key role that this doctrine occupies in the life and society of the time.

12. In *Colloquium XXVII* Miguel introduces the *Corpus Domini* procession, held in Bologna on June 20, 1585 and led by the Cardinal Archbishop Gabriele Paleotti (1524-1597) and the Pontifical Legate Antonio Maria Salviati (1537-1602). The emissaries received the honor of holding (for a short distance) the first four poles supporting a canopy:

We also took part in a procession which was taking place at that time, in which the memory of the most holy Body of Christ is honoured with devotion, and we could see that its pomp and splendour lacked nothing in regard to magnificence, variety, and Christian piety. Among other things the legate himself carried the pyx with the Blessed Sacrament, and for a while we held the poles supporting the canopy covering the sacred receptacle and the priest. We handed them over after a short while to other nobles and, taking our places on either side of the cardinal archbishop, made our way with that splendid procession to the designated place²⁰.

13. A greater magnificence is on display during the parade in honor of Saint Mark in Venice (*Colloquium XXVIII*), postponed for the embassy's visit to June 29, 1585, Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul. The Serenissima exhibited all its splendor, richness and power:

Now the nobles of Venice, having learned of our arrival, postponed the procession until 29 June, the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, for they wished to soothe our spirits when we were tired by the discomforts of the journey with something joyous, and to offer to the men come from afar the spectacle of that most religious procession, which on our account has been considerably delayed. [...] I really don't know where I should start in describing this spectacle for you, whether with the multitude of citizens, conjoined in religion, or their order and correct disposition, or again with the great and wonderful value of the things they carried [...]. And the fact that such a quantity of gold and silver is brought together for just one public procession is manifest evidence of the wealth of Venice²¹.

14. *De Missione* likewise mentions meetings between the dignitaries and several ecclesiastical figures: Cardinal Alessandro de' Medici (1535-1605) in Florence, who would be elected pontiff on April 1, 1605 under the name of Leo XI, and Cardinal Niccolò Sfondrati (1535-1591) in Rome and in Cremona, who would be elected pope on December 5, 1590 with the name of Gregory XIV. The text outlines the main roles of the ecclesial hierarchy and the funeral practices of the pontiff and conclave during a gathering of the college of cardinals to elect the new Bishop of Rome («*Vicarius Christi*»). It portrays the history and features of some orders and religious institutions, in particular the Society of Jesus founded by Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) and canonically established by Paul III (Alessandro Farnese, r. 1534-1549) with the bull *Regimini militantis*

¹⁹ The episode of baptism is described in *Colloquium XXIX*, though it is also narrated in several other reports on the Tenshō embassy. On the morning of this Sunday (July 14, 1585), the delegates also took part in a «solemn Mass in Santa Barbara, sung by the new Abbot, they confessed, and having taken Communion, received

indulgenza plenaria for their sins, and for having received such an immense treasure, they took Communion most devotedly from the hand of the same Abbot». Bosi 2016, p. 251.

²⁰ Massarella & Moran 2012, p. 331.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 353-355.

ecclesiae (September 27, 1540). The text further describes the Society's main educational colleges, some of which were erected in Rome²² and in India, where the first Spanish Jesuit Francis Xavier (1506-1552) landed in Goa on May 6, 1542²³. The ambassadors found accommodations in several Jesuit colleges and residences on the Iberian and Italian peninsulas (according to Valignano), and they were always received with joy and filial affection. Due to this warm reception, Superior General Acquaviva wrote letters patent (see Appendix) the day before their departure from Rome (June 2, 1585)²⁴, in which he urged the Italian confreres to welcome the four boys and provide them with all that they would need for their return journey.

15. *De Missione* presents Catholicism as a successful political ideology whose values permeate European polities, institutions and society, and whose history accounts for European greatness. Valignano intended to reaffirm the supremacy of Catholic doctrine as the most valid and truthful of human life. This idea is clearly expressed by the illustration of the volume's frontispiece, an image of the Most Holy Trinity seated above a multitude of men holding palms. Between the Father (as Creator) and the Son (as Redeemer) there lies a *globus cruciger* (a globe with a cross on top),

²² In *Colloquium XXIII* Miguel describes the Roman College erected in 1551 by Ignatius of Loyola for the training of the clergy. He also refers to the Germanic College established on August 31, 1552 with the bull *Dum sollicita* by Julius III (Giovanni Maria Ciocchi del Monte, r. 1550-1555) and merged in 1580 with the Hungarian College (*Collegium Germanicum et Hungaricum*). Finally he narrates that the English College was founded on May 1, 1579 with the bull *Quoniam divinae bonitati* and entrusted to the Jesuits by Gregory XIII.

²³ In *Colloquium V* Miguel notes that the Jesuits established three houses in Goa: the *casa professa*, the college of St. Paul and the noviciate.

²⁴ The ambassadors arrived in Rome on the evening of March 22, 1585 and were immediately led to the *casa professa*, where they were

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a Catholic symbol of authority representing the dominion and power of God over the world, in use since the Middle Ages. Above them flies a dove, symbol of the Holy Spirit (as Sanctifier). This image is composed of two main aspects: the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity (Three Persons, one Substance), considered as the central mystery of Christian faith and life, and the greatness of Catholicism, as represented with the cross, i.e. the «glorious banner», the victory of Christ (crucified and risen) over death and sin. The engraving clearly illustrates, summarizes and clarifies the purpose of the work²⁵.

16. Regarding this doctrinal purpose, Derek Massarella has written:

There is no mention of the Protestant states' rejection of papal power, most notably the nationalisation of the church of England under Henry VIII and the Elizabethan Act of Supremacy (1572). Indeed Protestantism (described as heresy) is acknowledged, although briefly and marginally, in *De missione*. It had cracked the unity of the sacred realm, but fortunately on the periphery, far from the gaze of the young Japanese emissaries. Rome intended to repair their damage. *De missione* prefers to focus on the non-violent means the church was employing to

welcomed by the Superior General and several confreres. The boys were then led to the church for the singing of the *Te Deum*, performed by the clerics of the *Collegium Germanicum et Hungaricum*. The following day, they participated in the public consistory in the *Sala regia* and met Gregory XIII. During their stay in Rome, Pope Boncompagni died on April 10, 1585 and on April 24 (Wednesday after Easter Sunday) Sixtus V (Felice Peretti, r. 1585-1590) was elected pontiff. The emissaries met him on April 27.

²⁵ This engraving also appears on the title page of *Christiani pueri institutio adolescentiaeque perfugium*, edited in Macau in 1588. It is a reprint of the work of the Spanish humanist Juan Bonifacio (1538-1606), published in Salamanca in 1575. A copy can be found in the Biblioteca da Ajuda (BA) at Lisbon. Braga, 1963, p. 34.

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this end, mentioning the Jesuit-run German and English colleges in Rome. Interestingly, *De missione* suggests that the most efficacious way to defeat heresy (Protestantism) and counter ignorance (among non-Christians) is the same: discussion and refutation. In both cases, *De missione* implies, men are to be won back or won over to the true church by reason²⁶.

17. Indeed, the embassy did not visit countries such as Germany and Saxony (then in the throes of the Protestant Reformation), where, as declared in the German *Flugschrift* of 1585, «they might have learned something of the true light of Christ as understood by the followers of that dear man of God, Dr. Martin Luther²⁷». The anonymous pamphleteer argued that Japan with its independent traditions, would have found Lutheranism more congenial than Catholic doctrine.

18. One of Valignano's major concerns was to offer young people only the edifying aspects of Europe, without exposing them to ambiguous events, which might instead disturb and agitate, and thus damage the unitary image of the continent presented by the Jesuits.

19. In Valignano's view, the emissaries should not come into contact with people likely to upset them, neither should they learn of the presence of disorders and divisions both in the church and in the courts²⁸. They were expected to encounter only the positive and enlightening aspects of Europe. The Japanese boys were not supposed to hear anything

about recent scandals among the clergy nor meet disreputable people. They were to be always accompanied by the Jesuit Diogo de Mesquita and return to Japan with the highest idea of Catholicism in Europe. This concept was clearly expressed by Valignano in his instruction number 48, written in Goa on December 12, 1583 and delivered to his Portuguese companion Nuno Rodrigues. This instruction belongs to the fifty-five articles (twenty-six of which concern the Japanese embassy to Europe), which the Visitor composed in Portuguese under the title *Regimento e Instrução do que ha de fazer o padre Nuno Roiz que agora vay por procurador a Roma*, upon realizing that he would be unable to travel to Europe due to his appointment as Provincial of India²⁹.

20. Valignano would return to these same questions years later. In 1598 he composed the *Apologia*³⁰, where he refuted the accusations of two Discalced Franciscans: the Spanish Martin de la Ascensión y Aguirre (b. 1567), who had arrived in Japan in 1596 and was martyred in Nagasaki on February 5, 1597 with twenty-five men (*Nihon nijūroku seijin*)³¹, and the Portuguese Jerónimo de Jesús (d. 1601), who lived in Japan from 1594 to 1599 and survived Toyotomi Hideyoshi's purge³². In this work, Valignano opposed the presence in Japan of Mendicant friars (especially Franciscans, because Dominicans and Augustinians arrived in 1602), which risked giving the Japanese the image of a

²⁶ Massarella 2005, pp. 338-339.

²⁷ Lach 1965, p. 702; Id. 1968, p. 702.

²⁸ For this reason the party did not proceed to Naples, where an anti-Spanish revolt had recently broken. The real motivation was hidden from the emissaries, and in *Colloquium XXVI* Miguel simply declares that they did not go to this city because of the unhealthy season. Massarella & Moran 2012, pp. 323-324; Sorge 1985, p. 224; Id. 1988, p. 74.

²⁹ The original Portuguese document is in: ARSI, Jap. Sin. 22, ff. 51-58v. These instructions were

partially published in: Pinto & Bernard 1943, pp. 391-403. The whole document is in: Álvarez-Taladriz 1982, pp. 125-205. The partial Italian translation is in: Di Russo (ed.) 2016, pp. 529-536.

³⁰ *Apologia en la qual se responde a diversas calumnias que se escribieron contra los Padres de la Compañia de Japon y de la China*. The text is edited by José Luis Álvarez-Taladriz in 1998 by Eikodo (Ōsaka). See also: Correia, 2008.

³¹ Franco 2007, p. 216.

³² Hur 2007, p. 37.

simple, division-ridden doctrine, as was the case with Japanese Buddhist sects.

2. *De Missione*: Vehicle for Socio-cultural Information

21. *De Missione* also gives priority to the cultural context. For instance, it contains references to book production and documentary heritage, in particular in Padua. Melchior Wieland (1520-1589), a German botanist, offered them the *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (Antwerp, 1570) composed by Abraham Ortelius (1527-1598), «one of the most definitive world maps of the sixteenth century³³», together with the first three volumes of the *Civitates Orbis Terrarum* (Cologne, 1572; 1575; 1581)³⁴ produced by Georg Braun (1541-1622) with many engravings by Franz Hogenberg (1535-1590)³⁵. Universities are also described as centres of academic and scientific life, for example Alcalá, Padua – where Valignano studied law and obtained his degree *in utroque iure*, before joining the Society in Rome (May 29, 1566) – and Coimbra, where the Jesuits established (with royal patronage) the College of Jesus in 1542 for the training of missionaries³⁶. The work mentions libraries and art galleries containing frescoes and paintings, such as those seen in Verona in the home of count Mario Bevilacqua (1536-1593), as well as palaces adorned with marble statues and fine furnishings or with lush furniture and artifacts of a rare beauty, like in the Farnese villa in Caprarola, commissioned to Jacopo Barozzi (1507-1573) by the Farnese family. There are also allusions to sumptuous

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clothes and their manufacture, as recorded in the encounter with Nicolò da Ponte (1491-1585), Doge of Venice, who wore a magnificent vestment during the solemn audience on June 28, 1585. We even find descriptions of modern navigation tools, including the astrolabe, the planisphere and the compass³⁷.

22. In this context, music holds a prominent place. *De Missione* evokes concerts and the performance of pieces and interludes. Some of them were produced in their honour, as happened in Venice, where the organist Giovanni Gabrieli (c. 1557-1612) arranged and played a *Te Deum*. Andrea Gabrieli (c. 1510-1586), an organist at San Marco and Giovanni's uncle, also produced a *Missa* for four choirs in memory of their stay. The harmony of European music and the peculiarity of its instruments charmed the delegates. In Vila Viçosa they were entertained in the chapel of the dukes of Bragança, where they listened to three pieces produced by the Renaissance master Ginés de Morata and five psalms composed by Antonio Pinheiro (c. 1550-1617)³⁸. In both the Cathedral of Évora and in the villa of the Cardinal Gianfrancesco Gambara (1533-1587) in Bagnaia, they were particularly interested in the organ and the harpsichord. Mancio and Miguel managed to play the pipe organ so excellently as to arouse the admiration of the Archbishop Teotónio de Bragança (1530-1602). Recalling this event in Bagnaia, Miguel does not describe (in *Colloquium XXI*) the sumptuousness of the building with its mannerist garden, attributed to the Renaissance architect Barozzi, or the

³³ Cheong – Lee 2000, p. 255.

³⁴ Cooper 1996, p. 33.

³⁵ Rui Loureiro has written that the Japanese ambassadors received many books as gifts in Europe from both monarchs and princes as well as from ecclesiastical figures. These volumes can be considered as possible sources for the drafting of *De Missione*. He specified that there is not a complete list of the gifts received, but through a reading of the *De Missione* there are implicit and

explicit references to various printed books brought from Europe by the four boys. Loureiro 2020, pp. 244-245.

³⁶ On the historical and artistic relations between Coimbra and the Jesuit mission to Japan see: Curvelo 2020, pp. 175-192, which deals with the passage of the embassy to Coimbra (December 23, 1585-January 9, 1586).

³⁷ Cfr. Ricuperati 2018, p. 320.

³⁸ Cf. Ryan 2001, pp. 99-107.

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other amenities of the villa, but rather the singularity of this harpsichord, which had so caught their attention. This focus on music takes up a theme that Miguel had already introduced in *Colloquium XI*, where he had discussed singing, instrumental music and dance³⁹, pointing out some differences between the European and Japanese cultures⁴⁰. However, in the *De Missione* there are no explicit references on the identity of composers or chapel masters and on the titles of the music (in the concerts and in the various Eucharistic celebrations) heard by the ambassadors⁴¹.

23. *De Missione* contains further information about the habits, customs and manifestations of the public and private life of European people, as well as the geographic landscape and architecture. These elements are all linked to *urbanitas*, not only intended as a polite and civil way of behaving but also as a way to observe the city, scrutinize its constitutive aspects, and learn a specific *modus operandi et agendi* within a wider territorial and social entity. As Americo da Costa Ramalho, translator of the work in Portuguese (1997)⁴², has argued, the dignitaries mention several Portuguese cities with enthusiasm, not only those confined to Portugal itself (Lisbon, Évora, Elvas, Santarém, Coimbra), but also the territories of the colonial Empire (Saint Helena Island, Mozambique, Cochin, Goa, Malacca, Macau), which the four young people visited on their

way to Europe and on their return home. In addition, *Colloquium IV* focuses on the arrival of the Portuguese in India, proposing a brief *excursus* on the history of Portugal's territorial and mercantile expansionism, citing the most influential figures, in particular Henry I the Navigator (1394-1460), considered the «supporter of expeditions». *De Missione* focuses on several cities, including Cochin, where the Portuguese settled in 1503, and Goa (capital of the *Estado da Índia*) in 1510, the year in which Afonso de Albuquerque (1453-1515) conquered the city, putting an end to the then existing Muslim rule⁴³.

24. As Gunji Yasunori has noted, the most meticulously described city is Venice⁴⁴, with its position in the midst of a lagoon at the northwest end of the Adriatic Sea. *De Missione* describes the days that the group spent in Venice (June 26-July 6, 1585); the political and hierarchical organization of the Serenissima; the Doge's palace and the monumental complex of Piazza San Marco, which occupies the first pages of *Colloquium XXVIII*; the shoreside fortress; the arsenal, which aroused particular interest in the legates; several educational and charitable institutions; the visit to workshops in Murano, and the request of the Senate to commission portraits in the «Sala del Maggior Consiglio»⁴⁵:

³⁹ Gunji 1980, p. 27.

⁴⁰ The Japanese boys studied music in the Arima seminary, both Gregorian chant and European instrumental music. From contemporary sources it emerges that, during the long crossings, they practiced their instruments in order to lighten the mood and distract from the dangers of the journey.

⁴¹ Di Russo (ed.) 2016, p. 571.

⁴² The work is published under the title *Diálogo sobre a Missão dos Embaixadores Japoneses à Cúria Romana*, Macau-Lisboa, Comissão Territorial de Macau para as Comemorações dos Descobrimientos Portugueses-Fundação Oriente, 1997. A bilingual Latin-Portuguese edition was

printed by the Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra and by the Centro Científico e Cultural de Macau in 2009.

⁴³ Cfr. Subrahmanyam 2013, p. 113.

⁴⁴ Cfr. Gunji 1985b, p. 153.

⁴⁵ Recently, Paola Di Rico (Trivulzio Foundation in Milan) discovered Itō Mancio's portrait. After careful investigation, together with Sergio Marinelli of Ca' Foscari University, she concluded that this picture was painted by Domenico Robusti (1560-1635), known as Tintoretto (1560-1635), son of Jacopo (1518-1594). See: Di Rico 2014, pp. 83-94; Marinelli 2017, pp. 59-68; Molteni 2017, pp. 19-33.

We'll mention just two of the favours done to us by that Republic, and then bring our treatment of it to an end. The first was their concern to ensure that we would not be forgotten, and with this intention those most distinguished senators decreed that the story of our embassy, with very realistic portraits of us, was to be depicted by outstanding artists as our most certain memorial in the Hall of the Great Council among the other great achievements of the Republic; and the cost of this work, as we heard later, was two thousand ducats⁴⁶.

25. According to Gunji, *De Missione*'s description further contributes to the spread of the international «myth of Venice»⁴⁷ and its Republic, much admired in Europe.

26. In *Colloquium XV*, Miguel provides further information on other European cities and their buildings. He emphasizes differences in the ways of living of Westerners and Japanese, highlighting various beneficial medical institutions. In *Colloquium XVI*, for instance, he mentions the *Hospital Real de Todos os Santos* in Lisbon, begun in 1492 on the orders of King John II (1455-1495) after obtaining papal approval, and finished in 1504.

27. António Maria Marques Henriques declares that *De Missione* is structured as an elegy to Europe, exalting the virtues and beauty of Westerners and celebrating the magnificence of the «old continent»⁴⁸.

3. *De Missione*: Vehicle for Historical-political Information

28. *De Missione* also provides historical and political material on the current governmental and administrative situation of several Southern European kingdoms. The work supplies information on the following topics: monarchies; servants in the courts; the main features of the management of kingdoms

⁴⁶ Massarella & Moran 2012, p. 360.

⁴⁷ Gunji 1985a, p. 120.

⁴⁸ Henriques 2014, p. 380.

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and republics; elements of military strategy and fundraising for wars; and naval battles fought for the conquest of new possessions. The volume also refers to the complex code of rules regulating royal families or dynasties for the succession of the throne.

29. During their visit to Catholic Europe, the legates met and were often received by different political authorities and representatives, who displayed not only their power, but also the hierarchical structure and wealth of their kingdom. The Japanese envoys gained particular insight into the political prestige of the Holy See (and the Papal States) and the Spanish Habsburg Crown.

30. Virtually the entire narrative contains traces of this political awareness. Clearly an integral part of every society, the *res publica* was revealed to the ambassadors even through experiences of a religious and cultural nature. Some scholars have asserted that the ecclesial component was occasionally linked to an institutional aspect, whereby visiting places of worship became a political as much as a devotional act. An example is offered by Judith C. Brown, who describes their visit to Mantua:

The duke, for example, took the emissaries to see the church, palace, and treasure of the knightly Order of Santo Stefano. Since this was the institution by which the duke sought to establish his naval supremacy in the Mediterranean, their visit to the headquarters of the order had as much to do with ducal efforts to be perceived as a powerful figure beyond the confines of his small state as it had to do with the Ash Wednesday celebrations that were taking place there during the Japanese visit⁴⁹.

31. Political leaders often enquired about the Japanese boys and the country they came from. Francesco I de' Medici (1541-1587) is known to have been the first Italian political

⁴⁹ Brown 1994, p. 894. See also: Boscaro 1970, pp. 1-20.

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figure to have the privilege to welcome the Japanese «princes» into his Gran Duchy. In Pisa, he asked Mancio to sit next to him because he was eager to learn more about Japan. A similar episode occurred in Spain, where the Empress and Doña Leonor de Mascarenhas (1503-1584), elderly governess of Philip II, expressed admiration for the beauty of their clothes, and the Empress was particularly curious to examine their traditional swords. The ladies also asked them to write something in Japanese and in Latin⁵⁰.

32. Ramalho stated that Philip II, «along with Popes Gregory XIII and Sixtus V, is the prime historical, social and political figure mentioned in the book and he was not to be offended»⁵¹. *De Missione* thus gives particular consideration to the monarch, who had reunited various territories under his crown. *Colloquium XVIII* is in fact dedicated to the king (first of all the sovereigns of Europe) and to his son, describing the solemn audience held in Madrid on November 14, 1584. The ambassadors (in typical Japanese clothes) met Philip II and offered him some gifts and letters signed by the three feudal lords. *De Missione* further exalts the work of this monarch, whose reign is described as the fruit of Divine providence, and hints at his imperial «fortune», which had then expanded to the four continents. As is known, Philip II was granted rule by legitimate right over neighboring Portugal and its empire, following the death of Cardinal-King Henry (1512-1580)⁵². He was officially crowned Philip I of Portugal on March 25, 1581, inaugurating the period of the Iberian union (1580-1640), a period mentioned in *De Missione*:

Charles' son Philip, second of that name, about whom we are now speaking, auspiciously obtained the whole of Portugal [in 1580], and the parts of Africa

and Asia which belonged to the dominion of Portugal, when King Henry of Portugal, who was Philip's uncle, departed this life; and now that his realm extends so far and so wide, into so many kingdoms and provinces, and he is sovereign over such vast possession, it is fitting that we pray God that he continue to rule for many years yet. It is now the thirty-fourth year since this most glorious king took over the helm of his kingdoms, while his father Charles was still alive; Charles who, after winning the highest praise for his many victories over his enemies, and for his outstanding conduct of affairs both at home and on the field of battle, partly because he was afflicted with many illnesses, partly because of his confidence in the prudence and authority of his son, put the key to all the affairs of the kingdom in his hands [in 1556]⁵³.

33. The prestige of Philip's monarchy and the greatness of the royal headquarters are also described in the subsequent conversation. In *Colloquium XIX*, before narrating the arrival of the delegates in Alicante (January 5, 1585), where they stayed for fourteen days, Miguel discusses several works sponsored by the king, dwelling in particular on the Escorial complex, begun in 1563 by the royal architect Juan Bautista de Toledo (1515-1567) to celebrate the decisive victory of San Quintino over the French (August 10, 1557)⁵⁴.

34. In *Colloquium XVII*, *De Missione* also devotes a particularly detailed political portrait to cardinal archduke Albert of Austria (1559-1621), legate *a latere* and viceroy of Portugal from 1583 to 1593. Miguel exclaims:

He is the most noble cardinal, son of Emperor Maximilian, brother of Rudolph, who is still alive, and nephew of Philip, king of all Spain, through his sister, whom his uncle himself placed at the head of the

⁵⁰ Cooper 2005, p. 64.

⁵¹ Ramalho 1999, p. 96.

⁵² Elliott 1991, p. 49.

⁵³ Massarella & Moran 2012, p. 235.

⁵⁴ Santoro Sricchia 1997, p. 105.

entire jurisdiction of Portugal when he was not yet an adult but was endowed with an extraordinary prudence, and with other gifts of nature and virtue. This prince therefore, as was fitting for one endowed with such nobility and dignity, both sacred and secular, received us with all kindness and generosity; and although, as I said, he governs the whole of Portugal, and has a household and train of servants such as formerly the kings of Portugal were accustomed to have, his friendliness and benevolence towards us were such that in the three times that we visited him in the space of the month or thereabouts that we stayed in Lisbon he always treated us with the utmost love, and he would not suffer us to kiss his sacred hand, a costume and rite of veneration observed by all the nobles and lords⁵⁵.

35. The Cardinal himself met the dignitaries several times following their landing at the port of Cascais (August 10, 1584), demonstrating affection and generosity in different ways. He invited them to visit Sintra, which required crossing through Penha Longa to his summer residence. He also met them again in the autumn of 1585, when the group reached Lisbon for the second time. The party later set sail aboard the *São Filipe* on April 13, 1586 with several Jesuits destined for the mission in the East Indies.

4. A Brief Reference to China

36. Despite being intended primarily for a Japanese audience, the book's publication also provided new information regarding the territories of East Asia, especially China. England was particularly interested in such

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information after the Portuguese ship *Madre de Deus* was captured in 1592 by an English privateer on a journey from Goa to Lisbon, and a copy of *De Missione* arrived in English territory. The volume was immediately discovered by Richard Hakluyt (c. 1553-1616), collector and publisher of travel literature, as well as one of the greatest promoters of Anglo-Saxon overseas expansion. He had the section on China translated into English and printed in London in 1599 under the title *An Excellent Treatise of the Kingdome of China*⁵⁶. This section was included in the second volume of the second edition of *Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation* (1598-1600), although without any reference to the text from which it was taken. Hakluyt only considered the *Colloquium XXXIII* for the richness and truthfulness of its news and for the precise and detailed description of various aspects of contemporary Chinese society, including public administration and the judicial system, the organization of the economy (in particular mining), as well as social and religious practices and education.

37. Rui Loureiro has claimed that this chapter can be viewed as a truly encyclopedic synthesis of the knowledge available on China in the Portuguese circles of the East Indies at the end of the 16th century⁵⁷. At the same time, Adolfo Tamburello, in a review of the Italian edition of *De Missione* by Marisa Di Russo published in 2016⁵⁸, has stated that this *dialogus* appeared to be the only up-to-date source of knowledge about China's culture and civilization at that time. According to Tamburello, up to this point Europe was not well informed about China's resources and would have to wait for the publication of

⁵⁵ Massarella & Moran 2012, p. 223.

⁵⁶ *An excellent treatise of the kingdome of China, and of the Estate and Government thereof: Printed in Latine at Macao a citie of the Portugals in China, An. Dom. 1590 and written Dialogue-wise. The speakers are Linus, Leo, and Michael.*

⁵⁷ Loureiro 1992, p. 22, 25.

⁵⁸ The Italian edition is titled: *Dialogo sulla missione degli ambasciatori giapponesi alla Curia romana e sulle cose osservate in Europa e durante tutto il viaggio basato sul diario degli ambasciatori e tradotto in latino da Duarte de Sande, sacerdote della Compagnia di Gesù and published by Leo S. Olschki Editore in Florence.*

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Matteo Ricci's memoirs, edited by the Flemish Jesuit Nicolas Trigault (1577-1628), sent to Europe in 1613 as Procurator, and printed in Augsburg in 1615 with the title *De Christiana expeditione apud Sinas suscepta ab Societate Jesu*⁵⁹.

38. Despite Tamburello's claim, a few years prior to the English edition of the «Chinese chapter» of *De Missione*, Juan González de Mendoza (1545-1618), a Spanish Augustinian appointed bishop on May 31, 1593, made a significant contribution to the knowledge of China in Renaissance Europe. In 1585 in Rome, he published *Historia del Gran Reino de la China*, which quickly spread through several scholarly circles and enjoyed more than fifty editions. Although Mendoza never visited Asia (though he did spend two years in New Spain before returning to Spain), he was commissioned by Gregory XIII in 1583 to produce a meticulous historiographical work, which he managed to carry out with the sources at his disposal⁶⁰, ultimately contributing to the construction of the image of China in Early Modern Europe⁶¹. Regarding the importance of Mendoza's work, Robert Richmond Ellis has written that, even though the text «was not the first sixteenth-century European treatise on China, it was by far the most influential and widely read, translated into every major European language and reprinted many times⁶²».

39. In the end, Filippo Comisi has recently claimed that, while the Japanese embassy

contributed significantly to making Europe known to Japan, it succeeded even more in making Japan known to Europeans⁶³.

Conclusions

40. *De Missione* is not only a mere description of a voyage but also an important geographical and cultural encyclopedia. By devoting sections to the major cities visited by the ambassadors, the volume reveals the expansive and rich heritage of religious, artistic, economic, historical and political weight of Western civilization, as well as its prosperity and wealth. Miguel finds such prosperity expressed through three features: the peace and success of its inhabitants, the fertility of the soil, and internal and external trade.

41. The text is thus primarily a celebration of the excellence of Catholic Europe. Although the description of other fertile and well-organized territories such as China is included, Miguel argues that such countries cannot challenge Europe's superiority⁶⁴ as displayed in all its splendor by the narrative of the young Japanese boys and by Jesuit methodology⁶⁵. Before concluding *Colloquium XXXIII*, Miguel reaffirms (unlike the English translation which concludes earlier) the grandeur of the continent and celebrates the prestige of its religious, political, social and cultural context.

⁵⁹ Tamburello 2016, p. 177.

⁶⁰ Mendoza gathered most of his information from the travel notes of Miguel de Luarca (1540-1591), a Spanish soldier who took part in the expedition led by Miguel López de Legazpi (c. 1502-1572) to the Philippines, published as *Verdadera relación de la Grandeza del Reino de China* (1575). According to Liam Matthew Brockey «The first part of the book was based on the writings of fellow Augustinians who visited Fujian Province in the mid-1570s, while the second part contains an account of Alfaro's visit to Canton in 1579, and a third part tells of the brief visit made by Fray Martín Ignacio de Loyola (1550-1606) to Fujian

and Guangdong Provinces in 1582». Brockey 2016, p. 9.

⁶¹ See: Sola García 2016, pp. 1-23.

⁶² Richmond Ellis 2012, p. 81.

⁶³ Comisi 2019, p. 25.

⁶⁴ Pedro Lage Correia writes that the description of Chinese culture in this *Colloquium* played a decisive role in this image of European superiority. In fact, the aim was to make it clear that Europe possessed a higher level of civilization than China. Correia 2012, p. 82.

⁶⁵ Di Russo 2010, p. 973.

42. The work can thus be seen as a series of *laudes civitatum*, offering an enthusiastic and highly polished exaltation of Europe as a propagator of faith and civilization⁶⁶. The text continually arouses feelings of wonder and admiration, as in the case of Leão in *Colloquium XXI*. Marvelling at the description of several of the cities of central Italy, he tells his cousin Miguel:

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With every day that passes you tell us more extraordinary things, and I no longer doubt that Europeans ^{surpass} all others in their abilities; and yet if we had not had you and your companions as most trustworthy witnesses we would have regarded all these things as fiction and thought nothing of them⁶⁷.

Appendix

Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (ARSI), Romae. 13 I, f. 91-91v.

Letters Patent of the Superior General Claudio Acquaviva to the Italian confreres, Rome on June 2, 1585.

[f. 91v]

Patenti universali a tutti i nostri per i Signori Giaponesi 2 di giugno 1585

[f. 91]

2 giugno 1585

Se¹ bene io non dubito che questi Signori Giaponesi dovunque occorrerà loro far passaggio, o in qual si voglia maniera fermarsi, ove siano collegii et case di nostri saranno da quelli accolti et serviti con quell'affetto d'amorevolezza et di carità che et le persone loro da tutti meritano, et noi particolarmente dobbiamo; tuttavia per mostrare anch'io in questa parte la volontà et efficace desiderio mio, non ho voluto lasciar d'accompagnarli con la presente incaricando a tutti i nostri² che io grandemente desidero che non si lasci ufficio alcuno a dietro ove si possa mostrar la particolare affettione della Compagnia in tutte le cose concernenti l'honore et servitio loro, non lasciando però di ricordare che in tutto s'havrà da procedere col parere de Padri che vengono in compagnia di detti Signori, che per esser già informati potranno meglio vedere secondo l'occorrente quello che sarà più spedito et necessario. Et perché so che non mi bisogna scrivere più a lungo in questa materia, che far finire, all'orationi et santi sacrificii di tutti mi raccomando pregando loro dal [...] copiose gratie.

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Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (ARSI), Rom. 13 I, f. 91-91v.

⁶⁶ Gil 1994, p. 435.

⁶⁷ Massarella & Moran 2012, p. 271.

¹ A note added later in the upper right margin reads: «Andò così senza titolo e senza soprascritto

piegata come lettera e col sigillo ordinario di Nostra Paternità, dico quello delle lettere».

² These words («a tutti i nostri») are added in the interline.

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