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Bulletin of Portuguese - Japanese Studies, núm. 6, june, 2003, pp. 47-71

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Available in: http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=36100603
JOÃO RODRIGUES TÇUZU
AND THE CONTROVERSY OVER CHISTIAN
TERMINOLOGY IN CHINA
The Perspective of a Jesuit from the Japanese Mission

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There is no doubt that João Rodrigues Tçuzu (1561-1633) played a pivotal role in the controversy over Christian terminology in China. Between 1616 and 1633, Tçuzu frequently expounded upon the subject in his missives, clearly assuming a central role for himself in the unfolding of this fierce and protracted debate that would soon turn into the famous Chinese Rites Controversy, once it spread beyond the confines of the Society of Jesus.

Forced to abandon Japan in 1610 in the aftermath of various intrigues over his involvement in the silk trade, João Rodrigues Tçuzu shifted base to Macao, from where he made a few brief incursions into the Chinese mainland.

In June 1613, while carrying out orders received from the recently deceased Visitor Francesco Pasio (1554-1612), Rodrigues once again returned to China, and thus began a journey that visited the Jesuits’ many residences and missions.1 The journey was undertaken with a view to investigate Chinese religion and philosophy, given the plan to prepare a common catechism for the missions in China and Japan and in other areas influenced by Chinese civilisation.2 He remained in China for two years, until June 1615, when he returned to Macao.3

His letter dated January 1616 formally constitutes the start of the debate that caused much antagonism within the missionaries in China itself as well as between some of these missionaries with their counterparts in Japan.

In this missive, written after a period spent in research in the Chinese interior, Tçuzu appears rather critical and very firm in his conviction that in

1 At the time, The Society had residences in Peking, Nanking, Nanchang, Hangzhou and Nanxiong, apart from a mission in Shanghai.
2 This catechism was never realised.
3 Cf. João Rodrigues Tçuzu’s letter to the Father General, Macao, 22.01.1616, ARSI, Jap.Sin. 16 I, fl. 284.
the Chinese mission Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) and his companions had committed innumerable errors, which he urged be immediately remedied. He affirms the necessity of starting from scratch with regard to many of the choices that had been made, especially with regard to the Chinese terms used to designate Christian concepts. This question would prove to be the central issue of a protracted debate that would unfold shortly after, and would cause a profound divide within the missionary fold.

Tçuzu was shocked with the native words that were applied to Christian concepts. Amongst these, the word utilised for God, Shangdi, which, in his opinion, was “very bad” as “apart from being a famous temple amongst them, does not mean god but something very different”. This was also the case with the words for Soul, Linghun, and Angels, Tianshen, which were “all superstitious and bad words”.

A staunch opponent of what he called “obscure terms that had a meaning that was different from what the words appeared to sound”, during the last twenty years of his life Tçuzu was involved in a clear campaign in favour of the proscription and substitution of these words.

As he peremptorily affirmed, if the utilisation of these words was excusable before his investigations and the consequent perception of the errors committed, it was no longer acceptable from that point in time onwards as “one could not dissimulate hidden malice”. It was necessary to rapidly correct the errors committed and designate God by that very name, as well as the Soul, Angels, etc. given that these concepts did not have any equivalents in the Chinese language.

Tçuzu’s position is clearly a reflection of the sensibilities that were so characteristic of a man who had been forged in the mission in Japan, where the strategy of adaptation had stopped well short of the strategy adopted in China and had followed a rather different path, namely in the context of terminology, in which they had opted for the Japanisation of Latin and Portuguese words – Deus [God], for example, had been transformed into Deusu.
Thus, Tçuzu’s intransigence with regard to the utilisation of Chinese terms, which he repeatedly classifies as obscure and dubious, becomes perfectly comprehensible. His sensibilities would have decreed it as such. Intrinsically, Tçuzu sought nothing but the imposition of the Japanese missionary model in China.

Rodrigues assumed a benevolent tone when referring to Ricci’s options that were the result of the "great difficulty and reluctance that they encountered in this nation in receiving alien doctrines that were different from their own". His errors were not borne of any ill will or perfidy but were only the result of inexperience and ignorance of the terrain with which he was dealing.

Considering himself, in his own opinion, to be far more suitable than Ricci to comprehend the essence of Chinese religious and philosophical thought, Tzuçu clearly declared himself to be the one responsible for disentangling the errors that had been committed in the Chinese mission over the course of thirty years, so much so that the missionaries "received much illumination with my visit there and found many essential errors against the faith that were to be found in our books due to the fact that they were explained in obscure terms".

But the "excesses" of accommodation in China were not limited to terminology alone and Tçuzu noted other errors as well, especially with regard to rites, such as the practices he had witnesses in funerary ceremonies in which the missionaries did things that "even the moors in China hesitate to do for fear of appearing to be heathen superstition". Father João Rodrigues Tçuzu stated that he had prepared some treatises on this subject.

The argumentation expounded by Tçuzu in his letter of 1616, which is persistently taken up again in subsequent missives, focused upon the necessity of elaborating a uniform strategy throughout the different missions in East Asia or, at the very least, to eliminate the contradictions therein.

Effectively, the fact that the Chinese system of writing was not limited solely to China, but had also spread to Japan, Korea and Indochina, implied that whatever was published in one place would be understood in others. As a result, it was necessary to proceed with caution and avoid discrepan-

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10 "Grande dificuldade e repugnancia que acharam em esta naçam receber doutrinas estranhas e diferentes da sua".
11 "Receberam muita luz com a minha yda la e acharam muitos erros essenciaes contra a fee que andam em nossos livros por se explicarem por termos escuros"; Ibid., fl. 285.
12 "Ate os mouros que há na China tem escrupulo de fazer por parecer superstição gentilica"
13 Cf. Ibid., fl. 285 v.
cies in what was published. In Japan, stated Tçuzu, they had already pointed out errors in Ricci’s catechism. It was imperative to ensure uniformity. And, in Tçuzu’s opinion, the model that should be followed was obviously that which had been used in Japan.

Rodrigues also enumerated other arguments that would require a rapid resolution of this question. In the first place the Inquisition, which he himself had pondered over warning, as he had been advised by some good theologians and by Manuel Dias Junior (1574-1659). The only reason why he had refrained from doing so was the fact that he had seen the good intentions of the Superior of the Chinese mission, Niccolò Longobardo (1565-1655), and was aware that the errors committed were the fruit of ignorance and not of malice. Tçuzu further warned of the risk that the Society itself ran of being discredited in this situation, given that if the friars in Manila, who knew Chinese, came to know of the errors, as was imminent, they would denounce the Society’s missionaries.

After carrying out his investigations Tçuzu compiled a list of errors that he proceeded to hand over to Superior Longobardo. The list evoked many different reactions from amongst the missionaries in China. According to Tçuzu himself, the Superior had revealed himself to be favourably inclined to his observations and ordered that Ricci’s catechism be recalled with the intention of carrying out the necessary corrections. In addition he also ordered that a book by Alfonso Vagnone (1568-1640) be burnt and recalled other books.

Nevertheless, there were three fathers “well versed in the language who refused to listen” who, according to Tçuzu’s accusations, “presuming that they knew all about it” contradicted “everything with great vehemence”. But their repudiation was promptly explained by Tçuzu: they felt

15 Ricci’s catechism, The True Meaning of (the Doctrine of) the Master of Heaven (Tianzhu shiyi), was begun in 1593 and was ready in 1596, the text then being submitted to the Bishop, D. Luís Cerqueira. A definitive version was prepared only in 1601. It was published for the first time in December 1603 or in early 1604, under the title The True Meaning of Heavenly Studies (Tainxue shiyi) Cf. Jacques Gernet, China and the Christian Impact, New York-Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987, p. 8.
16 Cf. Ibid., fl. 286.
17 Cf. Ibid., fl. 285 v.
18 “Bem versados na lingoa que fecharam os ouvidos”.
19 “Presumindo que sabião o em que se fundavam”.
20 “Com grande vehemencia a tudo”.

themselves to be in danger of being discredited as the errors that had been exposed had proliferated in the books that they had published under their own names.\textsuperscript{21} As for the majority of Christians Mandarins, although they were “very weak in their faith”,\textsuperscript{22} they ended up by agreeing with Tçuzu.\textsuperscript{23} This is obviously a manifest exaggeration.

In the meanwhile, with the expulsion of the remaining Jesuits from Japan and their subsequent establishment in Macao, support for Tçuzu increased. In January 1619 Father João Rodrigues Girão (1558-1629) reported that, “amongst the fathers in China and our fathers from Japan there was a dispute over some words that they used in Father Matteo Ricci’s catechism to denote God, soul, spirit etc. that had heathen meanings and were detrimental to the understanding of the truth”.\textsuperscript{24}

However, differences of opinion must have already existed amongst the missionaries in China themselves, although these undoubtedly did not prove to be as radical as those of the missionaries from Japan, who, according to Tçuzu, advocated a pure and simple substitution of the Chinese terms by other Portuguese or Latin terms – in accordance with the Japanese model.

The position of the Jesuits in China who were not favourably inclined towards the terms utilised was more moderate and essentially centred around the expressions chosen by Ricci from Chinese Classics to denote God, \textit{Shangdi} (literally, Lord on High) and \textit{Tian} (Heaven), given their overly Confucian connotations. That is to say, the position of the men who had some experience of China was undoubtedly less radical than that of the men who had been moulded in the mission in Japan, such as Tçuzu. In the case of the former, the use of Chinese words themselves was not being questioned, but rather the inadequacy of the words that had been chosen was the issue.

It was against this backdrop that an initial attempt was made in Macao to resolve the controversy. In 1621, a meeting took place in which the question of terminology was discussed. The supporters of the terms chosen by Ricci saw their position strengthened, with the sanctioning of the term

\textsuperscript{21} Cf. \textit{Ibid.}, fl. 285 v.
\textsuperscript{22} “Muy fraquinhos na fé”.
\textsuperscript{23} Cf. \textit{Ibid.}, fl. 286 v.
\textsuperscript{24} “Entre os padres da China e os nossos de Japão ouve contenda sobre algumas palavras que elles usavão no catecismo do padre Matheus Rício para nomearem Deus, alma, espírito, etc que tinham significações gentílicas e erão em prejuízo da inteligência da verdade”; Letter from João Rodrigues Girão to the Father General, Macao, 21.01.1619, ARSI, \textit{Jap.Sin.} 17, fl. 225.
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Shangdi, considered to be “good and permissible and for this reason shall be left as it was in printed books, and also in free usage by Christians”. 25

The General of the Society himself, Muzio Vitelleschi (1615-1645) gave orders to this effect to the Visitor of China and Japan, Jerónimo Rodrigues Senior, 26 prohibiting alterations to Ricci’s books. 27

Discontented, those who had opposed the terms refused to consider themselves defeated and persisted in their quest, thus continuing the dispute. From amongst the missionaries in China, Longobardo, who then held the post of Superior of the residence in Peking, was amongst those who refused to accept the decision made in Macao. In this regard, in around 1623-1624 he prepared a treatise entitled A Short Answer Concerning the Controversies about Xang Ti, Tien Xin and Ling Hoen and Other Chinese Names and Terms; to clear which of them may be used by the Christians to these Parts, Directed to the Fathers of the Residences in China, so that they may peruse it, and then send their Opinion concerning it to the F. Visitor at Macao. 28

In this treatise he condemned the use of terms such as Shangdi and Tian, that in his opinion did not correspond to the God of the Bible and that only served to generate confusion, leading the Chinese into error and impeding them from understanding the true essence of God and Christianity. 29

26 Jerónimo Rodrigues Senior held this post twice, first from 1619 to 1621 and again from 1622 to 1626.
28 N. Standaert states that the text appears to have originally been written in Portuguese, with the title Resposta Breve sobre as Controvérsias do Xamti, Tienxin, Limhoën, e outros nomes e termos sinicos: per se determinar quais delles podem ou não podem usarse nesta Xrandade. Dirigida aos Padres das Residencias da China, para a verem, e depois enviare com o seu parecer sobre ella ao Nosso Padre Visitador em Macao. In the mid 1640’s Francisco Furtado ordered it to be destroyed so as to eliminate any traces of this controversy amongst the Jesuits. However, there was one copy which went astray and ended up in the hands of the Franciscan António de Santa Maria Caballero (1602-1669) and would end up being used, years later, as a powerful weapon in the anti-Jesuit struggle in the context of the Rites Controversy (Cf. N. Standaert, Yang Tingyun, Confucian and Christian in Late Ming China, His Life and Thought, Leiden-New York, E. J. Brill, 1988, pp. 183-185). According to Gernet, this treatise was originally written in Latin, under the title De Confucio e jusque doctrina tractatus. It was later translated into French, under the title Traité sur quelques points de la religion des Chinois, and printed in Paris in 1701 under the patronage of the Foreign Missions. Cf. Jacques Gernet, China and the Christian Impact, p. 31.
29 Cf. ibid., p. 31.
Well, if Longobardo was not satisfied with the conclusions that were the outcome of the 1621 meeting in Macao, one can be sure that Tçuzu and the other missionaries from Japan were undoubtedly unsatisfied too. Ten years after the first letter in which he had raised the question of the problem of the terms used, Tçuzu took up the subject once again in two new missives, dated 1626 and 1627, and addressed, respectively, to the General and to the Portuguese Assistant in Rome.30

Despite its gravity, the problem continued unresolved, warned Tçuzu.31 On the one hand, the superiors did not consider themselves apt to take a decision, given their unfamiliarity with the language and the "affairs of such obscure sects".32 On the other hand, the fathers in China had managed to deceive the General, alleging the authority that they had acquired from living in the heart of the Chinese Empire and by dominating the language. It was based on this that the General had deemed them to be right and prohibited alterations to be made to Ricci’s books.33 Nevertheless, in Rodrigues’ opinion, the situation already showed more promising signs, as after 14 long years during which the fathers from Japan had warned those in China to open their eyes and rectify their mistakes,34 some of them had finally woken up and they "were already divided in two".35

He affirmed that amongst those who were opposed to Ricci’s terms were to be found “the main and oldest fathers”,36 a category that included Niccolò Longobardo, Manuel Dias Junior, Gaspar Ferreira (1571-1649), Pedro Ribeiro (1570-1640) and the Chinese brother Qiu Lianghou / Pascoal Mendes (1584-1640).37 The following year, without mentioning specific

36 “Os principais e mais antigos padres”.
37 Gaspar Ferreira later appears on the side of the faction that was favourable to Ricci’s terms, and we thus do not know if he changed his opinion or whether the information provided by Tçuzu is false. In fact, Ferreira authored a treatise that refuted another treatise by Longobardo.
names, he counted seven of the main fathers in this group without taking into account the other younger missionaries.39

With regard to the faction that persisted in remaining loyal to Ricci’s terms, one could find Manuel Dias Senior (c.1561-1639) who “never studied anything about these matters, and follows his impulse”,40 apart from “other modern [greenhorns] who are still learning the language, who go by the superficial appearances of the people”.41

In a rather prejudiced fashion, Rodrigues ignored the fact that Dias Senior had spent a number of years at the mission.42 Furthermore, he omitted any reference to Alfonso Vagnone, another avid defender of Ricci’s terminology, who had many years of experience and was well versed in the language.43 This did not, however, impede him from claiming to be totally exempt of vested interests, at the same time that he noted that, “If there was any suspicion to be had of passion it is of those who defend the contrary, who find it very painful to rectify their books and being shown to be in error”.44

Tçuzu’s criticism further extended to include Father Francesco Buzoni (1576-1635)45 in Indochina, the author of a treatise in favour of those who supported the terminology. Tçuzu recriminated with him for having omitted the arguments of the opposing faction in his work.46 He further added that the position of the missionary in question did not derive from a lack of knowledge, but rather from being “a little [too] confident in his learning and being easily [induced] to follow and defend immoral opinions”.47 In the

40 “Destas cousas nada estudou, e vai pello pular”.
41 “Outros modernos que ainda aprendem a lingoa que seguem o exterior do povo”; João Rodrigues Tçuzu’s letter to the Father General, Macao, 21.11.1626, ARSI, Jap.Sin. 18 I, fl. 72 v.
42 Apart from this, he had twice held the important position of Principal of the Macao College, between 1597 and 1602 and, later, between 1611 and 1615.
43 Vagnone arrived in Macao in July 1604 and was appointed to the mission in China, where he arrived in 1605, with instructions to dedicate himself totally to the study of the Chinese language and characters. Three years later, he was already well versed in the language.
44 “Se algua sospeita podera aver de paixan he dos que defendem o contrario, por sentirem muito emmêdar seus livros serem notados de erros”; Cf. João Rodrigues Tçuzu’s letter to the Portuguese Assistant, Macao, 30.11.1627, ARSI, Jap.Sin. 18 I, fl. 88 v.
45 Superior of the mission in Indochina (Conchichina).
47 “Um pouco confiado em sua sciencia e facil em seguir e defender opiniões escabrosas”; cf. João Rodrigues Tçuzu’s letter to the Father General, Macao, 21.11.1626, ARSI, Jap.Sin. 18 I, fl. 73.
following year, he further added that, "he knows little of these languages
and sects".48

As for himself, Rodrigues stated that, "of course I am not in error in
this matter, as I am very well [versed] in these local sects and in their
symbols".49 To prove this, he once again expounded upon new arguments
that corroborated his position. In the first instance, the more than forty
extremely serious errors and many heresies that had been observed in the
books of one of the Christian Mandarin, "not out of malice, as he is very
zealous and simple",50 he acknowledged, but rather "due to ignorance of the
faith, [caused] by the doctrine that he heard from our [missionaries] that
our holy law was that which his ancestors professed".51

Tçuzu was further empowered by two other aspects: the Nestorian
stele, discovered in around 1623, in the province of Shaanxi, in the Xi’an
region, and the example of Francis Xavier.

With regard to the former, the stele contained "a marvellous scripture
of the ancient Christianity that existed in China around – 1000" 53, by which
one could prove the antiquity of the introduction of Christianity in China. It
was paradigmatic of the "circumspection, that they had, of using their name
for God as they understood the person that nele avia, que assaz de experiencia tinham por 146 annos que florecia a lei de Deus na China có Bispo e igrejas pelo Reino"; João Rodrigues Tçuzu’s letter to the Father General, Macao, 30.11.1627, ARSI, Jap.Sin. 18 I, fl. 88 v.

54 "Termos de que usam os padres mas de outros seguros Is. que alli nomea a Deus, Alla, vocabulo serico; e uso do nome Missia, para Salvador, e, Satan, por Demonio"; João Rodrigues Tçuzu’s letter to the Portuguese Assistant, Macao, 30.11.1627, ARSI, Jap.Sin. 18 I, fl. 88 v.
With regard to Xavier, “our eagle of this Orient”, he had shown the way as to the correct form of proceeding in the Japanese archipelago, "because he did not wish to trust any of the words of the Japanese for the tidings that he sought to impart of the supreme divinity of God". So much so that he "never changed the word Deos [God], unless it was after having proclaimed the divine perfection, would tell them that they must call him thus and as they did not even know him till that time they did not give him a name in their language, but those who really believed in him called him Deos [God] because it was thus they should call him, repeating and inculcating it in each word, Deus, Deus, Deus, so that, as it was new to them, it would be engraved in their memories, and hearts". And he concluded, "This is an example for those who are involved in conversions, to always keep in mind, particularly in China and Japan, [both of which are] curious nations and inclined towards errors and heresies if one is not very careful in this area.

Although at no time does Rodrigues demarcate himself from the position of the missionaries in China who were unfavourably disposed towards Ricci’s terms, we would like to emphasise yet again that his position would, by no means, have been identical to theirs.

There is no doubt that Tçuzu intended a substitution of the words in Chinese by Portuguese or Latin words, in exactly the same way as had been done in Japan. He affirmed the necessity of harmonising efforts and employing uniform methods in the missions in East Asia, in such a way so that "what, in one place, is rejected as idolatry and superstition, is not sanctioned in another as is, in truth, happening, which is scandalous in the eyes

56 “Aguia nossa deste Oriente”.
57 “Porque para a noticia que pretendia dar da soberana divindade de Deos, de nenhum dos termos proprios dos japões se quis fiar”.
58 “Nunca mudou a palavra Deos, se nam depois de lhes declarar as divinas perfeições dizialhes que assim o aviam de chamar e como elles ate então o nam conhecerão assim lhe nam derão nome em sua lingoaagem, mas os que nelle verdadeiramente criam o chamavam Deos que assim aviam de chamar repetindo e inculcando a cada palavra, Deus, Deus, Deus, pera que cõ ser novo lhes ficasse impresso na memoria, e coração”; Rodrigues omitted any reference to the fact that it was not exactly so, as Francisco Xavier had begun by using Buddhist terms, namely Dainichi for God, and also jodo, for Paradise, jigoku, for Hell, and tennin, for angels. Cf. Michael Cooper, S.J., Rodrigues, O Intérprete, Um Jesuíta no Japão e na China, Lisbon, Quetzal Editores, 1994, pp. 291-292, 335.
59 “Exemplo he este pera os que andam em converções o trouxessem sempre diante dos olhos, particularmente na China e japões nações curiosas e dispostas pera erros e heresias se se nam tem muito tento nesta parte”; João Rodrigues Tçuzu’s letter to the Father General, Macao, 21.11.1626, ARSI, Jap.Sin. 18 I, fts. 72 v.-73.
of the Christians and the cause of much mirth to the heathens". As for the missionaries in China, this was not the issue in question: amongst them, as we have already mentioned, the debate revolved around the adequacy – or inadequacy – of the terms, to which some amongst them attributed an overly Confucian connotation which was full of ambiguities. In this manner, the fathers from Japan and those in China, both staunch opponents of the terms, did not share the same ideas with regard to the solution of the question although they did share a common desire to see a change in the terminology. For the former, the change they sought was far more profound.

Amongst the fathers in China the question continued to be aggravated over the course of time, and a consensus soon emerged as to the urgent necessity for a general deliberation to attempt, yet again, to put an end to the dispute. In 1626 Rodrigues alluded to the desire for such a deliberation to be organised, to be realised this time in the mission itself, so that many controversial aspects could be resolved. He did not fail to refer to a treatise he had written which "I believe will surely shed much light upon the matter of the sects in order for them to resolve and amend whatever is necessary".

On the opposing side, Alfonso Vagnone, who had returned to the mission in March 1624, after a six year exile in Macao, expressed an identical opinion with regard to the pressing need for a meeting affirming, with regard to the controversy over the utilisation of the terms Shangdi and Tian, that "it appears that it is not possible to define and conclude in a definitive manner if they can be used to designate God, without the council and a discussion of the Fathers who can give their judgement in this regard".

60 “O que é húa parte se reprova por idolatria e superstiçam se não aprove na outra como na verda[de] passa, o que he de escandalo para os spáos, e de gozo aos gentios”; João Rodrigues Tçuzu’s letter to the Portugues Assistant, Macao, 30.11.1627, ARSI, Jap.Sin. 18 I, fl. 88.

61 “Cuido lhes dará muito lume na materia das seitas para se resolverem e emendarê o que for necessario”; cf. João Rodrigues Tçuzu’s letter to the Father General, Macao, 21.11.1626, ARSI, Jap.Sin. 18 I, fl. 72 v. According to Michael Cooper, the treatise in question could be a work attributed to Tçuzu entitled Tractatus Copiosissimus contra Praxes Matthaei Ricci et Sociorum ejus Sectatorum, inter quos P. Rodericus de Figueiredo, dating from 1618. He further adds that the treaty prompted diverse responses, namely that of Rodrigo Figueiredo himself. Cf. Michael Cooper, Rodrigues, O Intérprete, p. 339.

62 Vagnone arrived in Macao in January 1618. He had been expelled from China in the aftermath of the 1616–1617 persecution that began in Nanking and would result in the shutting down of five missionary residences.

63 “Se se pode usar para designar Deus, parece que não se há de poder definir e cécluir bem a junta e disputa dos Padres que podê dar parecer nella”; Alfonso Vagnone, “Breve informação sobre o nome Xam ti, e Tien em lugar de Deos para os superiores”, ARSI, Jap.Sin. 161 II, fl. 225.
In this context, he prepared a treatise entitled “Brief Information about the Name Xam ti, and Tien in Place of God for the Superiors”, 64 so that they could really understand the matter under discussion, keeping in mind the difficulty and specific nature of the issue. 65 This information was not dated but, judging by its contents, it appears to have been written prior to 1627, the year in which the conference was actually held. 66 Vagnone’s position on the question of terminology is perfectly defined here.

In this missionary’s opinion, “The name Xam ti, which means supreme king and monarch, is in itself appropriate and very suited to signify our true God”, 67 as “its concept is suitable and in accordance with the truth of that which it signifies”. 68 He further added that, “Many scholars in China, both of the old guard as well as modern ones have understood and understand this name Xam ti that is used and adopted in their doctrinal and authentic books to be a name that is superior to all created things, that governs the entire world with justice and providence, rewarding the good and punishing the bad, without being able to conceal anything from him”. 69

However, Vagnone, following Ricci’s example, referred to what Ricci had termed Original Confucianism, in the light of which he had interpreted those terms and compared it to the Song Neo-Confucianism that prevailed in his times. In this regard, Vagnone acknowledged that the term Shangdi held a clear ambiguity for the Chinese, as its real meaning, that of the “ancient scholars”, had been distorted by the Neo-Confucianism of the “scholars of the Sum kingdom”. 70 Thus, there existed a “great difference between the doctrine of the ancient scholars and that of the scholars of the Sum kingdom”. 71 He added that the latter had interpreted “the name Xam ti

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64 “Breve informação sobre o nome Xam ti, e Tien em lugar de Deos para os superiores”; Ibid., fls. 225-226.
65 Cf. Ibid., fl. 225.
66 No reference is made to the prohibition of the terms, but merely to the possibility of this happening.
67 “O nome Xamti, q.s. supremo rei e monarca, de si he apto e mui accomodado para sinificar ao nosso verdadeiro Deos”.
68 “Seu conceito he ajustado e cóforme a verdade da cousa que sinifica”.
69 “Muitos letrados assi antigos como modernos na china entenderá e entendê ser este nome xam ti usado e tomado nos seus livros doutrinais e autéticos por hu nome superior a todas as cousas criadas, que governa cõ providência e justiça todo o mundo, apremiando os bôs, e casti-gando os maos, sê se lhe poder encubrir nada”; Alfonso Vagnone, «Breve informação... », fl. 225.
70 “Letrados do reinado sum”. In other words, of the Song Dynasty (960-1279).
71 “Grande diferença na doutrina dos átigos letrados, da dos letrados do reinado sum”.

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badly”\(^{72}\) and had subverted “a truth which was so clear and obvious as to what it is to have intelligent (?) spirits and an Immortal soul”.\(^{73}\)

In this context, the crux of the matter, observed Vagnone, consisted in ascertaining if it would be better “to eliminate the use of the name Xam ti from everything, so as not to afford the occasion for error”,\(^{74}\) and “not to permit the Christians to use this name”\(^{75}\) – as the opponents to the terminology would have liked to see happen – or to go about it in such a way that the Chinese re-attributed to it its original meaning, as had happened with a “minority of the scholars who in fact understood this name”.\(^{76}\)

For Vagnone, the latter was unquestionably the correct option: “Without comparison it will be much easier for Chinese scholars to leave the misconceptions they have about the said name, and other similar ones, and adapt to and take in a good meaning than to totally cease to use them”.\(^{77}\) He further guaranteed that nobody who had even “a mediocre understanding of Chinese customs”\(^{78}\) would deny this “as the Chinese scholars, owing to their natural pride about, and great esteem in which they hold their ancient doctrines, and their wise ancestors, whom they venerate as saints, would not wish to leave what they taught, and even less be inclined to consider […] that they were in error”.\(^{79}\)

This was the opinion of the converted scholars and mandarins who, affirmed Vagnone, “practice it thus without the fathers who are of a contrary opinion being able to do anything about it”.\(^{80}\) In fact, he explained, terms such as \textit{Shangdi} and \textit{Tian} were omnipresent and inevitable throughout the careers of these individuals, who could not “stop using these names, no matter how much they may wish to”.\(^{81}\) Not to utilise them, “so as not to sin, going against our order”,\(^{82}\) would imply that they abandon their
posts. In order to remain in these offices it would compulsorily oblige them to “go against the order of the Fathers or against their conscience”, in the event that the terms be proscribed.83

In order to further legitimise his opposition, Vagnone reminded one of the example of the Primitive Church that had proceeded “very smoothly, the Apostles and other Preachers after them accommodating themselves as well as they could to the conditions of the nations and the circumstances of the places and the times”.84 Thus, “we see that the name of God applied by the Ancients to Idols, were applied to the true god; the names of spirits, the soul, that had been composed from air or fire, were applied to the Angels, and the spiritual soul. The names of paradise, hell and many others, with which or by which very different things were understood than that which we now believe and know, were applied and taken in the good sense of the word”.85 He even added that “the Temples of the Idols were converted into temples and Churches of God; the festivals of the Idols were transformed into the festivals of the saints”.86 The fundamental basis for all of this was “if I am not mistaken, because they had understood and proved from experience that it was much easier to amend the concepts of the misled men, and improve their ancient customs [to] other good ends and circumstances, than to deprive them of all their customs”.87

Even in China, repeated Vagnone categorically, “it is easier for the Chinese scholars to rectify the misconceptions that they have with regard to this and other names, and to form a good concept of them, than to totally cease to use them”88 and “in fact, this is impossible”,89 by which “it is totally appropriate that there should be no change in this regard, so as not to risk

83 “Fazer cõtra a ordê dos Padres ou cõtra cõscia”; Ibid., fl. 225 v.
84 “Com muita soavidade accómmodando-se os Apostolos e mais Pregadores depois delhes quâto boamente pudião a condição das nações e as circunstâncias dos lugares e dos têpos”.
85 “Vemos que o nome de Deus aplicado dos antigos a Idolos, aplicarão ao verdadeiro deos; os nomes de espiritos, da alma, que tinhão ser cóposta do ar ou fogo, aplicarão aos Anjos, e alma espiritual: os nomes de parayso, inferno, e outros muitos, cõ os quais ou pollos quais entendião cousas mui diferentes das que nos agora cremos e sabemos, aplicarão e tomarão ê bô sentido”.
86 “Os Têplos dos Idolos cõverterão ê templos e Igrejas de Deos; as festas dos Idolos trás-ferirão ê festas dos santos”.
87 “Se não me engano, porque entenderão e provarão por experiencia que era mui mais facil emendar os cóceitos dos homêns enganados, e melhorar lhes seus costumes antigos [a] outros bons fins e circôstâncias, que tirar lhes de todo os seus custumes”; Ibid., fls. 225 v-226.
88 “Mais facil he os letrados chinas emendarê as erroneas que tê sobre esse e outros nomes, e de formarê bó cóceito delles, que deixarê totalmente de os usar”.
89 “Antes he isso impossivel”.

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what has been done with so much effort, on the axiom that there is no necessity to bring about such a change”.90

In February 1627, Manuel Dias Junior, the then Vice Provincial of China (1623-1635) referred to the fact that he had fixed the realisation of a general deliberation “bringing together in it all the fathers possible, as we have many issues to deal with and resolve, that have much more force and are better grounded when they are made to common satisfaction”.91

He stressed that one of these “principal issues was to examine carefully many terms that we use in preaching and in the books, which many fathers not only contend to be dubious, but hold to be completely illicit: others hold opinions to the contrary”.92 In this manner, the missionaries were divided into two factions, which “greatly hindered the preaching of the Gospel”.93

Various treatises had been written about this issue, but none of them bore fruit. Given that “no conclusion had been reached with papers”94 and that “it is not wise to defer these questions even if only owing to the scruples that some individuals have, and do not know how they should proceed with their preaching”,95 the deliberation became indispensable.

The meeting finally took place in December 1627 in the city of Jiading,96 near Shanghai. All the fathers “who were able to get together”97 participated including the Visitor himself André Palmeiro (1569-1635),98 who was worried about “them being extremely disunited on the issue of the

90 Que “toda rezão pede que não haja mudança nisto, para não arriscarmos o que se tê feito có tâto trabalho, maxime não havendo necessidade para fazer esta mudança”; Ibid., fl. 225 v-226.
91 “Ajuntando nela todos os padres que podesse, por que temos muitos pontos que tratar e assentar que quando vão feitos em comum contento tê mais força e são melhor fundados”. Cf. Letter from Manuel Dias Júnior to the Father General, Nanchang, 20.02.1627, ARSI, Jap.Sin. 161 II, fl. 97.
92 “Principaes era examinar bê muitos termos de que usamos na pregação e nos livros, de que muitos padres não so duvidão, mas julgão serê totalmente ilícitos: outros tê pera si o contrario”.
93 “Grande estorvo à pregação do Evangelho”; Ibid., fls. 97-97 v.
94 “Com papeis nada se tê concluido”.
95 “Estas questões não cóvê dilatarê se tanto pelo muito escrupulo que algus tê, e não sabê como hão de pregar”; cf. Ibid., fls. 97 v.
96 João Rodrigues Tçuzu, in his letter dated November 1627 mentioned that the meeting would take place in January of the following year. (Macao, 30.11.1627, ARSI, Jap.Sin. 18 I, fl. 88). However, Palmeiro, in a letter dated 1628, provides information to the contrary stating that the meeting had taken place in December 1627. Macao, 14.05.1628, ARSI, Jap.Sin. 161 II, fls. 99 v.
97 “Que se poderam ajuntar”.
98 Cf. carta do Visitador André Palmeiro ao Padre Geral, Macao, 14.05.1628, ARSI, Jap.Sin. 161 II, fl. 99. Palmeiro arrived in Macao in July 1626 and held the position of Visitor to China and Japan between 1626 and 1635.
doubts that have existed for many years amongst them about the various meanings of some names in China, with which they habitually explain either the nature of God or other things that relate to the mysteries of our faith”.99

Of the nineteen fathers who were to be found at the mission, according to the Annual Letter from China in 1627,100 Jean-Pierre Duteil mentions eleven who participated in the deliberations which included, apart from Palmeiro, Niccolo Longobardo, Nicholas Trigault (1577-1628), Giulio Aleni (1582-1649) Lazzaro Cattaneo (1560-1640), Francesco Sambiasi (1582-1649), Álvaro Semedo (c.1585-1658), Alfonso Vagnone, Pedro Ribeiro (1570-1640), Gaspar Ferreira and Manuel Dias Senior. The only missionaries absent were the fathers who were in far off areas or were overloaded with other work as was the case with Johann Adam Schall von Bell (1592-1666) or Johann Terrenz Schreck (1576-1630).101

In a letter dated May 1628 Palmeiro, while observing that there were “many different opinions”102 with regard to “the doubt that exists about the name, because one has to explain the true divinity”,103 emphasised his own difficult position in this question, given that he did not understand the “proper meaning of the words, about which there are doubts, nor could one who doesn’t know the language understand it”.104 Nevertheless, he finally took a decision: “I do not know if it is unsuitable; they shall be the judge of it”.105 It entailed the proscription of the terms *Shangdi* and *Tian, Tianzhu*, literally “Master of Heaven”, a term adopted by Michele Ruggieri (1543-1607) in the early days of the mission, became the official designation for God.106 Ricci’s
work was not affected by the decision.\textsuperscript{107} In other words, the situation was still far removed from the radical position that Tçuzu proclaimed.

The Visitor cautioned that, “As they have entered upon this point with a fair degree of passion, one fears that some will be blinded by their reasoning”.\textsuperscript{108} And in fact, six months after his letter, in November 1628, probably in the aftermath of a nervous breakdown brought on by this heated debate, Nicholas Trigault, who was “so intensely involved” in the discussions, committed suicide by hanging himself: “Xamti killed him”, wrote Palmeiro, in code, citing information received from Niccolò Longobardo.\textsuperscript{109}

Once again, the attempt to put an end to the controversy with the Jiading deliberations had come to naught. The dispute continued.

Against this backdrop, a year after the meeting, in a letter addressed to the General dated December 1628, Alfonso Vagnone severely criticised the Visitor. He explicitly accused him of partiality, because he had “patiently heard out one of the Fathers who held a negative opinion, without wanting to hear anyone who was of a positive opinion”\textsuperscript{110} and “without conferring with anybody who is informed about the matter, issued and passed sentence against the positive opinion in favour of the negative one and added some precepts of obedience so that nobody use orally or in writing the name xam\textit{ti} [...] in place of God despite the fact that the printed books of Father M. Ricci and other Fathers are replete with this name”.\textsuperscript{111}

With regard to what Palmeiro had said about wanting to “harmonise the voices, not being able to harmonise the opinions”,\textsuperscript{112} Vagnone predicted that “it does not seem that he is taking the path to achieve what he intends...”.

\textsuperscript{107} Cf. \textit{Ibid.}, p. 32. Gernet mentions that the Franciscan Caballero had noted in 1668 that under the pretext of the fact that Ricci’s position had not been condemned, the term \textit{Shangdi} had gone back to being used once again.

\textsuperscript{108} “Como entram no tratar deste ponto com algüa paixam, he de temer que cegue a algus a rezam”; Letter from the Visitor André Palmeiro to the Father General, Macao, 14.05.1628, ARSI, \textit{Jap.Sin.} 161 II, fl. 99 v.


\textsuperscript{110} “De vagar a hú dos Padres da opinião negativa, sê querer ouvir a ningué da opinião afirmativa”.\textsuperscript{111} “Sê cóferir có ningué que se sayba cortou e deo sentêcia cótra a opinião afirmativa é favor da negativa e accrecêton algus preçeitos de obediencia para que ningué ou de bocca ou in scriptis usasse do nome de xam\textit{ti} [...] eu lugar de Deus não obstante que os livros do Padre M. Ricci e dos mais Padres emprassou andáo cheos daquel nome”; Cf. Alfonso Vagnone’s letter to the Father General, s.l., 18.12.1628, ARSI, \textit{Jap.Sin.} 161 II, fl. 107.

\textsuperscript{112} “Côcordar as boccas, não podendo côcordar os pareceres”.
to”, as, he further accused, “to silence the voices of some with precepts of obedience, and not of others, to lend a patient ear to some and not to others, to give credence to some and not to others without first being well informed about both sides and what each one of them alleges in their defence; this is not the path to harmonising all voices but serves instead to further divide opinions and dispositions”.

Vagnone warned the General of the serious difficulties that would result from the factious and incorrect decision taken by Palmeiro. In his argumentation he stressed upon how the missionaries would be inevitably discredited in the eyes of the Chinese officials and scholars who would accuse them of not understanding their books. The negative fallout on conversions would not be long in coming.

In effect, in Vagnone’s opinion, the proscription of a term such as *Shangdi*, which was so common in Chinese books and held in such great esteem, would not be well received. Already some converts had even warned the missionaries that they would not respect the prohibition, declaring that they understood their books better than the fathers who were mere foreigners. In this way, any intention of impeding the scholars from utilising this term would per force lead to their distancing themselves and would lead them to “raise dust and enemies against our Holy Law, as though we wish to destroy for them the scant illumination and knowledge of God that are contained in their ancient books”.

On the other hand, to make it impossible for the missionaries to agree with some scholars who were “very wise in their books and sects”, and who sometimes established an association between God and their *Shangdi*, would imply obliging the former to act against their conscience, and give the latter yet another reason for scorn. To such an extent repeated the father that, “they spit in our faces, saying that we want to know their books better than they themselves who are natives and have spent their entire lives in studying them and thus we are embarrassed on both sides”.

113 “Não parece que leve caminho para alcãçar o que pretende”.
114 “Tapar as bocas có preceitos de obediencia a hus, e abrillas a outros; dar ouvido mui de vagar a hus, e não dallo a outros; não dar credito a hus e dallo a outros sê ser primeiro bem enformado de ambas as partes do que cada huia dellas allega por sua defesa; não he este caminho de cõcordar as boccas antes de cada vez mais desunir os pareceres e as vòtades”; *Ibid.*, fll. 108v.
115 “Allevãtar poeira e imigos cótra nossa Santa Lei, como que lhe queiramos destruir o pouco lume e conhição de Deus que tê e seus livros antigos”; *Ibid.*, flls. 107v.
116 “Mui intelligetes nos seus livros e sectas”.
117 “Nos cuspê no rosto, có dizer queremos saber melhor de seus livros, que elles mesmos que são naturais, e gastarão toda a vida no estudarê e assi por ambas as partes ficamos emleados”; *Ibid.*, fl. 107 v.
To illustrate the difficulties Vagnone reported several incidents that had taken place with Francesco Sambiasi and Adam Schall. The former, who was in charge of the Residence in the province of Henan, had complained that “he found himself to be very much embarrassed in this matter and that those who were not preaching in the field were the ones who went about harassing those who were actively carrying out missionary work with their numerous examples”. As for Schall, who was in the province of Shaanxi, he reported that “he one day found himself hard pressed by a Chinese scholar, and he later told me that he would have greatly rejoiced if our father Visitor had been there at that time and place to hear what actually happens here in the interior. If he had heard, it would undoubtedly not have been such an easy matter to eliminate the use of this name”.

Vagnone further pointed out the inconsistencies that would result from Palmeiro’s decision. If the General’s prohibition entailing the elimination of Ricci’s terms from the books that had already been printed were enforced, these would contradict what the fathers said and “thus, when the scholars hear that we verbally reject what is sanctioned in our books, they [shall] laugh in our faces as if to say that we cannot reach an understanding amongst ourselves and that we contradict ourselves or at the very least”, he repeated yet again, “that we do not understand their books well as Father Matteus Ricci had understood them”. The missionaries would thus be “discredited, and considered vacillators, and inclined to novelties”, Vagnone further reminded one that as Ricci’s books were widely spread throughout the country and held in great esteem, there was no possibility of recalling them or eliminating the word *Shangdi* from them. And even if there were, “one must carefully consider whether it is suitable or not”.

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118 “Se achava mui embarassado nesta matéria e que os que não andavão em christandades erão os que có seus demais dios exemplos andavam enqustando os que andão nas christandades”; N. Standaert infers that Sambiasi belonged to the faction that was opposed to Ricci. Cf. N. Standaert, Yang Tingyu, p. 184.

119 “Se achou hu dia mui apertado de hu letrado china, e depois me disse que folgara que o nosso padre visitador se achara naquele tempo e lugar para ouvir o que passaça dêtro, o que se ouvira por certo não ouvera de ser tão fácil em cortar pollo uso de tal nome”; cf. Alfonso Vagnone’s letter to the Father General, s.l., 18.12.1628, ARSI, Jap.Sin. 161 II, fl. 108.

120 “Assi ouvindo os letrados que de bocca reprovamos, o que esta aprovado nos nossos livros, rinsde de nos có dizer que não nos entêdemos e que nos contradizemos a nos mesmos, ou pollo menos”.

121 “Que não entendemos bê seus livros, como os entendeo o Padre Matteus Riccio”.

122 “Desacreditados, e tidos por encõstãtes, e amigos de novidades”.

123 “Se há de cõsiderar mui bê se cóvê ou não”; Ibid., fl. 108.
 Unsatisfied with the outcome of the Jiading deliberations, Vagnone persisted with regard to the necessity of realising another meeting of fathers, “who can provide a good understanding of this matter”,\textsuperscript{124} so as to “discuss and ascertain the truth”,\textsuperscript{125} given that, “without this discussion one will never be able to put an end to these controversies and, consequently, one will never be able to bring about an agreement amongst those who are at this mission”.\textsuperscript{126} In his opinion, one should not question “so many men, both dead and alive, excellent scholars who professed theology, who were considered by all to be very good men of religion, and achieved great results in this mission by following the positive opinion and using the name xam ti”,\textsuperscript{127} who would not have done it “if they considered it to be dangerous, or idolatrous, or otherwise erroneous, or if they did not have very well founded reasons to follow this path”.\textsuperscript{128} In conclusion, he observed that never had there been found “in the forty years that this path has been tread, that there was any error, or unsuitableness in the Christians”.\textsuperscript{129}

Vagnone’s letter perfectly illustrates the climate of tension that this debate had created amongst the missionaries. In it, the missionary referred to the various calumnies spread by the faction that was opposed to Ricci’s terms, namely those of “teaching heresies, of teaching Idolatry to the Chinese, so as to set the Inquisition against us and other such actions”.\textsuperscript{130} And, in fact, Tçuzu’s letters show that Vagnone was not lying in this respect. Vagnone mentioned that the authors of the treatises where these calumnies appeared had been punished both in Macao as well as in the mission. However, these punishments had been kept secret, at the same time that the treaties had been divulged in different areas, including outside the mission. Palmeiro’s decision was tailor made to facilitate the fact that the calumnies were taken to be the truth, so that they could reach the ears of the Inquisi-

\textsuperscript{124} “Que podê dar bô juizo nesta materia”.
\textsuperscript{125} “Disputar e averiguar as verdades”.
\textsuperscript{126} “Sê esta disputa nûca se há de dar cabo a estas cõtroversias, e por cõseguinte nûca hão de cócordar os animos dos que andão nesta missão”.
\textsuperscript{127} “Tãtos homens mortos e vivos bôs letrados e que professarão Theologia, e forão tidos de todos por mui bôs religiosos, e fizerão grande fruito nesta missão có seguir a opiniao afirmativa e usar do nome xam ti”.
\textsuperscript{128} “Se lhe virão perigo ou de Idolatria, ou d’outro erro, ou se não tiverão mui bons fundamentos para a seguir”.
\textsuperscript{129} “Em 40 annos que se seguiu esta opiniao, que ouvesse algû erro, ou encõveniete nos christãos”; \textit{Ibid.}, fl. 108v.
\textsuperscript{130} “Ensinaré eresias, de ensinaré aos chinas a Idolatria, de poder a enquisição entender cônosco, e outros termos deste teor”.

tion and, consequently, place not just the defenders of the terms at risk but also endanger the entire mission in China.

In a letter dated February 1633, six months before his death, Rodrigues, who had just returned from the interior of China, took up the question of terminology for the last time, and assumed an undoubtedly more optimistic tone, in stark contrast to Vagnone.

Palmeiro’s visit to the mission and his orders so that “henceforth that name shall not be used for God, nor others” had given a promising twist to the situation so that “things were already in such a good state”. The majority of the fathers in China had finally “seen the error of their ways” and “those who had not yet done so are the minority”. This was the case with Vagnone, “whose reasons consist of raising a series of obstacles for one fundamental issue”; with Rodrigo Figueiredo (1594-1642), “who as he is a youngster and less experienced in the language and letters of the natives, went to pieces writing to private individuals”; and with Giacomo Rho (c. 1592-1638), “who does not know anything about these matters, but only speaks infide of what the other two say”. Tçuzu further accused them of proceeding “with some passion, as well as speaking to others without any grounding in these matters, as well as censuring the superiors”.

As for the Chinese Christians, they had finally perceived the “errors that existed, and to avoid them even rejoice in using our words, instead of the doubtful ones”. Again, this is clearly an exaggeration by Tçuzu. He further reported that the books by Ricci and the others in which the terms were utilised would soon be corrected, although he stressed upon Palmeiro’s prudence, and the fact that “in this aspect he proceeds with care”.

131 “Que ao diante se não uzasse daquelle nome por Deus, nê de outros” 132 “Já as cousas em tam bom estado”; João Rodrigues Tçuzu’s letter to the Father General, Macao, 5.02.1633, ARSI, Jap.Sin. 18 f, fl. 122.
133 “Caindo nos erros”.
134 “Os que ainda estão por aquella parte sáo os menos”.
135 “Cujas rezões são políticas de inconvenientes é hũa fundamental”.
136 “Que como mais mancebo e de menos experiencia da lingoa e letra dos naturaes se descompos demasiadamente escrevendo a particulares”.
137 “Que destas cousas não sabe nada, mas somente falla infide do que dizê os douss”.
138 “Cô algua paixão, assi no fallar dos outros sem fundamento nestas materias, como no censurar os superiores”; Ibid., fl. 122.
139 “Erros que avia, e pela fugir delles antes folgão de usar de nossas palavras, que das duvidosas”.
140 “Por este princípio vai cô suavidade”; Ibid., fl. 122.
Rodrigues emphasised the need to put a definitive end to the controversy, requesting the General to allow that the resolution be taken locally, instead of awaiting a new decision from Rome, given the delay that such a course of action would imply, "and here we run much danger in delaying, owing to the errors that the Christians could follow, as well as the possibility of our being censured by the friars who so avidly seek to enter China by means of Manila."

To the arguments upon which he had already expounded in his letters, Rodrigues added one more, worthy of note: the moment in which Christianity would be presented to the Emperor was drawing ever nearer, as "Doctor Paulo [Xu Guangqi] was his Colao, and immediate counsellor, who was in the palace and spoke to him everyday". Thus, the books that would be presented to the Emperor in the near future would have to have already been corrected, "because, should the King approve them, and they be divulged throughout the Kingdom, it is well that they first already be purged, and not purged after having been given". Tçuzu further added that the name of God had already been introduced in Peking, both for the Christians, as well as in the memorials that they had given to the Emperor.

In 1633, the year of João Rodrigues Tçuzu’s death, the debate over Christian terminology, a controversy that he had set in motion and persistently fomented during the course of almost twenty years, had still not been resolved definitively. Despite the implicit optimism his last letter, it seems improbable that the changes he would have liked to see implemented were really imminent. On the contrary, Ricci’s supporters increasingly gained ground and Ricci’s position would finally end up by becoming the official stance of the Society of Jesus.

If the question of terminology continued to be an internal debate until Tçuzu’s death, after this date and coinciding with the beginning of the
arrival of members from other religious orders to the Chinese mission, the controversy soon assumed new dimensions, becoming more intense and widening its scope. The debate initiated by Tçuzu was merely a prelude to the Chinese Rites Controversy.
Abstract

The intention of realising a common catechism for the Japanese and Chinese missions sparked off a protracted and heated debate about Christian terminology in China, in which Jesuits from both missions clashed over their opposing views.

Under instructions from Francesco Pasio to begin investigations in the Chinese interior with a view to prepare for the aforementioned catechism, João Rodrigues Tçuzu (who had worked for over 30 years in the Japanese mission) was responsible for initiating this controversy, which was formally set in motion with his letter dated January 1616. There, for the first time, he broached this issue, which would later turn into a recurrent theme in successive missives. Shocked by the utilisation of native terms to designate Christian concepts, in stark contrast to the case of the Japanese mission, during the last twenty years of his life Tçuzu was involved in a campaign in favour of proscribing these terms and substituting them with Portuguese and Latin words.

The debate over terminology soon spread to the missionaries in China, and one can discern the existence of two opposing factions at the very heart of the Chinese mission at the beginning of the 1620’s. Tçuzu mentions this division in his letters without, however, truly revealing its various facets.

Despite the fact that Tçuzu did not make a distinction between himself and the faction that was opposed to Ricci, the latter did not share his overly radical position of demanding the proscription of the Chinese words. Very much more moderate in their views, the fathers in China who were opposed to the terms only advocated the substitution of certain words by other – equally Chinese – terms, which they considered to be more appropriate such as Tianzhu instead of Shangdi and Tian for God.

Resumo

O intento de realizar um catecismo comum para as missões nipónica e sínica veio a estar na origem de um longo e aceso debate sobre a terminologia cristã na China, em que se defrontaram jesuítas de ambas as missões.

Encarregado por Francesco Pasio de encetar as investigações no interior da China com vista à preparação da referida obra, João Rodrigues Tçuzu, que por mais de 30 anos trabalhara no Japão, foi o responsável pelo desencadear desta controvérsia, cujo ponto de partida foi formalmente marcado pela sua carta de Janeiro de 1616, onde, pela primeira vez, abordava a questão. Chocado com a utilização de termos nativos para designar conceitos cristãos, Tçuzu envolveu-se, ao longo dos seus últimos 20 anos de vida, numa campanha em prol da sua proscrição e substituição por palavras portuguesas e latinas.

O debate logo se estendeu aos missionários da China, sendo manifesta a existência de duas facções antagónicas no decalhar da década de 1620, uma favorável aos termos utilizados e outra contrária. As cartas de Tçuzu dão conta desta divisão, sem transmitirem, porém, os seus verdadeiros contornos. Conquanto não se demarcasse da facção oponente aos termos, esta não partilhava a sua posição demasiado radical de proscrição das palavras chinesas, advogando unicamente a substituição de determinadas palavras por outras, igualmente chinesas, mas tidas por mais apropriadas.
要約

日本と中国両宣教地のための共同教理問答書の作成意図が両宣教地に属していたイエズス会士間の長く熱い論争の火種になった。

この著書の準備のために中国内陸で調査をバジオから任命された、日本で30年間以上勤めたジョアン・ロドリーゲス・ツズが1616年1月の書簡によってこの争いの点火者となった。キリスト教の概念を中国語で表現することが定着し続けることに動揺したツズは生涯の最後の20年間をその概念を中国語からポルトガル語やラテン語への転換を求める活動に捧げた。

1620年代初頭、中国で宣教を行っていた会士の間に中国語の使用に関して積極的な派閥とそれに反対する二つの派閥ができた。ツズの書簡がその分裂を伝えているが、論争の真相を表してはいない。ツズは使われていた中国語に反対した派閥に共鳴したがこの派閥はツズの過激な主張を支持していなかった。この派閥の主張は使われていた中国語用語に問題があったが使用すべき用語をポルトガル語等ではなく別のより適切な中国語の単語に換えるべきだというものであった。