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THE JESUIT PORTRAYALS OF CHINA
BETWEEN 1583-1590

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Abstract

This article will examine the initial development process of the paradigm of the Jesuit perception of China, together with the arrival of the first Jesuit priests, in the decade of 1580, to the Chinese Empire from Macao. Firstly, we will briefly reflect about the different type of determinants that guide and mark the building process of the Chinese image in modern Europe, through tales from Spanish and Portuguese people in the 16th century. Thus the existence of the paradigms of perception is confirmed: the Iberian paradigm, that stands out in the work Historia del gran reino de la China (History of the Great Kingdom of China) by Juan González de Mendoza, and the Jesuit paradigm, that is initially developed in Matteo Ricci’s diaries and finds its first textual manifestations in the letters and documents which will be analysed in this work.

Resumo

Este artigo examinará o desenvolvimento inicial do paradigma de percepção jesuíta da China, juntamente com a entrada dos primeiros padres jesuítas, na década de 1580, no interior do Império Chinês através de Macau. Em primeiro lugar, será feita uma breve reflexão sobre as diferentes condicionantes, que orientam e marcam o processo de construção da imagem da China na Europa moderna, através dos relatos de espanhóis e portugueses do século XVI. Assim se confirma a existência dos paradigmas de percepção: o paradigma ibérico, que culmina com a Historia del gran reino de la China de Juan González de Mendoza, e o paradigma jesuíta, que é inicialmente desenvolvido nos diários de Matteo Ricci e que encontra as suas primeiras manifestações textuais nas cartas e documentos que aqui se vão analisar.

要約

この論文は1580年代にイエズス会神父と共にマカオから中国に入ったイエズス会の中国に関する認知パラダイムの初期発達過程を考察する。初めに16世紀にスペイン人とポルトガル人が作った物語をと通して近代
During the 16th century, Europe went from having a fragmentary conception of the *terrae incognitae* based on myth and fable to having a more empirical and objective standpoint. In a few short decades, Europe’s view of China came to be based on acquired first-hand information which was confirmed and organized. However, it was still strongly branded by a variety of legendary, ideological, political and rhetorical determinants. The development of the European portrayal of China in the 16th century and its study goes alongside the development of Iberian commercial, diplomatic and missionary contact in Eastern Asia. Until after the first half of the 16th century, the general European perception of China came mainly from the medieval images of the Yuan dynasty of Mongol China (1280-1368). A second grouping of conditions that marked the Iberian images of China in the 16th century consist of the limitations in a conception of otherness formed only in a superficial, fragmentary and partial manner. Iberians had contact with China through interactions marked by the restriction of the social and institutional settings that were allowed to be seen, by the limited list of visited zones, by constrained periods of contact, as well as by the incapacity for complete comprehension of the linguistic, communicative and cultural codes. A third type of determining factor for the Iberian image of new worlds seen during the 16th century comes from the contextual’s cenography’ that molded the

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1 Atkinson, 1935, 50-59.
writing process. One did not write to the Courts to partake in ethnographical dialogue but to obtain specific objectives: mainly economic or logistic support or support for the legitimization of colonial-missionary actions.

In examining the formation process of the image of modern China, it is also essential to distinguish between information contained in written epistles and that in printed historical volumes. Not only for the obvious differences in intellectual distribution and impact must we make this differentiation but also for the different functions that information served within the historical process that they were produced. In manuscripted accounts, a determinant for complete comprehension is bearing in mind the biographical, ideological and historical background in which they were written and their strategic importance. Tied to the realm of action, hand-written correspondences reflect the contextual possibilities coming from the act of writing: They reveal their historicity. Once these accounts, letters and hand-written descriptions turn into sources of historiographical works of great importance and amplitude, they also emphasize their ethnographic representation. These portrayals emphasized their ethno-historic aspect and likewise satisfied the enormous intellectual curiosity that the study of China awoke in the educated classes of Renaissance Europe, despite their initial motives that provoked and encapsulated the demand for knowledge.

A paradigmatic example of change in enunciatory scenery associated with modification in interpretive meaning is found in the Cartas Anuas (Annual Letters) of the Jesuits which completed, selected and styled the images of otherness through the figure of an editor, who acted as an anthologist, censor and re-writer.

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Coinciding with the formation and circulation phase of the first paradigm of Iberia’s modern perception of China was another perception in the works that was becoming more solid but so clearly differentiated that at first was not even manifested as a specifically relevant variable and nor had it reached printed circulation yet either. However, after the 1580’s it became the seed that would grow into the second modern paradigm of the perception of China: the image formed by the first generation of Jesuit priests that were permanently set up in China by 1583. The most significant of works was by Father Matteo Ricci which was widely dispersed through successive...

2 Maingueneau, 1993, 123.
versions in different languages translated from the first printed edition, a Latin translation from the Ricciano Italian originals. This first translation was carried out by Nicholas Trigault, a Flemish Jesuit in 1615, entitled *De Christiana Expeditione apud Sinas*. It was later printed in Castillian in 1621 as *Historia de la China i Christiana Empresa hecha en ella por la Compañía de Jesús* (History of China and of the Christian Mission accomplished by the Society of Jesus).

This first seedling of the Jesuit perception of the 17th century was produced in a series of accounts and descriptions with common influences, written between 1580 and 1590. This collection of Jesuit documents did not have an immediate repercussion because it did not arrive to the press during its time. They firstly involved the letter-account that Matteo Ricci wrote in Italian while he was in Macao in 1584, to the Royal Representative of Manila, Juan Bautista Román. This letter is also seen in a Castillian version integrated into an account from the Royal Representative himself. However, we also find the three chapters, from 26-28 by Father Alessandro Valignano's book *Historia del principio y progreso de la compañía de Jesús en las Indias Orientales*, (History of the Beginning and Progress of the Society of Jesus in the East Indies) that incorporated information given by Michele Ruggieri and Matteo Ricci into its first edition which had already been finished in June of 1583. Finally, we also find the three accounts of China written by Alonso Sánchez between 1583 and 1588 that, in especially the second and third accounts, reflect an evident influence of the acquired knowledge of the Jesuits of the Chinese mission, Michele Ruggieri, Matteo Ricci and Francesco Pasio.

Jesuit contact with China occurred mainly in the context of Portuguese colonial expansion in Asia from the very beginning. Father Melchior Nunes Barreto was one of the first people to offer a descriptive account of China in the times before the Portuguese settlement in Macao in 1555. With the arrival to the East of the visitor of the Jesuit missions in Asia, Alessandro Valignano, an ambitious project of missionary development through the use of regional linguistic and cultural knowledge was started in China and would have vast future repercussions.

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6 The first edition of the Italian originals in which the 1700’s version was based upon, is found in Ricc-D’Elia, 1942.
8 Valignano-Wicki, 1944.
10 Sanz, 1958, XXV-XXVII.
11 Colin-Pastells, 1904, II, 686.
The initiators of this project were the Italian Jesuits Michele Ruggiero and Francesco Pasio who collaborated with Matteo Ricci in August of 1582, and he in turn completed and ended up as the leader of the project that was originally conceptualized by Valignano. The framework of this language acquisition process and of the first prolonged stays in the interior of China, a series of accounts and letters appeared that opened a new chapter in the representations of China. In the second half of the 1580’s, Juan González de Mendoza’s book symbolized to a certain extent, the completion of decades of a growth and circulation process of an assortment of Chinese representations by Iberians. Meanwhile these Jesuit documents over China that we are here concerned with just hint at the embryonic beginning of a new paradigm of perception that was demonstrated to its utmost during the second decade of the 17th century in Matteo Ricci’s diaries.

Matteo Ricci’s first edited writing in China that saw distribution during the 16th century was a brief communiqué about China put into an anthology of eight letters that was edited in the collection Cartas anuales del Japón of 1586. As a result of the first prolonged stays in the interior of China by Michele Ruggieri and Francesco Pasio, and later on by Matteo Ricci in 1583 and 1584, an epistolized corpus was produced of which the editors in Italy chose these 8 missives. After having been properly reduced and censored, they were edited in the 1586 volume of the Cartas anuales del Japón below the title Avvisi della Cina dell’ottantatre et dell’ottantaquattro. Come alcuni della Compagnia sono entreti dentro a terra ferma et di alcune primitie del Christianesimo et della speranza che v’è di progresso, (Jesuit Letters from China, 1583-1584).12 Four of these letters are signed by Michele Ruggieri; two by the rector of the Jesuit house in Macao, Francisco Cabral; one by Matteo Ricci; and one by Francesco Pasio. The eight communiqués were included in one of the Italian editions of Mendoza’s The History of the Great and Mighty Kingdom of China and the Situation Thereof, produced in Genova by G. Bartoli in 1586.13 The title of the book Dell’Historia della China... added a note reading: “Herein added are various Chinese descriptions never before printed” (“Si sono aggiunti alcuni avis pur della China non piu stampati in questo libro,”).

The comparative analysis between the edited letters and the original ones, shows evidence that the reduction and censorship actions were applied to minimize the most graphic details about China just as too explicit refer-

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12 The 8 letters on China can be found between pages 169 and 188 of the volume of Annual Letters that were edited in Rome by Francesco Zanetti. An example of the letters from Japan of 1586 are kept in the James Ford Bell Library, Minnesota University (Rienstra, 1986, 47).

13 An example of this edition is kept in the John Carter Brown Library. The eight letters from the Jesuits can be found between the pages 271-180 of the book. (Rienstra, 1986, 35).
ences to policies of adaptation to Chinese cultural guidelines of the Jesuit missionaries were also taken out.\textsuperscript{14}

The Jesuit letters from China that were edited in Italy present a very similar content to a series of letters written between January and February of 1583. They were addressed to the Spanish Crown in Europe, sent from the Philippine post and were reproduced with the title \textit{Copia de unas cartas que escrivieron los religiosos de la Compañía de Jesús que residen en la ciudad de Jauquin donde está estos años el virrey de Canton, que es la provincia frontera de estas Filipinas, al rector de Macán, yleta cerca del Río de Canton, donde los portugueses están poblados y sujetos a los chinas}, (Copy of several letters written by the Fathers of the Society of Jesus...). The correspondents in this case are Michele Ruggieri and Francesco Passio, the Jesuits who first stayed for an extended period of time in the interior of China. These letters as well as the before mentioned letters put emphasis on the narration of the circumstances that involved the Jesuit priests’ introduction and immersion into China, like descriptions of the gifts given to the Mandarin locals, conditions of their stay and other more personal aspects. The arrival of the communications to Europe was a long awaited event that stirred great expectations.

There is another group of letters about the beginnings of the Jesuit enterprise in China, edited in a book called \textit{Cartas Anuas titulado Avisos de la China y Japón del fin del año 1587, recibidos en octubre de 88, sacados de las cartas de los padres de la compañía de Jesús que anda en aquellas partes} (Annual Letters), published in 1589 in Madrid, in the printing of the widow of Alonso Gómez, printer for king Felipe,\textsuperscript{15} In this book of Annual Letters, the first one is a letter from Alessandro Valignano, of 14\textsuperscript{th} of January of 1587, in which he informs about the entry in China, of the Portuguese priests Duarte de Sande and António de Almeida, to join the Italian priests already residing in Zhaoqing (Michele Ruggieri, Matteo Ricci, Francesco Passio). This letter from Valignano also describes the intent to transfer the Jesuit priests (Almeida and Ruggieri) from Nanjing, former capital of China. Lastly, Valignano explains the expediency of not sending more priests to China so as not to alarm the Chinese authorities. He emphasises the closing of the uncontrolled entrance of priests, especially the ones from the Philippines. The second letter, from the 10\textsuperscript{th} of February of 1586, belongs to the Portuguese Jesuit António de Almeida. The letter describes an almost three month journey on boats, flowing through rivers and channels and sometimes on horse, in direction to Nanjing, which he made together with Father Michele

\textsuperscript{14} Rienstra, 1986, 3-12.

\textsuperscript{15} This book of Annual Letters can be found in the archive of the Royal Academy of History (Madrid) 4/1278.
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Ruggieri. They go up to the capital Jiangxi, Nanchang, pass through Jingdezhen, the largest porcelain manufacture centre of China, at that time "a city where the whole of India and Europe retrieve their supply of porcelain", in Zhejiang (Chiqion in the letter of Almeida) they arrived to city of Shaoxing, where they meet a friendly environment, that Almeida thinks more favourable than the predictions. Nevertheless, after a few weeks they were expelled: Ruggieri returned to Zhaoqing and Almeida to Macao. Although these letters don’t focus on the description of China itself, but on the telling of the (failed) intention to create a new Jesuit territory in the province of Zhejiang, they also provide a few remarkable observations regarding the sights, the urban life, the climate or even the ethnography.

The first articulated description of China that Matteo Ricci wrote during the initial period of his stay in the Great Empire was written from the Cantonese city of Zhaoqing and appeared in a letter sent via Father Michele Ruggieri between May and September of 1584 to the Royal Representative of the Philippines, Juan Bautista Román, who was in Macao. This Riccian description of China was included in sub-section of a letter that had another account of China written by Román, who had been in Macao in 1584 with the Jesuit Alonso Sánchez. The title of this double document was Relación de Juan Bautista Román, Factor de las Islas Filipinas en Macán. Copia de la carta que me escribió el P. Matheo Resi, italiano de la Compañía de Jesús, que reside con el P. Miguel Ruggiero en la ciudad de Juaquín, cabeza desta provincia de los Cantones en los Reynos de la China, i donde reside el Virrei desta dicha provincia, qual recebí en Macao, veinte leguas de Cantón, he cincuenta de Juaquín, (Copy of the letter that Matheo Resi wrote to me...) According to Pablo Pastells, it was the Jesuit Alonso Sánchez that translated this descriptive account of Matteo Ricci from Italian into Spanish, although it is not dismissible that the account was not translated by Matteo Ricci himself or

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16 This Riccian account appeared in a variety of compilations of Jesuit letters published in French, Italian and German around 1587 (Lach., 1965, I, 2, 802).
17 AGI, Archivo General de Indias, Macao, September, 8, 1584 AGI Filipinas 29, Archivo Naval Madrid, Colección Fernández Navarrete XVIII, fol. 146, dto. 31 and Archivo de la Real Academia de la Historia, Colección Juan Baptista Muñoz, 9-4797, vol.18, ff. 249-258 (However, it appears in a variety of catalogues and bibliographical compilations with other pagination: Volume 33, pp. 242-265. The different page numbers can be seen despite having been written in red pen.) The content of this document has been reproduced in a fragmentary form, lessening the two accounts of China that it contains on various occasions. (Ricci -D’Elia, 1942: I, 142, 179-180), (Lopetegui, 1944), (Razón y Fe, IV, Vol. III, 1902: 463-477). The Italian original of this first Matteo Ricci descriptive account of China is also persevered with the Spanish title Relación de las cosas de la China del Padre Mateo Ricci: cronología, provincias, riqueza de la tierra, comercio y gobierno. Copia manuscrita, 7 pages, in italian, Archivo Historico de la Provincia de Toledo de la Compañía de Jesús de Alcalá de Henares, (Estante 2, Caja 101, Documento 31.1, Legajo 1042, 3).
18 Colin-Pastells, 1904, II, 448.
by Michele Ruggieri. It must not be forgotten that in those times Spanish was a language of habitual use in correspondence of the Jesuits in Eastern Asia, especially in communications with their superiors in Rome and with the Spanish court on which they administratively depended since Felipe II rose to the Portuguese Crown. We see this for example, in the *Historia del principio y progresso de la compañía de Jesús en las Indias Orientales* (History of the Beginning and Progress of the Society of Jesus in the East Indies), that was being compiled at the time by Alessandro Valignano, although in the end he was not able to witness it in print, as it remained unpublished until its annotated edition by Josef Wicki in 1944. Valignano’s book was originally written in Spanish. Father Alessandro Valignano rationalized his linguistic choice with these words: "(...) and although I would venture to write better in Portuguese than in any other language, it is necessary to do it in poor Spanish as it is useless in Italy".  

Alessandro Valignano included a complete and detailed account on China in his *Historia del principio y progresso*... (History of the Beginning and Progress...) dedicating the three chapters from 26 to 28 to the subject. The three chapters dedicated to China were also distributed as an autonomous document entitled *Relación del grande Reyno de la China, y de sus calidades, embiada por el Pe. Alexandro Vaiñano, Visitador de Japón y dela India, de la Compañía de Jesús, en el año de 1584* (Account of the Great Empire of China and its Qualities Sent by Father Alessandro Valignano, Visitor of the Society of Jesus for Japan and India, in 1584) Valignano wrote the *Relación del grande Reyno de la China* in Macao using the available information regarding the topic by Matteo Ricci and Michele Ruggieri sometime before December of 1583. Both Josef Wicki and Donald T. Lach support the existence of a direct textual link between the letter-account sent in 1584 by Matteo Ricci to the Royal Representative Juan Bautista Román and the *Account of the Great Empire of China* by Alessandro Valignano incorporated in the *Historia del principio y progresso de la compañía de Jesús en las Indias Orientales, (1542-1564)* (History of the Beginning and Progress of the Society of Jesus in the East Indies). However indubitable the connection or extreme similarity

19 “y aunque me atreviera a dictar as mejor en portugués que en ningún otra, como esto no se entiende ni sirve de nada en italia, es necesario que las dicte en mal castellano.” (Valignano-Wicki, 1944, 481).
20 Archivo de la Real Academia de la Historia, "Cortes" 562, ff.519-542.
21 Valignano-Wicki, 1944, pág. 62* n. 24.
22 Valignano-Wicki, 1944, 92* n. 88.
in the provided perception of China, Matteo Ricci does not necessarily have
to be solely attributed for this re-compilation, processing and distribution of
the new information on China. We must remember that at the time of the
creation of Account of the Great Empire of China by Alessandro Valignano,
Matteo Ricci had been in Macao for less than two years. The abundance of
references extracted from Chinese books allows it to be thought that Michele
Ruggieri, who had already had more than four years of studies in and direct
contact with China, and thus benefited from a cultural and linguistic base of
the Sinic subject superior to that of Matteo Ricci at the time.

The Account of the Great Empire of China compiled by Alessandro Valignano
from the information provided by Ruggieri, Ricci and Pasio can be
linked as well as Matteo Ricci’s account sent to Juan Bautista Román in
1584 can be linked to several Jesuit writings during the following years. We
find here on the one side, the second account about China and especially the
third account that Father Alonso Sánchez wrote in 1585\(^{24}\) and 1588\(^{25}\) and
on the other side we find a written text related with China included in
De missione Legatorum Iaponensium ad Romanam Curiam, by Valignano,
edited in Macao in 1590.\(^{26}\)

The connection of this Sinic dialogue that Valignano included in his
Macao edited De missione Legatorum Iaponensium ad Romanam Curiam in
1590 using the text over China that he himself had compiled in 1583 for
his original Historia del principio y progresso de la compañía de Jesús en las
Indias Orientales,\(^{27}\) (History of the Beginning and Progress of the Society of
Jesus in the East Indies) as well as the letter-account about China by Matteo
Ricci in 1584 is firmly verified. Nevertheless, upon comparing these texts,
an evident advance in the refinement of the perception and comprehension
of several aspects of Chinese reality are detected in the discussion of 1590.
This is seen for example in the higher attuned consideration of aspects of
religion and thought in China. Matteo Ricci’s stay in the interior of China
was by extended to more than six years and this reaped his many results. The
consciousness of change of perception is manifested by Valignano himself
when he expressed his willingness in 1588 to delay publication specifically
because of his desire to actualize the perception of China that he had put

\(^{24}\) Brief account of Alonso Sanchéz’s stay the second time he went to China in 1584. (AGI,
Filipinas 79), Archivo de la Real Academia de la Historia, Jesuitas, tome VII and Archivo Naval,
Colección Fernández Navarrete, II, fol. 253, dto. 8. 256.
\(^{25}\) Account of particular matters of China, written by Father Sanchez of the Society of Jesus
which His Majesty Kind Don Felipe II asked to be read. Biblioteca Nacional, ms 287, pp.
198-226.
\(^{26}\) Loureiro, 1992.
\(^{27}\) Loureiro, 1992, 24.
forth in it in 1583: “Many things must be muted in the chapters dealing with China; it would be best if it is not printed by any means (...)” 28

The Latin edition *De missione Legatorum Iaponensium ad Romanam Curiam* by Alessandro Valignano was a text of the didactic type directed towards the education of Japanese novices in Jesuit schools. Its main objective was the narration of the European ambassadorship that Valignano had organized for four young princes from Kyushu who left Nagasaki in 1582 and arrived to Lisbon in August of 1584, being later conducted to Iberian cities before arriving in Rome. The *coloquium* over China shows the four young ambassadors as interlocutors that argue about characteristics of Imperial China.

For his part, Alonso Sánchez used information coming from accounts of China by Matteo Ricci from 1584 and by Alessandro Valignano in 1583 but he did not incorporate the historical perspective nor the proto-ethnological orientation that they contained. The perspective that Sánchez adopts is always Euro-centric and synchronic of that Euro-centrism: He speaks of what is relevant for an end of the 16th century missionary or conquistador trying to get into and know China or, what amounts to the same with different means, directing himself to a King or to royal advisors from who missionaries and conquistadors were trying to be granted political, economic and military support. The majority of information appears in Alonso Sánchez’s second and third accounts about China, working predominantly on the practical and instrumental value of strategic interest or interest in exploiting future possibilities. We don’t find any prevailing intention to deepen the knowledge of China or its characteristics and customs of the Chinese people. In other documents by Alonso Sánchez himself, the objective is blatantly declared not to get to know the alterity and otherness of China but to eliminate, erase and specifically Hispanicize and Christianize it:

“In learning our language in school, adults must be taught as if they were children, which they could do quickly, but left to their own devices is like talking to a wall in trying to persuade them even to rid themselves of bad habits, let alone their old-fashioned customs.” 29

28 “Se han de mudar muchas cosas en los capítulos que tratan de la China, será bién que V.P. no haga en ninguna manera imprimir (...)” ARSI, Iap-Sin. 9, II, f. 213v (Valignano-Wicki, 1944, 101*, n.1).

29 “Para aprender en la escuela nuestra lengua y escritura los grandes como si fuesen niños, lo qual ellos harían con mucha brevedad, mas dejados en su cuenta, es hablar al biento quererlo persuadir ni sacar de sus manías ni costumbres antiguas.” AGI Filipinas 79, 2, 15.
The option imposed in the Society of Jesus was very different. They adopted a preaching policy based on the knowledge of the classic Chinese language and the canon of texts to which it was linked, as well as the adjustment of the Christian message to the Confucian rituals. This option was inspired in the previous experience of preaching of Saint Francis Xavier and Alessandro Valignano in Japan. The missionary policy of adjustment to the Chinese cultural surroundings opened a fertile period of exchange of knowledge between China and Europe that lasted until the middle of the 18th century.

Most of the writings by the Jesuit Alonso Sánchez were kept unpublished. We found a catalog of his unpublished writings in the book by P. Chirino Historia de la Provincia de Philipinas de la Compañía de Jesus (1610)\(^\text{30}\) and later incorporated by P. Francisco Colín in his own Labor Evangelica de la Compañía de Jesús en las Islas Filipinas (1663).\(^\text{31}\) Similar to this catalog, other treaties, memorials and chronicles written by Father Alonso Sánchez are reproduced or paraphrased, with intermittent literality, in the works by the first Jesuit chroniclers gathered in the province of the Philippines: Father Pedro Chirino and Father Francisco Colín, in the book Historia de la Provincia de Filipinas de la Compañía de Jesus, in which he tried to document on the first twenty-five of the Jesuit presence in the Philippines and China.

On the other hand, the immediate repercussions of the accounts about China, by Alonso Sánchez, in the building process of a Chinese image in shape of fragmentary influence on other works, are found in several reports and passages about China and the Eastern Indies by José de Acosta, known as "the Pliny of the new world",\(^\text{32}\) in his work Historia Natural y Moral de las Indias (1590). The information of the book by José de Acosta especially based on the book Relación de las cosas particulares de la China... (1588), as well as on the direct testimonies from Alonso Sánchez, that can be found in chapters VI and XXIII of the third book, chapter XVII of the fourth book, chapter XVI of the fifth book and chapters V and VI of the sixth book and they refer particularly to matters regarding the linguistics and culture and also the religion.\(^\text{33}\)

Other book that profusely nurtured from the reports from the writings by Alonso Sánchez is the fourth book from Historia de las Misiones que han hecho los religiosos de la Compañía de Jesús para predicar el Sancto Evangelio en la India Oriental, y en los reynos de la China y Japón (1601) by Luís de

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30 Chirino, 1630, I, XXVI and Pastells & Torres Lanzas, 1925-1936, IV, XI-XXII.
31 Colin-Pastells, 1904, I, 523-542.
32 Lach,, 1965, I, I, 806-808.
33 Pino Diaz, 1985, 283.
Guzmán, dedicated, in its first eight chapters, to offering a descriptive synthesis of China and the other twenty-five chapters describing the arrival of the Jesuits to China, with special attention to the mission of Michele Ruggeri and Matteo Ricci, but also dedicating importance to narrating the travels to China done by Alonso Sánchez, the sole protagonist of five chapters in this fourth book.34 In the chapters led by Alonso Sánchez, as well as the ones referring to the arrival of the Italian Jesuits in China, there is an important trace about the three reports written by Alonso Sánchez about China.

Among the sources of the first part of the book by Luís de Guzmán there is a very important outline of the three chapters (26-28) about China of the never before printed book by Alessandro Valignano Historia del principio y progresso de la compañía de Jesús en las Indias Orientales35 (History of the Beginning and Progress of the Society of Jesus in the East Indies). However, the foundations of Luís Guzmán weren’t limited to printed works about the “Indias Orientales” and the letters of the Jesuit missionaries: he was in a position that also facilitated the direct oral testimonies from Jesuits that had returned to Europe after long stays in Eastern Asia.36 We may consider this work by Luís de Guzmán as the first historical synthesis on the establishment of the Italian and Portuguese Jesuit priests in China,37 with an important reference to posterior resumes of Jesuit historians in the 17th century, for example the ones by de Pierre du Jarric, François Solier or Jean Craset.38

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