

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

*A missão jesuíta da China nas coleções da Biblioteca da Ajuda*  
*The Jesuit Mission of China in the Ajuda Library collections*

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**The correspondence of Ferdinand Verbiest, SJ (1623-1688) between Europe and China: the contribution of the Ajuda Library (05/07).**

[Abstract]

*In this paper, I describe the new edition of Verbiest's correspondence (Leuven, 2017), its contents and its history. After this, I focus especially on the 43 'new' items (almost) only preserved through a mid-18th century made in Macau, now in the Ajuda library; I make clear that the inestimable value of these copies (almost without preserved autographs) is somewhat affected by a series of errors and omissions, due to misunderstandings by the transcribers ("amanuenses") of the original autographs in the pre-1762 Macau archives, as a consequence of the bad (illegible?) quality of some autographs, the circumstances of this transcription process (high pressure of time) and probably also the low level of instruction of the transcribers; this apparently affected especially the Chinese romanizations, accompanied by only 5 Chinese characters in the 43 preserved items*

This International Workshop and the book presentation which it encompassed<sup>1</sup>, is in fact the last phase of a process, which started in the reading room of the Ajuda Library some 25 years ago (Aug. 1991), aiming to the edition of a completely new, revised and expanded correspondence of Ferdinand Verbiest, SJ (1623-88), one of the main non-Portuguese Jesuit missionaries of the 'padroado' in China. It started with Henri Bosmans, SJ (1852 - 1928)<sup>2</sup>, who between 1910-1928 carefully prepared an edition of the

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<sup>1</sup> N. Golvers, *Letters of a Peking Jesuit. The Correspondence of Ferdinand Verbiest, SJ (1623 – 1688) Revised and Expanded* (Leuven Chinese Studies, XXXV), Leuven: Ferdinand Verbiest Institute, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> On the life and work of Henri Bosmans, see most recently: Michel Hermans & Jean-François Stoffel (eds.), *Le Père Henri Bosmans, SJ (1852 – 1928) historien des mathématiques*. Bulletin de la Classe des Sciences, Brussels (Académie Royale de Belgique), 6me série, Tome XXI, 2010; for



correspondence of Belgian, mainly Flemish Jesuits in China, from the perspective of history of mathematics, as mathematics were since Matteo Ricci († 1610) strongly related with this mission, and the main ‘human means’ (“*media humana*”) to propagate it. Bosmans’s project converged posthumously in an edition by two of his fellow fathers, published by the *Académie Royale de Belgique* in Brussels in 1938,<sup>3</sup> now outdated and a bibliographic curiosity. In this 1938 edition, the Ajuda documentation was wholly absent: in the 1920’s Portugal, as well as Spain were indeed, when seen from Belgium and Central or NW Europe, hardly accessible for scholars. When fifty years later, in the 1980s – in view of the Verbiest celebration of 1988 – the Verbiest Project of the *Katholieke Universiteit Leuven* started the preparation of a new edition, a circular letter was sent throughout European libraries, and one of the revelations among the many answers was a list of 43 so far unknown letters from and to Verbiest in the Ajuda library: the list was made by Dr.a Maria de Conceição Geada, and dated 31-03-1984. It was only through ‘diplomatic’ pressure and literally through the ‘diplomatic mail’ from the “*Embaixada da Belgica*” that a microfilm of these documents arrived in Leuven. It took as long as 1988, before I was involved in this project, to prepare with these materials a new, ‘updated’ edition, on the basis, among others, of this microfilm. This was for me the incitement to start a 2-year study of Portuguese at the local *Centrum voor Levende Talen* (CLT) in Leuven, parallel with a tentative transcription of the letters, a first time on my office, afterwards collated with the original texts during a three-week stay in Lisbon, in 1991, and again in 1993. After several other findings, in archives in Antwerp, Bloomington, Goa, Paris etc., and several long interruptions for other projects, I could refine step by step the reading and understanding of the Ajuda documents, in the last phase considerably supported by Dr.a Cristina Basto Pinto

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his China-bound studies: *ibid.*, pp. 135 – 152; for his bibliography: *ibid.*, pp. 253 – 298.

<sup>3</sup> Henri Jossion & Léopold Willaert, *Correspondance de Ferdinand Verbiest, SJ (1623-1688), Directeur de l’Observatoire de Pékin*, Bruxelles: Palais des Académies, 1938.

(Director) and Dr.a Maria de Fatima Gomes, scientific collaborator. All this converged in a series of preparatory contributions<sup>4</sup>, and in this edition,

<sup>4</sup> -See especially the following contributions:

- ‘La mission des jésuites en Chine en 1678: un cri d'alarme’. - *Courrier Verbiest*, vol. V (Dec. 1993), 2 – 6; vol. VI, 1994, 4 – 9 (no. 32 of the new edition).

- ‘A l'aube du sacerdoce chinois. Lettre de Ferdinand Verbiest, datée du 12 juin (15 aout) 1678’ - *Courrier Verbiest*, vol. VI, 1994, 4 – 11 (no. 30).

Id., ‘The letter of F. Verbiest to King Afonso VI of Portugal, written in Peking on 7.9.1678’, in: *Courrier Verbiest*, Vol. VIII, Dec. 1996, 5 – 9 (no. 35).

- ‘Les Lettres Indipetae et les raisons profondes des vocations pour la Chine dans les Pays Bas du Sud, 1640 - 1660 (1ière partie)’, in: *Courrier Verbiest*, vol. XII, 2000, pp. 4 – 5 (nos 1; 3).

- ‘An unnoticed letter of F. Verbiest, S.J. on his geodesic operations in Tartary (1683 / 1684)’, in: *Archives internationales d'histoire des sciences*, vol. 50, 2000, pp. 86 – 102 (no. 61).

- ‘Two overlooked letters of Ferdinand Verbiest to A. Kircher. How a missionary project was shaped, and Kircher's books were received in mid-17th century Spain and Portugal’, in: *Humanistica Lovaniensia*, LIV, 2005, pp. 267 – 284 (nos 5 and 8).

- ‘The missionary and his concern about consolidation and continuity: Ferdinand Verbiest’s astronomica and the public relations of the China Mission in the last decades of the 17th century’, in: N. Golvers & S. Lievens (eds.), *A Lifelong Dedication to the China Mission (...)*, Leuven Chinese Studies, XVII, Leuven, 2007, pp. 347 – 404 (esp. on n° 30).

- ‘Litterae Indipetae from the Jesuit Provincia Flandro-Belgica, 1640 – (1660 -) 1700’: in: Roman Malek & Gianni Criveller (eds.), *Light & Candle. Encounters and Friendship with China*. Festschrift in Honour of Angelo S. Lazzarotto P.I.M.E. (Collectanea Serica), Nettetal, 2010, pp. 205 – 227 (on nos 1 and 3);

- ‘Ferdinand Verbiest's 1678 Letter to King Afonso VI of Portugal and the possible role of Tomas Pereyra in its Conception,’ in: Artur K. Wardega & Antonio Vasconcelos de Saldanha (eds.), *In the Light and Shadow of an Emperor: Tomas Pereira, SJ (145-1709), the Kangxi Emperor and the Jesuit Mission in China*, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, May 2012, pp. 404 – 421 (on no. 35).

- ‘Savant correspondence’ from China with Europe in the 17th-18th centuries’, in: *Journal of Early Modern Studies*, 1.1, 2012, pp. 21 - 41.

- ‘Ferdinand Verbiest’s 1668 observation of an unidentified celestial phenomenon in Peking, its lost description and some parallel observations, especially in Korea,’ in: *Almagest* 5.1, 2014, pp. 33 – 51 (on no. 16).

- ‘Jesuit correspondence from China: the two ‘Tartary letters’ of Ferdinand Verbiest, S.J. (1682 & 1683) and their oldest printed edition (Paris, 1684), as a case study’, *CWCRJ*, 2016, pp. 43-58 (nos 52 and 59).



which presents instead of the 80 letters of the former edition, 134 items from / to Verbiest.

This series of 134 letters covers Verbiest's entire 'public' life, from the 1st application for the (West-) Indian missions in 1645 until the last letters sent to him posthumously in 1689, i.e. almost two years after his death: 94 (or 70%) of them were written by him, 40 sent to him. It became quickly clear that this number represents only part of the real volume of the original correspondence, and the real number of letters once sent / received: in the preserved letters, indeed, we can easily recognize references to 42 other letters, now lost, of which date and writers, incl. some aspects of the contents are exclusively known through this reference, whereas some other letters were partially quoted (or translated) in other works (such as the compilation of Thomas-Ignatius Dunyn-Szpot on the Jesuit mission in China<sup>5</sup>). What is more, we know Verbiest had an capillary network of Chinese correspondents – in Chinese –, either Christians, common people, magistrates, etc., of which nothing is preserved, except some exterior references<sup>6</sup>. Finally we know that precisely extensive letter writing – and transcribing these letters by hand in many copies to be diffused through China and / or Europe – because of a chronic lack of competent *amanuenses* in the Xitang residence – was occasionally the reason of serious illness of the writer<sup>7</sup>: revealing in this respect is Verbiest self-confession on 27 March

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<sup>5</sup> See especially our numbers 26, 88 and 113.

<sup>6</sup> See for instance Fang Hao's reference in *Dong fang za zhi*, 39,5, 1943.

<sup>7</sup> In only some cases the Xitang Jesuits used the xylograph printing method, producing with the help of a competent Chinese carver on the spot, i.e. in one of the extensions of the Jesuit compound – some pieces, which were diffused in many copies: it concerns two Europe-bound pieces, viz. (1°) his comprehensive description of the 'state of the mission' in 1678, dated 15 August 1678 (the famous "*Epistola P.ris Ferdinandi Verbiest Vice-Provincialis Missionis Sinensis, anno 1678, die 15 Augusti ex Curia Pekinensi in Europam ad Socios missa*" = our n° 32, of which many tens of xylographic samples copies are still preserved in Europe); (2°) n° 34, a 'matrix-letter' to thank European benefactors; three pieces circulating through China, one (3°) addressed to the Visitor Sebastião de Almeida (no. 30); another (4°) referred to in no. 30 § 25; a last one (5°) mentioned in no.



1687, saying: “*tive hum acidente de humas defluxoens catharrosas no dar-se em por aver assentado muitas dias continuamente escrevendo **cartas a todas as residencias e outros religiosos***”<sup>8</sup>. This writing to ‘all the (Jesuit) residences’ may have had a repetitive and ‘institutional’ character, diffusing official decisions he made in one of his hierarchical positions within the Chinese Vice-Province, and the ‘*other religiosos*’ represent individual fathers (friars) and responsible persons from the other religious congregations in (sometimes also outside) China; many of them are also to be found among the preserved letters, especially a series addressed to the Franciscans of Shandong Province.

Finally, Verbiest’s ‘secretary’ since 1686, Antoine Thomas (1644 - 1709) refers in his Obituary of Verbiest to ‘pastoral’ letters, comforting and supporting (“*consolandis juvandisque*”) the missionaries throughout the country, on which he spent day and night<sup>9</sup>. Acc. to Thomas, only his robust constitution could support this; the former witness proves, however, that

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38; the last two are lost, to my knowledge. This overview suggests that this process was only applied for letters with an important content, of general import and of a certain volume, this because of the costs involved in the production of such a printing. I assume for this work were engaged Chinese collaborators in the XItang, who had a minimal knowledge of Latin, such as those who are mentioned as informers from the Xitang to Nicolas Witsen for his *Noord- en Oost-Tartarij*).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. JA 49-IV-63, f° 60r.

<sup>9</sup> The text of this obituary was published by H. Bosmans, ‘La notice nécrologique de Ferdinand Verbiest par son secrétaire Antoine Thomas de Namur’, in: *Annales de la Société d’Emulation*, 64, 1914, pp. 102 – 133; a parallel (short) report he wrote was published in: *Archiv für die Geschichte der Naturwissenschaften und der Technik*, 1ter Bnd, 1909, pp. 36 – 42. Thomas speaks as an eyewitness for the period since his arrival in Nov. 1686, but he certainly had also seen a copy of *all* these letters, also those of the previous years, as Verbiest kept a draft version of his correspondence on his room, to which Thomas moved after Verbiest’s death (see JS 148, f° 161v.; cf. also his reference to Verbiest’s personal *annotationes* he found there: see my *Libraries of Western Learning for China*, vol. 2, p. 149). He occupied this room – in fact the ‘*cubiculum mathematicum*’ of the Xitang college - in his new function of ‘(temporary) Head of the Astronomical Bureau; also important mathematical instruments were kept there, such as the recently arrived ‘*machine de Römer*’ for eclipse calculation (see his letter of 4.09.1688, now in AFSI, Fonds Brotier 117 (5°).



even this constitution had its limits. This extensive writing may have been spread over the entire year, but for the Europe-bound correspondence there was a period of concentrated writing in August-September, as appears from a comparison of dates and addressees.

Within this total corpus of 134 letters, precisely 43 (or 32,5 %) come from the *Jesuitas na Asia* (JA) collection in Ajuda, on which I will focus from now on exclusively. Chronologically the first one among them is Verbiest's letter to Visitor Luis da Gama in Macau, of 04.09.1670 (n° 22 of my edition),<sup>10</sup> written 12 years after Verbiest's arrival in China; there is no particular explanation for this 'late' start, as the communication with nearby Canton had apparently not been broken in this period.

As is commonly known, the JA collection represents mid-18th century transcriptions (Lat. "*transumptum*") from the (Vice-)Provincial archives of Macau: because of this, they represent mostly – but not exclusively - the correspondence from Peking (and other places in China) with Jesuit authorities of the Chinese Vice-Province, such as the (Vice-)Provincial, the Visitor (S. de Almeida; Andrea Lubelli, etc.) or the Superior in Canton, temporarily also Provincial of the Japan Province (1680-1683) in Macau, Francesco Saverio Filippucci (1632 - 1692)<sup>11</sup>. As such, we can distinguish within these 43 Verbiest letters some '*sub-corpora*', such as the 22 letters exchanged between Verbiest and Francesco Saverio Filippucci, 3 letters exchanged between Visitor Andrea Lubelli and Verbiest (1684)<sup>12</sup>, and the four letters from the French Jean de Fontaney<sup>13</sup>. These 'new' letters,

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<sup>10</sup> JA 49-IV-62/131.

<sup>11</sup> Correspondent in 22 items of the Verbiest correspondence; Filippucci is represented in Ajuda with some 400 items (this number is mentioned by José Maria Braga, *Jesuitas na Asia (Biblioteca Macaense)*, 1998, p. 163 note 2).

<sup>12</sup> Lubelli to Verbiest, in nos 70 (from JA 49-V-19/139d, f° 515v.-519v.), 73 (from JA 49-V-19/38b, f° 508v.- 510r.) and 74 (JA 49-V-19/139a, f° 510r/v.).

<sup>13</sup> See note 14.



therefore, are not merely a considerable quantitative, but also a ‘*spectral*’ extension; I will further return on this point.

Apart from this ‘institutional’ correspondence, the Ajuda papers contain also some other ‘dossiers’: (a) copies of the 4 letters – in French – written by Jean de Fontaney in 1687 (nos 116 - 118); (b) copies of two letters of Pedro II from Lisbon to Verbiest (nos 129 & 133); (c) copy of a letter from the General’s secretary, Aegidius Estrix, to Verbiest (no. 130); (d) two items from Moscow Jesuits, addressed to Verbiest as well (nos 131-132), the last three in Latin. Most of these items were copied here in Macau, as they necessarily passed through this ‘turning point’ of the correspondence between Peking and Europe, or Europe to Peking.

Despite the Macau origin of this correspondence (or precisely because of this reason), Macau itself is rarely the scene of the information: in these Verbiest letters only three Macau-bound aspects appear, clearly derived from Verbiest’s memory to his short stay in this city in (July) 1658 – (medio) 1659, and one of these three seems to contain an error, when he refers to the ‘*porta de cerca*’, commonly called ‘*Porta do cerco*’, probably only by confusion<sup>14</sup>; his other Macau-related reference concernn the island *Taipa Quebrada*<sup>15</sup>, and the activities of Bartolomeu da Costa<sup>16</sup>. Besides, there are several references to an intense correspondence between Macau citizens and authorities and Verbiest, inspired by the fickle position of the city in the commercial relations between China and the Dutch, and by the ongoing discussions on opening other ‘*viae*’ of access to China by the Jesuits (Russia; Siam), which would damage the ‘*padroado*’ monopoly position.

Because Portuguese was the internal ‘*lingua franca*’ of the China mission, it is also the language of most of these 43 items (in fact 33: 43); the main

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<sup>14</sup> See his letter n° 19, substituting ‘cerco’ = ‘enclosure’ by ‘cerca’ = ‘fence, wall’.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. n° 98 (JA 49-IV-63/68, f° 60v.) and 100 (JA 49-IV-63/77).

<sup>16</sup> No. 22 (JA 49-IV-62/131).

exceptions were letters written by non-Portuguese correspondents (Gabiani; Gayosso; Estrix; David; Zapolski), mostly not addressed to Macau, where they were preserved only as an archival transcription (*‘transumptum’*).

With regard to the Portuguese language, some particular observations can be made, as it appeared that the ‘Portuguese’ language, as used by the non-native Jesuits of the *‘padroado’* had its peculiarities, to be ascribed to an incomplete or distorted knowledge of the language, by Jesuits who learned the language in Lisbon (Coimbra..) or / and in Macau, during a rather short stay there. To give some examples of these ‘anomalies’: there are some apparent lexicological ‘Hispanisms’ such as *‘u/opada’* (‘[salary for] & Working day’) in letter n° 23<sup>17</sup> and *‘tralla’* (‘lash’) in n° 38<sup>18</sup>. That similar oddities should be situated on the level not of the transcribers, but on that of Verbiest himself, and characterize therefore his own idiolect, emerges from some other *autographs* – where there is no doubt about the origin of the error - were we find, e.g., *‘Henero’* for ‘janeiro’<sup>19</sup>, *‘tengo’*, self-corrected in *‘tenho’*<sup>20</sup> and *‘literna’*: ‘torch’<sup>21</sup>. Obviously also particular Far-Eastern terms made part of Verbiest’s language, such as *‘fula de golfão’* (with clear Indo-Goan connections)<sup>22</sup>, Japanese *‘katana’*<sup>23</sup>, Malayan (?) *zabartana*<sup>24</sup>, etc.

<sup>17</sup> Cf p. 209 note 417 in our edition, from JA 49-V-16, f° 412r., to be compared to a passage in a letter by Augustin de San Pasqual of 20.03.1679, in AIA, XII, 1919, p. 92 = *Sin.Franc.* III, p. 502, to be compared to another passage in *Sin.Franc.*, III, p. 485 note 1: ‘in all probability a hispanized Tagala word, meaning: *‘salarium seu pretium laboris unius diei; verosimiliter assumitur ut ‘dies laboris’*, i.e. ‘(salary for a) work day’.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. p. 323 note 901 in our edition (from JA 49-IV-63/6, f° 13r.).

<sup>19</sup> See n° 112 (from JA 49-IV-63/124).

<sup>20</sup> This autograph self-correction is in the autograph n° 80.

<sup>21</sup> In n° 38 (from JA 49-IV-63/6, f° 12v.).

<sup>22</sup> See n° 20, of 20.08.1670: “golphão” in the autograph is a (pseudo-) learned spelling of the common term “golfão” = aguapé: “Waterlily”; the ms. has “fula”, not “fala” (as the former editors read); “fula” (var. fulla) is the Luso-Asiatic term for ‘flor’, also used, for example, by Garcia de Orta: see S.R. Dalgado, *Glossario Luso-Asiatico*, I, pp. 409 – 41, who refers to Sanskrit ‘phull’ = deabochar”; “fula de golphon” (sic) is also mentioned by M. Martini, *Novus Atlas Sinensis* (A’dam, 1655), p. 85 (in the description of

To understand some particular problems in the ‘wording’ of the letters, we should realize that all these 43 Ajuda letters were mid-18th century *transcriptions*, copied in a couple of years under high pressure of time: for only 4 of them we have – through another way, viz. Manilla and the *Academia da Real Historia* de Madrid – also the autographs, with the possibility of a mutual comparison<sup>25</sup>. Although 5 ‘hands’ of transcribers were recognized in the bulk of JA, only two were involved in Verbiest letters.

One of the aspect of this transcriptions– not without importance for the assessment of some letters – is the omission by the ‘*amanuenses*’ of the entire ‘apparatus’ of addresses and undersigning – which contains often vital information for the correct understanding of the letter in question, as we know from preserved autographs, e.g. in the Jesuit archives in Rome; this can no longer be recuperated from other copies.

The circumstances, in which the transcriptions were made, combined with the sometimes hardly legible handwriting of the original authors and the bad

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the province Kiangsi): “(...) *flos hic, qui a Sinis ‘lien’ dicitur (i.e. in PY: lian: ‘lotus’), a Lusitanis Fula de Golfon, in aquis stagnantibus, quarum sedimentum limum efficit, crescit ad duos tres cubitos, aquae superficiem supereminet, duris fortioribusque stolonibus adnexus, una saepe radix plures flores fert, dantur coloris varii, purpurei, albi, mixti, rubri aliique similes: lilia nostra magnitudine superant, ac longe magis pulchritudine, cedunt tamen illis odoris, quo carent, fragrantia; etc.*” etc. Because of its Sanskrit etymology and the fact that the term was used by Garcia de Orta, it may have been a Luso-Indian word, which Verbiest may have picked up in Goa and in Macau.

<sup>23</sup> See n° 40 (14.10.1680, from JA 49-V-17/53, f° 234r.-235r.); for the term ‘katana’: cf. S.R.Dalgado, *Glossario Luso-Asiatico*, I, pp. 231 – 232.

<sup>24</sup> See n° 115 (27.06.1687), from JA 49-IV-63/122: S.R. Dalgado, *Glossario Luso-Asiatico*, II, p. 440.

<sup>25</sup> See my first observations on this point in: ‘Preliminary report on the Verbiest letters in the Jesuitas na Asia collection of the Biblioteca da Ajuda (Lisbon)’, in: *International Conference in Memory of the 400th Anniversary of the Birth of Johann Adam Schall von Bell and the Historiography of the Catholic Church in China. Conference Papers*, Taipei, 1992, pp. 488 - 497.

state of conservation of many originals already in the mid-18th century<sup>26</sup>, as well as the probably low instruction level of some of the transcribers, all this affected apparently the quality of the transcriptions.

Most explicit indications of a problematic transcription are the passages with an open space, in which a series of letters or words were omitted and substituted by dots (...), for passages apparently illegible in the model; these can no longer be checked, let alone be restored, as the original item is lost; by this the transcriber lost, of course, also the understanding of the following passages, which affected an adequate transcription.

Other errors in the transcriptions become immediately visible, because they represent inexistent words, such as ‘*cosão*’ (n° 70)<sup>27</sup>, ‘*querão*’ (n° 79)<sup>28</sup> or ‘*faire*’ (n° 62)<sup>29</sup>, the former (*cosão*) probably to be reconstructed as a bad understood abbreviated *\*(a)co(n)s(elh)ão* and ‘*faire*’ as *\*facie*, i.e. the recto /verso side of a sheet of paper. Other errors are not immediately self-evident, but become apparent because they are senseless in the given context, such as the incomprehensible reference to a ‘guard’ of the ‘*conjectura*’ of the Jesuit Nicolas Smogulecki († 1656), presumably for *\*sepultura* (n° 38)<sup>30</sup>, or the qualification of Giandomenico Gabiani, SJ (1623 - 1694) as a Provincial (n° 86)<sup>31</sup>, a position he never hold, by omission of the prefix ‘V(ice-); other errors emerge as being ‘illogic’ in the context, for instance in n° 119, where the given ‘*escrevido*’ replaces the expected *\*lido* in the lost model<sup>32</sup>; even impossible is the date ‘1680’ in n° 79, in

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Antoine Gaubil’s testimony on the Jesuit library of Macau, in his letter of 25 October 1753 (i.e. slightly later than the process of transcription in ca. 1745), and speaking from hearsay: “*Je n’ay jamais été à Macau; ceux qui y ont été me disent tous que, sans de grandes précautions, l’humidité, les fourmis blanches et vers détruisent tout et que la bibliothèque du Collège, qui était très curieuse, est à demi-perdue; si cela est, c’est grand dommage*” (R. Simon, *Correspondance de Pékin*, Genève: Droz, 1970, p. 763).

<sup>27</sup> From JA 49-V-19/139d, f° 517r.

<sup>28</sup> From JA 49-IV-63/7, f° 14r.

<sup>29</sup> From JA 49-V-19/114, f° 474r.

<sup>30</sup> From JA 49-IV-63/6, f° 13r.

<sup>31</sup> From JA 49-IV-63/65, f° 59v.

<sup>32</sup> From JA 49-IV-63/125, f. 100v.



which is referred to Antoine Thomas's activities in Macau, where he only arrived in June 1682, revealing by consequence the wrong reading (and transcription) of the year in the model (where the cipher "5" was misread as "0").<sup>33</sup> Equally impossible is the date '15 April 1686' in Dom Pedro's answer in n° 133. Finally, in some other cases a more obscure name has been substituted by a similar name, better-known in the Macau context ('*lectio facilior*'): so was the substitution of the title *Metropolitanus* for the MEP bishop Louis Laneau, MEP (1637 - 1696) to the less well-known \**Metellopolitanus* (n° 110)<sup>34</sup>, and, twice, the substitution of the obviously better known "*Lusitania*" for the correct \**Lithuania* (n° 130)<sup>35</sup>.

Particular problems raised the many Chinese *romanizations* in the original letters, as we know from preserved autograph letters in other collections (e.g. ARSI in Rome) certainly following the so-called 'Portuguese-based' system, with its 5 tone signs<sup>36</sup>. Especially the sometimes rather complex combination of signs on some parts of the words seems clumsily transcribed, probably because the basic Chinese term was not recognized by transcribers, who were probably not acquainted with Mandarin chinese, nor with this system of tones; all in all, in the 43 Verbiest letters from Ajuda only 5 Chinese 'characters' were introduced, all copied (imitated?) in one and the same letter<sup>37</sup>.

Arrived on this point of my presentation, I should emphasize that this kind of 'reconstitutions' must remain the exception, and that respect for the given text must remain the basic principle. On the other hand, such errors inevitably make some passages unintelligible, and also in my edition several of them remained without explanation. This does not affect, of course, the enormous potentiality of these letters, which almost all represent '*unique*'

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<sup>33</sup> Letter n° 79 (from JA 49-IV-63/7, f° 14r.).

<sup>34</sup> From JA 49-IV-63/123, f° 100r.

<sup>35</sup> From JA 49-IV-63/74, f° 315v.

<sup>36</sup> Described, among others, by Ad Dudink, in: N. Standaert (ed.), *Handbook of Christianity in China*, I, pp. 260 – 285.

<sup>37</sup> Viz. no. 77 (from JS 49-V-19/129, f° 496v.-497r.).



*documents*, and *themes* which are far less represented in the Europe-letters and now preserved either in the general Jesuit archives of Rome (since ca. 1929 called ARSI), or the regional provincial Jesuit archives, such as – in Verbiest’s case – that of the *Provincia Flandro-Belgica* in Antwerp / Brussels.

Therefore I want now to turn shortly to the *contents* of these 43 letters, in fact the core of our interest. Most letters represent the inner-China situation and ‘affairs’ of the mission, on a macro - but also on a micro - level. Among the problems on the *macro*-level, dealing with wide-ranging problems and decisions there is the arrival of the Vicars Apostolic, including François Pallu, MEP (1626 - 1684) and the deliberation about what should be done with the ‘oath of obedience’; especially these contain many points of contact with many other letters known from the Franciscan and other religious Congregations. Another macro-aspect concerns the attitude of the ‘newest’ generation of missionaries, mostly Franciscans and Dominicans, which often emerged as too ‘extrovert’, risking to provoke negative reactions from the Chinese, as several regional ‘persecutions’ confirm.

The most revealing, however, are the many, various details on the *micro*-level, which I can only mention here: the details on the mail communication within China; some details on Jesuit Macau, including the depositing of Verbiest’s own texts in the local archives<sup>38</sup>; the many original data on the production (or: planned production) of Chinese and some Western texts<sup>39</sup>; the passages speaking of emendations and the exact interpretation of some passages in Chinese texts<sup>40</sup>; the reference to the internal working and the

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<sup>38</sup> See the ‘bibliographical’ letter n° 33 (from 49-V-17/110, f° 503r.-504v.).

<sup>39</sup> On the *Min Li* and *Da ke wen* (no. 80; from JA 49-IV-63/419, f° 185v° - 188r° = 457v. – 460r.); on *Pie Vam*: n° 60 (from JA 49-V-19/111, f° 407v. – 415r.).

<sup>40</sup> Concerning a passage on the term ‘sacrificare’ (“ç’i cao”, ie. PY ji zao: ‘the God of the Hearth’): see nos. 77 (from 49-V-19/129, f° 495v.-497r.) and 80 (cf. supra).



(Christian) staff of the *Qintianjian* (Astronomical Bureau)<sup>41</sup>; regional persecutions (Fujian); the activities of some individual Jesuits; the presence of Chinese converts; the pretexts Verbiest ‘invented’ to protect Christianities, etc. Yet, despite their ‘formal’ contents, occasionally many letters show also a ‘*personal*’ tone, and not rarely indignation or serious concern, if not urgent admonition can be heard between the lines.

Certainly the two most ‘*dramatic*’ letters of the corpus, although of opposite import, are found at the end of Verbiest’s life: I refer to the letter of Pedro II, dated 2 March 1689 (n° 133)<sup>42</sup>, in which he thanks Verbiest for his interventions for the benefit of the city of Macau, granting him with the Portuguese nationality; the other is a letter of Superior Filippucci, of 5 March 1688 (n° 128)<sup>43</sup>, in which Verbiest is fiercely criticized and exempted from his official duties within the Chinese Vice-Province, because of his more or less hidden ‘personal’ negotiations with ‘foreign’ (non-Portuguese) envoys. None of these two documents came to Verbiest’s knowledge, as on the moment when both letters arrived in Beijing, he already died, on 28 January 1688.

From this far too quick overview one may be understand how substantial and complementary the information traceable through these letters is. Of course, many more themata are discussed in the totality of this corpus of 134 letters, with letters from archives in Rome, Paris, Brussels, Antwerp, Bloomington, etc., and some private collections. As such, this corpus is a splendid example of Jesuit reporting and Jesuit letter writing, developed since the early days of the Jesuit Society as a means of creating a strong ‘corporate’ cohesion, and described in the ‘*Formula scribendi*’<sup>44</sup>. I invite

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<sup>41</sup> On particular measures and concern for the Christians among the staff: see nos 62 (JA 49-V-19/114, fl. 473r.-474v.) and 77 (JA 49-V-19/129, f° 495v.-497r.).

<sup>42</sup> From JA 49-V-20/141, f° 433r.

<sup>43</sup> From JA 49-IV-63/151, f° 132 r./v.

<sup>44</sup> On Jesuit letter writing and its manifold functions, see Luce Giard & Antonella Romano, ‘L’usage jésuite de la correspondance. Sa mise en



you to make an excursus through this edition, the multiple and very heterogeneous contents of which I tried to make accessible through (a) extensive summaries of most of the letters, and (b) through three extensive indices: one of names, one of subjects and one on Chinese terms. It would be nice, if further detail investigation of these texts would further reveal the less clear passages of these letters, and inspire the reconstitution of other letter corpora, starting from this tremendously rich Ajuda collection, as happened, for instance, for Tomas Pereira<sup>45</sup>.

N. Golvers

Lisbon 15.05.2017

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Overview of the distribution of the Verbiest letters in the Ajuda-collection (total: 43 items).

Vol.

14: 49-IV-62 (no. 22 of my edition);  
15: 49-IV-63 (nos 38; 55; 79; 80; 83; 84; 85; 86; 90; 93; 98; 100; 101; 102; 105; 107; 109; 110; 112; 115; 116; 117; 118; 119; 126; 127; 128; 130; 131; 132; i.e. 30 items );  
34: 49-V-16 (no. 23);  
35: 49-V-17 (nos 33; 40);  
37: 49-V-19 (nos 60; 62; 70; 73; 74; 77); copy of no. 29;  
38: 49-V-20 (nos 129; 133).

#### **Appendix: survey of the corpus of 43 Verbiest-items in the Biblioteca da Ajuda:**

04-09-1670: F. Verbiest to Luis da Gama: n° 22.

01.01.1671 : F. Verbiest to Antonio de Gouveia : n° 23.

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pratique par le mathématicien Christoph Clavius (1570 – 1622)’, in: A. Romano (ed.), *Rome et la science moderne entre Renaissance et Lumières*, Rome, 1008, pp. 65 – 119. A basic work for Jesuit letter communication is: M. Friedrich, *Der lange Arm Roms? Globale Verwaltung und Kommunikation im Jesuitenorden 1540 – 1773*, Frankfurt / NY, 2011, pp. 90 - 91; see also A. Delfosse, ‘La correspondance jésuite: communication, union et mémoire. Les enjeux de la ‘Formula Scribendi’, in: *Revue d’histoire ecclésiastique*, 104, 1, 2009, pp. 71 – 114.

<sup>45</sup> See the edition by Ana Cristina da Costa Gomes, Isabel Murta Pina & Pedro Lage Correia (eds.), *Tomas Pereira. Obras. Volume 1; 2*, Lisbon: CCCM, 2011;



16-05-1678: A. de San Pascual to F. Verbiest: n° 29;  
24-08-1678: F. Verbiest to Filippo de Marini: n° 33.  
03-07-1680: F. Verbiest to the Provincial F.S. Filippucci: n° 38.  
05-10-1680: G. Gabiani to the Peking Fathers: n° 39.  
14-10-1680: F. Verbiest to the Visitor, Andrea Lubelli: n° 40.  
05-05-1683: F. Verbiest to Provincial F.S. Filippucci: n° 55.  
23-11-1683: Francisco Gayosso to F. Verbiest: n° 60.  
07-01-1684: F. Verbiest to F.S. Filippucci : n° 62 ;  
March 1684: A. Lubelli to F. Verbiest: n° 70.  
(Early) June 1684: A. Lubelli to F. Verbiest: n° 73.  
21-07-1684: A.Lubelli to F. Verbiest: n° 74.  
18-11-1684: F. Verbiest to Filippucci: n° 77;  
Febr. 1685: F. Verbiest to Filippucci: n° 80;  
27-03-1685: F. Verbiest to Filippucci, Superior: n° 83;  
30-03-1685: F. Verbiest to Filippucci, Superior: n° 84;  
08-05-1685: F. Verbiest to Filippucci, Superior: n° 85;  
23-06-1685: F. Verbiest to Filippucci, Superior: n° 86;  
02-09-1685: F. Verbiest to Filippucci, Superior: 90.  
22-09-1685: F. Verbiest to Filippucci, Superior: n° 93.  
12-12-1685: F. Verbiest to Filippucci, Superior: n° 98;  
28-03-1686: F. Verbiest to Filippucci, Superior: n° 100;  
15-07-1686: F. Verbiest to Filippucci, Superior: n° 101;  
16-08-1686: F. Verbiest to Filippucci, Superior: n° 102;  
13-09-1686 : F. Verbiest to Filippucci, Superior : n° 105 ;  
22-11-1686: F. Verbiest to Filippucci, Superior: n° 107;  
10-01-1687: Jean de Fontaney to F.Verbiest: n° 109;  
28-01-1687: F. Verbiest to Filippucci, Superior: n° 110;  
26-04-1687: F. Verbiest to Filippucci, Superior: n° 112;  
27-06-1687: F.Verbiest to Filippucci, Superior: n° 115;  
29-07-1687: Jean de Fontaney to F. Verbiest: n° 116;  
04-08-1687: Jean de Fontaney to F. Verbiest: n° 117;  
13-08-1687: Jean de Fontaney to F. Verbiest: n° 118;  
24-09-1687: F. Verbiest to Filippucci, Superior: n° 119.  
05-02-1688: F.S. Filippucci to F.Verbiest: n° 126;  
05-02-1688: F.S. Filippucci to F.Verbiest: n° 127;  
05-03-1688: F. S. Filippucci to F. Verbiest: n° 128;  
25-03-1688: Dom Pedro II, King of Portugal to F. Verbiest: n° 129;  
01-01-1689: Gilles (Aegidius) Estrix to F. Verbiest: n° 130;  
27-02-1689: Georg David to F. Verbiest: n° 131;  
07-03-1689: Ignatius Zapolski to Verbiest: n° 132;  
02-03-1689: Dom Pedro II to F. Verbiest: n° 133.