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Between Spanish Franciscans and Chinese Literati in Late Ming and Early Qing: Modes of Interactions and Cultural Exchanges

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Abstract: The Franciscan Order was one of the most important missionary orders in China during the Ming and Qing Dynasties. While rooted in the local communities, they also engaged in various forms of interactions with Chinese literati. This article will begin by briefly discussing the issue of the Franciscans changing from religious habit into Chinese dress as well as their evolving attitude towards Confucianism and Chinese rituals, aiming to illustrate the process of shaping their “Western Confucian” image and their adaptation to Chinese culture. Subsequently, the focus of this paper will be shifted to exploring the modes of interactions between the Spanish Franciscans and the Chinese literati. The author argues that the interactions between the two sides were primarily power-based. These power-based interactions entailed establishing connections with officials and leveraging their influence to safeguard missionary activities. It can be further categorized into three types. The first type involved socializing with officials, while the second type included interaction with Jesuit officials in court, and the third type was direct involvement in official positions. In their engagement with literati, the Franciscans demonstrated a thorough understanding of and adaptation to Chinese societal and cultural norms, thereby facilitating the development of their mission.

Keywords: Spanish Franciscans; Western Confucian; Chinese rites; modes of interactions; Chinese literati



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1. Introduction

The Franciscan Order was one of the most important missionary orders in China during the Ming and Qing Dynasties. Starting with Antonio de Santa María Caballero (利安当, Li Andang, 1602–1669)’s entry into Fujian in 1633, the Franciscans remained active in China for the following century except interruptions due to events like the Calendar Case in Early Kangxi Reign (康熙历狱, Kangxi liyu). Although the influence of the Franciscan Order in China temporarily disappeared after the death of Caballero, Buenaventura Ibañez (文都辣, Wen Dula, 1610–1691) led a group of newly recruited missionaries to China in 1672, reinitiating the Franciscan missionary work. They established their headquarters in Guangzhou (广州) and departed from the previous radical methods such as street preaching and confrontation with the authorities. Based on the realities of China, they flexibly adjusted their missionary strategies and achieved remarkable results.¹

Before the Chinese Rites Controversy reached its intense phase and the uncompromising attitudes of both China and the Vatican led to the complete prohibition of Catholicism in the early 18th century, the missionary influence of the Franciscan Order in China continued to grow. By the end of the 17th century, they had established missions in provinces such as Guangdong (广东), Fujian (福建), Shandong (山东), Jiangxi (江西), Anhui (安徽), Jiangsu (江苏), and other regions, gradually becoming a significant missionary force that could not be ignored on the Chinese land. Many studies vaguely suggest that the Franciscans adhered to a grassroots approach, opposing cultural accommodation and Matteo Ricci (利玛窦, Li Madou, 1552–1610)’s strategies. However, it is difficult to imagine that such results could be achieved solely by relying on a grassroots approach without any adaptation to China’s traditional culture, which centered around Confucianism. In fact,

just as Jesuits also established connections with rural communities in China beyond the upper-level routes (Brockey 2008), a careful examination of the letters and reports left by the Franciscans reveals that they, too, recognized the importance of the so-called “top-down strategy” for converting the Chinese. While rooted in the local communities, they engaged in various forms of interactions with Chinese officials as well.

Currently, research on the Franciscan Order in China, both in terms of quantity and depth, is noticeably less extensive compared to the studies on the Jesuits. Early research on the Franciscan mission has largely been conducted by church historians. For instance, in the early 20th century, Lorenzo Pérez revealed the missionary activities of Franciscans led by Buenaventura Ibañez in Guangdong (P. L. Pérez 1917, pp. 225–54). Antonio Sisto Rosso introduced the missionary life and academic works of Franciscan Pedro de La Piñuela (1697) (石铎球, Shi Duolu, 1650–1704) (Rosso 1948, pp. 250–74). Antolín Abad Pérez, on the other hand, discussed the impact of the Yongzheng Emperor’s (雍正, reign: 1722–1735) prohibition of Catholicism on the Franciscans (A. A. Pérez 1974, pp. 5–39). George Harold Dunne, in a monograph published in the 1960s, vividly portrayed the historical process of introducing Catholicism to late Ming China through storytelling. However, taking a “Jesuit-centric” stance, Dunne depicted the Franciscan Order as somewhat rash, radical, lacking an understanding of Chinese culture, and thus posing a threat to the survival of the Jesuit mission, and merely playing a contrasting role (Dunne 1962). Cummins focused on the Franciscans’ engagement with Chinese ritual issues, asserting that their attitudes towards American civilizations were more open-minded than their approach to Chinese rituals, which he attributed to their need to guard against syncretic tendencies in Chinese culture (Cummins 1978, pp. 33–108).

In recent decades, with the continuous publication of *Sinica Franciscana* and the increased utilization of Spanish-language original documents by scholars, research on the Spanish Franciscans that evangelized in China has gradually become more enriched. Ubaldo Iaccarino implicitly responded to Dunne’s perspective, contending that the 1579 Mission of Pedro de Álfaro was not “an attempt to put at risk the careful labor of the first generation of Jesuit ‘giants’”, but rather an effort to establish beneficial relations with local authorities in Fujian, which can be seen as a continuation of the embassy of Martín de Rada (1533–1578) (Iaccarino 2022, pp. 245–62). Other scholars took various research perspectives. In addition to brief introductions to missionary history,² there is a growing academic focus on early attempts made by the Franciscans to enter China (Jiménez 2014, pp. 425–46), as well as their experiences of establishing missions in Shandong province, and how the Franciscans, such as Caballero, interacted with local intellectuals there (Mungello 2001). Dinara V. Dubrovskaya examined the missionary activities of the Franciscans in China within the context of the competition between Portugal and Spain in the Far East (Dubrovskaya 2021, pp. 216–27). Additionally, there has been an increased focus on the Chinese works of Franciscans in the 17th century. Apart from studies on Caballero’s *Tianru Yin* (天儒印, *Concordance of Divine Law with the Four Chinese Books*), attention has been particularly directed towards la Piñuela. Research has predominantly centered on the analysis of *Chuhui Wenda* (初会问答, *Preliminary conversation*) (Girard 2000), *Moxiang Shengong* (默想神功, *Spiritual practice of meditation*) (Meynard 2020, pp. 251–73), and his pharmacological work *Bencao Bu* (本草补, *Supplement to Chinese Materia Medica*) (Corsi 2014, pp. 117–48; Bocci 2014, pp. 151–209).

In the Chinese academic community, scholars such as Tang Kaijian (汤开建), Zhang Kai (张铠), Han Chengliang (韩承良) have conducted studies on the Spanish Franciscans.³ In 2006, Cui Weixiao (崔维孝) published a significant work titled *Mingqingzhiji Xibanya Fangjihui Zaihua Chuanjiao Yanjiu (1579–1732)* (明清之际西班牙方济会在华传教研究 (1579–1732), *A Study of the Spanish Franciscan Missions in China during the Ming and Qing Dynasties (1579–1732)*), which not only provided a comprehensive examination of the Franciscan missionary activities in China but also laid a solid foundation for subsequent research by Chinese scholars on related issues (Cui 2006). Even almost 20 years later, it remains one of the essential references for relevant studies. Building upon this founda-

tion, Ye Junyang further delved into the Franciscan Order's missionary strategies as well as its financial and economic issues (Ye and Ollé 2021, pp. 469–81). He disapproved of categorizing the Franciscans as opposing adaptation and provoking conflicts. Instead, he asserted that they had consistently been staunch implementers of cultural adaptation strategies (Ye 2021b, pp. 74–81).

It can be observed that the academic attention on the Spanish Franciscans in China has transitioned from initial introductions of missionary history to research from different perspectives. Some scholars have realized that it is inappropriate to broadly consider the Franciscans as adhering strictly to a grassroots approach. Following this line of thought, this paper discusses the relationship between Spanish Franciscans and Chinese literati and explores the modes of interactions and cultural exchanges between them.

2. Spanish Franciscans as “Western Confucian” (西儒)

“And then, even the clothes we brought were not of use here; it was necessary to make new ones.”⁴

When it comes to the Franciscans, people's first impression is often that of a group of barefoot friars in rough robes. If one were to project this traditional European stereotype onto the early Franciscans attempting to establish themselves in China in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, it would generally be accurate. However, by the late 17th century, the situation appears to have changed entirely. Spanish Franciscans who came to China began, almost unanimously, to adopt the practice of changing dress, one that had been widespread within the Society of Jesus since the era of Matteo Ricci. Through this transformation, they became “Confucians from Spain”. It is widely accepted in academia that after being persuaded by Qu Rukui (瞿汝夔, 1549–1612) and obtaining permission from Alessandro Valignano (范礼安, Fan Li'an, 1539–1606), Ricci changed his attire from that of a monk to silk garments and grew his hair long, adopting the appearance of a scholar. However, the question of when the Spanish Franciscans began this practice of changing dress seems to have received insufficient attention, and there is no clear consensus.

In 1579, while Jesuit Michele Ruggieri (罗明坚, Luo Mingjian, 1543–1607) had just arrived in Macau and Ricci was still in India, a group of Franciscans led by Father Pedro de Álfaro set out from the Philippines to Guangzhou, marking the first attempt by the Franciscans to enter China. It seems that the embassy of Martin de Rada to China a few years earlier did not provide them with much experience. Unprepared for this journey, and with a lack of language proficiency, they were unaware of the need for changing attire. As their ship entered Chinese rivers, their exotic appearance and clothing attracted the attention of the local people.⁵ This expedition, along with subsequent expeditions initiated by the Franciscans from the Philippines to China, did not achieve their objectives. About half a century later, when Gaspar Alenda (?–1642) and his companions entered China once again, there were no fundamental changes in their missionary methods aside from starting to learn Chinese. Carrying crosses, preaching along the streets, and confronting Chinese authorities were common traits of the Franciscans during this period. Following the outbreak of the persecution against the Catholicism in Fujian at the end of 1637, in order to escape pursuit by the authorities, the Franciscans were forced to flee to the mountains. One day, they encountered an attack, unsure whether it was from soldiers or bandits, and were forced to scatter. Documents from that time reveal that the fleeing Franciscans still wore Western religious attire and may have even retained the European tradition of going barefoot:

“On this occasion, a friar⁶ [...] escaped from their hands [...] From mountain to mountain, the friar spent the whole Easter without eating or drinking, yet he didn't feel hunger, thirst, or the cold, almost with only the habit. Instead, he felt a joy and happiness in his soul that he had never experienced before; [...] In the end, we (Escalona and some friars) walked barefoot almost the entire night on very rocky paths and joined the other friars. As soon as they (other friars) saw him, they were greatly pleased; [...] They warmed him, dried his habit, comforted each other, [...]”⁷

There is also no evidence to suggest that when Caballero entered China in 1633, he was aware of the need to change attire. During the same period, another Franciscan Francisco de Escalona, who had experienced the failure of missionary efforts in Fujian, went on to establish missions in Guangxi (广西), where he achieved considerable success, at least as he described in his reports. However, what is puzzling is that a conversation he had with the locals seems to imply that he realized the need to make certain changes to traditional religious attire:

“And a Chinese man, one of the most serious scholars in that city, said to me: ‘Master, I have heard and read your teachings, and I am very impressed, [...] but tell me, don’t you have other sandals and a better silk robe than the one you are wearing?’ I told him not to worry about that, that the clothing I had was sufficient, for Jesus Christ and his apostles walked barefoot and poor, preaching to people. Wearing the clothes of each nation as much as possible is to conform with the locals in some aspects and to better win them for God.”⁸

This may suggest that in order to adapt to the local Chinese culture, Escalona changed into Chinese-style sandals and silk clothing, albeit of lower quality. Nevertheless, strangely enough, this principle or practice was not inherited by later Franciscan missionaries. Even as late as 1649, when Caballero returned to China for the second time with Ibáñez, despite prior experience in China, he might still have been dressed in the traditional mendicant garb. In that year, he arrived in Anhai (安海), Fujian, where he received a warm welcome from the Zheng clan. Zheng Zhilong (郑芝龙, 1604–1661)’s daughter and son-in-law were devout Catholics who had long wished for a priest in Anhai.⁹ They had specific requirements for the priest they desired, stating that they preferred Franciscans who “dress in coarse attire, walk barefoot, girded with a cord, and do not take money”.¹⁰ Judging by their later request for Caballero and his companions to stay in Anhai to attend to the mission, it seems that these Franciscan missionaries had not yet adopted a different attire so as to meet the visual expectations of the mendicant priests in their hosts’ minds.

During his stay in Anhai, Caballero frequently mentioned the lack of funds to acquire new clothing. Regrettably, he did not explicitly specify whether these were religious-style garments or traditional Chinese attire. Caballero did not linger in Anhai for an extended period but departed from Fujian and headed north in 1650. Although he initially intended to establish a mission in Korea, he changed his plans upon the advice of Johann Adam Schall von Bell (汤若望, Tang Ruowang, 1591–1666) and redirected his journey to Shandong. When Caballero arrived, he visited three local mandarins with a recommendation letter from Adam Schall and presented them with various gifts. Under their protection, Caballero established the first Franciscan church in China in Jinan (济南). Upon arriving in Shandong, Caballero, much like in Fujian, repeatedly mentioned the need for funds to purchase clothing but did not explicitly specify the type of garments. In January 1653, he wrote a letter requesting Manila to send “Sayal”¹¹, a commonly used European fabric for making religious habits, which indicates that they still required materials for crafting religious attire, or at the very least, attire suitable for religious activities such as Mass. However, Caballero did not provide clear details regarding their everyday clothing.

In December 1653, Caballero explicitly mentioned the need to wear Chinese-style clothing in China in a letter to the Provincial of the Philippines, and hinted that this decision was influenced by the practices of other orders, even though he also displayed a clear reluctance, believing that adopting Chinese attire would bring about numerous inconveniences:

“In Korea, even if it needs the work of our hands, we can sustain ourselves, and there will be no need to wear clothing other than our habits. This cannot be done here, not for any other inconvenience than the fact that other evangelical ministers all dress in the Chinese manner, and if we were to differ, it would cause great disturbance in their minds. Dressing in this way brings many hindrances to expeditious evangelization and entails many more expenses that could be avoided if we could dress in the religious manner.”¹²

Despite this, the passage of time gradually led Caballero to accept this attire. Seven years later, at the age of 58, he revealed in a letter that he had embraced the clothing style of the Qing Dynasty. He also indicated that his Chinese was so proficient that a Dominican priest once failed to recognize him as a foreigner.¹³ As for whether he referred to ordinary Chinese clothing or the attire worn by literati, Caballero did not explicitly state. Nonetheless, from the series of descriptions provided by Caballero, it is evident that aside from Jesuits, missionaries of other orders in China at this time had all adopted Chinese clothing.

Two years later, in 1662, with the aim of recruiting more missionaries and fundraising for the Chinese mission, Ibáñez, acting on Caballero's instructions, left China and returned to Europe. Unfortunately, Caballero did not live to the day of Ibáñez's return. He became embroiled in the Calendar Case from 1664 to 1669, was imprisoned, and eventually passed away in Guangzhou. Consequently, the influence of the Franciscans disappeared from China, and the "changing dress" strategy was interrupted before it evolved into a prevailing practice within the Franciscan Order in China.

When Ibáñez led new Franciscans back to China in 1672, they had reverted to religious attire. By the end of that year, Ibáñez, along with Francisco Peris de la Concepción (卞芳世, Bian Shifang, 1635–1701) and Jaime Tarín (林养默, Lin Yangmo, 1644–1719), secretly entered Guangzhou. From their letters to Manila, it can be inferred that at this time, the group still wore religious garments ("ropa de la mission").¹⁴ Despite their efforts to conceal themselves, their whereabouts were eventually reported to Shang Zhixin (尚之信, 1636–1680), the supreme governor of Guangdong at that time. Yet surprisingly, Shang Zhixin warmly welcomed Ibáñez and his companions, providing each of them with two sets of Chinese clothing as well as bedding, and he instructed servants to prepare meals according to their preferences. He also arranged for teachers to help them learn the Chinese language and asked them to patiently wait before heading to Shandong.¹⁵ Subsequently, the Franciscans successfully constructed two churches in Guangdong and established the Guangdong mission through leveraging Shang Zhixin's political influence and financial support in that region.

On 27 March 1674, in a letter to the Provincial of the Philippines, Ibáñez requested the dispatch of two missionaries to Tonkin (Vietnam). He stated:

"Send two friars there; without the need to bring any financial support for sustaining themselves or to change their habits [...] That mission is suitable for Friars Minor who do not need to carry money or conceal their habits, only the Governor should mention them to the King of Tunquin to avoid them being banished."¹⁶

Ibáñez believed that in Tonkin, the "mission is suitable for Friars Minor". This implies that to some extent, the Chinese mission was not as suitable as the Franciscans desired because cultural adaptations must be made there. In particular, one cannot continue to present oneself in the European mendicant style. In the following years, the Franciscans in China increasingly recognized the importance of wearing respectable clothing and implemented it as a long-term policy. In a letter to the superiors in Manila in 1676, la Piñuela explicitly pointed out: "and then, even the clothes we brought were not of use here; it was necessary to make new ones."¹⁷ Agustín de San Pascual (利安定, Li Anding, 1637–1697) even provided detailed descriptions of the specific clothing requirements when visiting officials:

"If we had that fine cloth from New Spain, in a mossy color, it is very good for the long garment and for another short one that is worn over it, which for us is always black for it seems most decent. The rough woolen fabric or the same cloth will be good and honorable for making the garment, as this is not a fabric they have in their kingdom, they value it."¹⁸

The above passage not only illustrates that the strategy of "changing dress" had become a convention within the order but also reveals that Franciscans, in order to cater to Chinese preferences, went a step further by utilizing novel fabrics from New Spain to attract attention. Furthermore, the significance they placed on clothing is evident in their expenditure. In 1678,

when Bernardo de la Encarnación (郭纳璧, Guo Nabi, 1630–1719) arrived in Fujian from the Philippines, the purchase of clothing alone amounted to six pesos. Considering that during the same period, the annual salary for a servant hired by the Franciscans in Fujian was seven to eight pesos, it is clear that this expenditure was not an insignificant sum.¹⁹ Despite the fact that the Spanish Franciscans acquired more abundant funding sources after 1672, which to some extent improved their living conditions, the reality was that these subsidies and aids often cannot be consistently provided for various reasons. This forced missionaries into financial difficulties (Ye and Ollé 2021, pp. 469–81). Nevertheless, the order was still willing to allocate a considerable amount of funds for clothing for new missionaries, highlighting the necessity of the strategy of adopting local dress.

Since then, under the leadership of Ibáñez, the later Franciscans skipped the phase of adopting “Chinese monk attire” that Jesuits had experienced and gradually embraced Chinese common clothing and literati attire, which marked the formal completion of the widespread adoption of Chinese local dress in the Franciscan Order. Cui Weixiao provided a perfect interpretation for the Franciscans’ Western Confucian image:

“Upon entering Guangzhou, the Franciscans consciously or unconsciously began to change their way of life under the counsel of Shang Zhixin. They shed the coarse habits of mendicants and donned Chinese-style silk robes; they no longer relied on street begging for sustenance, but constructed churches and resided in them. They also began to accept without hesitation when the Chinese addressed them with honorific titles such as Laoye (老爷) or Xianggong (相公), because they had already realized that by living in the same manner as Chinese literati, they would be respected and admired by the common people. Officials and the populace would be more willing to listen to their preaching, facilitating the spread of Catholicism in China.” (Cui 2006, p. 410)

3. Comprehension and Attitude towards Confucianism and Chinese Rites

The first Franciscan who attempted to compose Chinese books was Caballero. In 1653, in Shandong, he revealed in a letter that he had already written three books in Chinese.²⁰ These three books were drafted by a Chinese literatus, for which Caballero paid four taels of silver.²¹ This marked the formal beginning of Caballero’s collaboration with Chinese literati in the realms of Chinese writing and doctrinal discussions. Unfortunately, he did not specify the titles of these three books. Relying solely on a few ambiguous content descriptions,²² it seems difficult to confirm whether they are the later-known works, namely, *Wanwu Benmo Yueyan* (万物本末约言, *Compendium of the Origin and End of All Things*), *Zhengxue Liushi* (正学镠石, *Touch stone of orthodox learning*)²³, and *Tianru Yin*. From the perspective of the time of writing, D.E. Mungello denied that Shang Huqing [尚祐卿] was the Chinese literatus involved in this collaboration (Mungello 2001, p. 32). Mungello has conducted detailed research and interpretation of Caballero’s Chinese writings, and there is no need to repeat it here. It appears that this method, whereby missionaries provide oral accounts, local literati draft the content in Chinese, and then missionaries revise and approve it, had almost become a fixed pattern for Chinese writing among the Franciscans. Therefore, when attributing authorship to the works, it is often noted as being “narrated” (述) by rather than “written” (著) by a certain missionary, indicating that the missionaries’ main role was oral narration rather than writing. However, both Caballero and later Franciscans consciously or unconsciously “deprived” the Chinese drafters of the right to attribution, even omitting mentions of their names in private letters. Nevertheless, sometimes, the writing style of a particular work seems to serve as a silent cry from the drafter, revealing subtle traces. For example, in la Piñuela’s *Bencao Bu*, there are examples of expressions in the Jiangxi dialect (Zhen and Zheng 2002, p. 205) that are unlikely to have originated from la Piñuela himself, suggesting that a certain form of collaboration with local literati existed.

The author of this article used Caballero’s second entry into China in 1649 as a marker to categorize Franciscans in China into two generations, namely, the “old” and “new” gen-

erations. “The first generation of Franciscans has already reached some levels of knowledge and cultural contact. However, it was the second generation of Franciscan missionaries who progressively deepened in turning this linguistic and cultural knowledge into a fundamental tool in their missionary task.” (Ye and Ollé 2021, p. 470) Caballero himself served as a typical epitome of this transformation.

Making general statements about Caballero’s understanding of Chinese culture may lead to some misunderstandings. We should recognize that his stances on Confucianism and on Chinese rituals were interconnected yet not parallel. During all his time in China, Caballero was consistent in his opposition to Confucian rites. Meanwhile, his study of Confucius and his teachings primarily focused on aspects that could interact with Catholicism, with less attention given to other facets of Confucianism. In this sense, Caballero’s studies on Chinese rituals and Confucianism were interrelated and inseparable. However, unlike his unchanging opposition to Chinese rituals, his attitude towards Confucianism went through three distinct periods.

The initial period was the first few years when Caballero came into contact with Chinese society and culture after entering China for the first time in 1633. At this time, he could barely speak Chinese, and he was almost entirely ignorant regarding Confucianism. His criticism of ritual issues mainly relied on his daily observations and inquiries with believers. The second period began from the year 1640, especially from his second entry into China in 1649. This time, as his proficiency in Chinese improved, he started to study the Confucian teachings, and consequently, his understanding of Chinese culture and classical texts deepened during this period. There was a noticeable shift in his attitude towards Confucianism, and he tried to adopt Ricci’s synthesis between ancient Confucianism and Catholicism. Finally, after 1661, under the influence of Niccolò Longobardo (龙华民, Long Huamin, 1565–1655)’s treatise, which he translated, and due to the debates against the Jesuits during the Guangdong exile, Caballero came to adopt a radical stance, rejecting not only the Confucian rites but also defining Confucius and his teachings as atheistic and materialist.

After his first entry into China in 1633, due to a lack of understanding of the real situation in China, he harbored a deep mistrust towards both Jesuit missionaries and Chinese culture. He strongly opposed the practice of Jesuits, which was to allow Chinese Catholics to participate in ritual activities such as the veneration of ancestors and Confucius, for he viewed them as heretical practices. He even formed an inquisition court together with Dominicans such as Juan Bautista Morales (黎玉范, Li Yufan, 1597–1664). Later on, the results of their investigation were sent to Europe as arguments against Jesuit practices, officially sparking the Chinese Rites Controversy in Europe.²⁴ Driven by the desire to uphold the purity of Catholic doctrine, Caballero maintained a consistent opposition to the involvement of Chinese believers in ritual activities throughout his life. After the outbreak of the Calendar Case, during the confinement of 25 missionaries in Guangzhou, a major discussion on the Chinese mission took place, resulting in 42 resolutions. Yet on the issue of the veneration of ancestors and Confucius, Caballero refused to sign, demonstrating his objection. This stance persisted until his death in Guangzhou.

In fact, during the initial years of his stay in China, Caballero had a limited understanding of Confucianism. He relied on the explanations of the Chinese character “祭” (ji) provided by his Chinese teacher and observations of activities such as the veneration of ancestors in some Chinese families when he concluded that Chinese rituals belonged to the category of so-called “superstitious” practices. After Caballero’s unsuccessful trip to Nanjing and his forced return to Fujian, his primary focus shifted to investigating and criticizing Chinese rituals, objecting to the missionary policies of the Jesuits.

However, after Caballero’s second entry into China and the expansion of missionary activities in Shandong, while maintaining his disapproval of Chinese rituals, Caballero began to delve into the study of Confucian classics. Gradually, he exhibited a more adaptive attitude towards Confucian thought. In the construction of the discourse system wherein Caballero opposed Chinese rituals, the involvement of Chinese individuals was almost

absent, except for the inquisition court which was biased and preconceived from the beginning. To be specific, the treatises were written in European languages, and the dialogue was primarily undertaken among European missionaries. Chinese people neither understood what the missionaries were debating, nor could they participate in the conversation. They were left bewildered by conflicting instructions among different religious orders regarding their permission to venerate ancestors and Confucius. During his stay in Fujian, Caballero had little interaction with literati, and his missionary methods towards common people sometimes even tended towards intimidation, describing terrifying scenes of hell.²⁵

But when evangelizing in Shandong, Caballero's Chinese writings signaled a departure from a closed stance; he deliberately included Chinese people in the interactive field. Chinese readers could finally read and directly understand the arguments of Franciscans. What is more, readers with higher levels of education, such as Shang Huqing, could participate in discussions and assist Caballero in modifying texts. In such an open interaction, Caballero deepened his understanding of Confucian thought. Through the study of the *Four Books* (四书, Sishu) and with the assistance of Shang Huqing, he completed his significant work *Tianru Yin*, whose publication showcased Caballero's efforts to "identify similarities between the Confucianism and Catholicism in order to narrow the gap between Chinese literati and Catholic doctrine." (Zhang 2017, p. 293). This marked his first step towards evangelization through academic discussions.

Contrary to common beliefs, some of Caballero's views in this period were not in line with those of Longobardo; instead, they were closer to the perspectives of Ricci. For example, he approved of the "ancient Confucianism" represented by Confucius, while being critical of Neo-Confucianism. In August 1661, Caballero wrote the *Declaratio...iuxta cultum Ritusque Sinarum erga suos e vita discessos Maiores* (*Declaration...according to the cult and rites of the Chinese towards their deceased elders*).²⁶ In this document, Caballero considered that Confucius detested superstition and idolatry, while he expressed a clear critical stance towards Neo-Confucianism, believing that the Neo-Confucians distorted the thoughts of Confucius. Caballero's observations were evidently influenced by the Jesuits (Luo 2023, p. 65). He generally followed the methodology of Matteo Ricci and attempted to establish a bridge between Confucianism and Catholicism, although in some respects, he still struggled to fully justify his arguments and had to acknowledge that Confucius seemed to be affected by certain superstitious ideas (Canaris 2023, pp. 71–72).

In exactly the same year, Longobardo's treatise came into Caballero's sight, which exerted a decisive impact on Caballero's subsequent shift in views concerning the Confucian teachings. As early as the Jiading (嘉定) Conference, which was held between December 1627 and January 1628, there was an internal decision among Jesuits to continue Matteo Ricci's missionary policy and shelve or cease further discussion of Longobardo's paper, which was written in Portuguese and titled *Reposta breve sobre as Controversias do Xámty, Tien Xin, Lim Hoen e outros nomes e termos sinicos, per se determinar quaes delles podem ou nao podem usarse nesta Christiandade* (*A Brief Response on the Controversies of Xámty, Tien Xin, Lim Hoen, and other Chinese names and terms, in order to determine which of them can or cannot be used in this Christendom*).²⁷ In this paper, Longobardo expressed different views from other Jesuits regarding Confucianism and Jesuit missionary methods, especially on the Chinese translation of certain Catholic terms. Later, during Caballero's missionary activities in Shandong, he became friends with another Jesuit, Jean Valat (汪儒望, Wang Ruwang, 1614–1696), who unauthorizedly handed the manuscript of Longobardo to this Spanish friend. Caballero not only immediately translated Longobardo's treatise into Latin²⁸ but also summarized its contents and appended it as *Epilogus* to the *Declaratio*, which he had written shortly before (Canaris 2023, pp. 74–75).²⁹ These documents were then taken back to Europe by Buenaventura Ibañez and became crucial tools for opposing Jesuit policies.

It is noteworthy that Longobardo's paper contradicted many points in Caballero's *Declaratio*, yet the Franciscan was unable to reconcile the discrepancies between the two. This may reflect that at this time, Caballero's understanding of Chinese culture was not profound enough, and his grasp of Confucianism and Longobardo's treatise was still in

a tentative stage. Subsequently, although the Calendar Case led to the suspension of the Catholic mission, Caballero gained ample time to meticulously study Longobardo's paper. In the last years of his life, with a deepening understanding of Longobardo's views and benefiting from new knowledge acquired through exchanges and debates with other missionaries during the Guangdong exile, it seems that Caballero developed a renewed understanding of Confucianism.

On 9 December 1668, Caballero wrote a letter titled *Tratado sobre algunos puntos tocantes a esta mission de la gran China* (Treatise on Some Points Regarding this Mission to Great China)³⁰ to Luís da Gama, the Visitor of the Provinces of Japan and China of the Society of Jesus. In this letter, which encapsulated Caballero's most comprehensive and up-to-date reflections on Confucianism and Chinese rituals, Caballero completely abandoned previous practice of treating Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism differently; he asserted that Confucian thought could never be reconciled with Catholicism and deemed the Jesuit strategy unacceptable (Canaris 2023, pp. 81–82). In this way, he proclaimed a definitive departure from the path set by Ricci.³¹

Nevertheless, with Caballero's death, the Franciscans' study of Confucianism was interrupted and their early practices of evangelization through academic discussions were suspended. When new Franciscans returned to China, and as their understanding of the country deepened, they inherited Caballero's approach and once again engaged in Chinese writing. San Pascual was one of the representatives of this practice. When San Pascual entered Fujian, he began interacting with literati and officials. He realized that the street preaching approach was not suitable for the Chinese society and that convincing them required rational debates in the church. Therefore, he not only requested Manila to send a companion well-versed in theology but also compiled a list of topics that literati preferred to discuss. These topics included creation, knowledge of God, remission of sins, eternity of reward and punishment, immortality of the soul, and justice of God, among others.³²

Pedro de la Piñuela, who entered China in 1676, continued to employ the strategy initiated by Caballero and San Pascual, strengthening communication with literati and officials.³³ La Piñuela left behind a substantial body of Chinese works, including nine religious works and one pharmacology treatise titled *Bencao Bu*. He wrote accessible materials like the *Shengjiao Qimeng Zhiyao* (圣教启蒙指要, *Compendium of Basic Knowledge of the Holy Religion*) and the *Ting Misa Fanli* (听弥撒凡例, *Methods of Attending Mass*) to target the lower classes, as well as more sophisticated and reason-based works like the *Yongzan Dingheng* (永暂定衡, *Evaluation of Eternity and Temporality*). His *Moxiang Shengong* was even reviewed by seven Chinese Catholic literati.³⁴ Many of these works incorporated elements of Chinese culture and thought, aligning with the secular rational spirit of Confucian literati. This characteristic received positive responses within the literati community. Han Jun (韩雋), for example, praised la Piñuela, stating that he possessed the "demeanor of a great Confucian scholar".³⁵

In addition to the mentioned missionaries, Franciscans such as Ibáñez, Tarín, la Concepción, and others have left behind Chinese works. It is evident that from the time of Caballero, the Franciscans adopted the strategy of evangelization through academic discussions. The new generation of Franciscans inherited and promoted the spirit of rational debate initiated by Caballero and strengthened communication with literati and officials, thus contributing to the development of the mission.³⁶

However, unlike Caballero's strong opposition to Chinese rituals, his successors underwent further reforms in their attitudes towards this issue. When Ibáñez and his companions went back to China in the 1670s, they were initially firm in their resistance to Chinese rituals. For example, in 1675, San Pascual burned 23 Chinese ancestral tablets in Ningde (宁德), Fujian, and considered it the best thing he had done in his life.³⁷ But in less than ten years, as San Pascual gained more experience, many of his ideas underwent certain changes. His attitudes towards Chinese rituals were concentrated in the *Normae Pastorales Pro Seraphica Missione Statutae* (*Pastoral Norms Established for the Seraphic Missions*), written in Guangdong in 1683. Although he still regarded the veneration of ancestors and Confu-

cius as idolatrous and prohibited Chinese Catholics from participating, he became much more tolerant of ancestral tablets. He allowed believers to pay respects to the memorial tablets of their ancestors and Confucius, as well as to offer flowers and burn incense, as long as they did not make any oblations during the process. He considered this a secular act, merely expressing gratitude to ancestors and Confucius. Regarding the other Chinese traditional rituals, San Pascual considered various circumstances and then classified and discussed them. For instance, he argued that Chinese Catholic believers ought to be permitted to take part in mourning activities for the deceased, in which they could burn incense, light candles, and bow. If the non-Catholic relatives of the deceased insisted on offering food in front of the coffin or tablet of the deceased, as a precaution, Catholic believers should also be allowed to participate, provided they publicly declared that their purpose was to “show the affection they had for the deceased and offer the same things as if he/she were still alive, without believing that his/her soul came or could come, or that the soul could eat these things”.³⁸ On the other hand, for literati or officials who had converted, San Pascual did not permit them to participate in activities involving offerings to Confucius. However, he did not oppose them paying respects to Confucius when assuming their offices or on the first and fifteenth day of each lunar month, as long as they regarded Confucius as a teacher and not as a deity.³⁹ In addition, if compelled to participate in activities not in line with Catholic doctrine, such as being forced to go to a temple to pray for rain, they could do so but should avoid entering the temple. Instead, they could place a table at the entrance with a cross and an image of God to indicate that they were praying to the Lord.⁴⁰ These are just some examples, which, nevertheless, already suffice to demonstrate that San Pascual no longer classified all these activities as superstition. Compared to Caballero, San Pascual’s attitude towards Jesuit strategies appeared more inclusive, recognizing some secular aspects in the Chinese rituals and conditionally allowing believers to participate. In a letter from 1694, he proposed that “the evangelical minister, upon arriving in a place where the opinion of the Society of Jesus is established, must conform to it”.⁴¹ By the early 18th century, when Ibáñez had passed away and San Pascual, la Piñuela, and other predecessors were reaching their later years, the younger representatives of the Franciscans, such as Miguel Fernández (南怀德, Nan Huaide, 1665–1726), became more tolerant on the issue of Chinese rituals. He permitted almost everything that Caballero had criticized, including veneration of ancestors and Confucius, as well as ancestral tablets, as long as these rituals did not involve activities considered to be “superstition” by Catholic standards (Mungello 2001, pp. 84–85).

Certainly, as the number of Franciscans rose, it also became increasingly difficult for them to reach any consensus on the missionary strategies and the issue of Chinese rituals. Sometimes, even their unique personalities could have an impact on the mission. For example, San Pascual had a character so strong that Ibáñez described him as a rooster (gallo). Miguel Flores (傅劳理, Fu Laoli, 1644–1702) gave up the mission in Shandong and returned to Guangdong due to his inability to get along with him,⁴² which exacerbated the shortage of personnel and hindered the mission in Shandong. In contrast, Ibáñez was mature and experienced. When accompanying Caballero in Shandong, he truly experienced the benefits of having a good relationship with the local authorities in his missionary work. He also understood the importance of maintaining friendship with the Jesuits. After the second entry of Caballero in China, cooperation with the Jesuits actually became one of the essential policies of the order. However, there were often unexpected incidents between missionaries. For instance, in 1679, la Piñuela had a conflict with Jesuit Simón Rodríguez (李西满, Li Ximan, 1645–1704) in Jiangle (将乐), Fujian province. In order to prevent the situation from escalating, Ibáñez had to order la Piñuela to leave.⁴³ Among the younger generation of Franciscans, Miguel Fernández had a poor relationship with Jean Valat, which damaged the friendly cooperation between the Jesuits and the Franciscans in Shandong created during Caballero’s time.⁴⁴ As for the issue of rituals, there were indeed certain disagreements within the Franciscan order. For instance, there seemed to be disagreements regarding the significance of the Chinese term “天” (Tian). In the Jiangle Church, La Piñuela once

hung the tablet with the inscription “Jingtian” (敬天, Revere Heaven) given by Emperor Kangxi. However, after Charles Maigrot (颜瑯, Yan Dang, 1652–1730) promulgated the famous seven prohibitions in Fujian, Lucas Tomás (宋多玛, Song Duoma, 1646–1723) went against the instructions of Tarín and directly took down the tablet and damaged it contemptuously.⁴⁵

Nevertheless, at that time, the Catholic influence in China was very weak, and clearly it was in a disadvantageous position within China’s secular political power structure and traditional cultural order. The substantial real-life pressures and the rapidly changing missionary landscape left little room for debates and disagreements among the Franciscans. As the Rites Controversy intensified, Emperor Kangxi, who gradually lost patience, eventually ordered that all missionaries in China must comply with the rules of Ricci and obtain the certificate (票, piao) if the Chinese mission was to be continued. Otherwise, they would be expelled from the country. Faced with formidable political pressure and in order to sustain their mission, the Franciscans ultimately decided to comply, acquire the certificate, and align their practices with those of the Jesuits.

4. Three Modes of Interactions of Spanish Franciscans with Chinese Literati

Certainly, it needs to be acknowledged that, perhaps due to the Franciscans’ traditional lack of emphasis on education compared to the Jesuits and less direct involvement in secular politics, or possibly because the Franciscans in China did not receive strong support from Spain and the Philippines, their intellectual exchanges with literati may not have reached the same level of success as those of the Jesuits did. However, they still engaged in extensive interactions with literati on various levels when it suited their missionary practice. The interactions between the Franciscans and literati were mainly power-based. These interactions involved establishing connections with officials and leveraging their influence to safeguard their missionary activities, and they can be further divided into three types.

The first type of interaction involved socializing with officials. Whenever the Franciscans established a new mission in a new area, they actively engaged with local officials or literati. The highest level of authority that the Franciscans came into contact with was the emperor. The earliest recognition of the need to maintain good relations with the central authorities came from Caballero. Upon arriving in Shandong, he learned through a letter from Adam Schall that the mother of Emperor Shunzhi (顺治, reign: 1644–1661) had a favorable disposition towards Catholicism, and that he should try to win her favor.⁴⁶ By the year 1660, Caballero further grasped the prevailing situation: the Qing Dynasty would ultimately unify the entire country and achieve final victory. He praised the governing abilities of Emperor Shunzhi and suggested that Manila should negotiate a trade agreement with the Qing Dynasty. He even expressed the hope that Emperor Shunzhi might one day convert to Catholicism:

“Sir: It seems better to establish trade and friendship with the Tatars of Canton, I mean, with the Chinese loyal to the new Tatar King, either in Canton or in other ports where the seas bordered Japan in this kingdom, near the cities of Nanjing, Hangzhou, and Suzhou, where there are bulks of silk. The new Tatar King, though young and non-Catholic, is very attentive to matters of governance, upright, benevolent, and just. May our Lord convert him for himself [...].”⁴⁷

Later, after Caballero’s passing, the Shandong mission was deserted. In the 1670s, when the Franciscans returned to China, most of them were located in Guangdong and Fujian, far from Beijing, making opportunities to establish contact with the central authorities very slim. Then, with the restoration of the Shandong mission by San Pascual and the accumulation of experience, they gradually realized that entering the palace to serve the emperor and thus gaining access to the central seat of power was crucial for safeguarding their missionary efforts, although this wish had never been fulfilled. For instance, Kangxi’s high-ranking official Tong Guogang (佟国纲, ?–1690) expressed a desire to find someone who could repair clocks and play the organ, and he was willing to build a church in Tongzhou (通州), which was not far from the Imperial Palace, as a token of appreciation.

San Pascual immediately recognized this as a golden opportunity for the Franciscans to enter the imperial court and requested that Manila promptly dispatch a capable individual.⁴⁸ Unfortunately, Manila did not respond positively, and the matter came to naught.

The most significant turning point occurred in the late 17th century. Emperor Kangxi conducted six Southern Inspection Tours from 1684 to 1707, visiting regions such as Shandong and Jiangsu. On 4 February 1689, during his second Southern Inspection Tour, Emperor Kangxi passed through Ji'nan (济南). José Osca (柯若瑟, Ke Ruose, 1659–1735) had the opportunity to be received by the emperor. He answered the emperor's inquiries and received a reward of 20 taels of silver. Additionally, he presented the emperor with gifts brought from Europe.⁴⁹ At the end of March of the same year, when Emperor Kangxi and his entourage passed through Ji'ning (济宁), Manuel de San Juan Bautista (利安宁, Li An'ning, 1656–1711) also received a friendly audience with the emperor (Mungello 2001, pp. 66–72). In early 1703, Emperor Kangxi embarked on his fourth Southern Inspection Tour. When he once again passed through Ji'nan, Miguel Fernández first met with the emperor and later answered questions from officials led by the emperor's uncle and high-ranking official, Tong Guowei (佟国维, 1643–1719) (op. cit. pp. 85–86). The cautious and exemplary behavior of these Franciscans left a positive impression on the emperor. However, compared to the treatment that Jesuits serving in the imperial court received or to the permission granted by Emperor Kangxi to Simón Rodríguez to “preach by imperial decree” (奉旨传教, fengzhi chuanjiao) more than ten years before the formal issuance of the Edict of Toleration (康熙容教令, Kangxi rongjiaoling) in 1692 (Pfister 1932, p. 386), the emperor did not provide any substantial privileges or support to the Franciscans, except merely symbolic rewards of a small amount of silver. Nevertheless, the meetings with the emperor did have a positive impact on the Franciscans in terms of public perception. As José Osca expressed, the emperor's friendly attitude “let all non-Catholics see the favors that His Majesty bestows on the holy law of God.”⁵⁰

The most important meeting between the Franciscans and Emperor Kangxi occurred on 2 May 1709. Inside the Forbidden City, Emperor Kangxi received six Franciscans led by Tarín and inquired about their ages.⁵¹ This seemingly brief meeting took place when the Franciscans entered the palace to receive the certificate. In reality, it marked the complete submission of the Franciscans to central authority and the consequent legitimacy of their missionary status. Shortly after this meeting, they successfully obtained the certificate. With the authorization granted by central authority for the Franciscans to continue their missionary activities and residence in China, their religious affairs were able to further develop. In the ongoing negotiations with local powers, the Franciscans now had an additional layer of authority from the central government to protect churches and believers, and enhance their position in the complex dynamics of local and imperial interactions.⁵²

In terms of relations with local officials, Caballero also played a pioneering role. After his second entry into China in 1649, he established good relations with the Zheng clan in Anhui. Despite Zheng Zhilong having surrendered to the Qing Dynasty and being detained in Beijing at that time, the influence of the Zheng clan in Anhui remained strong. Due to the upheavals of the Ming–Qing transition, Fujian was in a state of chaos and war. Caballero benefited from the hospitality of the Zheng clan, which enabled him and his companions to settle and begin developing the Catholic community, even though the results were not ideal.⁵³ In addition to the Zheng clan, during this period, Caballero also worked on establishing good relations with other officials in Fujian. Medical activities became a primary means of fostering closer ties between the Franciscans and local authorities. In fact, as early as the 1630s, the Franciscans began medical activities in Fujian. For example, Juan de San Marcos, who came to China in 1637, was a lay friar and served as a pharmacist and a surgeon. During his time in Fujian, he engaged in both missionary work and medical practice, treating the illnesses of the local population. The majority of those seeking medical care from San Marcos were impoverished villagers, although there were also a few scholars and local officials among his patients (Alcobendas 1933b, pp. 572–75).

When Caballero and his companions evangelized in Anhai, they managed to cure the disease of a local official's wife that Chinese physicians were unable to treat. This success earned them deep gratitude from the official, along with generous rewards.⁵⁴ The strategy of combining medical care with missionary work established during this period was inherited by later Franciscans. They actively provided medical treatment for officials and ordinary people. Under the leadership of Buenaventura Ibáñez and Blas Garcia (艾脑爵, Ai Naojue, 1635–1699), they even established a hospital in Guangzhou. Admittedly, the scientific and cultural knowledge of the Franciscans in China was not as advanced as that of the Jesuits. Therefore, although they insisted on evangelization through academic discussions, their efficiency was lower than that of the Jesuits. In this context, providing technical services such as medical treatment became an effective way for them to establish connections with the literati. As described by Severiano Alcobendas, the officials who were cured not only provided political protection to the Franciscans but also offered financial support, thus contributing to the funding of the hospital and the overall development of the mission (Alcobendas 1933b, p. 161).

In addition to providing medical services, another means of establishing good relations with officials was through gift-giving. In the late 16th century, the initial groups of Franciscans attempting to settle in China were somewhat reluctant to engage in gift-giving. In 1579, Pedro de Álfaro and his companions made the first attempt to enter China. They were brought to Zhaoqing (肇庆) in Guangdong and had an audience with the governor, who expressed a desire to see what they had brought from Manila:

“And the viceroy ordered that only one person should enter to show what we were carrying. Thus, he examined piece by piece the images and books, and the altar stone (*ara*), which was what he most desired to see. As he paused to look at all those images, he indicated his pleasure in seeing them, and from time to time, he nodded approvingly.”⁵⁵

The governor repeatedly examined the religious images and the altar stone, implicitly suggesting a desire for a bribe. However, it seems that the friars did not comprehend this. Later, when the captain general of Guangdong explicitly expressed a desire to obtain the altar stone, Álfaro not only refused on the spot but also spoke disrespectfully, stating that it would be “a great offense to God” (*gran ofensa de Dios*).⁵⁶ Clearly, at this point, the Franciscans did not fully understand Chinese customs and realities, nor did they grasp the importance of pleasing officials for the sake of their missionary endeavors. In fact, four years prior, when the first diplomatic embassy from the Philippines led by Martín de Rada visited Fujian, the Spanish had prepared gifts for the local authorities, and they also reciprocated with gifts to the Philippines in turn. Rada's diplomatic experience should have offered invaluable insights for subsequent missionaries, yet at least two factors may have resulted in the Franciscans not adopting the strategic approach of gift-giving. First, perhaps the exchange of gifts was perceived more as a diplomatic tradition between two nations rather than a calculated religious strategy at that time. Second, there was a lack of adequate preparation by Álfaro and his companions.⁵⁷ During the same period, Ruggieri had already established good relations with the officials in Guangdong. Afterwards, when Ruggieri and Ricci went back to China and had an audience with Chen Rui (陈瑞, 1515–1583), the governor of Guangdong and Guangxi, gifts again played an essential role. As for the Franciscans, during Caballero's stay in Anhai, he had realized the necessity of presenting gifts to officials.⁵⁸ The first church he established in Shandong not only benefited from the recommendation letter by Adam Schall, but also due to the positive friendships he forged with local officials through gifts. The strategy of presenting gifts later became the most commonly used approach for the Franciscans when interacting with literati and officials. Whenever they ventured into a new area for missionary work, they would first bring gifts to visit local officials, seeking their protection. La Piñuela once noted the preferences of officials and advised Manila that there was no need to prepare expensive gifts. Instead, a few exotic trinkets not found in China would be sufficient to establish good friendships with officials.⁵⁹ He requested his superiors to send him some European

items such as eyeglasses, European-style boxes, glass, etc., hoping to satisfy the curiosity of officials and thereby win their favor.⁶⁰

After Caballero, the interactions between the Franciscans and literati continued to increase. Among the local high officials, Shang Zhixin held considerable significance. As mentioned earlier, when Ibáñez returned to China in 1672, his swift construction of a new church in Guangdong was primarily attributed to the crucial patronage of Shang Zhixin, the paramount authority in Guangdong at that time. On the other hand, la Piñuela was an expert in dealing with ordinary local officials and literati. In 1677, just one year after his arrival in China, la Piñuela successfully visited local officials in Ningde, leaving a deep impression on them.⁶¹ In 1686, la Piñuela and Bernardino Mercado (麦宁学, Mai Ningxue, 1654–1713) began their missionary work in Chaozhou (潮州), Guangdong province. On the second day after arriving at their destination, la Piñuela visited local officials with gifts. With the protection of the authorities, the Franciscan mission in Chaozhou proceeded smoothly.⁶² In 1687, la Piñuela arrived in Jiangxi where he reached the peak of interactions with local literati. Among them, the most notable was Liu Ning (刘凝, 1625–1715). Liu Ning, styled Erzhi (二至), had served as the vice-rector of the school (训导, Xundao) in Chongyi (崇义) County. He was one of the Confucian scholars who converted in the early Qing Dynasty and compiled the book *Tianxue Jijie* (天学集解, *Collected Accounts of Learning from Heaven*). While conducting missionary work in Nan'an (南安), Jiangxi, la Piñuela established a profound friendship with him, who visited Nan'an every year and discussed with la Piñuela about the Catholic doctrine. Liu Ning wrote prefaces for la Piñuela's pharmacological work *Bencao Bu*, as well as his religious work *Dashe Jielüe* (大赦解略, *Brief Explanation of Indulgences*), and he proofread his *Moxiang Shengong*. Meanwhile, the friar often engaged in intellectual exchanges with other knowledgeable figures.⁶³ For example, literati of Nanfeng (南丰), Jiangxi, namely Zhao Shiyuan (赵师瑗, ?-?), Zhao Xilong (赵希隆, ?-?), Li Rining (李日宁, ?-?), Li Changzuo (李长祚, ?-?), and Gan Zuolin (甘作霖, ?-?), collectively participated in the proofreading of *Moxiang Shengong*. Another literatus, Wu Su (吴宿, ?-?), provided annotations for the book. It can be observed that the network of literati contacts that la Piñuela constructed during his time in Nan'an was further expanded compared to the one he built during his missionary period in Fujian. Their prestige and social status could exert greater influence, attracting more people to convert to Catholicism.⁶⁴

Eventually, Franciscans who engaged in rural missionary work placed great importance on collaboration with rural literati and gentry. This cooperation not only facilitated the advancement of the mission but, at crucial times, could even save their lives. The most typical example is the Makeng Incident of 1676. When San Pascual and la Piñuela evangelized in Makeng (玛坑), Fujian, a tiger broke into that town and caused panic among the population. A boy accused la Piñuela of having performed an eccentric ritual in front of the town's temple. The villagers then believed that the malicious sect spread by the two foreigners had driven out the god's spirit from the temple, depriving the people of asylum and incurring the arrival of the tiger. On that night, the angry villagers nearly killed the Franciscans. Later, these two survived with the help of gentry, who San Pascual had visited upon arriving at the village.⁶⁵

Clearly, the Spanish Franciscans, who were conventionally thought to adhere to grassroots approach, actually advanced the establishment of a multi-layered, multi-dimensional complex network of interpersonal relationships with Chinese literati. At the same time, it should be noted that, unlike the Jesuits who aimed to integrate into the Confucian literati class and cultivate Catholic converts among officials, the Franciscans, while not averse to baptizing literati, primarily sought secular connections with officials. Their main objective was to leverage secular authority to protect their mission. A prime example is Caballero, who praised the common people of China while expressing a sense of disdain towards the literati class:

“The ambition of their pretensions and sensuality, as well as greed, hinder the path to their salvation. There are some Christians among these people in the kingdom, but they are few in number and lack fervor in caring for their salvation.

[...] Although many have heard us, argued, and debated with us about the truth and falsehood of doctrines, hearing that of the Lord and seeing theirs refuted [...] without accepting it or abandoning their doctrines or their superstitions, they leave and do not return."⁶⁶

In fact, many Franciscans, whether they experienced the upheavals of the Ming–Qing transition (like Caballero) or encountered the chaos in the Rebellion of the Three Feudatories (三藩之乱, sanfan zhiluan) (like Ibáñez, San Pascual, la Piñuela, etc.), were keenly aware that despite being effective from time to time, political patronage was also fickle and fragile. Once the political situation changed or officials altered their stance towards Catholicism, the mission often fell into crisis. Therefore, Franciscans did not fixate on maintaining relationships with any specific political power; instead, they adapted to the circumstances, leveraging various forces to protect the mission. For example, a few years after entering Guangzhou, Ibáñez realized that he had better keep a proper distance from Shang Zhixin (one of the leaders of the mentioned rebellion) in case he would be defeated by the Qing Dynasty and the Franciscans would become involved.⁶⁷ When the Qing army entered Guangzhou, the friars quickly established contact with this new power, thus avoiding the likely confiscation of churches.⁶⁸ On the other hand, Franciscans also focused on developing the grassroot Catholics, making adjustments in their attitudes towards rituals to integrate into the cultural fabric of China and gain more believers with firm conviction. This enabled them to have sufficient popular support when they were under political pressure. The fact that Franciscans often sought refuge in the homes of believers when facing persecution or escaping from bandits illustrates this point well.

The second type of interaction was with Jesuit officials. Since Matteo Ricci and Diego de Pantoja (庞迪我, Pang Diwo, 1571–1618) successfully entered the Forbidden City, Jesuits had become a consistent presence in the imperial court. Ricci served Emperor Wanli (万历, reign: 1573–1620) and received some financial support but did not hold formal positions in the government. During the era of Schall and Ferdinand Verbiest (南怀仁, Nan Huairen, 1623–1688), Jesuits began working in the Imperial Astronomical Bureau (钦天监, Qintianjian), officially becoming central government officials. As time passed, they gradually gained the trust of Emperor Kangxi. In this sense, these Jesuits had a dual identity: foreign religious missionaries and Chinese secular court officials. Although the Franciscans held contrasting views with the Jesuits regarding their missionary strategies in some respects, they placed great importance on maintaining good relations with Jesuits in the imperial court. Even someone like Caballero, who had significant disagreements with the Jesuits on the Chinese rites, maintained a close relationship with Schall. It is safe to conclude that without Schall's advice and recommendation letter, Caballero could not have gone to Shandong for missionary work. Additionally, without his ongoing financial support, Caballero would have struggled to establish a long-term presence in Shandong. Subsequently, when Franciscans faced persecution, seeking support from Jesuits in the court also became one of their common strategies.

The most notable example is the Nan'an Prefecture persecution. In 1690, while preaching in Nan'an, la Piñuela faced persecution from local authorities. On 7th June, heavy rain caused a section of the earthen walls from the church roof to fall, damaging a wall of a local temple. The next day, some residents hostile to Catholicism came to the church, claiming compensation for the alleged destruction of the temple, but la Piñuela refused their demands. Then, local authorities intervened, attempting to exploit the situation and deliberately exaggerating the incident. They accused the friar of indecent acts, such as undressing female followers in the church,⁶⁹ with the intention of driving the foreigner out of Nan'an. Moreover, they planned to confiscate the church and convert it into a Confucian academy to teach Confucian doctrine.⁷⁰ La Piñuela's appeals were in vain, and he had no choice but to seek assistance from Jesuits.

He first went to Ganzhou (赣州), seeking assistance from Adrien Greslon (聂仲迁, Nie Zhongqian, 1618–1697). However, Greslon informed him that he had limited personal connections with local officials in Ganzhou and could not request their involvement in the

Nan'an affair. Despite this, he still wrote a letter to the Nan'an prefect in his own name to seek mediation.⁷¹ At the same time, la Piñuela also wrote letters to ask for help from Tomás Pereira (徐日昇, Xu Risheng, 1645–1708), a Jesuit official in court. With the involvement of Jesuits Greslon and Pereira, the situation took a significant turn, and the authorities dropped the lawsuit against la Piñuela, allowing him to continue his mission.

In such a minor persecution case, the hierarchical nature of the ancient Chinese bureaucratic system is evident: the higher-ups planned the persecution, and the lower-level officials were powerless to intervene. On one hand, the main figures of Nan'an, the prefect and sub-prefect, coordinated with each other and played a decisive role in the course of the entire event. The prefect, utilizing his authority, tacitly permitted and supported the punitive actions against la Piñuela, while the sub-prefect led subordinates and personally conducted the investigation.⁷² On the other hand, the governor of Dayu (大庾) County, who had a good relationship with la Piñuela, attempted several times to mediate on his behalf. Not only did he explain that Catholicism was actually Nestorianism (景教, Jingjiao) (which had already been introduced to China during the Tang Dynasty), he also emphasized in front of the investigating team that during his time in Beijing, he had personally witnessed the tablet of Jingtian given by Emperor Kangxi to the missionaries, which he used as evidence to affirm the legitimacy of Catholicism.⁷³ Despite his efforts, in a persecution case led by the authorities of Nan'an Prefecture (senior officials), the governor of Dayu County (a subordinate official) was destined to be powerless in such a highly hierarchical system.

Interestingly, it was precisely this strict hierarchical bureaucratic system in ancient China that came to the rescue of la Piñuela at such a critical moment. The letters from Pereira seemed to play a decisive role in determining la Piñuela's fate. The incident occurred in 1690, and coincidentally, in the previous year (1689), China and Russia formally signed the Treaty of Nerchinsk (尼布楚条约, Nibuchu Tiaoyue), which resolved long-standing border disputes. During the negotiations, Pereira and Jean-François Gerbillon (张诚, Zhang Cheng, 1654–1707), who served as translators and advisors, were credited for their contributions. This pleased Kangxi greatly, and his appreciation for the missionaries reached unprecedented height, even to some extent contributing to the formal issuance of the Edict of Toleration. Therefore, the intervention of Pereira transformed the conflict between Catholicism and Confucianism in Nan'an into a secular game between lower-ranking and higher-ranking officials, as well as between local and central authorities.

During this process, the attitudes of Nan'an officials towards Jesuits also showed significant distinctions due to bureaucratic hierarchy. Greslon had evangelized in Jiangxi for many years. After the Rebellion of the Three Feudatories, the Qing army "showed the Father a thousand marks of kindness, returned his residence, placed guards to protect him, and gave the order to spare all the churches in the province."⁷⁴ However, it had been many years since then, and Greslon was not at the court, nor did he hold any secular position. In this sense, he occupied a lower rank in the social power structure. His correspondence had limited influence on the officials in Nan'an, who offered only verbal assurances for la Piñuela to return to the church. The fact that the sub-prefect responded reluctantly and without any show of affection might reveal more about the situation,⁷⁵ indicating that Greslon held little authority in his eyes. The real turning point came with Pereira's intercession. Pereira, as a central government official, occupied a higher position in the bureaucratic hierarchy. After receiving Pereira's letter, the sub-prefect of Nan'an exhibited a noticeable change in attitude:

"I received your letters for me and for these mandarins together. I forwarded to these gentlemen the ones that belonged to them, and they all had a very good effect. Through them, they have honored me. The sub-prefect, who previously opposed, now treats me familiarly [...]"⁷⁶

The inconsistency in attitude reflected the operation of the Chinese bureaucratic hierarchy. Local officials in Nan'an did not want to risk offending the emperor's favorite bureaucrat by continuing to oppose la Piñuela. Apparently, some Jesuits not only provided economic assistance to the Franciscans but also, relying on their secular identity as "Chi-

nese central officials”, occasionally used their political influence to help the Franciscans in distress. In this sense, the Jesuits became a unique group of literati who kept contact and interaction with the Franciscans and played a special role in ensuring the safety of the Franciscan mission.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that there was another mode of interaction which is easy to overlook: direct involvement in official positions. This is, in fact, an extension of the missionary strategy of presenting the “Western Confucian” image. Beyond their religious identity, missionaries strived to position themselves as Chinese officials, securing a place for themselves within the power structure in China. This enabled them to rely on their own secular influence when they needed to provide protection for the mission. Therefore, this mode of interaction was also essentially power-based, occurring not between missionaries and other Chinese literati but within a missionary himself, who, according to the external context, achieved internal interaction between the distinctive features of his religious identity and the secular Chinese literati in order to adapt to the secular politics and social reality of China.

In this regard, the Jesuits undoubtedly played a central role. For example, Jesuits like Adam Schall and Verbiest served in the imperial court. Even though, currently, there is no official record showing that Spanish Franciscans in China held official positions, it is certain that they once disguised as lower-rank Chinese officials during chaotic escapes and used the fake identity to protect their personal safety.

At the end of 1676, San Pascual and la Piñuela evangelized in rural areas of Ningde. At that time, China was engulfed in an ongoing eight-year conflict known as the Rebellion of the Three Feudatories. In 1676, forces of the Qing Dynasty arrived in Fujian, and the rebel army led by Geng Jingzhong (耿精忠, 1644–1682) suffered successive defeats. In this chaotic situation, the two Franciscans chose not to become martyrs but decided to temporarily leave Ningde and hide in safer towns to avoid the dangers threatening their personal safety and the mission. However, during that time, they not only faced the possibility of encountering the Qing army but were also frequently harassed by bandits and the army of Geng Jingzhong. Figuring out how to safely leave Ningde and reach their destination became a conundrum for the two missionaries. In the end, San Pascual made a risky decision: they concealed their religious identity and disguised themselves as officials by donning the hats of “chai-kuon” (差官, officials dispatched). This decision reflected the keen observations of San Pascual regarding the social dynamics in China at that time; the chaos caused by the rebellion and the panic triggered by the news of the imminent arrival of the Qing army made people so preoccupied with self-preservation that they no longer cared about the behavior of the two foreigners. Indeed, the disguise as officials proved crucial for their escape, for San Pascual encountered a squad of fifty soldiers soon after he left the church:

“[...] when they saw the attire, they thought I was chai-kuon, and thus they did not dare to carry out their intentions. I was passing on one side of the road, and they on the other. I heard some say, ‘He is chai-kuon.’ Others said, ‘He seems not, as he does not carry a katana.’ In the end, with their doubts [...] we moved away, [...]”⁷⁷

Despite the soldiers being suspicious of this strange chai-kuon, they did not dare to act hastily, and the missionary managed to escape (Ye 2022, pp. 417–19).

Certainly, given that Franciscan friars rarely held official positions, assessing the relationship between this type of interaction and the Franciscan mission requires further exploration with more historical records and documents.

5. Conclusions

Shortly after their arrival in the Philippines, the Spaniards relocated their main base from Cebu to Manila to establish better economic, cultural, and various other connections with China.

As early as the 1570s, before Michele Ruggieri and Matteo Ricci had arrived in Macao, the Spanish Augustinians had already begun preparations to enter China. Just four years after the failed mission led by Martín de Rada, the Franciscans under the leadership of Pedro de Álfaro arrived in Guangdong. Even though the early groups of Franciscans faced challenges due to inadequate preparation and a lack of understanding of Chinese culture, preventing them from establishing a firm foothold in China, and Caballero indeed held a clear opposition to Chinese rites, one cannot assume that the Franciscans rejected Chinese culture and Matteo Ricci's methods, thoroughly and persistently adhering to a lower-class approach, because such an assumption overlooks their efforts to adapt to Chinese society.

In reality, as we have analyzed, during the early 17th century, it seems that Escalona had already initiated a process of "changing dress" to some extent while he was in Guangxi. Later, influenced by missionaries from other orders (most likely the Jesuits), Caballero also began wearing Chinese-style clothing. This practice became prevalent among the Franciscans after Ibáñez's return to China in 1672, and their "Western Confucian" image was thus firmly established. Perhaps, as Cummins pointed out, these "Spanish Confucians" initially resisted Confucian culture and Chinese rites, probably due to their stance against syncretic tendencies in Chinese culture. However, if we extend our observation to the entire 17th century and even the early 18th century, we discover a notable diversity and fluidity in the Franciscan stance. Although Caballero resisted Chinese rites throughout his life and his attitude towards Confucian thoughts went through three distinctive stages, the Franciscan mission in China entered a new chapter after Ibáñez led the new Franciscans back to China in 1672; they embraced practices such as changing dress, adopting Chinese names, and engaging in evangelization through academic discussions, accelerating their adaptation to Chinese culture on various fronts. Friars like San Pascual, la Piñuela, and Miguel Fernández gradually adopted a more tolerant attitude towards Chinese rites. Despite some differences of opinion among the Franciscans, under strong political intervention from the central government, they ultimately decided to proclaim adherence to Ricci's rules and to receive the imperial certificate in order to continue their mission.

This seemingly forced and passive adaptation, however, also exhibits proactive endogenous dynamics within the Franciscan order in certain respects. The supposed "accommodation" actually encompassed two parallel dynamic transformation processes. On one hand, faced with strong political, social, and cultural pressures in China, they were left with only two choices: to adapt or to leave China. For the survival of the mission, the Franciscans had to adopt a series of accommodation strategies. On the other hand, these tactical adjustments by the Franciscans were also motivated by their own internal dynamics. As analyzed earlier, with their deepening understanding of the Chinese language, social realities, and culture, they gradually realized that the early method of street preaching was not advisable, and instead engaged in more rational discussions with literati. They also recognized that some understandings of Chinese rituals might be inaccurate or overly radical, not only making it difficult to be accepted by Chinese literati but also contradicting traditional perceptions (like filial piety) of the common people. Therefore, they gradually adjusted their views on rituals. From this perspective, it is more accurate to say that they found a subtle balance point between Chinese culture and pure faith, meeting the needs of all parties involved, rather than to conclude that they sacrificed their original emphasis on purity of faith.

As for their relationship with Chinese literati, the Franciscans exhibit characteristics distinct from the Jesuits. The Jesuits sought alignment with Chinese literati regarding Confucian thought and Chinese rituals, striving to convert them to Catholicism. In contrast, the Franciscans did not insist on ideological uniformity. They placed greater emphasis on friendly secular interactions with literati, aiming to leverage their authority and influence to support missionary activities. Therefore, their engagement with literati can be considered power-based. Unlike their cautious approach to Confucian culture and Chinese rites, Caballero and later Franciscans demonstrated great flexibility concerning Chinese grassroots life and bureaucratic culture. Whether it was through medical practices to attract the

lower classes to Catholicism or through gift-giving strategies to please local officials, they actively implemented these practices.

Whether with the highest secular political authority of the central government, Emperor Kangxi, or that of the highest local officials, and whether with a governor at the county level or the rural literati and the gentry in towns and villages, the Franciscans were adept at employing appropriate means to establish friendly connections so as to facilitate and safeguard their mission. Meanwhile, as a distinct group of literati, the Jesuits serving in the imperial court were also subjects of interaction for the Franciscans. These Jesuits, who held relatively strong material resources and provided assistance to the economically challenged Franciscans, could utilize their political influence in the central court to protect the Franciscans that faced persecution.

In summary, the Spanish Franciscans not only evangelized among the lower classes but also interacted frequently with literati and officials. Their contact with Chinese society was comprehensive and multi-dimensional, ensuring the development of the Franciscan mission and laying the foundation for their decision to adhere to Matteo Ricci's strategies and to continue their mission in China.

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Notes

- ¹ On 27 August 1684, the Italian Franciscan Bernardino della Chiesa (伊大任, Yi Daren, 1644–1721), the Bishop of Argolis, arrived in Guangdong (广东) with two companions: Giovanni Francesco Nicolai da Leonissa (余宜阁, Yu Yige, 1656–1737) and Basilio Brollo da Gemona (叶尊孝, Ye Zunxiao, 1648–1704). Afterward, Italian Franciscans gradually joined the Chinese mission. This paper will only discuss the Spanish Franciscans dispatched by the crown of Spain, and will not delve into the Italian Franciscans sent by the Congregatio de Propaganda Fide. The timeframe of this paper spans from the first attempt of the Franciscans to enter China in 1579 under Pedro de Álfaro (1525–1580)'s leadership, until the end of the Kangxi reign (1661–1722).
- ² In his paper discussing the Franciscans from the Czech lands in China, Vladimír Liščák provided a brief overview of the 17th Century missionary history of the Franciscan Order in China (Liščák 2014, pp. 529–41).
- ³ For a review of early research, see: (Tang 2006, pp. 17–20).
- ⁴ Original text: “Y luego hasta los vestidos que truximos no fueron acá de provecho, sino que ha sido necesario hacer otros.” From: P. Fr. Petrus de la Piñuela: Epistola ad Michaellem A S. Maria, 21. Oct. 1676.” (Mensaert et al. 1965, p. 1137).
- ⁵ Original text: “Lo que hazian era mirarnos y reirse, y algunos se^m quedavan abobadosⁿ de ver gente de tan extraño y nuevo traje.” From: “Augustinus de Tordesillas: Relacion del viage que hizimos em China” (Van Den Wyngaert 1933, p. 117).
- ⁶ At that time, there were eight friars, including both Franciscans and Dominicans, but Escalona did not explicitly identify which friar he was.
- ⁷ Original text: “un religioso en esta ocasion, [...] se escapo de sus manos, [...] de monte en monte paso la pascua, sin comer, ni beber en todos aquellos dias, mas sin hambre, ni sed, ni casi sentimiento de frio, estando casi con solo el habito, antes sentía en su alma un jubilo y alegria tal, cual jamas habia experimentado; [...] En fin, anduvimos descalzos casi toda aquella noche por caminos bien fragosos y nos vinimos a juntar con los demas religiosos, que, asi que le vieron, recibieron gran contento; [...] Abrigaronle, enjugaronle el habito, consolaronse unos con otros, y confortados en el Señor, [...]” From: “Franciscus a Iesu de Escalona: Relación del viaje al reino de la gran China” (Van Den Wyngaert 1933, p. 261).
- ⁸ Original text: “Y un Chino, que era de los mas graves letrados de aquella ciudad, me dijo: «Maestro, yo he oido y leido tu doctrina, y estoy muy edificado y [...] pero dime ¿no tienes otras sandalias y vestido de seda mejor que ese que traes?» Yo le dije que no reparase en eso, que el vestido que yo traia era bastante, pues Jesucristo nuestro bien y sus apóstoles anduvieron descalzos y pobres predicando a los hombres, y que el traer los vestidos de cada nacion es a mas no poder, por conformarnos en algo con los naturales para mejor ganarlos para Dios.” From: “Franciscus a Iesu de Escalona: Relación del viaje al reino de la gran China” (Van Den Wyngaert 1933, p. 296).

- 9 “P. Fr. Bonaventura Ibañez: Relatio Itineris in Sinas, Octobri 1649.” (Mensaert et al. 1965, p. 33).
- 10 Original text: “se visten de saco andan descalzos, ceñidos con una sogá y no toman plata.” From: “Antonius A S. Maria Caballero: Relatio VI–15 Oct. 1649.” (Van Den Wyngaert 1933, p. 367).
- 11 “Antonius A S. Maria Caballero: Epistola ad P. Provinciale, 3 Ian. 1653.” (Van Den Wyngaert 1933, p. 424).
- 12 Original text: “Puestos en la Corea, aunque sea con el trabajo de nuestras manos, nos sustentaremos, que alla no sera necesario vestir mas vestido que nuestros habitos, lo cual no puede hacerse aqui, no por otro inconveniente que por vestir los demas ministros evangelicos al modo chino, y si nosotros variásemos, habia de causar gran perturbacion en sus animos, y el vestir a este modo trae muchos impedimentos consigo para no poder evangelizar expeditamente y obliga a muchos mas gastos que se escusarían, si pudiéramos vestir al modo religioso”. From: “Antonius A S. Maria Caballero: Epistola ad P. Provinciale, 15 Dec. 1653.” (Van Den Wyngaert 1933, p. 431).
- 13 “Antonius A S. Maria Caballero: Epistola ad Episcopum Antonium a S. Gregorio, 13 Ian. 1660.” (Van Den Wyngaert 1933, p. 498).
- 14 During the process of evading pursuit by the authorities, the Franciscans lost their clothes, but later, with the assistance of officials, they were able to recover them. In a relation, Tarín mentioned: “Our brother Commissioner remained very happy; When all of us reflected on the manner of the event, (we observed) the special providence of the Lord: the clothes of the mission being spared (from harm), [...]” Original text: “quedando nuestro hermano Comissario mui alegre; reparando todos nosotros en el modo del sucezo, la especial prouidencia del Señor, sacandose libre la ropa de la mission, [...]” From: “Historia y Relación Escrita por el P. Fr. Jaime Tarín, 1689.” (Alcobendas 1933a, p. 279).
- 15 “Carta al P. Provincial, Fr. Juan de Albalate, 10 de diciembre de 1673.” (Alcobendas 1933a, p. 51).
- 16 Original text: “mande para all dos religiosos; sin tener necesidad de lleuar socorro alguno para sustentarse, ni mudar de habito [...] Aquella misión es propia para ministros Menores, que no tienen necesidad de andar con dinero ni esconder su habito, solo que el Governador haga de ellos mención al Rey de Tunquin para no ser desterrados.” From: “Carta al Provincial, Fr. Juan de Albalate, 27 de marzo de 1674.” (Alcobendas 1933a, p. 58).
- 17 “P. Fr. Petrus de la Piñuela: Epistola ad Michaellem A S. Maria, 21. Oct. 1676.” (Mensaert et al. 1965, p. 1137).
- 18 Original text: “si tubieramos de esse paño entrefino de la Nueva España, color amusgo, es mui bueno para el vestido largo y para otro corto que se viste ensima, que en nosotros, por onestidad, siempre es negro; de raja o del mismo paño sera bueno en esto, y honrrado, que como este no es genero que ellos tienen en su reino, lo estiman.” From: Augustinus A S. Paschali: Epistola ad Provinciale, 20 Aug. 1677.” (Van Den Wyngaert 1936, p. 461).
- 19 “Augustinus A S. Paschali: Epistola ad Provinciale, 18. Mart. 1679.” (Van Den Wyngaert 1936, p. 492).
- 20 “Antonius A S. Maria Caballero: Epistola ad P. Provinciale, nov. ^a 1653.” (Van Den Wyngaert 1933, p. 427).
- 21 “Antonius A S. Maria Caballero: Epistola ad P. Provinciale, nov. ^a 1653.” (Van Den Wyngaert 1933, p. 428).
- 22 See note 20 above.
- 23 Mungello believed that *Zhengxue Liushi* should be attributed to Shang Huqing (Mungello 2001, p. 36).
- 24 Due to complicated reasons, eventually, Caballero didn’t travel to Europe and returned to mainland China in 1649.
- 25 “Antonius A S. Maria Caballero: Epistola ad P. Provinciale, 3 Ian. 1653.” (Van Den Wyngaert 1933, p. 423).
- 26 The *Declaratio* is currently preserved in the Propaganda Fide Historical Archives (APF, Archivio Storico di Propaganda Fide). see: APF, Scritture riferite nei Congressi (SC), Indie Orientali e Cina 1, 1623–1674, fols.198r–214r.
- 27 APF, SC, Indie Orientali e Cina 1, 1623–1674, fols.145r–169v.
- 28 The Latin version translated by Caballero is appended to the original Portuguese manuscript by Longobardo. See: APF, SC, Indie Orientali e Cina 1, 1623–1674, fols. 170r–197v.
- 29 The *Epilogus* is appended to the *Declaratio*. See: APF, SC, Indie Orientali e Cina 1, 1623–1674, fols. 214v–218v.
- 30 APF, SC, Indie Orientali e Cina 1, 1623–1674, fols. 269r–270v.
- 31 Zhang Kai and Luo Ying did not mention Caballero’s ultimate departure from Confucianism, while Canaris provided a detailed analysis. See: (Zhang 2017, pp. 211–344; Luo 2023, pp. 60–66; Canaris 2023, pp. 54–84).
- 32 “Augustinus A S. Paschali: Epistola ad Provinciale, 29 Iulii 1675.” (Van Den Wyngaert 1936, pp. 422–23).
- 33 For basic information about the life and works of la Piñuela, see: (Rosso 1948, pp. 250–74).
- 34 For research regarding *Moxiang Shengong*, see: (Meynard 2020, pp. 251–73).
- 35 Original text: “饶有大儒之丰裁”. From La Piñuela’s 石铎录 *Yongzan Dingheng* 永暂定衡 [Evaluation of Eternity and Temporality]. Preface written by Han Jun. fol. 2r.
- 36 For further information on the strategy of evangelization through academic discussions of the Franciscans, see: (Ye 2021b, pp. 76–78).
- 37 “P. Fr. Augustinus A S. Paschale: Liber Baptizatorum Ecclesiae de Ningteh A. 1675.” (Mensaert et al. 1965, p. 144).
- 38 Original text: “mostrar el afecto que tuvieron al defuncto y que le ofrecen las mismas cosas que si viviera, sin creer que su alma viene ni pueda venir, como ni pueda comer estas cosas.” From: “P. Fr. Augustinus A S. Paschale: Normae Pastorales Statutae, Anno 1683.” (Mensaert et al. 1965, p. 189).

- 39 “P. Fr. Augustinus A S. Paschale: Normae Pastorales Statutae, Anno 1683.” (Mensaert et al. 1965, p. 199).
- 40 “P. Fr. Augustinus A S. Paschale: Normae Pastorales Statutae, Anno 1683.” (Mensaert et al. 1965, p. 200).
- 41 Original text: “El ministro evangélico, que llegando a algún lugar donde está introducida la opinión de la Compañía, se debe conformar con ella.” From: “P. Fr. Augustinus A S. Paschale: Epistola ad D. de Lionne, 13 Febr. 1694.” (Mensaert et al. 1965, p. 262).
- 42 “Bonaventura Ibañez: Epistola ad P. Michaellem A S. Maria, 24 Mart. 1680.” (Van Den Wyngaert 1936, p. 220).
- 43 “Bonaventura Ibañez: Epistola ad P. Michaellem A S. Maria, 24 Mart. 1680.” (Van Den Wyngaert 1936, p. 225).
- 44 For more information about the Franciscans’ personalities and their interpersonal relationships, see: (Mungello 2001, pp. 60–62, 77–79).
- 45 “P. Fr. Iacobus Tarín: Epistola ad Mich. Sánchez, 4 Ian. 1707.” (Mensaert et al. 1965, p. 615).
- 46 “Antonius A S. Maria Caballero: Epistola ad P. Provincialem, 24 Ian 1652.” (Van Den Wyngaert 1933, p. 413).
- 47 Original text: “Señor: Mejor parece sera asentar el comercio de contrato y amistad con los Tataros de Canton, digo con los Chinos leales al nuevo Rey tataro, o sea en Canton, o sea en otros puertos que hay en las mares fronteras del Japon en este reino, cercanos a la ciudades de Nanquin, Hancheu y Suche, que es donde esta el golpe de las sedas etc. El nuevo Rey tataro, aunque mancebo e infiel, pero es muy mirado en las cosas del gobierno y muy recto, es benigno y justamente justiciero. Nuestro Señor le convierta para si, y a V.S. le guarde muchos años para bien y aumento de esas islas y republica.” From: “Antonius A S. Maria Caballero: Epistola ad gubernatorem generalem Philippinarum, 12 Ian 1660.” (Van Den Wyngaert 1933, p. 496).
- 48 “Augustinus A S. Paschali: Epistola ad Provincialem, 10 Dec. 1687.” (Van Den Wyngaert 1936, p. 623).
- 49 “P. Fr. Ioseph de Osca: Epistola ad Thomam Pereira, 17 Ianuarii 1689.” (Mensaert 1975, pp. 157–58).
- 50 “P. Fr. Ioseph de Osca: Epistola ad Thomam Pereira, 17 Ianuarii 1689.” (Mensaert 1975, p. 159).
- 51 “P. Fr. Iacobus Tarín: Epistola ad Dom. Parrenin, 29 Maii 1709.” (Mensaert et al. 1965, p. 655).
- 52 Cui Weixiao has analyzed how the Franciscans acquired their certificate. See: (Cui 2006, pp. 322–48).
- 53 According to Caballero, they did not succeed in converting any Chinese to Catholicism during their one-year stay in Anhui. As a result, he conceived the idea of going to Korea to establish a new mission. See: “Antonius A S. Maria Caballero: Relacion de algunas cosas sucedidas a los Padres de la Serafica Religion de la Gran China” (Van Den Wyngaert 1933, p. 453).
- 54 “Antonius A S. Maria Caballero: Relatio 15 Oct. 1649.” (Van Den Wyngaert 1933, p. 378).
- 55 Original text: “y mando el virey que entrasse uno solo para enseñar lo que llevavamos. Y assi miro pieza por pieza las imagenes y libros y el ara que era lo que el desseaba mas ver; y segun se detenia en mirar todas aquellas imagenes dava a entender holgarse de vellas, y de quando en quando cabeceaba.” From: “Augustinus de Tordesillas: Relacion del Viaje.” (Van Den Wyngaert 1933, pp. 139–40).
- 56 “Augustinus de Tordesillas: Relacion del Viaje.” (Van Den Wyngaert 1933, p. 141). Later, Álfaro was forced to present a religious image of Magdalene to the Captain General, hoping to dispel his desire for the altar stone. However, the stone was eventually forcibly taken by the General.
- 57 They clandestinely traveled to China without obtaining approval from the Philippine authorities. See: “Augustinus de Tordesillas: Relacion del Viaje.” (Van Den Wyngaert 1933, pp. 105–7). Ubaldo Iaccarino proposed that the expedition led by Álfaro had diplomatic purposes from the beginning and appeared to have received permission and support from Francisco de Sande, the governor of the Philippines at the time (Iaccarino 2022, pp. 252–54). However, this is inconsistent with the descriptions provided by the friars. Thus, we shall maintain a cautious perspective on this matter until further research is conducted.
- 58 “Antonius A S. Maria Caballero: Epistola ad P. Provincialem, 1650.” (Van Den Wyngaert 1933, p. 407).
- 59 “P. Fr. Petrus de la Piñuela: Epistola ad P. Laurentium, 20 Dec. 1678.” (Mensaert et al. 1965, p. 1147).
- 60 “Petrus de la Piñuela: Epistola ad Provincialem, 1 Ian. 1685.” (Van Den Wyngaert 1942, p. 294).
- 61 “Petrus de la Piñuela: Epistola ad Provincialem. 1. Nov. 1677.” (Van Den Wyngaert 1942, p. 267).
- 62 For more information about the Chaozhou mission, see: (Ye 2021a, pp. 163–207).
- 63 “P. Fr. Petrus de la Piñuela: Epistola ad Io. Basset, 28 Oct. 1693.” (Mensaert et al. 1965, p. 1196).
- 64 La Piñuela pointed out in the annual report of 1693 that a total of 12 children and 123 adults were baptized that year. See: “Petrus de la Piñuela: Relatio Annualis, 31 Dec. 1693.” (Van Den Wyngaert 1942, p. 315) Because we lack complete archival records, apart from the detailed numbers from 1693, we currently cannot determine the specific baptism figures achieved by la Piñuela in other years. However, according to his own account, the number of baptisms exceeded 1000 people in six years. See: “Petrus de la Piñuela: Relatio Annualis, 31 Dec. 1693.” (Van Den Wyngaert 1942, p. 316). This figure is remarkable, especially when compared to la Piñuela’s baptismal numbers during his stay in Fujian, which totaled 423 people in the eight years from 1676 to 1684. See: “Petrus de la Piñuela: Relatio sui Ministerii, 30 Dec. 1684.” (Van Den Wyngaert 1942, p. 293).
- 65 Regarding the detailed discussion about this incident, see: (Ye 2022, pp. 403–29).
- 66 Original text: “La ambicion de sus pretensiones y la sensualidad y codicia les impide el camino de su salvacion. Algunos cristianos hay de esta gente en el reino, pero son los menos en numero y en fervor de cuidar de su salvación, [...] si bien muchos nos han oido, altercado y disputado con nosotros sobre la verdad y falsedad de doctrinas, oyendo la del Señor y viendo confutada

la suya [...] sin recibirla ni dejar la suya ni sus supersticiones, se van y no vuelven. " From: "Antonius A S. Maria Caballero: Epistola ad P. Provinciale, 7 Mart. 1659." (Van Den Wyngaert 1933, p. 469).

67 "Bonaventura Ibañez: Autobiographia, 31 Mart. 1690." (Van Den Wyngaert 1936, p. 327).

68 "Bonaventura Ibañez: Epistola ad P. Laurentium A Plagis, 4 Mart. 1681." (Van Den Wyngaert 1936, p. 233).

69 "P. Fr. Petrus de la Piñuela: Epistola ad. Thomam Pereira, 28 Iunii 1690." (Mensaert et al. 1965, p. 1188).

70 "P. Fr. Petrus de la Piñuela: Epistola ad. Thomam Pereira, 28 Iunii 1690." (Mensaert et al. 1965, p. 1187).

71 "P. Fr. Petrus de la Piñuela: Epistola ad. Thomam Pereira, 28 Iunii 1690." (Mensaert et al. 1965, pp. 1190–91).

72 See note 70 above.

73 "P. Fr. Petrus de la Piñuela: Epistola ad. Thomam Pereira, 28 Iunii 1690." (Mensaert et al. 1965, pp. 1188–90).

74 Original text: "Toutefois le général tartare donna au Père mille marques de bonté, lui fit rendre sa demeure, mit des gardes pour la protéger, et donna l'ordre d'épargner toutes les églises de la province." (Pfister 1932, p. 297).

75 "P. Fr. Petrus de la Piñuela: Epistola ad. Thomam Pereira, 7 Iulii 1690." (Mensaert et al. 1965, p. 1192).

76 Original text: "Las (cartas) de V. P. juntamente para mi y para estos mandarines recibí. A estos señores remití las que les pertenecían y todas tuvieron muy bien efecto. Pues mediante ellas me han honrado; y el el-fu que era antes el contrario, corre hoy con familiaridad [...]." From: "P. Fr. Petrus de la Piñuela: Epistola ad. Thomam Pereira, 28 Ian. 1691." (Mensaert et al. 1965, p. 1193).

77 Original text: "ellos como vieron el traje, juzgaron ser chai-kuon, y asi no se atrevieron a hacer de las suias, con que yo yva pasando por un lado del camino y ellos, [...], por otro. Oiales decir a unos: «Este es chai-kuon». Otros decian: «paresse que no es, que no lleba catana». En fin, ellos con sus dudas [...] nos apartamos, [...]" From: "Augustinus A S. Paschali: Epistola ad Provinciale, 20. Aug. 1677." (Van Den Wyngaert 1936, p. 449).

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