

Rui Manuel Loureiro

“The Manchu conquest of China seen through Iberian accounts”

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*Nueva España: puerta americana al Pacífico asiático siglos XVI-XVIII*

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## THE MANCHU CONQUEST OF CHINA SEEN THROUGH IBERIAN ACCOUNTS

RUI MANUEL LOUREIRO

A mighty political typhoon swept across the Chinese empire in the middle decades of the seventeenth century. The Ming dynasty, which seen from Europe had appeared so powerful, was overthrown by the Manchu after a period of military turmoil that set China ablaze. Detailed accounts of this momentous period of dynastic change in early modern Chinese history can be found in such seminal scholarly works as Lynn Struve's *The Southern Ming* (1984) or Frederic Wakeman's *The Great Enterprise* (1985).<sup>1</sup> But a fact seldom underlined is that Iberian accounts were instrumental in the diffusion of information about the so-called Ming-Qing cataclysm among the European cultivated public. Thus the purpose of this text, which aims at drawing the reader's attention to a group of four Iberian works, written in the course of the seventeenth century, and which brought news of the Manchu conquest to Europe at large. In fact, accounts written by Iberian authors such as Álvaro Semedo, Juan Palafox y Mendoza, Gabriel de Magalhães and Domingo Fernández Navarrete, which were repeatedly published and translated across Europe, were instrumental in assessing the changes that had occurred within China, and in describing its new Qing rulers, thus contributing to the shaping of Europe's image of the Middle Kingdom.<sup>2</sup> On the

<sup>1</sup> Lynn A. Struve, *The Southern Ming, 1644-1662*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1984; Frederic E. Wakeman Jr., *The Great Enterprise: The Manchu Reconstruction of Imperial Order in Seventeenth-Century China*, 2 v., Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985.

<sup>2</sup> On this subject, see Edwin J. Van Kley, "News from China: Seventeenth-Century European Notices of the Manchu Conquest", *Journal of Modern History*, v. 45, 1973, Chicago, p. 561-582.

other hand, the publication of these titles in European printing presses clearly testified to the extraordinary importance of Iberian maritime networks, that extended from Macao to Goa and to Manila, and from these Asian outposts all the way to Europe, encompassing the globe and allowing for the expedite circulation of strategic information, alongside men and commodities.<sup>3</sup>

Since the early decades of the sixteenth century, Portuguese travelers had been the main protagonists in the direct maritime contacts between Europe and China. Right after the first contacts with the Chinese mainland, the Portuguese apothecary Tomé Pires had written in Malacca the first early modern description of China, based in eye-witness reports, which he included in his *Suma Oriental* (1515), whose only complete manuscript is kept at the Bibliothèque de Assemblée nationale, in Paris. And from then on, throughout the sixteenth century, information about China was diligently collected by civil, military and religious personnel working for the Portuguese *Estado da Índia*, the designation attributed to the many Portuguese settlements that sprouted all across maritime Asia. Back in Lisbon, writers such as Fernão Lopes de Castanheda—author of the *História do descobrimento e conquista da Índia pelos portugueses* (published in Coimbra, between 1551 and 1554)—and João de Barros—author of the monumental *Décadas da Ásia* (published in Lisbon, between 1552 and 1563)—included in their chronicles detailed reports about the Chinese empire, collected by the men on the field.<sup>4</sup>

Around 1555, the Portuguese, always on the out-look for profitable ventures, through negotiations with Guangdong officials

<sup>3</sup> Regarding Iberian information networks, see Arndt Brendecke, *Imperio e información: funciones del saber en el dominio colonial español*, trans. Grisel-da Mársico, Madrid/Frankfurt, Iberoamericana/Vervuert, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> On the first contacts of the Portuguese with China, see Rui Manuel Loureiro, *Fidalgos, missionários e mandarins: Portugal e a China no século XVI*, Lisbon, Fundação Oriente, 2000. Tomé Pires' treatise was published by Armando Cortesão (ed.), *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires and the Book of Francisco Rodrigues*, 2 v., London, The Hakluyt Society, 1944. On Castanheda, see Ana Paula Avelar, *Fernão Lopes de Castanheda: historiador dos portugueses na Índia ou cronista do governo de Nuno da Cunha?*, Lisbon, Edições Cosmos, 1999; and on Barros, see Charles R. Boxer, *João de Barros, Portuguese Humanist and Historian of Asia*, New Delhi, Concept Publishing Company, 1981.



managed to establish a solid outpost on the southern edge of the Chinese empire. The settlement of Macau rapidly became a prosperous emporium, under a joint, and informal, Portuguese-Chinese administration, basing its enormous economic growth on the commercial relations with Japan.<sup>5</sup> In the wake of navigators and merchants, also came the missionaries of several Catholic denominations. And in 1556, a Portuguese Dominican named Gaspar da Cruz visited the South China coast. He was so positively impressed with what he saw, that back in Portugal he would publish in Évora his *Tratado das coisas da China* (printed in 1570), the first European monograph entirely dedicated to Chinese affairs.<sup>6</sup> This rather sympathetic account would circulate discreetly around Europe, serving as the basis for many other treatises on China, such as Bernardino de Escalante's *Discurso de la navegacion que los Portugueses hazen a los reynos y provincias del Oriente*, published in Seville some years later (1577), and which, in spite of its title, was entirely dedicated to the Middle Kingdom.<sup>7</sup>

The echo of Portuguese ventures in China and Japan—and of the huge profits that could be reaped in those far-off regions—was certain to attract the Spanish, and several expeditions were launched from Spanish America, until eventually an operational basis was established in Manila, in the 1570's. The Spanish occupation of the Philippines was planned as a stepping stone to reach China, but the goal of establishing a Spanish out-post on the Chinese coast, similar to Macau, was never materialized. Instead, China came to Manila, where a prosperous Chinese

<sup>5</sup> On the origins of Macau, see Charles R. Boxer, *The Great Ship from Amacón: Annals of Macao and the Old Japan Trade, 1555-1640*, Lisbon, Centro de Estudos Históricos Ultramarinos, 1963; Rui Manuel Loureiro, *Em busca das origens de Macau*, Macau, Museu Marítimo de Macau, 1997; and also Jorge Santos Alves, *Um porto entre dois impérios: estudos sobre Macau e as relações luso-chinesas*, Macau, Instituto Português do Oriente, 1999.

<sup>6</sup> For a recente annotated edition, see Gaspar da Cruz, *Tratado das coisas da China*, ed. Rui Manuel Loureiro, Lisbon, Biblioteca de Editores Independentes, 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Bernardino de Escalante, *Discurso de la navegacion que los Portugueses hazen a los reynos y provincias del Oriente*, ed. María Lourdes Diaz-Trechuello, Santander, Universidad de Cantabria/Ayuntamiento de Laredo, 1991.

community soon developed.<sup>8</sup> And the Iberian Union, which joined Portugal and Spain under the crown of Felipe II after 1580, contributed to the development of close relations between Macau and Manila. As a result, news and commodities from China now traveled not only westwards from Macau to Goa and to Lisbon, but also eastwards to Manila and Acapulco, and from there to Seville. Thus, it is not surprising that it was in Mexico that Juan González de Mendoza collected the materials for his celebrated *Historia del gran reyno de China*, published in Rome in 1585, with many subsequent re-editions and translations (no less than 45 editions in the space of 15 years).<sup>9</sup> Gonzalez de Mendoza's extremely apologetic account gathered the contributions of many previous authors and informers (such as João de Barros, Gaspar da Cruz and Bernardino de Escalante), and immediately became the standard European guide to Chinese affairs. China was then constructed as an *exemplary kingdom*, which could well stand the comparison with the foremost European powers, in terms of demographic numbers, military power, political organization, urban growth and economic strength.<sup>10</sup>

Paradoxically, González de Mendonza's history was becoming obsolete precisely as it was being published in Rome. Because in faraway Macau, the Society of Jesus, resorting to a novel adaptationist strategy, had successfully established its first mission in Zhaoqing, in the Guangdong province.<sup>11</sup> Based on their knowledge

<sup>8</sup> See Rafael Valladares, *Castilla y Portugal en Asia (1580-1680): declive imperial y adaptación*, Leuven, Leuven University Press, 2001; Manel Ollé, *La empresa de China: de la Armada Invencible al galeón de Manila*, Barcelona, El Acantilado, 2002; and also Juan Gil, *Los chinos en Manila, siglos XVI y XVII*, Lisbon, Centro Científico e Cultural de Macau, 2011.

<sup>9</sup> For a modern edition, see Juan González de Mendoza, *Historia del gran reino de China*, ed. Ramón Alba, Madrid, Miraguano/Polifemo, 1990.

<sup>10</sup> On González de Mendoza's work, see the analysis of Donald F. Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe: A Century of Discovery*, v. I, 2 bks., Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 742-794. About the Spanish perceptions of China, see Manel Ollé, *La invención de China: percepciones y estrategias filipinas respecto a China durante el siglo XVI*, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz Verlag, 2000.

<sup>11</sup> Regarding the Jesuit in Macau and their advance towards continental China, see Luís Filipe Barreto, *Macau: poder e saber, séculos XVI e XVII*, Lisbon, Editorial Presença, 2006.

of the Chinese language and their familiarity with Chinese written culture, and also on their contacts with Chinese people of all walks of life, but especially the literati, Jesuit missionaries such as Matteo Ricci, Duarte de Sande, Michele Ruggieri and Nicholas Trigault conveyed to Europe in their letters and reports up-to-date information about Chinese affairs. Through Jesuit literature, the knowledge of China in Europe was immensely expanded in the early decades of the seventeenth century.<sup>12</sup> Now, not only the material aspects of the Chinese world were described (such as the geography of the empire, city planning, production structures, administrative organization, social manners and customs), but also intellectual affairs (such as classical literature, the examination system, historical conceptions, religious and philosophical ideas) were also being explored and explained to European readerships.<sup>13</sup>

In the middle decades of the seventeenth century the Manchu conquest brought about the downfall of the Ming and the establishment of a new ruling dynasty in China. The Europeans were familiarized with the Ming *status quo*, which, in most previous reports, seemed strongly established. Moreover, tradition and immutability were seen as China's most dominant features. Now, momentous changes were in motion within the apparently immobile Middle Kingdom,<sup>14</sup> upsetting the solidity of a European global image that had been built since the early decades of the sixteenth century. Perched on its southern periphery, Macau

<sup>12</sup> For a detailed analysis of Jesuit information and printing strategies, see Rui Manuel Loureiro, *Na Companhia dos livros: manuscritos e impressos nas missões jesuítas da Ásia Oriental, 1540-1620*, Macau, Universidade de Macau, 2007; and Donald F. Lach & Edwin J. Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe...*, v. III, bk. 4, p. 1563-1661.

<sup>13</sup> See David E. Mungello, *Curious Land: Jesuit Accommodation and the Origins of Sinology*, Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1989; and Liam M. Brockey, *Journey to the East: The Jesuit Mission to China, 1579-1724*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007.

<sup>14</sup> Regarding this period, see Jonathan D. Spence & John E. Willis Jr. (eds.), *From Ming to Ching: Conquest and Continuity in Seventeenth-Century China*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1979; and also the collection of sources collected in Lynn A. Struve (ed. & trans.), *Voices from the Ming-Qing Cataclysm: China in the Tiger's Jaws*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1993.

endured the political and military upheavals that raged through the Middle Kingdom,<sup>15</sup> and maintained its role as the “Trojan horse” of the Society of Jesus, as one Jesuit would define it.<sup>16</sup> And, as they had done for more than a century, the Portuguese maintained their role of Europe’s informers in East Asia, conveying in their letters, reports and dispatches to Goa and to Manila, and from there on to Lisbon and to Seville, a steady flow of news about the changes that were occurring in the Chinese realm. Jesuits from the China mission, from their vantage points of observation in the mainland also continued to report about events taking place in China’s major cities. “The reports of the Manchu Conquest seemed dramatically to move China into the European awareness, and for a time, informed Europeans seemed conscious of living in the same world with the Chinese”.<sup>17</sup>

The first extensive and monographic description of the Manchu conquest to be printed in Europe was the *De bello tartarico historia*, by Martino Martini, a Jesuit father who had come to Rome as an emissary of the China mission (cf. Plate 1). The *princeps* edition was published in Antwerp in 1654, but there were a series of subsequent re-editions and translations into Europe’s major languages, and namely into English (London, 1654), French (Paris, 1654), Portuguese (as *Historia da guerra dos Tartaros*, Lisbon, 1657), and Spanish (as *Tartaros en China*, Madrid, 1665). Martini’s account, which became the standard European description of the Manchu conquest and of the dynastic change that had occurred in China up to 1651, has been carefully and repeatedly studied, and needs not detain us here.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> About Macau in the seventeenth century, see George Bryan Souza, *The Survival of Empire: Portuguese Trade and Society in China and the South China Sea, 1630-1754*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986; and also Jorge Flores, “China e Macau”, in A. H. de Oliveira Marques (ed.), *História dos Portugueses no Extremo Oriente*, 5 v., Lisbon, Fundação Oriente, 1998-2003, v. 1, bk. II, 2000, p. 149-293.

<sup>16</sup> The expression was used by the Jesuit missionary Ferdinand Verbiest. Cf. J. S. Cummins (ed.), *The Travels and Controversies of Friar Domingo Navarrete, 1618-1686*, 2 v., Cambridge, The Hakluyt Society, 1962, v. I, p. LII.

<sup>17</sup> Lach & Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe...*, v. III, bk. 4, p. 1663.

<sup>18</sup> On Martini, see Min-sun Chen, “Three Contemporary Western Sources on the History of the Late Ming and the Manchu Conquest of China”, doctoral



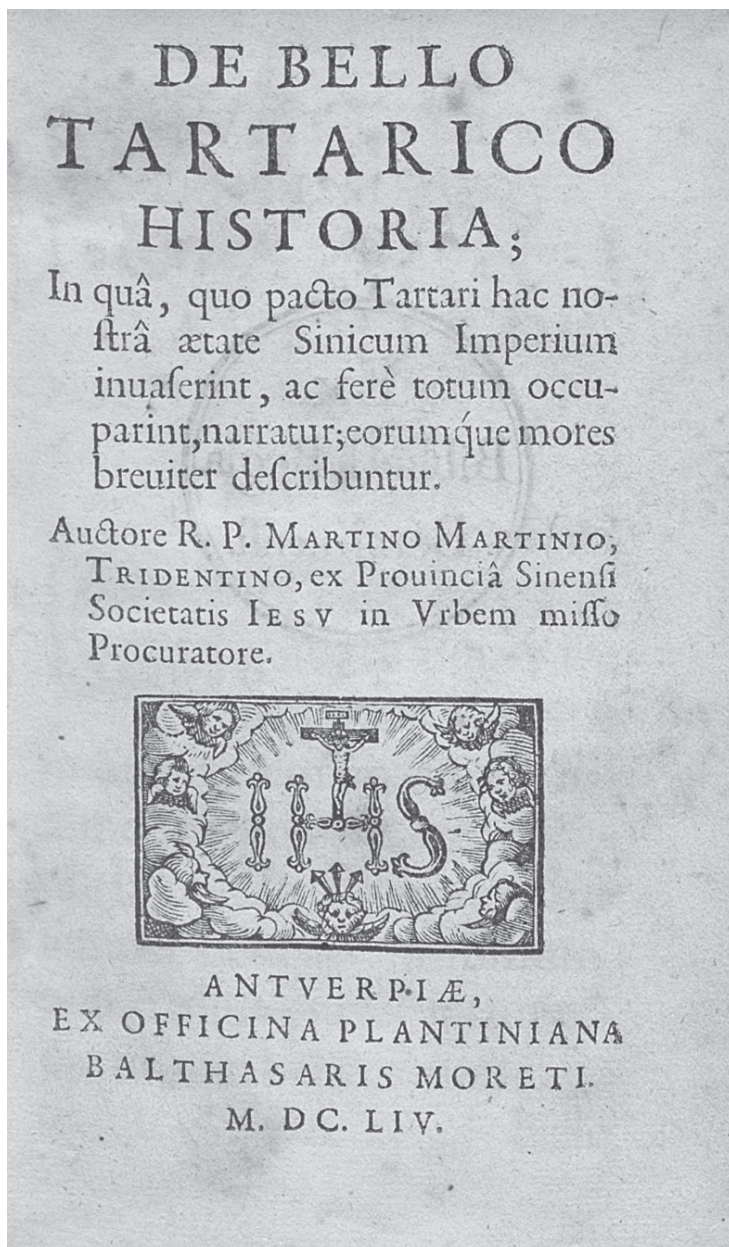


Plate 1. Front page of Martino Martini's *De bello tartarico historia* (Antwerp, 1654)



But there were other publications, written by Iberian chroniclers during the course of the seventeenth century that also contributed to the dissemination in Europe of news about the Manchu conquest. And four titles will be specifically mentioned—two by Portuguese authors and two by Spanish authors—. These men were Álvaro Semedo, Juan Palafox y Mendoza, Gabriel de Magalhães and Domingo Fernández Navarrete, and I will now look briefly into the biography of each one of them, also trying to present the nature of their individual contributions to the building of a European narrative of the Manchu conquest of Ming China, to conclude with a few exploratory ideas about their accounts of China.

Álvaro Semedo was born in Portugal, in 1585, and in 1608 he traveled to Goa, where he completed his education as a Jesuit. Four years later he moved on to Macau, from where he joined the China mission. For more than two decades he lived in Chinese territory, becoming fluent in the Chinese written language and conversant in Chinese classical literature. One interesting detail in his missionary career, he was the first European to examine the later famous Nestorian Tablet found in Sianfu.<sup>19</sup> Atypically for a missionary stationed in Asia, he traveled back to Europe in 1636, and during the long maritime journey he completed an ethno-historical account of China, which also included a chronicle of the Jesuit mission. When Semedo passed through Madrid, the Portuguese historian Manuel de Faria e Sousa got hold of a copy of his manuscript and immediately printed it in Spanish translation, under the title *Imperio de la China, i cultura evangelica en él, por los Religiosos de la Compañia de Jesus* (Madrid, 1642, cf. Plate 2).

The following year, an Italian translation came out in Rome, apparently under the author's supervision, the *Relatione della grande monarchia della Cina* (1643). Re-editions and translations

dissertation, University of Chicago, 1971, p. 138-216; see also Mungello, *Curious Land*, p. 110-116; and Lach & Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, v. III, bk. 4, p. 1664-1668.

<sup>19</sup> See Michael Keevak, *The Story of a Stele: China's Nestorian Monument and Its Reception in the West, 1625-1916*, Hong Kong, Hong Kong University Press, 2008, p. 5-28.

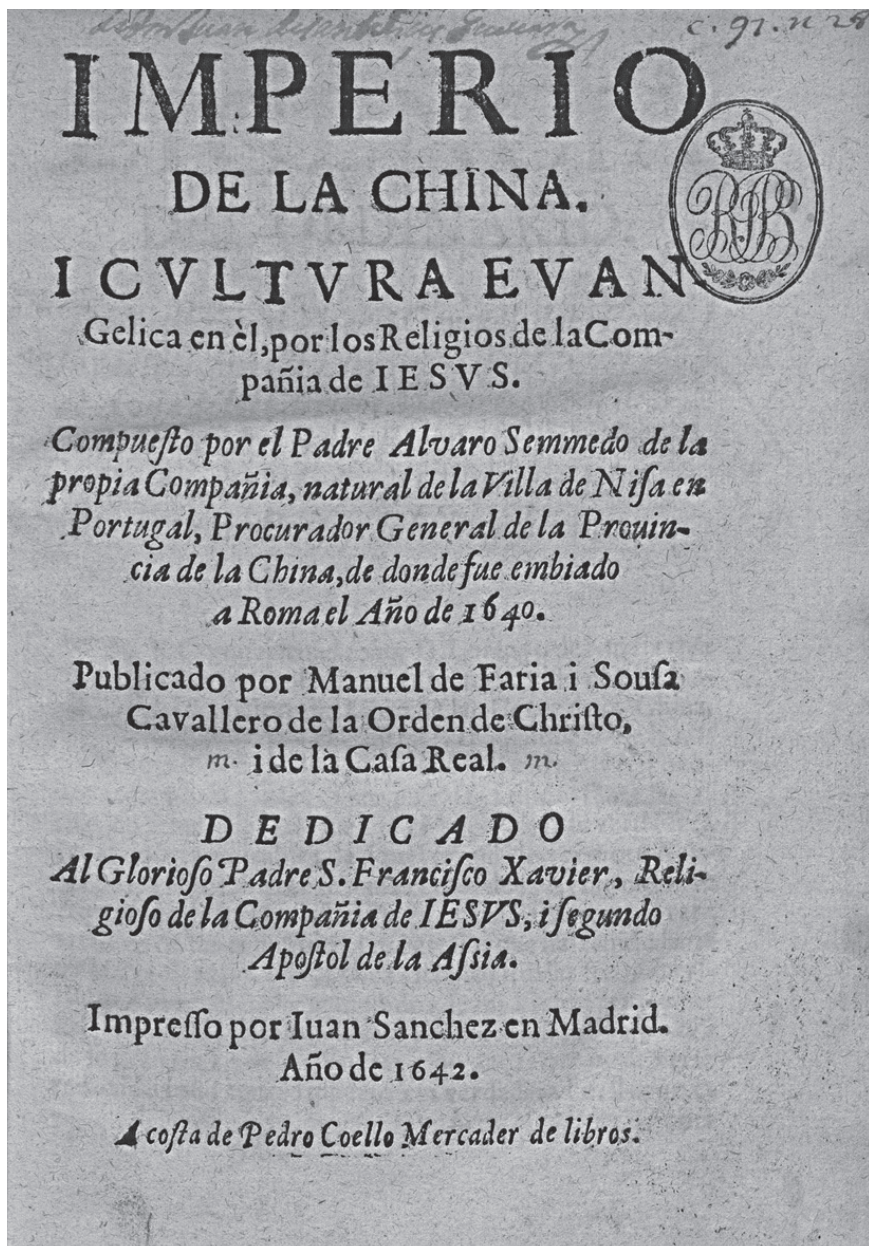


Plate 2. Front page of Álvaro Semedo's *Imperio de la China*, Madrid, 1642

in other European languages followed, namely in French (Paris, 1645) and in English (London, 1655). Besides contributing to the consolidation of European knowledge about China, the publication of Semedo's history had clear propaganda purposes for the Society of Jesus, in order to publicize the missions in Asia and to attract, simultaneously, material support from European Catholic powers and new missionary vocations.

Álvaro Semedo traveled back to Macau in 1644, and he would eventually pass away in Canton in 1658.<sup>20</sup> A perusal of his historical account will show an intimate knowledge of all things Chinese, acquired from long years of experience and observation, but also through the use of Chinese writings. Symbolically, the English translation presents a portrait of the author, holding in his hands a writing brush and an open Chinese book.<sup>21</sup> One of the chapters of the second part of the *Imperio de la China* is dedicated to the "origin and progress of the war that the Tartars introduced in China".<sup>22</sup> Like other contemporary European authors, Semedo employs the term "Tartars" to designate indiscriminately all human groups living to the north of the Great Wall, "without making a strict differentiation between the Mongols and the Tungusic peoples".<sup>23</sup> But he was aware of the existence of alliances between some of these groups, namely on the basis of the several military defeats suffered by the Chinese

<sup>20</sup> About Semedo, see Chen, "Three Contemporary Western Sources", p. 17-137; and Mungello, *Curious Land...*, p. 74-90. And also see Maria C. Pereira Barras Romana, "*Da Relação da grande monarquia da China*", unpublished master's dissertation, Universidade Aberta, Lisbon, 2003. For the first Portuguese translation from the Italian, see Álvaro Semedo, *Relação da grande monarquia da China*, ed. Luís Gonzaga Gomes, 2 v., Macau, Notícias de Macau, 1956. For a new edition: Álvaro Semedo, *Relação da grande monarquia da China*, ed. Luís Gonzaga Gomes & António Aresta, Macau, Direção dos Serviços de Educação e Juventude/Fundação Macau, 1994.

<sup>21</sup> For a reproduction of this portrait, see Lach & Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe...*, v. III, bk. 4, pl. 66.

<sup>22</sup> Álvaro Semedo, *Imperio de la China i cultura evangelica en el, por los religiosos de la Compañia de Iesus*, ed. Manuel de Faria e Sousa, Madrid, Jua Sanchez, 1642, p.135-143 (pt. II, ch. 13: "Del origen i de los progressos de la guerra que los tartaros introduxeron en la China").

<sup>23</sup> Chen, "Three Contemporary Western Sources", p. 132.

forces in the early decades of the seventeenth century. He mentions briefly the cooperation offered by the Macau government to the Ming court, under the form of cannons and musketeers, for when Semedo was residing in Nanchang, he met the Portuguese expedition that was accompanied by his brethren João Rodrigues, the famous Jesuit Interpreter.<sup>24</sup> Curiously enough, the *Imperio de la China* transcribes a memorial allegedly sent to the Wanli Emperor in 1618 by the “President of the Council of War”, where several internal causes are pointed to explain not only the Manchu attacks from the north, but also the growing turmoil within China. It is true that, in retrospect, the reader of Álvaro Semedo’s account would not be completely taken by surprise by the eventual fall of the Ming; but most of the book’s chapters are in tune with previous and enthusiastic Jesuit descriptions of the Chinese empire.

The account written by Juan de Palafox y Mendoza, the second in our list, is of a totally different nature. Born in 1600, he studied law and theology, and had a distinguished career, first within the Spanish Council of the Indies, and later, within the Spanish ecclesiastical hierarchy. It was during his residence in the New World, between 1643 and 1649, that Juan de Palafox became interested in China (not unlike his name-sake Juan González de Mendoza), or perhaps he understood the importance of the Middle Kingdom in the international context. And so he began collecting materials on Chinese affairs. Most of these, probably, were received in the form of letters, reports and memorials from Macau, through the Manila galleons; but Mexico was also receiving regularly printed books from Asia and from Europe. Mention must be made here of the famous Biblioteca Palafoxiana in Puebla de Los Angeles, in Mexico, which resulted from the donation of several thousand books by Juan de Palafox, from his personal and very large library, a clear sign that he had

<sup>24</sup> See Charles R. Boxer, *Estudos para a história de Macau, séculos XVI a XVIII*, Lisbon, Fundação Oriente, 1991, p. 105-118; and Michael Cooper, *Rodrigues, the Interpreter. An Early Jesuit in Jesuit in Japan and China*, New York, Weatherhill, 1974, p. 334-353.



access to important bibliographic resources.<sup>25</sup> Other relevant sources of information about China would have been the many Chinese who were living in Mexico. Palafox y Mendoza never set foot in China, and he eventually returned to Spain, where he lived for a decade, until passing away in 1659.

Years later, his *Historia de la conquista de la China por el Tartaro* was published posthumously in Paris (1670, cf. Plate 3).<sup>26</sup> It is possible that during his later years in Spain he completed his manuscript with references collected in works printed in Europe, in the meantime, and namely in Martino Martini's *De bello tartarico*. However, comparison of both works suggests that Juan de Palafox was writing on his own, for "there are too many differences in details and in emphases between the two" works.<sup>27</sup>

Furthermore, the Spanish author was not writing from a missionary point of view, with an eye on publicity for the China mission, but rather as an independent scholar, intent on clarifying one of the major political and military events of the seventeenth century and, simultaneously, on using it to deliver some political lessons to Spain's ruling elites, about the effects of misgovernance. The book became quite popular, with a Spanish translation appearing also in Paris in the same year, and an English translation in 1671, both of them reissued shortly afterwards.

Palafox's *Historia* is dedicated almost exclusively to the Ming-Qing transition, reporting events up to 1647. The Spanish cleric was an accomplished writer, author of many other relevant

<sup>25</sup> See Ricardo Fernández García, "Palafox y su pasión por los libros", *Artes de México*, n. 68, 2003, Mexico, p. 39-43.

<sup>26</sup> On Juan de Palafox, see Cayetana Álvarez de Toledo, *Juan de Palafox, obispo y virrey*, trans. M. Balcells & J. C. Bayo, Madrid, Centro de Estudios Europa Hispánica/Marcial Pons Historia, 2011; on his *Historia*, see J. S. Cummins, "Palafox, China, and the Chinese Rites Controversy", *Revista de Historia de América*, n. 52, 1961, Mexico, p. 395-427; Chen, "Three Contemporary Western Sources", p. 217-236; Lach & Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe...*, v. III, bk. 4, p. 1670-1672; Anna Busquets i Alemany, "La entrada de los manchus en China y su eco en España", in Pedro San Ginés Aguilar (ed.), *Cruce de miradas, relaciones e intercambios*, Granada, Universidad de Granada, 2010, p. 455-474.

<sup>27</sup> Lach & Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe...*, v. III, bk. 4, p. 1670.

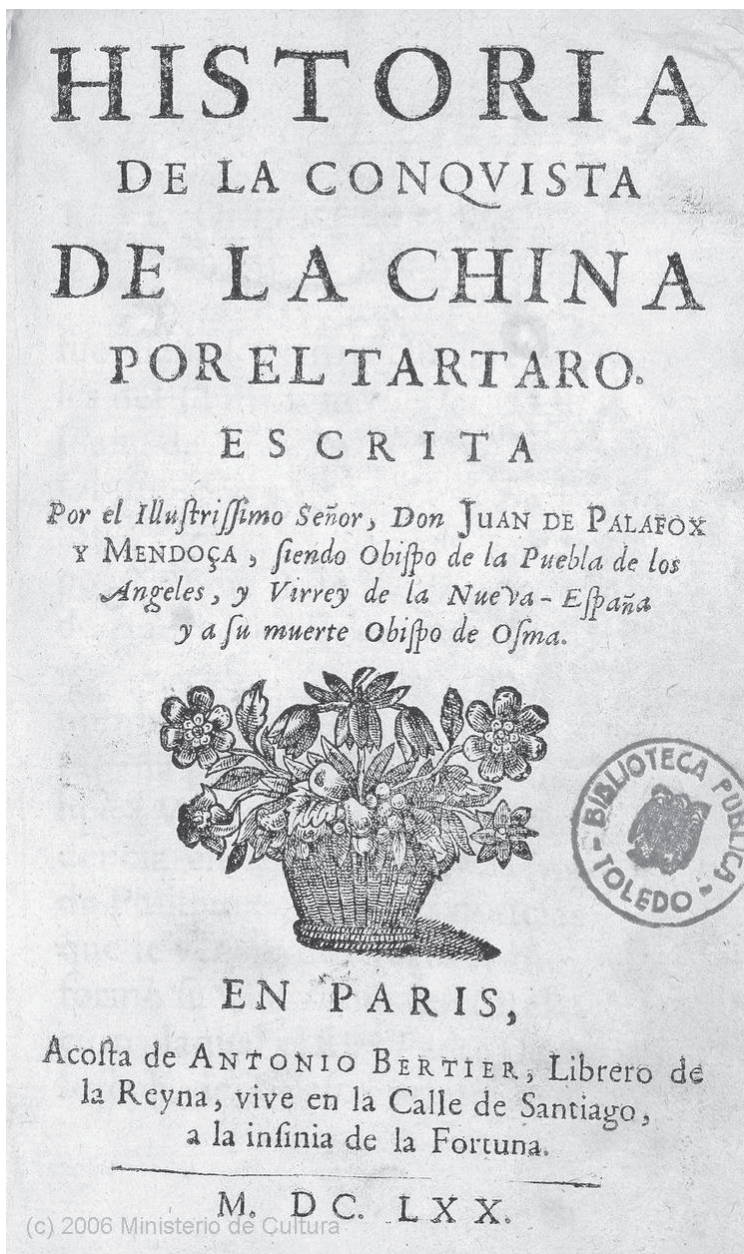


Plate 3. Front page of Juan Palafox y Mendoza's *Historia de la conquista de China*, Paris, 1670



works.<sup>28</sup> But close analysis of the factual value of his Chinese narrative reveals chronological errors, inaccuracies in the transcription of names, and occasional misinformation and misinterpretation. These can probably be attributed to the absence of empirical experience, since Palafox never visited Asia, and also to the scattered nature of his sources, for after all China was in turmoil and news arriving in Mexico must have been limited and contradictory. He claims himself in several passages of his *Historia* that the Manchu entry in China significantly reduced the flux of information emanating from Manila. Meanwhile, a special emphasis is given to events occurring on China's southern provinces, revealing the geographical origins of many of his sources, which mostly came either from Macau and Guangdong province, or from the Chinese community settled in Manila and their contacts in Fujian province. Significantly, then, a large portion of Juan de Palafox's account is dedicated to the actions of the famous Nicolas Iquan, otherwise known as "Zheng Zhilong and the difficulties that the Manchu's encountered in the control of the southern provinces" of the Chinese empire.<sup>29</sup>

The last eight chapters of the *Historia de la conquista* deserve a special mention because the author presents an elaborate description of the Manchu's, including sections on their political organization, warfare techniques, social and cultural practices and codes, religious beliefs, the writing system and the language. Besides being one of the first Europeans to collect such valuable information, since he was writing in the 1640's, Palafox appears to have been the first Iberian writer to present the new

<sup>28</sup> For a list of his works, see Francisco Sánchez-Castañer, "La obra literaria de Juan de Palafox y Mendoza", in *Actas del III Congreso Internacional de Hispanistas*, ed. Carlos H. Magis, Mexico, El Colegio de México, 1970, p. 787-793; and also Claudia von Collani, "Biography of Juan de Palafox y Mendoza, Bishop of Los Angeles (Tlaxcala, Mexico) and of Osma (Spain), author on China", <http://encyclopedia.stochastikon.com> (accessed 26-04-2016).

<sup>29</sup> Busquets Alemany, "La entrada de los manchus en China", p. 466. On Iquan, see Leonard Blussé, "Minnan-jen or Cosmopolitan? The Rise of Cheng Chih-lung alias Nicolas Iquan", in E. B. Vermeer (ed.), *Development and Decline of Fukien Province in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, Leiden, Brill, 1990, p. 245-264.

Chinese dynasty in a positive light, transferring to the Qing the apologetic attitude that until then had been present in most of the European descriptions of Ming China. The conquerors of China, so to speak, were legitimized by Juan de Palafox's account, which presented them with words of open praise, as "being 'noble and generous' and 'frank and open'".<sup>30</sup> The Spanish cleric was particularly enthusiastic about Manchu attitudes towards military affairs, since among them—and unlike with their Ming predecessors—he could recognize the extraordinary importance attributed to arms, war-horses, fighting techniques and the culture of war. All in all, it appears that Juan de Palafox's *Historia de la conquista* would deserve further inquiry

The third author in the list is Gabriel de Magalhães, another Portuguese missionary, who was born in 1609 in Portugal.<sup>31</sup> After university studies in Coimbra, he sailed to Goa in 1634, where he completed his Jesuit training. He was subsequently posted to the China missions, arriving at Hangzhou in 1640. Two years later he was sent to the province of Sichuan where he perfected his knowledge of Chinese language and culture. Captured by the Manchu forces in 1647, he was taken to Beijing, where he lived and worked for many years within the Jesuit mission, until his demise in 1677. Magalhães was a rather prolific author, and he wrote a number of important letters, reports, and tracts. In the 1650's he started writing an account known under the title "As doze Excellencias do Imperio da China" (The twelve excellencies of the Chinese Empire), which he concluded around 1668. He was probably inspired by the account written years before by Álvaro Semedo, since it is possible to find several analogies between both works, not only in content, but also at a structural level.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Chen, "Three Contemporary Western Sources", p. 228.

<sup>31</sup> About Magalhães, see Mungello, *Curious Land...*, p. 91-105; and above all Irene Pih, *Le Père Gabriel de Magalhães: un jésuite portugais en Chine au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1979.

<sup>32</sup> See António Graça de Abreu, "Gabriel de Magalhães, a sua *Nova Relação e a China*", in Magalhães, *Nova Relação da China*, ed. Luís Gonzaga Gomes & António Graça de Abreu, p. 27-28.

The original manuscript arrived in Macau,<sup>33</sup> and was brought to Rome by Philippe Couplet,<sup>34</sup> the procurator of the China Jesuit mission. It was eventually published in a French translation edited by Claude Bernou, as *Nouvelle Relation de la Chine*, in Paris in 1688 (cf. Plate 4), with several subsequent re-editions and translations, namely into English, as *A New History of China* (London, 1688).<sup>35</sup>

The French editor complains about the fragmentary nature of the manuscript that he received, which led him, so it seems, to include numerous annotations, confronting Magalhães' text with a large array of Jesuit sources published in recent years. Again, the Jesuits were using their descriptions of China as propaganda instruments in Europe, and Magalhães' account assumed the usual eulogistic tone, calling the reader's attention to "China's great riches, sumptuous architecture, elaborate monuments, excellent system of government, civility, industry, culture, cleverness, beauty and depth of the language", and so on.<sup>36</sup> Unlike other accounts of China, the *Nouvelle Relation* included several chapters about Beijing, with an elaborate description of the city, and namely its palaces, which the Portuguese missionary knew so well.<sup>37</sup> But, curiously enough, there is hardly any mention to the Manchu conquest in Gabriel de Magalhães' treatise, and the transition period merits only a passing reference to the "small

<sup>33</sup> A copy of the "Doze Excellencias" was later used without due acknowledgement by Jacinto de Deus, a Franciscan from Macau, as an inspiration to his *Vergel de Plantas e Flores da Provincia da Madre de Deos*, published in Lisbon in 1690 (see Pih, *Le Père Gabriel de Magalhães*, p. 243).

<sup>34</sup> On Couplet, the Jesuit China mission procurator to Europe, see Jerome Heyndrickx (ed.), *Philippe Couplet, S. J. (1623-1693): The Man Who Brought China to Europe*, Nettetal, Steyler Verlag, 1990.

<sup>35</sup> Since the original manuscript has not been found, the first Portuguese translation was based on the French edition: Gabriel de Magalhães, *Nova relação da China*, ed. Luís Gonzaga Gomes, Macau, Notícias de Macau, 1957. For a new edition: Gabriel de Magalhães, *Nova relação da China*, ed. Luís Gonzaga Gomes & António Graça de Abreu, Macau, Direcção dos Serviços de Educação e Juventude/Fundação Macau, 1997.

<sup>36</sup> Pih, *Le père Gabriel de Magalhães*, p. 243-244.

<sup>37</sup> Gabriel de Magaillans [Gabriel de Magalhães], *Nouvelle relation de la Chine*, ed. Claude Bernou, Paris, Claude Barbin, 1688, chs. 17-25.

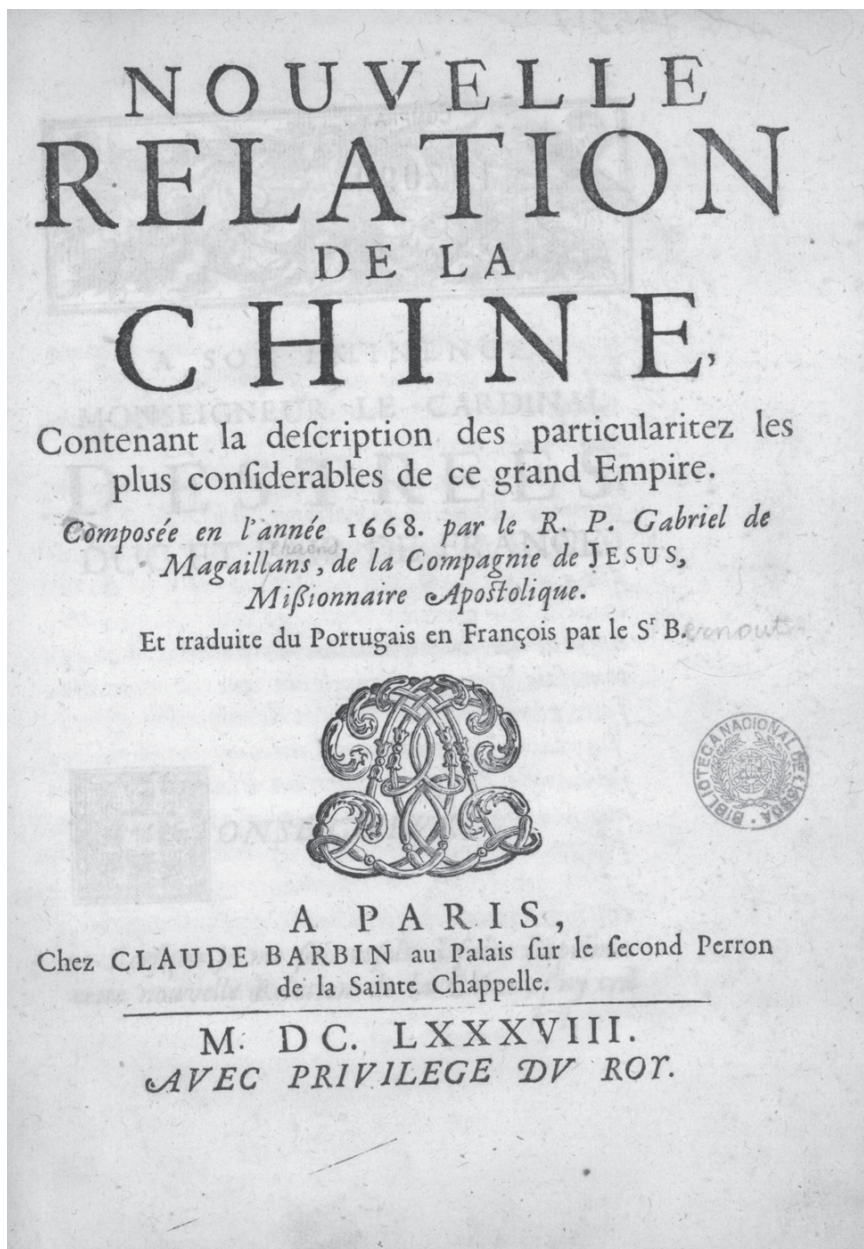


Plate 4. Front page of Gabriel de Magalães's *Nouvelle Relation de la Chine*, Paris, 1688

number of poor, rustic and ignorant barbarians” that overpowered Ming rule.<sup>38</sup> This appears in the context of a critical appraisal of the Chinese mandarins, where some of their negative characteristics are stressed. Otherwise, it seems, as the China that Gabriel de Magalhães is describing is a totally unchanged sequel to the Ming Empire depicted by previous Jesuit observers. Apparently, the Manchu conquest, by the time of the publication of the *Nouvelle relation de la Chine*, had already been digested in Europe, through the publication of several Jesuit reports in the 1670's, and namely “those of Adam Schall, Prospero Interocetta, Francis de Rougemont, and Adrien Greslon”.<sup>39</sup> And the Jesuit mission in China had been able to endure, with minor losses, the transition period.<sup>40</sup>

The final author in the group is Domingo Fernández de Navarrete, born in Spain in 1618, who joined the Dominicans in 1635.<sup>41</sup> Ten years later, volunteering for overseas service, he was on his way to Manila, when he met Juan de Palafox in Mexico, discovering that they had China as a common interest. After a decade of missionary work in the Philippines, on his way to Europe by the western route in 1658, he stopped over in Makassar, from where he decided to travel to Macau, embarking on the same ship as Martino Martini and a group of Jesuits who were traveling to the China mission. For another decade, between 1659 and 1670, he lived in South China, getting involved in missionary work and studying the Chinese language. By 1672 he arrived in Lisbon, via Goa and the Cape route, from where he set out to Rome, embarking on a campaign against the Jesuit adaptationist

<sup>38</sup> Gabriel de Magaillans [Gabriel de Magalhães], *Nouvelle relation de la Chine*, ch. 13, p. 204: “en l’assujetissant à un petit nombre de barbares, pauvres, rustiques & ignorans” (my translation from the French).

<sup>39</sup> Van Kley, “News from China”, p. 573.

<sup>40</sup> See Brockey, *Journey to the East*, p. 92-124.

<sup>41</sup> On Navarrete, see J. S. Cummins, *A Question of Rites: Friar Domingo Navarrete and the Jesuits in China*, Aldershot, Scolar Press, 1993; Cummins (ed.), *The Travels and Controversies*, v. I, p. XIX-XXXV; Lach & Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, v. III, bk. 1, p. 358-360; and Anna Busquets i Alemany, “Un siglo de noticias españolas sobre China: entre González de Mendoza (1585) y Fernández de Navarrete (1676)”, in Pedro San Ginés Aguilar (ed.), *Cruce de miradas...*, p. 255-271.



missionary methods. He settled in Spain for a few years, to work on the publication of a series of manuscripts that he had written during his extended travels abroad. Although several of his writings were not published during his lifetime, his monumental *Tratados históricos, políticos, ethicos y religiosos de la monarquía de China* came out at Madrid in 1676 (cf. Plate 5). The last years of Navarrete's life were spent in Santo Domingo, where he passed away in 1686.

Navarrete's *Tratados* did not meet with such wide circulation as the previous titles did. They were never reissued in Spain, and apart from brief summaries or excerpts in Italian or French there was only an English translation in the early 18th century.<sup>42</sup> Perhaps the fact that the work was openly critical towards some of the Jesuits' methods of accommodation had something to do with its rather small diffusion.<sup>43</sup> And yet, this was a major account by any standards, including a detailed and informed description of China, sections on Chinese history and philosophy, translations of Chinese classical texts, and extensive travel diaries, covering the Dominican's journeys around the world, from Mexico to Rome. Besides sundry relevant materials, based on first-hand experience of China, the *Tratados* included a wealth of textual sources, European and Chinese, which were presented and discussed throughout.

Navarrete's work also included several chapters about the Manchu conquest. In the sixth "Tratado", one of the chapters, for instance, was devoted to "The entry of the Tartar in China"; two other chapters dealt with events of the Ming-Qing conflict in Southern China; and the last chapter of the same "Tratado" included some "Notes on the treatise *De bello Tartarico* by father Martino Martini",<sup>44</sup> which the Dominican criticizes on minor

<sup>42</sup> See Cummins (ed.), *The Travels and Controversies...*, v. I, p. CI-CIV. There is a modern translation of book 6 of the *Tratados*, the travel diaries of Navarrete: Cummins (ed.), *The Travels and Controversies...*, p. 1-396.

<sup>43</sup> See Cummins (ed.), *The Travels and Controversies*, v. I, p. XXXVIII-LXXXIII, p. XCIV-C.

<sup>44</sup> Domingo Fernández de Navarrete, *Tratados históricos, políticos, ethicos y religiosos de la monarquía de China*, Madrid, Imprenta Real, 1676, tr. VI, ch. 29-32, p. 411-450.





Plate 5. Front page of Domingo Fernández de Navarrete's  
*Tratados históricos*, Madrid, 1676

points. His opinion regarding the new dynasty is straightforward, despite some criticisms he directs at the Manchu's: "To pretend that monarchies can last forever is like pretending to sail against the wind".<sup>45</sup> It has been noted that "[t]ime was on the side of continuity, so far has European interpretations of the Manchu conquest are concerned".<sup>46</sup> This was certainly the case with Domingo Fernández de Navarrete, who, despite describing in detail some of the most violent episodes of the Ming-Qing transition, detected a clear continuity in the political and administrative organization of the Chinese realm. Nevertheless, it has been demonstrated that the *Tratados*, besides its specific interest on China as a missionary field for the Dominicans, also had clear political motivations, using the Chinese example of a centralized and "paternal government" to teach European politicians a lesson.<sup>47</sup>

\* \* \*

Several points may be stressed about the four Iberian accounts of China that were briefly surveyed. In the first place, all were written by religious men with overseas experience, two Jesuits, one Dominican and one secular priest, precisely the kind of observers that could muster the necessary qualifications to serve as Europe's eyes in the wider world. The link between a Christian religious background and exotic ethnography is certainly worth exploring.<sup>48</sup> Textual connections pervade all four accounts, with the constant use of European and Chinese sources, explicitly or implicitly. There is undoubtedly a vast inter-textual network that forms a sort of background to all four accounts, and common readings may easily be identified. This would be the ever growing corpus of *materia sinica*.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Fernández de Navarrete, *Tratados históricos...*, tr. I, p. 9.

<sup>46</sup> Lach & Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe...*, v. III, bk. 4, p. 1674.

<sup>47</sup> Cummins (ed.), *The Travels and Controversies...*, v. I, p. LXXXVI.

<sup>48</sup> See Joan-Pau Rubiés, *Travellers and Cosmographers: Studies in the History of Early Modern Travel and Ethnology*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2007, IV, p. 1-39.

<sup>49</sup> For a preliminary analysis of this subject, in Jesuit context, see Loureiro, *Na Companhia dos Livros, passim*.



All four authors, on the other hand, had political agendas, that demanded the use of Chinese matters: the Jesuits Semedo and Magalhães were clearly working on a public relations scheme, in order to attract material and human resources to their Asian enterprises, while, at the same time, trying to preserve the monopoly of the Chinese mission-field; Navarrete, besides trying to discredit the Jesuit's accommodation methods, was trying to set up a Dominican missionary front on Chinese territory, while, at the same time, he was using the Chinese matter as a pretext to preach "a sermon" at home in Spain, "because of his distress at the state of his own country";<sup>50</sup> Palafox y Mendoza, likewise, was also intent on using the Chinese empire as an example for Europe, in terms of political and military organization.

In the fourth place, all four authors looked admiringly at China, underlining several characteristics of the Middle Kingdom, namely those that could stand comparison with its European counterparts: the size of the population, the industriousness and inventiveness of the people, the urban development, the administrative organization, the importance of learning, the political centralization, and so forth. Of course, the element of distance was paramount in the positive appreciation of China, since it could remove any immediate threat. Special attention must also be paid to the geographical distribution of the printed editions of these travel accounts. If Madrid and Rome seem obvious in the context of Iberian Catholic missionaries, the case of Paris is noteworthy, since in the second half of the seventeenth century it was becoming one of the foremost centers for the diffusion of accounts of non-European peoples and cultures.

Finally, regarding the Manchu conquest, although the Ming-Qing transition is seen generally as a period of turmoil, the 'Chineseness' of the Middle Kingdom appears untouched in all these accounts. As a result, they depict "the Manchus as the creators of a new but an essentially Chinese dynasty despite their foreign origin".<sup>51</sup> In the meantime, there is a significant difference in

<sup>50</sup> Cummins (ed.), *The Travels and Controversies...*, v. I, p. LXXXVI-LXXXVII.

<sup>51</sup> Lach & Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe...*, v. III, bk. 4, p. 1674.



respect to previous descriptions of China: while before the fall of the Ming the Chinese empire was mostly seen, and described, as a static or immobile entity, the rise of the Qing allowed European authors to introduce a factual dimension—or political and military chronicle—into their accounts.<sup>52</sup> This is another topic well worth investigating.

<sup>52</sup> See Van Kley, “News from China”, p. 561-562.

