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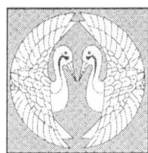
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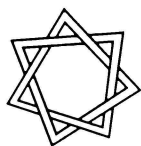
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THE REDISCOVERY OF YONGZHENG'S LETTER OF 1725 TO POPE BENEDICT XIII*

During my last visit to the Manuscript Department of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies in summer 1998, due to the courtesy of the keeper of Manchu holdings, Dr. Tatyana A. Pang, I could make acquaintance of a trilingual document written in Manchu, Chinese, and Latin (call number C 31). It is probably the original letter, sent by the Emperor Yongzheng to Pope Benedict XIII, in

reply to his letter of congratulations on occasion of Yongzheng's accession to the throne. The circumstances that surrounded the dispatching of the letter are a well-known chapter in the history of Missionary relations between the West and China. They have been exhaustively summarised by Antonio Sisto Rosso already in 1948. We read in particular:

"Benedict XIII, learning from optimistic reports by Pedrini and others of the accession of the Yung-chêng Emperor and of his good disposition toward the missionaries, decided to send to China five missionaries: two Carmelites — Gotthard Plaskowitz of St. Mary and Ildefonso of the Nativity — and three Franciscans. He entrusted to Plaskowitz, as head of the group, rich gifts and two Breves for the Emperor; in one Breve he congratulated the Sovereign on his accession, and in the other requested him to free Appiani and Guignes. Gifts and Breves were to be presented through Fathers Perroni and Romei, Propaganda Procurators in Kuang-chou and Pei-ching respectively.

The five missionaries, who left Roma in mid-October 1724, had to part at Oostende for lack of accommodation on board, and thus the Carmelites arrived at Kuang-chou alone on July 24, 1725. There Perroni let the Governor General handle this affair through the highest Boards and forward the Carmelites to Pei-ching as Legates on August 18. The legates, who reached their destination on October 22, two days later were announced to the Emperor, while both Breves were filed with the Board of Rites. Despite subsequent explanation about the true qualifications of the Fathers who came to stay as missionaries, the Emperor wanted to receive them as Legates, which he did in admitting them to a Palace audience on November 7, and then promptly dispatching them home.

On November 13, the Emperor answered the first Breve with a courteous letter; and on November 18 he issued the reply to the second granting the release of Appiani and Guignes. Early that morning the papal gifts were delivered to the Eunuchs of the Imperial Villa, and at noon, after performing the customary prostrations, the Envoys were admitted to the imperial presence. The Sovereign ordered the Envoys seated, while the others knelt down. He said that he appreciated the congratulations on his accession and the condolence on his father's demise expressed in the first papal letter, and that, with reference to the second letter, he had pardoned Pedrini whom his father had confined solely for his stand on religious matters. Then Fr. Plaskowitz entreated the Emperor to let the missionaries preach in the provinces as before. Taken by surprise, the Emperor began a long discourse on religious issues and set forth the reasons for denying the request.

There was nothing else for the Legates to do but hasten their return. On November 26, they were granted a farewell audience, and the next day they received from the Board of Rites the Imperial gifts and replies for the Pope. ..." [1].

The Chinese documents concerning this event has long become available in the English translation by Lo-shu Fu; it comprises (i) a memorial of the "Viceroy of Liang-Kwang, K'ung Yü-hsün", which announces the Legates' arrival at the Court; (ii) a note on the audience granted by the Emperor and recorded in the *Yongzheng Shilu* (ch. 25, p. 11a); (iii) the Emperor's reply to the Pope's first *Breve* (*Shilu*, ch. 37, pp. 6b—7a), which is the "courteous letter" mentioned by Rosso and dated by November 13 (according to the registration in the *Shilu*); (iv) K'ung Yü-hsün's report of the Legates' departure; (v) the Emperor's answer to the

Pope's second *Breve* concerning the release of two missionaries, L. Appiani and A. Guignes (*Shilu*, ch. 45, pp. 32b—33a) [2]. A copy of this *second* letter exists also in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, and has been published in facsimile by Rosso (with an English translation), in addition to extant Italian, French and Latin translations [3].

The Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana keeps also a copy of the Emperor's reply to the first papal *Breve* (the above-mentioned "courteous letter" of November 13), which is identical, as Rosso believes, to that registered in the *Shilu*, with the exception of "a few variants". This *Shilu* record

* I am grateful to Dr. Margarita Vorobyova-Desyatovskaya, Supervisor of the Manuscript Department, for making this document accessible for analysis and publication.

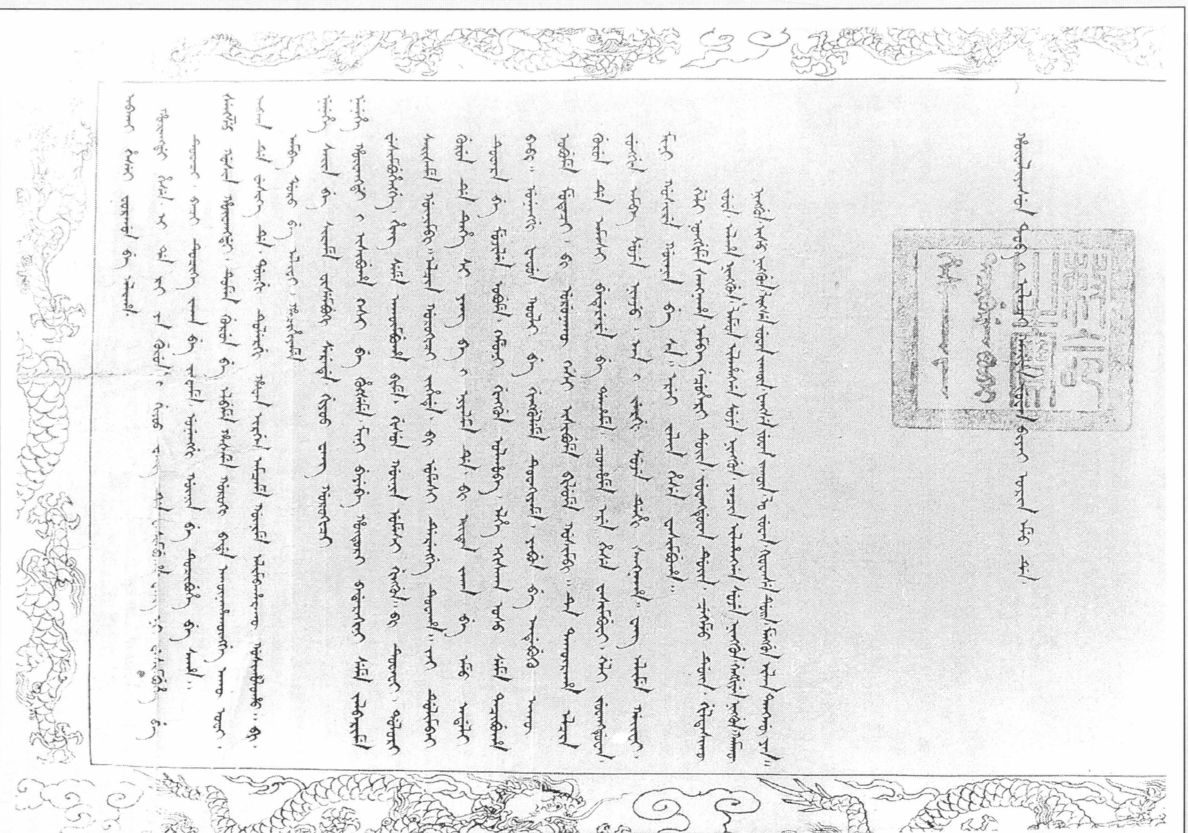


Fig. 1

was translated into English at least three times — by E. Backhouse and J. O. Bland, by Rosso, by Lo-shu Fu, and others [4].

The official letter with the Emperor's answer to the Pope's first *Breve* was delivered to the Legates, as Rosso states, a day after their farewell audience which took place on November 26. But this is precisely the document unexpectedly discovered in the manuscript collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies. It is dated by "Anno Christi 1725 die 25. Novemb.", i.e. one day before the farewell audience. The letter is written

Yu Xiyang jiaohua wang Bonadiduo. Lan zou bing jin gong fangwu

諭西洋教化王伯納地嘜覽王奏並進貢方物

"Edict to the King of Religious Culture of the Western Ocean, Bonadiduo (Benedict):
Looking at the King's message and the local products brought as tributes..."

In the Chinese version of the Imperial letter the Pope's personal name is substituted by the expression "King of the Religion of the State of Italy", while the term "pope" is altered, instead of *jiaohua wang* ("King of Religious

in Manchu, Chinese, and Latin on yellow paper framed with black dragons. It measures 200.0 × 57.0 cm and bears three red bilingual seals (11.0 × 11.0 cm) with the legend — *Hese-i tacibure boobai / chi-ming zhi bao* 敕命之寶 — printed over the dates.

On the whole, the two Chinese texts do not differ much, except for the introductory formulation and the ending where additional gifts are listed in the Imperial message solely.

The *Shilu* registration (ch. 37, p. 6b) begins as follows:

Culture") common *jiao wang* ("King of Religion") is employed. In addition, the character for *gong* ("tribute") is eloquently cancelled:

Feng. Tian cheng yun Huangdi chiyu Yidali guo jiaowang. Lan wang zou bing jin fangwu

奉天承運皇帝敕諭意達里亞國教王覽王奏並進貢方物

The letter's short sentence "The King of the Religion submitted to the Throne a message from far away" (*jian-wang yuanxing chen zou* 教王遠行陳奏) is changed in the *Shilu* and reads as follows: "The residence of the King of Religious Culture is extremely far away; he sent special envoys who brought a message to be submitted to the Throne" (*jiaohua wang dichu ji yuan. te qian shichen ji zhang chen zou* 教花王地處極遠特遣使臣齊章陳奏). Four lines later, the sentence "We will extend our favours" (*en* 恩) is given in the *Shilu* as "We will extend our affection" (*ai* 愛). The text in the Emperor's message reads that the gifts for the Pope are simply "given" (*xi* 錫), while in

the *Shilu* they are said to have been "bestowed" (*ci* 賜), which indicates a more lofty style. All these small but significant changes, made by the compilers of the *Shilu*, clearly show how the original documents were "corrected" in accordance with the rules of official Confucian historiography to underline the Emperor's higher position as a Universal Ruler.

The hitherto unknown Manchu version literally follows the Chinese text. As one of the curiosities we may cite the Manchu rendering of Chinese *Yidaliya* (Italy), which is given here as *l-da-ri-ya* instead of usual *l-da-li-ya*. We present here the transliteration of the Manchu text of the letter:

Abkai hesei forgon be aliha.

hūwangdi hese. i da ri ya gurun-i giyoo wang de wasimbuha: wang ni wesimbuhe be /

tuwaci. baci tucike jaka be jafame. unenggi gūnin be tucibuhe be saha: /

Šengzu gosin hūwangdi tumen gurun be elbime hašame goroki bade akūnahakūnge akū ofi. /

abka de wesike de. dorgi tulergi hafan irgen amcame gūnime alimbaharakū gosiholoho: bi. /

amba doro be alifi. hacihiyame /

nenehe sain be sirame wasimbuki serede. giyoo wang gorokici /

nenehe hūwangdi-i isibuha kesi be hukšeme mini beyebe hūhuri badarakini seme jalbarime /

wesimbuhengge. hing seme akūmbuha bime. gisun gūnin umesi ginggun: bi tuwaci. dolori /

sašame gūnimbi: elcin gorokici jihede. bi umesi derengge tuwaha: jai dulimbai /

gurun de tehe si yang ba-i niyalma de. bi eiten jaka be emu adali /

tuwara be mujilen obume. kemuni ginggun olhoba. elhe ekisaka oso seme tacibuha /

babi: unenggi fafun kooli be gingguleme tuwakiyame. yabun be endebuku akū /

obume muteci. bi urunakū kesi isibume bilume gosimbi: te takūraha elcin /

gurun de amasi bederere be dahame. cohome ere hese wasimbufi. geli juwangduwan. /

junggin amba suje ninju. an-i jergi suje dehi šanggaha: wang alime gaifi. /

mini gosire gūnin be sa. erei jalin hese wasimbuha:

geli unggime šanggaha amba gecuheri duin. juwangduwan duin. cekemu duin. gilasikū /

juwe. alha ninggun. lamun ilhangga suje ninggun. yacin ilhangga suje ninggun. genggiyen ninggun. kamkū /

ninggun. isu ninggun. lingse juwan jakūn. fangse juwan jakūn. lo juwan. kiyowanse duin. menggun ilan tanggū yen: /

Hūwaliyasun tob-i ilaci aniya juwan biyai orin emu de.

TRANSLATION *

Edict of the Emperor who received the Fate by Heaven's order, issued to the King of the Religion of the State of Italy.

Looking at the message of [You,] the King, I saw the expression of honest thoughts and accepted the local articles.

When the Benevolent Emperor Šengzu, who, submitting and protecting, reached far places in ten thousand countries, ascended the Heaven, all the officials and peoples inside and outside [the Empire], when remembering [him], felt intolerable grief.

When I received the Great Rule and announced that I would strive to follow [my] predecessor's good [example, You,] the King of the Religion, submitted from far away a message [saying that], grateful for the favours obtained by the prior Emperor, You are praying for my own prosperity. [Your] words and thoughts are extremely sincere and very respectful. When I look [at the message], feelings of appreciation arise inside [me].

When [Your] envoys came from so far away, I treated them with great honor.

[For what concerns] the people from the Western Ocean living in the Middle Kingdom: I always taught [them] — according to [my] principle to treat all in the same way — to be respectful and careful, peaceful and calm; if they observe attentively the right laws and rules and do not commit wrong actions, I will surely bestow favours [upon them], and protect and love [them].

Since these envoys are returning now to [their] country, I gave [them] this special Edict and — as a gift [for You] — sixty pieces of coloured satin with gold threads interwoven, brocade and great satin, as well as forty pieces of common silk. In accepting this, o King, take cognisance of my loving thoughts.

For this reason this Edict was issued.

Furthermore, the [following] gifts were also sent: four pieces of great brocade, four pieces of coloured satin, four pieces of Japanese satin, two pieces of silk brocade, six pieces of satin, six pieces of blue coloured silk, six pieces of dark coloured silk, six pieces of bright [silk], six pieces of brown silk, six pieces of black satin, eighteen pieces of damask, eighteen pieces of pongee, ten pieces of silk gauze, four pieces of taffeta, three hundred ounces of silver.

The third year *Hūwāliyasun tob*, tenth moon, twenty-first day.

TEXT IN LATIN

*Mandato Cæli hodiernus
Imperator
verba transmittit
ad Kiaó Vañ Regni Italiæ
(ad Sum'um Pontificem)*

Videndo, o Rex, quæ ad me retulisti, resque Regni Tui, quas mihi obtulisti, sinceritatem cordis Tui cognovi. Pater meus Imperator, cum omnia Regna, etiam remotissima, protectione complexus fuerit, indè contigit, ut cum è vivis excessisset, omnes sive Mandarinini, sive populi, tum Imperij, tum exterorum, desiderio illius commoti, profusis lacrymis prosecuti sint.

Mihi verò thronum subeunti ratum fuit totis viribus bona cæpta proseguere, et amplificare. Summus Pontifex accepta à Patre meo beneficia mente revolvens, mihi continuam precibus apprecatur felicitatem suâ è longinquo epistolâ, quæ sanè apicem attingit, cuius mens, et verba reverentiæ plena sunt; hanc corde læto laudavi.

Quos è disjunctissimâ regione misisti viros honorificentius habui. Quod vero spectat ad Europæos hospites in Sinis, Ego Imperator universa, quasi unum quid, sinu complectens, docui aliquando eos reverentiam cautelam, et quietam agendi rationem; si possint Leges Imperij reverenter observare, et nihil sit in eorum agendi modo reprehensibile, Ego Imperator certè beneficijs comulabo, fovebo, amabo.

Per missos autem viros, ad regnom reverentes, expressè hæc verba transmittito, simulque auro, et bombyce intertexta primi ordinis serica sexaginta, secundi verò quadraginta, dono. O Rex, hæc accipe, meumqè in Te benevolum animun noscito.

*Iterum trado serica
dicta Ta muon tuon 4.
Chuam tuon 4.*

* The translation proposed here is as literal as possible to convey the spirit of the Chinese court bureaucratic language.

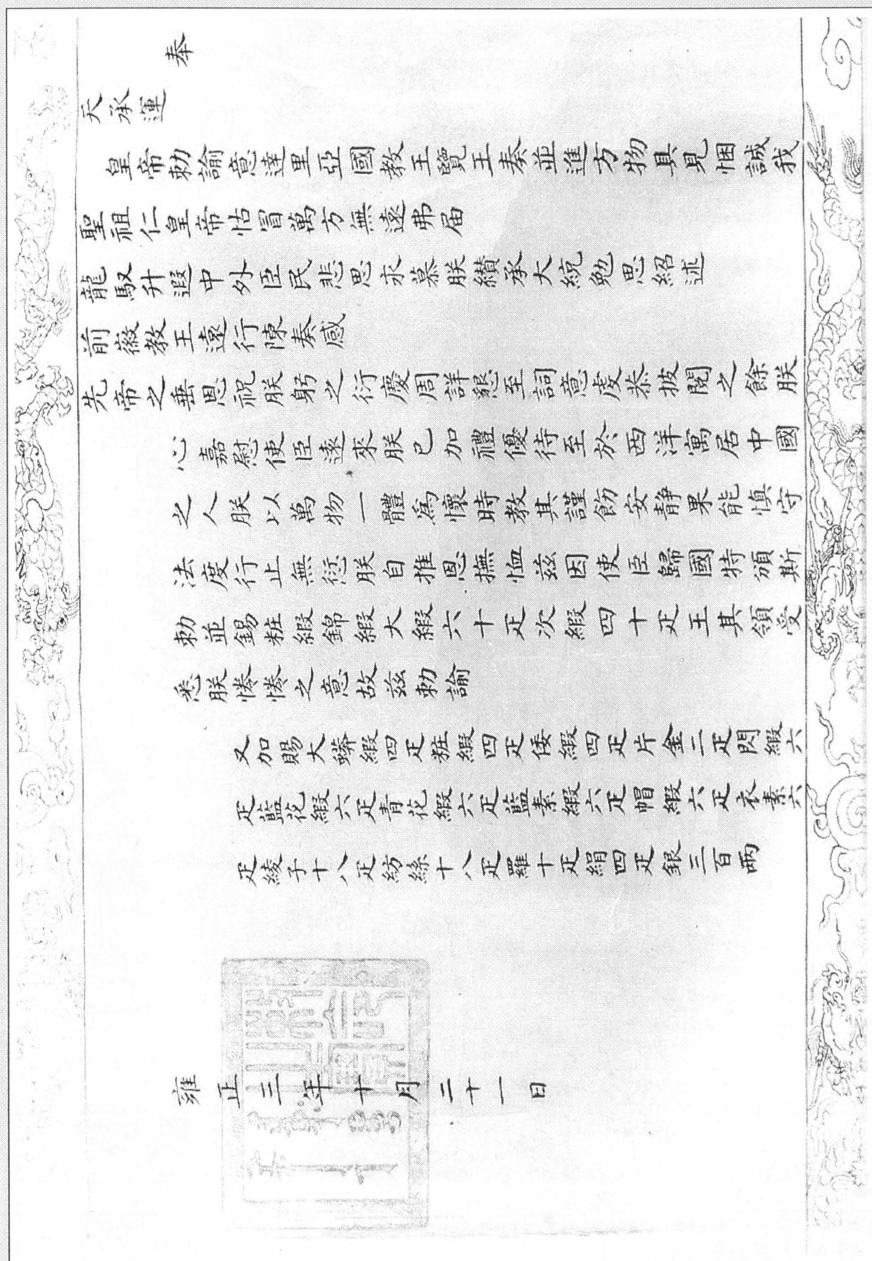


Fig. 2

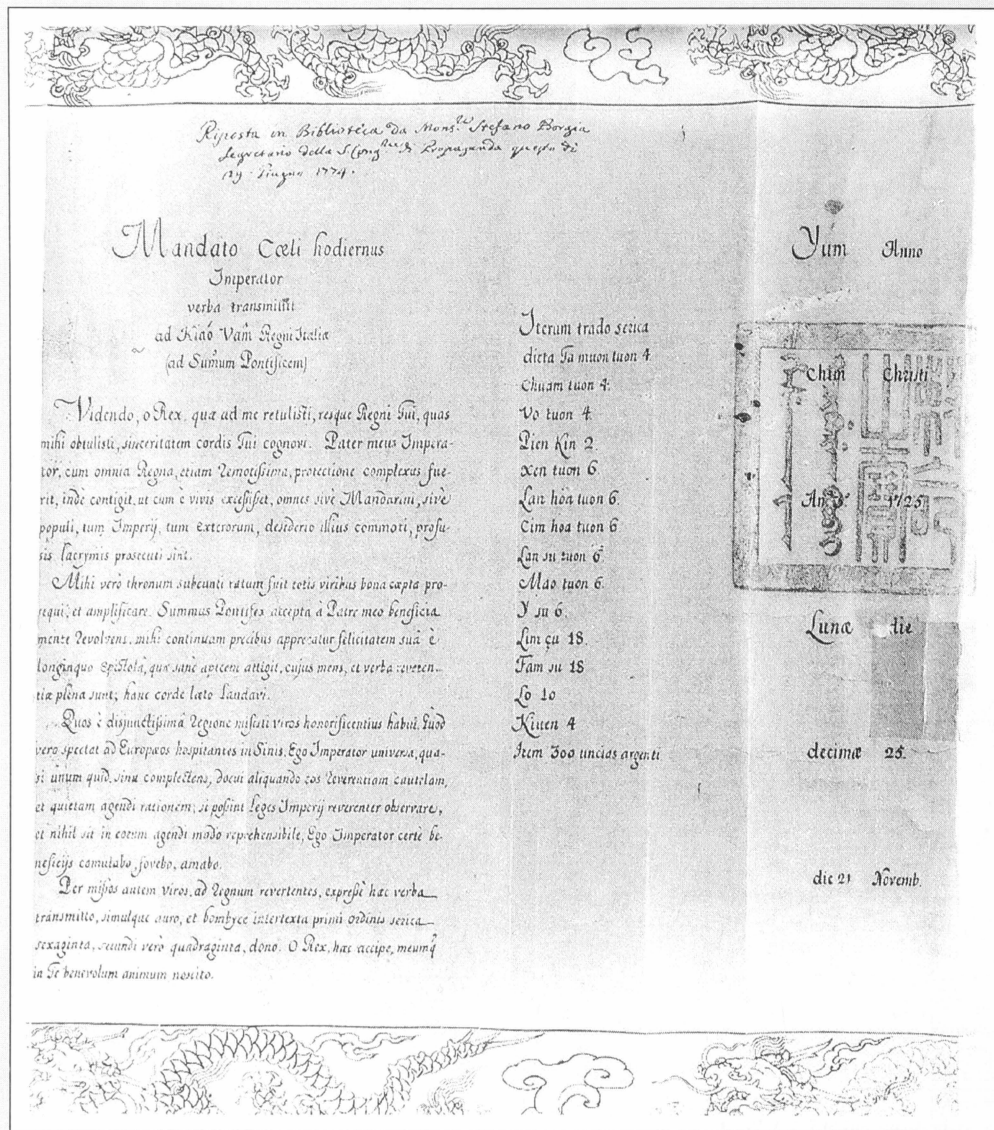


Fig. 3

Vo tuon 4.
Pien Kin 2
Xen tuon 6.
Lan hoa tuon 6.
Cim hoa tuon 6.
Lan su tuon 6.
Mao tuon 6.
Y su 6.
Lim çu 18.
Fam su 18.
Lo 10.
Kiuen 4
Item 300 uncias arenti

Yum chim An.º 3º Lunæ decimæ die 21
Anno Christi 1725 die 25. Novemb.

The Latin translation deserves our attention for the method and way it renders the Manchu/Chinese text. The content of the Latin version generally does not differ substantially from those in Manchu and Chinese, but the diver-

gency in style and formulation is necessarily determined by European rules of etiquette. This can be clearly seen from the opening formula of the Latin version, which reads:

By the Mandate of Heaven [being] now
 the Emperor
 sends these words
 to the *Kiaó Vañ* of the Kingdom of Italy
 (to the Supreme Pontiff)

The Imperial “Edict Issued” (*Hese wasimbuha/chiyu* 敕諭) is translated with the more adequate **verba transmittit** — “sends these words”. The translators maintained the Chinese/Manchu term for “pope”, *Kiaó Vañ* (*giyoo wang / jiao wang* 教王 — “King of the Religion”), which surely could not be translated literally into Latin, though this term is explained in brackets in the following line to give the Latin designation for the “Supreme Pontiff”. Already the first sentence of the Imperial message is a good example of how the Manchu/Chinese text was paraphrased:

“Looking, o King, on what You communicated to me,
 and on the things of Your Kingdom which You sent to me,
 I came to know the honesty of Your heart.”

In the next sentence, the Manchu/Chinese designations of the late Emperor Kangxi are rendered with “My father the Emperor” who, because of his paganism, could not “ascend the Heaven” (*abka de wesike*) [5], but simply “abandoned the living” (*è vivis excessisset*). Furthermore, we read that Kangxi’s protection reached “all kingdoms, even the farthest” (*omnia Regna, etiam remotissima*), not “ten thousand countries”. The text reads:

“When my Father the Emperor, who embraced and reached with his protection all kingdoms, even the farthest, left the living, all mandarins and people in the Empire and outside of it were moved with affection for him and remembered [him] with profuse tears.

When I succeeded to the Throne, I confirmed that I would continue and increase with all [my] forces [his] good actions. The Supreme Pontiff, keeping in mind the benefits received from [my] Father, [informed me] in his eminent letter coming from far away that he is praying for my continuous happiness. [This letter] is full of reverent

feelings and words; this I have appreciated with joyful heart”.

When mentioning the two Fathers, the Jesuit translator, who knew their real status of ordinary missionaries, used the term *viros* (“men”), while in both Manchu and Chinese texts they are qualified as *elcin / shichen* 使臣, i. e. “envoys”. The text further reads:

“With reference to the men You sent from a very distant region, I treated them in a very honourable way. Concerning the Europeans hosted in China, I, the Emperor, embracing with care everything as a single thing, taught them to act with reverent caution and calm mind; if they reverently observe the Laws of the Empire, and nothing reprehensible is [seen] in their way of acting, I, the Emperor, will surely bestow favours [on them], protect and love [them].

Through the men sent [to me], who are returning to [Your] kingdom, I expressly send these words, and at the same time I present [to You] as a gift sixty [pieces] of silk interwoven with gold and silk of first quality, and forty [pieces] of second quality.

O King, accept these [gifts], and know of my favourable mind toward You.”

For obvious reasons, the Manchu/Chinese final formula — “For this reason this Edict was issued” — remained without translation. The date above the seal is given in Latin according to the Chinese calendar (“On the third year of Yum Chim [Yongzheng], the tenth moon’s 21st day”), followed also by the Christian date (“The year of Christ 1725, the 25th day, November”).

Interesting also, from a linguistic point of view, is the list of additional gifts (missing in the *Shilu*), which are transcribed according to their Chinese names:

“Furthermore, I handed down [the following pieces of] silk called *Ta muon tuon* (< *da mang duan* 大蟒緞) — “Great snake [=dragon] satin”: 4
Chuan tuon (< *zhuang duan* 粧緞) — “coloured satin”: 4
Vo tuon (< *wo duan* 倭緞) — “Japanese satin”: 4
Pien Kin (< *pian jin* 片金) — “silk brocade”: 2
Xen tuon (< *shan duan* 閃緞) — “satin”: 6
Lan hoa tuon (< *lan hua duan* 藍花緞) — “blue coloured silk”: 6
Cim hoa tuon (< *qing hua duan* 青花緞) — “dark coloured silk”: 6
Lan su tuon (< *lan su duan* 藍素緞) — “light-blue silk” [6]: 6
Mao tuon (< *mao duan* 帽緞) — “hat-silk” [7]: 6
Y su (< *yi su* 衣素) — “black satin”: 6
Lim cu (< *ling zi* 綾子) — “damask”: 18
Fam su (< *fang si* 紡絲) — “pongee”: 18
Lo (< *luo* 羅) — “silk gauze”: 10
Kiuen (< *juan* 絹) — “taffeta”: 4
 Also 300 ounces of silver.”

The compilers of the Latin text are unknown, though they may have been the Jesuits who, at that time, worked at the Court as interpreters and translators — first of all, the French Jesuit Dominique Parrenin. His close collaborator, Antoine Gaubil, mentioned the envoys and the papal *Breve* in a letter dated October 27:

“Les deux envoyés du Pape sont deux Carmes déchaussés fort jeunes. Ils apportent des présents et deux brefs. Je n'ay vu que la liste des présents. [...] Les présents et les Brefs ne seront pas offerts par les 2 Carmes. Nous les offrirons en corps à l'Empereur...” [8].

From this is clearly seen that these Jesuits were involved in the diplomatic exchange. They were the ones to submit the letters to the Emperor (“Nous les offrirons”), evidently as experts of the Latin language.

And last but not least, we should mention a curious remark in Italian, written above the Latin text. It runs as

follows: “Riposta in Biblioteca da Mons.re Stefano Borgia Segretario della S. Cong.ne di Propaganda questo dì 29. Giugno 1774”, — i.e. “Placed into the Library by Monsignor Stefano Borgia, Secretary of the Holy Congregation for the Propaganda [of the Faith], this day, 29 June 1774”. The Library mentioned must be that of the “Propaganda” and not the Vatican Library, since the famous “Borgia Cinese” collection found its way there only in 1902. This record seems to give an answer to the remark of Antonio S. Rosso, who, analysing the Chinese copy kept in the Vatican Library, wrote that “The original, allegedly kept in the same [Vatican] Library, is not available now” [9]. It appears that this original was never available at the Vatican Library. Actually, it was given to the **Propaganda Fide** in 1774, from where for some unknown reason, and on an unknown date, it found its way to the Manuscript Department of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Study.

Notes

1. A. S. Rosso, *Apostolic Legations to China* (s. l., 1948), pp. 216—9, with detailed bibliography and source material quoted in footnotes 8—12.

2. See Lo-shu Fu, *A Documentary Chronicle of Sino-Western Relations (1644—1820)* (Tucson, 1966), i, pp. 142—5. For the *Breve*, see R. Streit, *Bibliotheca Missionum* (Freiburg i. Br., 1931), vii, No. 3047.

3. Rosso, *op. cit.*, pp. 399—403. For the Vatican copy, see Takata Tokio, *Inventaire sommaire des manuscrits et imprimés chinois de la Bibliothèque Vaticane. A Posthumous Work by Paul Pelliot* (Kyoto, 1995), p. 57, “Borgia Cinese 516.17”. — Italian School of East Asian Studies, Reference Series, 1 (ed. Antonino Forte).

4. E. Backhouse and J. O. Bland, *Annals and Memoirs of the Court of Peking* (London, 1914), pp. 307—8; Lo-shu Fu, *op. cit.*, pp. 143—4; Rosso, *op. cit.*, pp. 396—7. See also A. H. Rowbotham, *Missionary and Mandarin* (Berkeley—Los Angeles, 1942), pp. 173—4. For the copy kept in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, see Takata, *op. cit.*, p. 56, “Borgia Cinese 516.6”. It should be noted that some of these translations from Chinese are rather paraphrases than real translations, sometimes misleading with concern to the missionaries' activities in China. For detecting the exact meaning of this letter, cf. the literal translation of the Manchu version.

5. In the Chinese text, the Emperor's death is as usual expressed with the formula “he ascended [the Heaven] on a dragon-coach” (*longyu shengxia* 龍馭升遐).

6. The Manchu text has only *genggiyen* (“bright”).

7. Here, the Manchu text has the specific term *kamkū* (“a brown silk used for hats”).

8. R. Simon, *Le P. Antoine Gaubil S.J. Correspondance de Pékin 1722—1759* (Genève, 1970), p. 92.

9. Rosso, *op. cit.*, p. 396.

Illustrations

Fig. 1. Fragment of the Manchu part of the letter.

Fig. 2. Fragment of the Chinese part of the letter.

Fig. 3. Fragment of the Latin part of the letter.