Some scholarship written in languages other than English is cited, but the indices at the end of each volume omit the names of numerous cited scholars with non-Spanish names. To mention only the most glaring of these omissions, although multiple essays understandably cite John W. O’Malley, S.J., his name does not appear in either index. Moreover, the accuracy of references to English-language scholarship varies greatly among the essays. Some North American scholars’ names are misspelled and other details about their work and institutional affiliations are incorrect. The most egregious of these is Aurora Miguel Alonso’s erroneous statement that the US scholar of the Jesuits Kathleen M. Comerford is deceased. A more diverse group of editors and editorial staff might have been able to correct this grave error and other oversights before their printing, in addition to producing a collection that better represents the Jesuits’ presence in more of Spain’s imperial territories and the scholars who work on the Society.

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The archives and libraries of Rome are not perhaps the first places that historians of early modern China would think to look for their documentation, but missionaries were the first long-term European residents of China, and Rome is the home of Catholic missionary orders. Until recently, the lack of complete listings of China-related materials has made locating such documents difficult, but many such catalogs have appeared in recent decades. The one discussed here is that of the Biblioteca Casanatense, founded by Cardinal Girolamo Casanate (1620–1700), a member of the Dominican order. Not only did it include the cardinal’s papers and library, but it quickly became the repository for material relating to China from the opponents of the Jesuits
in China, amongst whom Casanate was a leading figure as a consultor of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide and member of the Papal Commission on the Chinese Rites issue. After his death, the library seems to have systematically acquired the papers of the anti-Jesuit party in China. Il Fondo “Cinese” della Biblioteca Casanatense is a model of its kind, not only giving a detailed breakdown of the contents of the collection but, where available, of the date and circumstances of their acquisition. The catalog is the work of Isabella Ceccopieri. However, there is an extensive Premessa by Angela Cavarra, former director of the Casanatense, which gives some practical biographical details on the main contributors to the collection and some summary comments on the issue of the Chinese Rites. One might take issue with her remarks about “the numerical inferiority of the Jesuit documentary testimony” on the Chinese Rites issue, but her other claim that the Casanatense material has been comparatively neglected is undoubtedly correct.

A significant part of the collection relates to the papal legation of Charles Maillard de Tournon (in China 1705 to his death in Macau in 1710), including some of the papers of members of the legation, especially the account of its events compiled after the death of the legate by his procurator, or agent in Rome, Giovanni Fatinelli, based on the reports from the legate and his retinue. It is mainly on the basis of Fatinelli’s Istoria della spedizione del Cardinal C. Th. Maillard de’ Marchesi di Tournon, which constitutes ms. 1636, 1637, and 1638 of the Casanatense collection Rui Zhang has written his study of the de Tournon legation. This will be its major contribution. If one wishes to read it as it were “authorized version” of the legation, it is here. But there are at least three other versions: the Jesuit version to which Rui Zhang makes token reference in footnotes without noting the radical differences on matters of fact, not just interpretation; the records in the archives of other religious orders, especially the Franciscans, many published in the extensive Sinica Franciscana series; and above all the Chinese archives that contain much more material than the reader would glean from their use by the Chinese author.

Several substantive issues neglected in this work seem to have not progressed beyond its origins in a doctoral thesis. The most weighty is that of the instructions and mission of the legate. Rui Zhang seems to simply assume that the Chinese Rites issue was decided in Rome before the legate’s departure, but this is simply chronologically impossible since not only did Tournon depart Rome nearly two and a half years before the decree was determined but died before it was published and admitted not having received an authenticated copy. The anti-Rites decree was not infallible, as Zhang claims, and never could have been since it regarded a matter of Chinese fact—but Fatinelli is probably the source of this notion.
The vexed question of Tournon’s health is never canvassed except for a reference to his “poisoning” by the Beijing Jesuits that the source, the legate’s physician, later retracted under oath. But the constant reference in the documentation to his many ailments, going beyond persistent dysentery—a not uncommon consequence of a prolonged stay in India—to paralysis of the limbs and extreme outbursts of uncontrolled rage, suggests much more needs to be said on this question. It is dangerous to speculate on medical conditions based on historical records, but the papal secretary of state Fabrizio Paolucci, in a somewhat coded letter to Tournon’s doctor Giovanni Borghese about the health problems of a certain young man of their mutual acquaintance after the legate’s death (now in the Yale University ms. collection) raises some interesting questions about diseases common in the aristocratic circles Maillard de Tournon came from.

The major omission in this work, however, is any serious consideration of the key issue in the legation, namely the Chinese Rites controversy. Much could be gleaned from the massive contemporary literature on the subject and modern scholarship. It is very clear from the imperial records, especially the vermilion inscriptions of the Kangxi Emperor himself reproduced in several collections, that the emperor regarded the rites in question as obligatory on all his subjects. The very few comments that Rui Zhang makes on this are dismissive and ignore the most recent scholarship on Chinese rituals and ritualism. In the introduction, he argues that Confucianism and its rituals was not “una vera religione istituzionale.” Perhaps it was not a state religion, but certainly, one prescribed for all officials and official occasions, and some including the ancestor rites at the heart of the Rites controversy.

Rui Zhang’s work in presenting Fatinelli’s contribution to this exciting and informative field of study for all interested in assessing the problems of early modern Chinese/European contacts and misunderstandings will be valuable to all who read Italian. But I would suggest in conclusion that its major contribution may be to demonstrate the dangers of viewing Chinese customs and culture in a European distorting mirror.

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