Stefano U. Baldassarri, Carlo Cinelli, Giuseppe de Juliis, and Francesco Vossilla, eds.

Ferdinando Moggi (1684–1761), architetto e gesuita fiorentino in Cina. Florence:

Angelo Pontecorboli Editore, 2018. Pp. 270. Pb, €24.

The past twenty years have seen three remarkable historiographical shifts related to Catholicism in the early modern period. The first is the breakdown of the dominance of Counter-Reformation as the category to denote all Catholic phenomena after the outbreak of the Reformation. Though still indispensable, the category is now seen as expressing only one aspect of the complex phenomenon that is Catholicism.

In tandem with that shift, came a more global perspective on mission history. The overseas enterprises, in other words, did not stand on their own but remained in dynamic relationship to their European origins and sponsors. This was a two-way street. Just as they continued to be affected by Europe, Europe felt their impact upon itself, as was especially clear regarding the Jesuits in China. Finally, in the past twenty years has come a greater awareness—or at least a greater readiness to admit—that the Catholic Church, when viewed in its full amplitude, was the single greatest patron of the arts in the period and that, within the church, the Society of Jesus was the single most prolific institution contributing to that effect.

The volume under consideration here reflects all three of those changes. That it reflects them unselfconsciously and without comment testifies to how thoroughly the academic community has assimilated them and takes them for granted. In these pages, I do not recall seeing the word Counter-Reformation. The contributions draw their substance, moreover, from the relationship between Europe, especially Italy, and the painters, architects, sculptors, and engravers laboring as missionaries in China. Finally, the contributions make clear that the overwhelming majority of those artists were Jesuits.

The volume contains eighteen relatively short contributions, some of only a few pages. Four of the contributions are in English; the rest in Italian. The volume concludes with thirty-three pages of black and white images and photos. It lacks an index. For a volume as wide-ranging and rich in information as this one, the omission is particularly regrettable.

The contributions were originally papers delivered at an international conference held in Florence on February 15, 2017, which was hosted there by the Accademia delle Arti del Disegno. The inspiration and impetus for the conference came from the Società di Studi Giuseppe Castiglione S.J. – Lang Shining, founded several years ago by Francesco Vossilla to promote precisely the kind of studies the volume contains. The Società operates out of Florence.

The contributions center on Ferdinando Moggi, who arrived in China in 1721, and often collaborated with his better known contemporary, Castiglione. Carla Cinelli provides the fullest biographical information about Moggi that we now possess, especially when coupled with Vossilla's "notes" on Castiglione and Moggi as architects in Beijing. Gianfranco Grimaldi studies Moggi as an engraver, and Elisabetta Corsi elaborates on that subject and, most interesting, on Moggi's relationship to the Laboratory of Applied Arts in the Qing court.

The volume thus serves the larger purpose of shining attention on the figures whom scholarship, with its attention focused on Castiglione, has largely neglected. They reveal, besides Moggi, a remarkable group of Jesuit priests and temporal coadjutors, who came especially from Italy, but also from France, Germany, Austria, and elsewhere. In this they provide a window into the international character of the China mission, even though it was carried forward under the auspices of the Portuguese crown. The Jesuits were dominant as artists in the mission, but there were a few others, such as Matteo Ripa, engraver, amateur draughtsman, and painter, who was a diocesan priest dependent on the *Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*, and Serafino da San Giovanni Battista, an Augustinian, also dependent on the *Propaganda Fide*. Serafino's expertise in optics and perspective had an impact in the circle of Chinese artists. Especially important in that regard, of course, was the Chinese adaptation of Andrea Pozzo's treatise on perspective completed by Castiglione in collaboration with the Chinese mathematician, Nian Xiyao, in 1729. The contributions range widely over the projects undertaken by these talented men or topics somehow related to them. Carla Benocci, for instance, compares gardens in Rome, especially the Jesuit garden at the novitiate of Saint Andrew and the Jesuit garden in Macau, and thus draws attention to the wider, fascinating, but sadly understudied subject of Jesuit gardens. However, the specific subject that recurs in the book and that is especially pertinent to Moggi is the imperial palace or villa for which Castiglione and Moggi served as the principal architects. In that regard, Luigi Zangheri provides an especially interesting study of the hydraulic engineering skills of the French Jesuit, Michel Benoist, responsible for the fountains of the palace. He lists other Jesuits engaged in the project—the French painter Jean Denis Attiret, the Bohemian painter Ignaz Sichelbart, and the French mechanic Gilles Thébault.

In the accounts the missionaries sent to Europe, they gave a somewhat idealized picture of their lives. Corsi makes clear, however, that these men enjoyed little social status despite their skill and the important projects on which they worked. The emperors and the members of the imperial court regarded them as employees and functionaries. They assigned to them their tasks and allowed them virtually no freedom to engage in any others.

The volume covers the middle decades of the eighteenth century, the turning point in the fate of the Chinese mission. Between 1704 and 1742, the Holy See published three different prohibitions of Christian adaptations of certain “Chinese rites,” which led the emperors to increasingly repressive measures against Christian missionaries and ultimately to the demise of the mission. Yet the Jesuits, still hoping to save the enterprise, continued to work in Beijing and thus appease imperial wrath. Vossilla in his contribution on the matter calls it a practice of diplomacy by way of art.

John W. O'Malley, S.J.

Georgetown University

jwog@georgetown.edu

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