CIRCULATION AND RECEPTION OF PORTUGUESE BOOKS IN THE 17TH/18TH CENTURY JESUIT MISSION OF CHINA, MAINLY IN THREE BISHOP’S COLLECTIONS (DIOGO VALENTE, POLYCARPO DE SOUSA AND ALEXANDRE DE GOUVEIA)

Noël Golvers

Introduction

Within the broad and complex research area of the communications between European countries and the Far East (especially China and Japan) in the 17th–18th century and the place of the China Mission of the Jesuits therein, Portugal holds a particular place, as the basis of the padroado and the logistic platform for the Jesuit mission to the Far East, materialized in the procuratura (and procurator) Missionum Orientalium at the Colégio St. Antão. For all kinds of reasons, both internal (such as the loss of large parcels of the original historical documents) and external (such as the huge and wide-ranging ‘impetus’ in the research developed in other countries involved, such as France and Italy, a.o.), the role of Portugal in the cultural and scientific exchanges between Europe and China has not always received the attention it deserves1 Yet, for the rather intense presence of Portuguese Jesuits in the field and their large participation in the mission in terms of personnel and other human means, the question quite logically arises whether and to what extent this participation also found a ‘cultural’ expression.2 One of the possible indicators to measure such an expected impact is the circulation and use within this padroado-mission of Portuguese editions, i.e. books printed in Portuguese (the lingua franca and natural expression of the mission itself) or printed in whatever

1 Cf. the assessment of Henrique Leitão: ‘However, speaking from the more restricted point of view of the Portuguese Jesuits in China, it is necessary to emphasize that much is still to be studied and understood’; Leithao H., “Jesuit Mathematical Practice in Portugal, 1540–1759”, in Mordechai F. (ed.), The New Science and Jesuit Science: Seventeenth Century Perspectives (Dordrecht: 2003) (229–247) 245, n. 6.
language in Portugal. This is the theme of the present paper. Due to limitations of space, it cannot be a comprehensive investigation of all the data, and focuses mainly on three “private” collections, established by three bishops of Portuguese nationality, who each had a “personal” library, the holdings of which are completely (Valente) or at least sufficiently well described or represented in our sources. My question to these collections will be, what was the ratio of Portuguese books in them; which authors and titles are recognized; is there any connection discernable between the language and a particular field. For the same reason of space, I have to refrain from dealing with several external aspects of this topic, such as the part of book agents lobbying in Portugal to get books for free, or detecting and buying books in and outside the country; the publishers and printing centers represented; the supply lines etc. These I will discuss in more detail on another occasion.3

The book collection of Diogo Valente S.J. (1633)

As a bishop of Japan, Diogo Valente (1568–1633) – who had left Lisbon in mid-1618 and arrived in Macau in Nov. 1619 – assembled a fairly large “personal” library, partly brought from Portugal, partly completed afterwards with books from the ‘procuratura’ of the Japan province, and probably also from the Trigault collection. This basic collection was also enlarged, after his arrival in Macau, by later acquisitions from Portugal, for the publication date of at least 18 of the 42 Portuguese books located in his collection were only published after Valente had left Lisbon for China in mid-1618, confirming that the book supply from Lisbon to Macau to his address continued at least until late in the 1620s, and was probably never interrupted. Probably his books were ‘marked’; despite the rules of Jesuit librarianship, it was a common practice in the Jesuit mission of China, as many inscriptions (of the type: ‘ad usum’; ‘para ouzo de’, etc.) show. Although the books of Valente – together with the other books of the Jesuit library – had in principle disappeared when the Society of Jesus was suppressed (1763), one book in the present Beitang collection (Peking) seems to stem from his library, viz. a copy of Juan Sardinha Mimoso, Relacion