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THE MISSIONARY WORK OF FRAY ANTONIO DE SANTA MARIA CABALLERO IN 17TH-CENTURY CHINA AND LEIBNIZ'S “DISCOURSE ON THE NATURAL THEOLOGY OF THE CHINESE”

Ivo Carneiro de Sousa
PhD (Portuguese Culture), Professor
Centre for Portuguese Studies
Macao Polytechnic University (MPU)
R. de Luís Gonzaga Gomes, Macao SAR, China
ivocarneiro@upm.edu.mo

This paper examines the life and work of the Spanish missionary Antonio de Santa Maria Caballero (1602–1669), who played a significant role in re-establishing the Franciscan presence in the Catholic missions of China during the 17th century. Caballero began his active missionary work in 1633 and became proficient in the Chinese language and culture, mainly focusing on understanding the works of Confucius and other classics. His dedication allowed him to pass the rigorous imperial exams in Lipu, northeast of Guangxi, in 1653. Caballero's work, published in Spanish, Portuguese, French, and Chinese, includes books, treatises, comments, and letters that identify his missionary theory and practice. He strongly opposed the accommodation model promoted by the Jesuits, which allowed Chinese converts to Christianity to continue practicing ancestor rituals and worshiping Confucius. Caballero criticized any blending of traditional Chinese beliefs with Christian doctrine. In 1666, together with 24 other Catholic missionaries in China, Caballero was arrested and exiled to Canton, where he died three years later. During exile, the surviving missionaries, 20 Jesuits, three Dominicans, and Caballero, held from December 18, 1667, to January 26, 1668, a series of meetings that, later known as “Canton Conferences”, intended to develop a consensual text on the missionary strategy. Dominated by the Jesuit accommodationist model, all the missionaries present signed the final document known in Latin as *Acta Cantoniensia authentica,* except Caballero, who immediately worked on a document justifying his critical position. The result was a long letter written originally in Spanish addressed in 1668 to the Portuguese Jesuit Luís da Gama (1610–1672), then provincial of China and Japan, entitled “Tratado que se remitió al muy R. P. Luís de Gama de la Compañia de Jesús sobre algunos puntos de esta misión de la Gran China” (*Treatise sent to the very R. P. Luís de Gama of the Society of Jesus on some points of this mission in Great China*). Mobilizing the main Confucian and neo-Confucian classics that Caballero shared in-depth, the text criticized in detail the cults of ancestors and Confucius as pagan, also denying any possibility of finding even remote forms of natural theology and an approach to the Christian God among the ancient school traditions that underpinned traditional cults. At the same time, seeking to substantiate his critical positions with works produced by some Jesuits, Caballero translated into Latin during this period of exile a treatise initially written in Portuguese by the Italian Jesuit Nicolò Longobardo, the successor of Matteo Ricci, critic of the accommodationist model and, in particular, of the proposed Chinese translations of the name of God. The two texts, Caballero's letter and Longobardo's treatise were translated into French and published in Paris in 1701 by the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris, a congregation extremely hostile to the Jesuit missionary model in China. Entitled “Anciens Traitez de divers auteurs sur les ceremonies de la Chine” (*Ancient Treatises of various authors on the ceremonies of China*), the work would be offered in 1715 to the German philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz at the end of 1715 by his French correspondent Nicolas-François Rémond de Montfort. The critical reading of Leibniz produced his unfinished reflections, written in 1716, on the

ethical compatibility between Chinese classical moral thought and Christian doctrine written in French as "Lettre sur la philosophie chinoise à Monsieur de Rémond" (Letter on the Chinese Philosophy to M. Remond). Republished since 1977 as "Discourse on the Natural Theology of the Chinese," Leibniz's text is a defense of the Jesuit missionary accommodation system, stressing its contribution to his personal ongoing research on the possibilities of an autonomous, universal moral philosophy grounded in transcultural foundations.

Keywords: accommodation; Catholic mission; China; Chinese rites; Fray Antonio de Santa Maria Caballero; Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz; natural theology; transculturalism

Introduction

The Spanish missionary Fray Antonio de Santa Maria Caballero is probably the most crucial figure of the Franciscan presence in China during the 17th century. Caballero actively sought to understand the Chinese language and culture, having a particular interest in traditional Chinese religious practices, the teachings of Confucius, and finding ways to bridge the Christian message and dominant Chinese tradition. Caballero's compelling desire to propagate the Christian faith in China led to his critical intervention in the Chinese Rites Controversy, through which he built his own theological positions regarding this pivotal issue that raged during the evangelization of China, mainly due to the Jesuit missionaries' pledge for accommodation between Christian doctrine, Confucian civic rituals, and the traditional ancestors' cults. Although still poorly studied by contemporary scholarship, despite some new insights [Busquets Alemany 2023; Ye 2024], Caballero was one of his epoch's most active missionaries in the study of Confucian philosophy, and his work was an important primary source utilized by the famous German philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz in his unfinished reflections, written in 1716, on the ethical compatibility between Chinese classical moral thought and Christian doctrine.

This paper recounts Caballero's historical life, emphasizing his missionary activity in China, and identifies his most influential writings. Among his works, this research focuses on a treatise in the form of a lengthy letter sent in 1668 to the Portuguese Jesuit Luís da Gama (1610–1672), then provincial of China and Japan, a text written in Spanish during Antonio Caballero's exile in Canton where he would later die. Translated into French and published in Paris in 1701, this controversial text highlights Caballero's critical views on Chinese basic traditional philosophy and cosmogony, the public rituals to Confucius, and the cult of ancestors, which were also the core themes of the debates surrounding the Chinese Rites Controversy and the Jesuits' accommodation system, initiated by Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), for guiding the Catholic missions' "success" in China. Caballero was a strong opponent of Jesuit missionary methods, and his treatise-letter is an essential repository of his theological as well as practical arguments directly opposed to the Jesuit accommodation proposals. The French edition of the Spanish Franciscan's work would end up being read by Leibniz in 1715, leading to his previously referenced critical text on Chinese philosophy and religion, which was left unfinished at the time of his death on November 14, 1716. This Leibniz treatise, classified as a manuscript letter sent to his French correspondent Nicolas-François Rémond and republished in the 20th century as a "Discourse on Chinese natural theology", is mainly a critical appreciation of Antonio Caballero's text. It is also a strongly critical review of the Latin translation of a treatise on the Chinese names of God written in Portuguese by the Italian Jesuit Nicolò Longobardo, the successor of Matteo Ricci, completed by the Franciscan during his Cantonese exile, and included in the French edition of Caballero's work. Leibniz carefully studied these two sources in preparing his letter turned discourse that debates in detail the two treatises' critical perspectives, with Leibniz ultimately defending the Jesuit missionary accommodation system and its contribution to his personal ongoing research on the possibilities of an autonomous, universal moral philosophy.

This debate is especially important for the present study, inviting us to reconstruct Caballero's original arguments and attend to Leibniz's responses to them. This cannot be

done without returning to the sources, historical context, and epochal debates, an effort that requires a particular critical return to the time and mission of the Spanish Franciscan in China that preceded by decades the German philosopher's first interests in Chinese religion, Confucian philosophy, and civic morals. In fact, Leibniz's intellectual allurement with China can first be documented in 1687, nineteen years after Caballero died in Canton, when the philosopher met the Jesuit missionary Claudio Filippo Grimaldi (1638–1712) in Rome, who was at the time procurator of the missions in China and later, in 1688, appointed by the emperor Kangxi as director of the astronomical bureau of Beijing. Impressed by his accounts and experience, Leibniz kept correspondence with Grimaldi, the French Jesuit Antoine de Verjus (1632–1706), Grimaldi's successor as procurator of the Chinese mission, and a few other Jesuit missionaries from whom our philosopher got privileged access to the collections of letters and reports from Jesuits settled in China [Leibniz 1990]. Influenced by these Jesuit correspondence and documents selected for the 1697 edition of his *Novissima Sinica,* one of the few rare books that he published during his lifetime, Leibniz firmly defended in the volume introduction the Jesuit accommodation system and the need to enhance cultural exchanges between the European and Chinese intelligentsia [Perkins 2004, *114*]. In addition to this printed collectanea, Leibniz wrote two other brief manuscript notes focused on China, both directed to Jesuit correspondents: "De cultu Confucii civili", to Verjus on January 1, 1700 [Leibniz 1994, *61–67*] and an essay usually titled simply "Remarks" to the German Jesuit Bartholomaeus des Bosses (1668–1738) on August 12, 1709 [Leibniz 1994, *67–74*]. It is in this intellectual context that Leibniz accessed the French translation of Antonio Caballero's letter-treatise, despite his not having the most remote clue about the man, whom he simply refers to as "P. Antoine de Sainte-Marie, Franciscan" [Leibniz 2004, *75*], nor his missionary work in China.

An Intense Life of Catholic Missionary Work in China (1633–1669)

Identified by the religious name of Antonio de Santa Maria Caballero and the Chinese names of Li Andang (利安當) or Li An Tang, he was born on the 20th of April 1602, in the town of Baltanás, Palencia Province in Spain, now part of the autonomous community of Castille and León. Caballero joined the Order of Friars Minor (the Franciscan Order) convent of San Pablo de Burgos on the 24th of March 1618 at the age of 16 and made his first profession one year after, on March 25, 1619. He was educated in Theology Studies at the prestigious University of Salamanca and then sent as a missionary to the Philippines, arriving in Manila in 1629 at the age of 27. From then on, he spent his entire life in East Asia, mainly in China. Upon arrival in Manila, Caballero was a lecturer in Sacred Theology at his Order's conventual school for three years before being assigned to the Franciscan mission in China beginning in 1633. In June of that year, he left Manila, traveling with a Dominican missionary, Juan Bautista Morales (1597–1664), and headed for China's Fukien Province (Fujian), first passing through the island of "Hermosa" (Taiwan) [Huerta 1865, *406–407*].

Caballero's missionary activity can be organized into four main periods divided by the times he was expelled from Macau and China and thus returned to Manila, the home of the Franciscan Province of *San Gregorio Magno* to which he belonged. These periods, including his complicated return journeys to Manila, can be organized as follows: from 1633 to 1636, when he was an active missionary in Fugan (Fu'an), North of Fujian; from the end of 1636, when he was expelled by local Chinese authorities and returned to Manila through Moluccas and Batavia, where he stayed until early 1640; from February 1640, when he was appointed spiritual tutor of the newly established St. Clair monastery in the Portuguese enclave of Macau, where he lived until mid-October 1644; from the end of 1644, when he was expelled from Macau and returned to Manila after visiting the Catholic missions in North Vietnam, staying in the Philippines until April 1649; from

1649, when he departed again to China, doing proselyte work in the mission of Shantung (Shandong, Jinan) for two decades before being arrested and sent to Canton in 1666; after three years of exile, Caballero died in the meridional Chinese provincial capital in 1669 [Huerta 1865, *407–408*].

Through this impressive periodization of sequential religious activities, Antonio Caballero is usually regarded as the 17th century "restorer" of the Franciscan mission in China. The Franciscans had, in fact, reached China four centuries earlier through the land route from Europe to Central Asia, arriving in Northern China during the Yuan Mongol dynastic period. Still, this missionary endeavor, centered in the figures of the Italian friars Giovanni de Piano Carpini (c. 1185–1252), Giovanni da Montecorvino (1247–1328), Odorico da Pordenone (1286–1331), the Portuguese Lourenço de Portugal (c. 1190–c. 1246), and the Flemish Willem van Ruysbroeck (c. 1215–1295), proved to be difficult and short-lived [Montalbano 2015, *588–610*]. Centuries later, in the last decades of the 16th century, the first Superior of the Franciscans in the Philippines, Pedro de Alfaro, and other friars, such as Martín Ignacio de Loyola and Juan Bautista Lucarelli, attempted to open missions in Southern China but failed to overcome the multiple oppositions of local mandarin authorities, Jesuit missionaries and the clergy of Macau [San Antonio 1738, I, *409–422*; Santa Inés 1892 [1676], I, *134–151*]. The restoration of the Franciscan mission in China in 1633 was a significant event in the history of the Order, and the initial success of this mission was mainly due to Caballero's work. In this period, the Spanish Franciscan can also be considered one of the few personalities who added a different intellectual color to the tapestry of Catholic missionary activities in China, whose recorded history and contemporary research are still heavily crowded by studies of Jesuit missionaries, often more apologetic than historiographic. However, it is essential not to neglect the contributions of religious missionaries from other Orders active in China during the 17th and 18th centuries who contributed through diverse pastoral and ecclesial activities to the complex encounters and clashes between their own European Catholic culture and Chinese traditional imperial and social thought. The comparisons and contrasts regarding their missionary methods, priorities, views, publications, and interpretations of Chinese traditions and cultures would greatly enrich our understanding of the cultural and historical exchanges that took place during that period [Sousa 2005, *9–41*].

Antonio Caballero also held some important positions during his missionary work in China. As previously noted, in 1640, he was assigned as Spiritual Director to the Poor Clares in Macau, the only female monastery in the Sino-Portuguese enclave and a notable repository of the second daughters of the local high-trade bourgeoisie [Sousa 2011, *187–201*]. Through his position, Caballero built friendly relationships with some of the wealthiest Portuguese and Eurasian families in Macau, whose daughters he helped to place in the Clarissas' monastery, usually in exchange for important dowries and municipal support. Later, in 1668, some of these wealthy Macanese traders tried but ultimately failed to liberate Caballero from his final exile in Canton, promising to deliver large amounts of silver to local Mandarin officials. The Franciscan was still in Macao when, in 1643, he received the critical appointment as Prefect Apostolic of China from Pope Urban VIII. From then on, Caballero's accomplishments in the China Catholic mission became numerous and impressive. He was responsible for building churches in several Chinese towns in the Guangdong and Shandong regions and thus founding Christian communities in different provinces and, according to his Order's apologetic chronicles, the "baptism, and education of thousands of Chinese who converted to Christianity" [Huerta 1865, *407*]. Despite these alleged massive conversions in which the same straight numbers represent narrative nouns, not accurate figures, the hagiographic accounts of Caballero's mission in China only really describe one exemplary singular baptism, that of the young Luo Wen Zao, whose Christian name was Gregorio Lopez. Luo became the very first

Chinese to be ordained a bishop and appointed Vicar Apostolic of China [Huerta 1865, *407*]. After years of missionary work and study of Chinese language and philosophy, in 1653, Antonio Caballero was able to pass the imperial examinations in Lipu, northeast of Guangxi, ranking third among tens of candidates, and thus became habilitated to receive the formal title of Mandarin which certified his mastery of the Confucian classics [Huerta 1865, *408*].

Canton Exile and Conference

Ten years later, following the general persecution of Catholic priests in China in 1664–1665, Antonio Caballero was one of the 25 missionaries arrested and exiled to Canton for four years. Among his co-exiles were 21 Jesuits and 3 Dominicans: 8 of whom were Italians, 6 French, 4 Portuguese, 3 Spanish, 3 Flemish, and 1 Austrian [Esquivel 2018, *234*]. Except for the four Jesuit astronomers working in Beijing led by Johann Adam Schall von Bell (1591–1666) and five Dominicans from the Fujian mission that had escaped to Manila, all the Catholic missionaries in China were arrested, tried in the imperial capital, and sent to Canton, where they lived under strict surveillance in a former Jesuit house until September 8, 1671. Some did not survive the first months of exile: the Portuguese Jesuit Inácio da Costa died on May 11, 1666, one week after the six-month arduous journey from Beijing to Canton; the Flemish Jesuit Michel Trigault passed away in September 1667 after a long fatal disease. These missionaries thus did not take part in the set of formal meetings that gathered the remaining 23 exiled missionaries aimed at reaching a pastoral written agreement on the missionary strategy, including the critical accommodation system built up by the Jesuits since Matteo Ricci that allowed new Chinese Christians to keep their ancestors' ceremonies and the public cult to Confucius [Mungello 1994; Županov & Fabre 2019, *50–67*].

Referred to, with exaggerated celebration, as the "Canton Conferences", these meetings lasted from December 18, 1667, to January 26, 1668, which led to a document titled in Latin as *Acta Cantoniensia authentica* that basically supported the Jesuit accommodation strategy. Caballero was the only one of the 23 exiled missionaries who outrightly rejected the agreement, refused to sign the final text, and frontally denounced its article 41 on the Chinese Rites controversy that had been decided as follows: "Regarding the ceremonies in which the Chinese honor their master Confucius and their ancestors, the answers of the Sacred Congregation of the Inquisition approved by the His Holiness Alexander VII in 1656 are very plausible without evidence to oppose them. Given this probability, we must not close the door of salvation to the countless Chinese, who would be denied access to the Christian religion if they were prohibited from doing things that can be done lawfully and in good faith, and that they would be forced to put aside with the most serious consequences"[1].

The Spanish Franciscan also opposed articles 6, 20, and 22 on the Chinese translation of the name of God and other Jesuit interpretations of general Chinese cults [Caballero 1701, *96*], thus becoming isolated and marginalized by most of his co-exiles. Caballero started writing a detailed report justifying his critical positions, aiming to change the papal position that, in 1656, lifted the previous condemnation of the Chinese rites decided in 1645 by the Propaganda Fide, the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. The first part of this document was finished on April 9, 1668, with the addition of a second part or addenda dated December 9, 1668, leading to the previously referenced large letter sent to the new Jesuit visitor Luís da Gama, but also formally addressed to the Pope and the Propaganda Fide. Written in Spanish, the manuscript received the title of "Tratado que se remitió al muy R. P. Luís de Gama de la Compañia de Jesús sobre algunos puntos de esta misión de la Gran China" (*Treatise sent to the very R. P. Luís de Gama of the Society of Jesus on some points of this mission in Great China*). The treatise was translated into French in 1701 and became a significant printed book on the religious

criticism of the accommodation system. Its contribution helped pave the way for the Vatican's official, definitive condemnation of the Chinese Rites by Pope Clement XI in 1704, which occurred after several years of research and debates; a decision, however, which was kept secret in Europe until its general publication and dissemination in 1709.

Confucius Sinarum Philosophus

During the Canton exile, some of the 19 surviving Jesuits collaborated on a Latin translation of the Confucian Classics for the European religious and intellectual elites, a project initiated by the deceased Inácio da Costa, who had previously translated the Confucian *Analects*. When the Italian Jesuit Prospero Intorcetta (1626–1696), with the assistance of Dutch VOC traders in Canton, escaped from exile to Europe in 1669, he took with him the manuscript of the first translations of what would later become the famous *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus, sive scientia sinensis latine exposita*, ultimately completed in 1672 in China by the Jesuits Christian Herdtrich, François de Rougemont and Philippe Couplet[2]. Published in 1687 in Paris without any ecclesiastic approval but with a cautious protective dedication to Louis XIV, the impressive volume became the European reference for accessing the Confucian classics. Significantly, Caballero evinced the critiques of Confucian materialism and the idolatry of the Sage cult using the initial parts of these translations and other works by Intorcetta [Paternicò 2017, *87–121*], such as the *Sinarum Scientia Politico-Moralis* and his translation of the *Doctrine of the Mean*, the first part printed in Canton, in 1667, and the second edited in Goa in 1669 [Boxer 1947, *202*; Mungello 1989, *251*]. It must be noted that Caballero's opposition to the Jesuit missionary "accommodation" system in China represents a long, serious personal, and textual dispute that can be traced back to 1634 when, near Nanjing, the Franciscan missionary was attacked, imprisoned, and kidnapped by Chinese Christians and Jesuit domestic helpers under the orders of that influential Johann Adam Schall von Bell [Sinica 1933, II, *413*]. From then on, letters, reports, and memorials fiercely criticizing the Jesuit missionary model became a constant in Caballero's writings in Spanish, Latin, and Chinese, merging serious theological arguments with countless concrete, vivid examples of newly converted Chinese Christian families engaged in ancestor ritual and worship visits to Confucian shrines that the Franciscan denounced as pagan practices abhorrent to the Catholic doctrine.

Caballero had already died for almost two decades when the complete *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* was printed in Paris. It offers three of the four canonical books of Confucianism, the *Analects,* the *Great Learning,* and the *Doctrine of the Mean,* completed with Philippe Couplet's useful "Tabula Chronologica Sinicæ Monarchiæ", a paramount erudite effort to list every Chinese king and emperor from 2952 BCE to 1683. Lacking official approvals, the book opens with the stated dedication to Louis XIV, followed by the "Proemialis Declaratio", an introductory section that includes a lengthy, often confused discussion of Confucianism from the Jesuit inventive perspective. Following the "Declaratio", readers can admire a portrait of Confucius and read a panegyric biography of the Sage based on the *Kongzi shijia* found in Sima Qian's arcane historical records. What follows are the translations of each of the three canonical Confucian texts with excerpts from attendant commentaries separated into three books under the heading "Scientiae Sinicae". The work ends with a map of the fifteen provinces of the Chinese empire, displaying 155 cities and the locations of Catholic missions. This map was engraved by François de Louvemont (1648–c.1689), a printmaker noted for several devotional engravings published in Rome for the Society of Jesus during the 1680s, including an impressive series on St. Francis Xavier that the Jesuits presented as the founding father of the Catholic missions in China due to his death on the island of Shangchuang near Macau, in 1552, when trying to reach mainland China [Sousa 2006, *65–66*].

Persecutions and Death

During his lifetime, Antonio Caballero suffered several persecutions in different places in Taiwan and China. In Taiwan, he was arrested by the Dutch and sent first to the Moluccas and then to a prison in Batavia (Jakarta), from which he escaped in June 1637. Seven years later, in 1644, he was also incarcerated in North Vietnam when he tried to return to Manila with seven Spanish St. Claire nuns expelled from Macau. Franciscan chroniclers naturally present such dramatic experiences, including his "unfair" political eviction from Macau, as true testimonies to his "strength of spirit" and "unshakeable faith", praising his extended mission in China as a path to "martyrdom" and thus suggesting Caballero's sainthood [Huerta 1865, *707*].

The expulsion of Caballero from Macau on October 19, 1644, is as well documented as it was highly controversial. In addition to his duties as director and spiritual confessor of the Poor Clares and other religious duties at the local convent of St. Francis, Caballero became one of the most listened to preachers at the *Misericórdia* of Macau chapel. The powerful confraternity brought together the local mercantile elite families every Friday in the early evening to follow a selected mass with a sermon on the mercy of the Virgin Mary and the twelve works of mercy, the main goals of the confraternity chart. The minutes' books of the Misericórdia praise the Franciscan's eloquence and ability to handle liturgical Latin and extol the vivid examples of the good practices of mercy works in his didactic sermons. When, in consequence of the Portuguese-Spanish war sparked by the 1640 Restoration Revolution, orders from the viceroy in Goa arrived in Macau at the beginning of 1644 to expel all Spanish residents in the city, members of the Misericórdia for months opposed the expulsion of Caballero and the seven Spanish Poor Clares who had come from Manila to open the new monastery. However, pressure from the governor and viceroy's envoys prevailed, and Caballero and the Poor Clares left Macau for Danang on a private commercial boat provided by the town's hall. In the city, Caballero left important friends among the mercantile elite, led by Agostinho Varela, Sebastião Barroso, and Cristovão Soares Monterroso, those who would later attempt to rescue him from the Cantonese exile [Sousa 2011, *274–277*].

Caballero died on the 13th of May 1669 in Canton, with the funeral rites presided over by the renowned Dominican bishop, Domingo Fernandez de Navarrete, perhaps the most well-known critical voice of Jesuit missionary submission strategies [Sun su Ming 1981]. The Franciscan historical chronicles recount that the body of Caballero remained unburied for five days until May 20, "exhaling a delicate aroma" [Huerta 1865, *707*]. Probably in the late 17th century, an epitaph in Latin was received at his burial place referring to his Franciscan affiliation, the position as Prefect Apostolic of China, and death during the Canton exile: "A. R. P. F. ANTONIO A S. MARIA ORDINIS MINORUM, MINISTRO ET PRAEFECTO VERE APOSTOLICO AB EXILIO CANTONENSI AD COEL ESTEM PATRIAM EVOCATO ANNO M. D. C. LXIX". Much later, in 1865, the Catholic bishop of Canton, the French priest of the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris, D. Philippe François Zéphirin Guillemin (1814–1886), informed his superiors that he visited the burial place, identified its epitaph, and opened the grave to find the body of Antonio Caballero "uncorrupted" and diffusing a "fragrant odor". According to the bishop's memory, his tomb on the outskirts of the Chinese meridional metropolis had become a place of pilgrimage of "Christians and Gentiles" and had been graced with "several miracles" [Huerta 1865, *707*]. It is possible that 19th-century Franciscan Spanish chronicles that treated Caballero as "venerable" used these accounts to suggest a path for his beatification. Still, the missionary was simply overlooked by the Vatican even when, on October 1, 2000, Pope John Paul II decided to canonize 87 Chinese believers and 33 European missionaries killed in China between 1648 and 1930, a widely debated canonical but also political

event [Clark 2011, *7*]. Indeed, Caballero was everything but a consensual Catholic missionary in 17th century China, as his militant evangelical experience and writings clearly evidence.

Antonio de Santa Maria Caballero's Writings

Caballero left behind an interesting body of publications and documentary sources comprising several letters, reports, commentaries, relations, translations, and catechetical titles. Some of these were written in the Chinese language and published between 1650 and 1664 in Shandong, namely for the formation of Christian neophytes. Unfortunately, it is challenging to form a complete inventory of the Franciscan's writings, especially the manuscripts that were lost, including the reports referred to by Caballero himself that were sent to the pope "through different routes" in 1637, 1638, 1640 and 1662 denouncing the Jesuit accommodation proposals related to Confucius public rituals and the ancestors' cult [Caballero 1701, *36*]. While the Franciscan chronicles of Francisco de Santa Inés and Juan Francisco de San Antonio ignore Caballero, it is only the historical treatise by Fr. Felix Huerta, published in 1865, that compiles an assumed hagiographic biography of the missionary assigning him 49 different titles [Huerta 1865, *408–411*]. Later, in 1892, the Spanish diplomat and academic Cipriano Muñoz y Manzano (1862–1933), second Earl of la Viñaza, presented to the International Congress of Orientalists in Lisbon a report that would later be published in book form offering an extensive repository of historical writings in Portuguese and Castilian on China and Japan that includes a serious entry on Antonio Caballero suggesting a much more limited bibliographic production. This research attributes to the Spanish Franciscan only twelve autonomous titles, including four printed books, three written in Chinese and published in Shandong [Muñoz y Manzano 1892, *54–56*]. Regardless of the differences, these inventories and all the other available bibliographic studies stress the central relevance in Caballero's writing *corpus* of the previously referenced letter addressed in Spanish in 1668 to the Portuguese Jesuit Luís da Gama. This text is usually presented in these chronistic and orientalist works as a "treatise" on the pastoral challenges and religious strategies of the 17th-century Catholic mission in China.

Other than the referred materials from Prospero Intorcetta, this letter-treatise also uses sources and arguments from an unpublished manuscript written around 1633 by the Italian Jesuit Nicolò Longobardo (1565–1655), the successor of Mateo Ricci as superior general of the Jesuit mission in China [Mungello 1989, *162*, *298*]. Originally written in Portuguese as "Resposta Breve" (Brief Answer), the document was very critical of the accommodation strategy and refused any Chinese translation for the Latin "Deus" (God) based on the Confucian classics. Contrary to Ricci, Longobardo underscored the different ways the literati and the "common people" understood Confucianism: the first interpreted Confucius' message in atheistic and materialistic terms, while the latter frequented it through superstitious rituals. The Jesuits in Beijing kept the text concealed, but during the missionaries' common exile in Canton, the Longobardo document was privately handed to Caballero by the French Jesuit missionary Jean Valat (1614–1692), who had found a preserved copy in the Jesuits' Beijing residency archives [Liu 2020, *14*]. Competent reader of Portuguese, Caballero decided to translate it into Latin, finishing the task in early 1669. On December 9 of the same year, the Dominican Domingo Fernández de Navarrete, with the help of Macanese traders, secretly escaped from the Canton exile, taking with him the two manuscripts of Antonio de Santa Maria Caballero: the letter-treatise in Spanish and the Latin translation of the Longobardo Portuguese text. Arriving in Europe, Navarrete published Longobardo's document in 1676 in Madrid as the fifth part of his influential "Tratados Históricos, politicos, ethicos, y religiosos de la Monarchia de China" (*Historical, political, ethical, and religious treaties on the Monarchy of China*), a monumental book that became paramount in the criticism of the Jesuit accommodation model

and contributed to the previously referenced papal definitive condemnation of the Chinese rites on the early 18th century [Navarrete 1676, *245–289*].

Later, the two texts were translated into French by Louis Champion de Cicé (1648–1737), who was an erudite priest of the Paris Foreign Society of Missions and a former missionary in China and bishop in Siam, as well as the editor of the *Acta Cantoniensia authentica* published in 1700. The two translations of Caballero's texts were published in a single volume under the title "Anciens Traitez de divers auteurs sur les ceremonies de la Chine" (*Ancient Treatises of various authors on the ceremonies of China*), edited in 1701 by Cicé's missionary Society in Paris featuring very similar titles: the letter published under the Gallicized name of Antoine de Sainte-Marie was titled "Traité sur quelques points importants de la Mission de la Chine" (*Treatise on some important points of the Mission of China*), with the Longobardo text titled "Traité sur quelques points de la Religion des Chinois" (*Treatise on some points of Chinese Religion*). We ignore the whereabouts of the original manuscript of Longobardo since the Portuguese Jesuit visitor André Palmeiro (1569–1635) had previously ordered the destruction of any copies, thus making it difficult to evaluate the level of textual intervention of Caballero. Nevertheless, it seems quite profound considering the formal and conceptual approximation of the two texts, justifying their similar titles and printed versions. Finally, it is relevant to stress that in this period, the powerful *Société des Missions Étrangères* was the harshest critic of the Jesuit evangelization practices in the mission in China. They regarded Caballero's letter-treatise and translation of Longobardo as effective tools in promoting a new, firmer evangelization, less tolerant of traditional Chinese beliefs and practices that conflicted with Catholic teaching. Needless to say, the Société was protected by Louis XIV and tried to build up a new French approach to Southeast Asia and Chinese religious missions far removed from the traditional control of the Portuguese rights of missionary patronage and Jesuit dominant influence, receiving ongoing sympathy from the Vatican.

In contrast, the other critical writing of Caballero relevant to the Chinese moral philosophy and religious debates, the *Tian Ju Yin* (or *Tianruyin*, "Congruence between Christianity and Confucianism" or simply "Commentaries on the Philosophy of Confucius"), published in China in 1664, was almost forgotten among European thinkers. It contains Caballero's own interpretations of some quotations from the four classic Confucian texts or "The Four Books" (Great Learning, Doctrine of the Mean, the Analects, and the Mencius) that until 1905 served as the primary basis for the Chinese civil service examinations, which we have already noted the Franciscan having passed with distinction. At the time, the medieval Confucian scholar Zhu Xi (or Chu Hsi, 1130–1200) was still the leading authority on the interpretation of these texts. In the *Tian Ju Yin*, Caballero gives his commentaries of pertinent passages from the Four Books, including those about the body, the soul, the spirits, proposed names of God in Chinese, as well as the foundational principles of *qi,* the vital or primary force, *li*, the first principle or essential knowledge, and of *Taiji*, the supreme ultimate. At the same time, Caballero denounces Zhu Xi's "modern" interpretations of ancient Chinese wisdom to conclude that Chinese neo-Confucianism turned far away from the original writings of the Sage, thus becoming even more materialist and idolatrous [Caballero 1664, *19–42*].

Leibniz's Last Letter on Chinese Philosophy

Having settled in Hanover, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz accessed in late 1701 a review of the single volume of the two treatises by Caballero and Longobardo published by the *Journal des Savans,* the first scientific journal in Europe whose premier issue appeared on January 5, 1655. In that precise year of 1701, a new editor assumed responsibility for the journal, the Oratorian priest *Abbé* Jean-Paul Bignon (1662–1742), an erudite scholar, writer, and librarian of Louis XIV linked to the most important academies in Paris: the Academy of Sciences, the French Academy and the Academy of Inscription and Fine Arts

[Vittu 2002, *179–203*]. As editor, Bignon organized a redaction committee of six members from those different academies, was granted royal patronage for the journal, and informed the readers that the publication would include monthly reviews of new books published in Europe, including brief descriptions and critical commentaries of each. The journal fulfilled these goals with reviews of the Caballero and Longobardo *Traités* in its April and May 1701 issues [Journal (Le) des Sçavans 1701; Longobardo 1701, *155–158*; Caballero 1701, *195–200*].

During this period, Leibniz was already one of the main contributors to the *Journal des Savans*, significantly enhancing his European intellectual fame through that epochal network of academics and writers commonly labeled the "Republic of Letters". The German philosopher started his contributions by submitting a letter to the editor in one of the 1675 issues on his invention of portable watches [Table 1756, *312*]. Until 1715, the date of his last contribution, Leibniz was one of the most active and prolific contributors to the erudite magazine, publishing 16 letters, 7 original papers, 3 disputes (all with Newton), 2 memoirs, 1 answer and 1 curious observation of "a dog that speaks" (that the philosopher swore to have seen). At the same time, the journal offered reviews of five printed works of Leibniz, four editions of historical sources for the history of the Hanover Elector, and the posthumous publication, in 1719, of the philosopher's famous "Essai de Théodicée sur la bonté de Dieu, la liberté de l' homme et l'origine du mal" (*Theodicy Essays on Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man, and the Origin of Evil*). Regardless of this impressive volume of contributions, Leibniz's writings on philosophy are scarcely found in the journal, with only two letters on the union of the body and soul. In contrast, one can find several writings and reflections on his famous binary arithmetic, other calculus topics, and more common themes such as barometers or the importance of baptism registrations. Among these writings, however, there is not a single remote remark on Chinese religion or philosophy. The journal didn't even seem to acknowledge Leibniz as a major philosopher, publishing in its 1717 issue a notice on his death presenting him as "historiographer of the Hanover Elector, honorary member of the Academy of Sciences of Paris and Director of the Academy of Berlin" [Table 1756, *312–320*].

Leibniz received the original printed French versions of Caballero and Longobardo's book at the end of 1715 from his loyal correspondent Nicolas-François Rémond de Montfort (1676–1725), courtier of Louis XIV and advisor to the Paris Parliament. Correspondence between the two became enthusiastic from 1713 onwards, including generous exchanges of books. Leibniz offered Rémond a manuscript copy of his penultimate work on the "Principes de la nature et de la grâce fondés en raison" (*Principles of Nature and Grace Grounded in Reason*), and the French courtier reciprocated this by sending a volume with the printed treatises of Caballero and Longobardo. Leibniz, who, as we have noted, had become interested in the moral philosophy of Confucianism mainly through correspondence and study of the letters of the Jesuits on mission in China, seems to have avidly and curiously read the works and translations of Friar Antonio de Santa Maria Caballero. Shortly before his death, the German philosopher sent his French correspondent an unfinished manuscript of a "Lettre sur la philosophie chinoise à Monsieur de Rémond" (*Letter on the Chinese Philosophy to M. Rémond*), showing his admiration for Caballero's in-depth knowledge of Confucian philosophy and surprise for his very critical arguments of the accommodation system organized by Jesuit missionaries in China. In a posterior letter, Leibniz reaffirmed to Rémond that this manuscript was still unfinished, stating, "I need more time to completely finish my discourse on the natural theology of the Chinese". He never finished it, but 20th-century scholarship used this admission to transform the letter into a much more solemn "Discourse on the Natural Theology of the Chinese", a title first appearing in 1977 in an English edition by Daniel Cook and Henry Rosemont, with a French edition appearing in 1987 through the erudite editing of Christiane Frémont. Nonetheless, the only draft autograph of this correspondence held by the Lower

Saxony State Library in Hannover refers to Leibniz's sixteen folio document as a "Lettre de Mr. Leibniz touchant les Chinois". This is the same French title used by the Latin edition of Leibniz's correspondence published in 1735 by the Danish Protestant theologian and university professor Christian Kortholt (1709–1751), *Viri illustris Godefridi Guil. Leibnitii Epistolae.* This voluminous publication re-edits Leibniz text under the French title of "Lettre XVIII de Mons. De Leibniz sur la Philosophie Chinoise à Mons. De Remond" [Kortholt 1735, *413–494*], followed by very deficient French copies of Longobardo and Caballero texts keeping its original 1701 printed titles [Kortholt 1735, *165–412*]. Kortholt also made a small but relevant addition to the original 1701 volume in French, titling his edition "Anciens Traitez de divers auteurs sur les cérémonies de la Chine avec des Notes de Monsieur De Leibniz". Regardless of this Leibniz assumed commented publication, one wonders if, when transforming private manuscript letters into public autonomous books, the authors would agree on giving them the present much more vibrant titles.

Caballero Traité: Criticism, Debates and Arguments

Caballero's letter turned into treatise and later book translated into French was truly surprising. In it, one does not discover a remarkable, singular text due to its elevated discussions of philosophical or theological grand themes, but a genuinely militant manifest committed to altogether denouncing the "lies" of the accommodationist discourse of some of the most important Jesuit missionaries in the past and present of the Catholic mission in China. The Spanish Franciscan does not spare anyone, including Matteo Ricci, but in his letter-treatise one quickly finds a kind of personal main "enemy": the Italian Jesuit Martino Martini (1614–1661), a prominent missionary in China made famous by the publication of his *Novus Atlas Sinensis*, published in Amsterdam in 1655, while on his way to Rome as a proxy for the Jesuits where he managed to convince the Propaganda Fide to accept that Chinese neophytes could continue the cults of Confucius and their ancestors. Caballero writes that, in 1659, he met with Martini in Hangzhou immediately after his return from Rome. In this meeting, the Jesuit priests Prosper Intorcetta and the Belgian François Rougemont were also present, as well as the brother António Fernandes Tsai (c.1620–1670), born in Macau of Chinese parents and an old friend of our Franciscan. Martini informed those present of the success of his mission and also added that he had convinced the Propaganda Vatican commission that in the cults of the ancestors the Chinese "did not attribute any divine power to souls, so they did not ask them for anything, much less expect retribution", stripping them of any spiritual dimension. Our Franciscan seemed unable to contain himself, countering Martini that "the Chinese ask their ancestors for what only God can give, thus attributing divine power to them". And to prove his arguments, he invited Martini to examine a work previously printed in Hangzhou in 1629, written by the famous Chinese convert and *jinshi* (the highest scholar-official title in imperial China) Yang Tingyun (1565–1630), baptized by Ricci as Leo, under the title of *Tianxue chuhan* (First Collection of Writings on Heavenly Learning). The book was promptly brought to the meeting, and Caballero immediately pointed with his finger to the page and passage he was inviting Martino Martini to read. When he did, what followed was a long, embarrassing silence that ended with the Jesuit concluding that "the author didn't clarify nothing about the first principles, which is why it was legitimately requested that all honors be accorded to the ancestors". Caballero confesses in the *Traité* that he remained silent despite condemning "from the bottom of his heart" what he had just heard but did not think "the time had come to speak" [Caballero 1701, *47–48*].

The letter which in 1701 became a published *Traité* is essentially a work of criticism and denunciation. Although Caballero declares his respect for Pope Alexander VII's decree of 1656 approving the Propaganda's accommodationist decisions, he, however,

couldn't remain silent that they were obtained based on lies transmitted by Martino Martini that "openly clash with the truth of the facts and disfigure the meaning of Chinese characters". Thus, the papal decree was only given "in favor of the Chinese ceremonies because these were masked and hidden to counter the ignorance, baseness, and deformity of their superstitions and idolatry". Therefore, from the Franciscan's critical perspective, the decree of Alexander VII "was null and cannot serve to authorize ceremonies when they are unmasked and replaced in their true dimension" [Caballero 1701, *48*]. Thus, the first five chapters of the first part of the work, completed in April 1668, critically dispute and denounce the public rituals to Confucius (3–32); the next three discuss the cult of the ancestors (33–54); and the final two chapters deal with the more philosophical questions of the first principles and proposals for a Chinese translation of the name of God (55–109). The second part of the letter-treatise, concluded in December 1668, accumulates again even more arguments against the rites to Confucius and the cult of ancestors, mobilizing, in addition to the ever-present texts by Nicolò Longobardo and Prosper Intorcetta, the works in Chinese of the Portuguese Jesuit missionaries Manuel Dias (1574–1659) and Rodrigo de Figueiredo (1594–1642), plus the exemplary powerful arguments of the very hagiographic double *Life of Saint Ignatius of Loyola and Saint Francis Xavier* written by the Spanish Jesuit Juan Eusebio Nieremberg (1595–1668), a work published in Madrid in 1645, which arrived to Caballero via Manila (110–152).

The first 32 pages of Caballero's treatise are a continued denunciation of the ritual, idolatry, and superstitious dimension of public Chinese cults to Confucius. It is not a question of discussing classics or complicated philosophies but of systematically and continuously summoning the missionary's concrete field experience. Thus, the Franciscan explains that "Confucius has a privileged position among the most famous idols in China who the Chinese incense and worship" [Caballero 1701, *4*]. Recalling his missionary experience in China since his first contacts in 1633 in Fugan, Fujian, the Franciscan missionary recalls that "Confucius rituals are renewed twice a year. The day before the ceremonies, several animals are killed at the door of the Confucius temple and chosen using ridiculous and superstitious ceremonies" [Caballero 1701, *8*]. Although, as Caballero explains, "the absolute and supreme Divinity among the Chinese is Heaven", what the general population strictly worships is an immense constellation of countless spirits and tutelary deities, of which the most important "to whom Magistrates and Literati turn to obtain jobs, honors, and dignity, it is by mutual agreement Confucius" [Caballero 1701, *13*]. Caballero also adds in an authoritative argument that "I have heard what I am telling you with my own ears. What will it be like in the future, if we tolerate and authorize this cult, as a simple sign of I don't know what affection, or recognition" [Caballero 1701, *15*]. Accumulating many examples and cases that are not worth detailing given their evident similarity, the Franciscan missionary can conclude with assumed perplexity that:

> It, therefore, seems almost impossible that we will continue to find people among us arguing that the Chinese ceremonies for Confucius and their ancestors are merely political and not sacrifices. On the contrary, the superstitious sacrifices that the Chinese offer to Confucius and the ancestors are truly sacrifices in every way similar to those they offer to Heaven, Earth, and their idols [Caballero 1701, *9–10*].

The following three chapters on the Chinese traditional ancestors' cult follow the same method, mobilizing several exemplary lively cases, but open with a question to which the missionary immediately responds: "Are ancestor cults permissible? No, without any doubt, even if they are Christians, because the Holy Church does not allow it to any Christian. Let us only make sacrifices to the true God, asking him mercy for our ancestors detained in the flames of the Purgatory. Neophytes should be even less permitted to make sacrifices for their pagan ancestors who died in infidelity" [Caballero 1701, *25*]. Answered the question, Caballero highlights that his arguments will start by remembering

his early Chinese missionary experience because "the practices I saw together with the Dominican priest Juan Bautista Morales in the province of Fujian are general: following these rituals in one place is the same as watching them throughout China due to the uniformity of the rites that are observed equally throughout the kingdom" [Caballero 1701, *33*]. In continuation, the missionary recalls that, along with his Dominican companion, they questioned three Christian neophytes, asking them why they maintained the cult of their ancestors, to which they replied "that the Jesuit priests allow it; and even when we said it was false, they retorted that the Jesuit priests had actually given them permission to practice the ancestors' worship in accordance with the general practices of the empire" [Caballero 1701, *36*]. As a result, Caballero further noted in his first years of his mission in Fujian that all Chinese, including Christian converts, practiced private and domestic ancestor worship, all exhibiting "in their homes, according to their quality and wealth, niches in who, following the forms prescribed in their rituals, place the names of their parents and dead ancestors to whom they deliver offerings at the indicated times and to whom they say their prayers". They also practice these ancestral rites "in the tombs of their ancestors, and one sees rich, and poor mobilized not only to mourn their dead, but above all to consume their offerings" [Caballero 1701, *37*]. The Franciscan "even admitting with some effort", as Father Martini and other Jesuit missionaries defended, that "originally the cult of Confucius and his ancestors was nothing more than civil and political, when now it turns out that after so many centuries, they give them incense and other sacrifices, what remains to be done to understand that these are entirely superstitious and truly idolatrous cults?" [Caballero 1701, *39–40*].

In the intelligent, systematic strategy followed in this letter-treatise of exploring the many evident contradictions that were listed in the writings, letters, reports, and pastoral practices of the Jesuit missionaries in China, Caballero summons in authority the unpublished *Monarchy of China divided into six ages* ("Monarchia da China dividida por seis idades") by the Portuguese Jesuit António de Gouveia (c. 1592–1677) completed in January 1654 in Fuzhou, another manuscript work that the Franciscan seems to have accessed and studied in detail. Utilizing a copy of the original text written in Portuguese, Caballero emphasizes that Father António Gouveia wrote in his work that "the Chinese, through their sacrifices, ask Heaven and their ancestors (whose material souls wander as if lost in the mountains and forests) for children, happiness, skills, riches and everything that suits them for the good of the body and for temporal prosperity. I am not talking here about what the idolatrous sects practice, but only about what the Chinese and the literati sect do" [Caballero 1701, *40*].

The text of our Franciscan missionary can now conclude in a theologically strong and well-founded way that "the missionaries who allow these ceremonies are not doing something pleasing to God by founding this cult on the fourth precept of the Decalogue, but it is rather the devil who rejoices when he sees that sacrifices are justified that only belong to God. Saint Augustine said in the past about the rites of the Gentiles and their offerings that *demones non nidoribus, sed divinis homoribus gaudent*" [Caballero 1701, *44*][3]. This is certainly not the only utilization from memory of the authority of Augustinian theology since, immediately afterward, when denouncing the Chinese funeral ceremonies that he had witnessed in his missionary activity, Caballero explains that "when the Chinese bury a dead person, they usually arrange well-decorated tables covered with food in the streets where the coffin passes", later denouncing that even in these situations some Jesuit missionaries intended to see "purely civil ceremonies". This was completely contrary to Christian theology since St. Augustine had clearly declared that "it was a serious error to bring wine and food to the tombs as if souls separated from the body had the need to drink and eat" [Caballero 1701, *45*]. This had even been prohibited in 1632 by the Bishop of Macau, the Jesuit D. Diogo Valente, when he determined, according to Caballero's text, that "in the Macanese churches and in all other churches the European Christians of

this city should not agree with the pagan Chinese about the superstitions they practice. And for the same reason, neophytes are prohibited from living among these idolaters" [Caballero 1701, *46*].

Furthermore, Caballero was utterly convinced, at least textually, that the Jesuits had recognized at the beginning of the mission to China the superstitious and idolatrous dimension of the rituals to the ancestors, which they later tolerated only to overcome the difficulties of evangelization: a submissive move was made without any serious theological foundation. The Franciscan tries to prove the argument with another manuscript work that came to his attention in Manila, a treatise on "Chinese rituals" written by the Portuguese Jesuit missionary in Macau Bartolomeu Roboredo (1607–1647). Appointed procurator of the Chinese missions in Manila in 1638 before dying in Canton [Dehergne 1973, *221–222 (688)*], Roboredo wrote in his nowadays unknown work that "at the beginning of the missions in China, no missionary supported any of the ceremonies we have just talked about [worship of ancestors and Confucius' rituals], but that, later, to overcome some difficulties that slowed down the progress of the missions, they began to tolerate them as a political thing". Which, according to Caballero, increased his scruples even further since, "if the Jesuits, in the beginning, recognized these ceremonies as superstitious and illicit, no reason, however serious, could justify them before God and men to convert them into a cult purely political" [Caballero 1701, *47*].

Despite the concrete, exemplary chapters on the rituals of Confucius and the ancestors' cults that dominate the *Traité*, Caballero does not shy away from the complex discussions of the Chinese arcane primary, complex, and polysemic concepts of *qi* and *li*, whose source, according to his interpretation, was the *Taiji*, the referred "supreme ultimate" or "principle from which all the Chinese race comes" [Caballero 1701, *55*]. The Spanish Franciscan explains that *Taiji* was merely a material principle lacking will and intelligence, denying any religious or metaphysical dualism to these primary causal concepts. Mobilizing once again his effective strategy of quoting Jesuit texts against the very model of Jesuit accommodation, Caballero recalls that Longobardo, "successor of Father Ricci", rigorously explained in the treatise the Franciscan had translated into Latin that "in accordance with the principles of the ancient philosophy of the Chinese, the ancients or the moderns never knew a first efficient cause that created all things out of nothing by its sole will and power, but they only recognized a first material and corporeal principle" [Caballero 1701, *56*]. In these fields, the Franciscan had already previously debated the traditional and colorful idea of *Guishen,* the voluminous collection of "geniuses" and "deities", arguing that since the Chinese systematically assign bodies to their spirits, they do not recognize spiritual beings. Moreover, Caballero adds, in the original Confucian idea, spirits really unite and embody themselves with objects from which they are not able to divorce. At the same time, the souls search for compatible spirits following a bizarre social "class" matching: "souls search for spirits of the same quality and with whom they have more relationships. For example, if a peasant addresses the spirit of a man of condition, he will be promptly rejected, and the spirit will not do anything" [Caballero 1701, *31*]. Following Caballero's reasoning, this was another argument reinforcing Confucius ritual dominance among the literati, since "for this reason, scholars only make sacrifices to Confucius as disciples who imitate him in the study of the sciences and who maintain among themselves the portion of spirit that is related to his knowledge and his eloquence" [Caballero 1701, *32*].

The Franciscan does not also refuse, in the last chapters of the first part of the work, to debate another critical topic of the Chinese rites' controversy, that of deciding which Chinese word was best suited to translate "God" according to the Christian conception without leaving the fundamental nature of God subject to ambiguities or misinterpretation. The most common translations were the words *Tian* (Heaven) and *Shangdi* (Lord of above), authorized by Matteo Ricci and later dominant in the *Confucius Sinarum.* Each

of these terms was used interchangeably to refer to God. However, each of them would also have its own implications regarding the conception of God and impinge on the dualistic construct that pervaded Christian Western theology. The official position of the Catholic Church authorized only the term *Tianzhu* (Lord of Heaven) because it reduced some confusion about the concept of God. The term "Lord of Heaven" makes a clear distinction between "Lord" as a person and "Heaven" as a place. It, therefore, safeguards the dualistic separation between matter and spirit, which was influential in the Catholic Church's understanding of the nature of God. Such distinction is clear and central in Caballero's *Traité* arguments*;* it is also used in the *Tian Ju Yin* and several other writings of the Franciscan, including his other two Chinese titles published posthumously: the *Wanwu benmo yueyan* (Compendium about the origin and end of all things), written in collaboration with the Franciscan missionary Buenaventura Ibañez (1610–1691), printed in Canton in 1680; and the *Zhengxue liushi* (Touchstone of the true doctrine), disclosed in 1698 [Pelliot 1938, *191–222*; Sinica 1942, IV, *321–336*]. In the letter-treatise, Caballero reaffirms his strong opposition to the term *Shangdi* preferred by the Jesuits and again invokes his personal missionary experience to support his position: "when Father Jean Valat and I were taken prisoner to Beijing, the judge asked us if we made sacrifices to the Lord God of Heaven, to which we replied that we made offerings to *Tianzhu* according to our law, but that we did not sacrifice sheep or other animals" [Caballero 1701, *31*].

Finally, in his opposition to the Jesuit option around using *Shangdi* as a translation for "God," Caballero does not forget to utilize the then-recent discovery, in 1625, of the famous *Shenxi* Nestorian stele erected in the 8th century that documents the first Christian communities in China [Keevak 2008, *13–14*). Mobilizing the Portuguese Jesuit Álvaro Semedo's "Relation of the Great Monarchy of China," published in Madrid in 1642 and immediately reprinted in Rome in 1643, specifically chapter 31, entitled "Of Christianity that many centuries before entered China and of an ancient stone discovered freshly, testimony to that" [Semedo 1994, *271–286*], the Franciscan intelligently utilizes Semedo's observations of the stele in 1628 to highlight that the epigraphic document was almost seven centuries closer to the "original Confucianism", clearly testifying that in it the name of God was not even remotely translated by the term *Shangdi*:

> In the year 1625, a stone was unearthed in the province of Shenxi on which the substance of the evangelical law as contained in the symbol of the Apostles was engraved in Chinese characters, but the inscription does not give God the name Shangdi. It defines him as "Lord Three in One, Creator of Heaven and Earth, Eternal". Thus, it can be seen that the authors of this inscription were scholars of that time, wise men, Christians, and mandarins who, looking for a word to express God well, found no more appropriate and expressive expression than that of "Lord Three in One", a very strong proof of that the name of Shangdi (which Confucius spoke of a thousand years earlier in his Analects, one of his four books as common in China as the alphabet in Europe) is not what the true God means [Caballero 1701, *100*].

Despite these more than one hundred pages of solid criticism and opposition regarding the Jesuit missionary accommodation program, Caballero was completely aware that denouncing the ancestors' rituals would create a huge social rift, resulting in an immediate family and community rejection of those Chinese converted to Christianity. The Franciscan was also conscious that denying the Chinese Christian neophytes their practice of rituals to Confucius would prevent them from ever having official cargos and formal mandarin positions, even though it was precisely among the literati or "ru" of the imperial central and provincial bureaucracy that the most important conversions were achieved. Nonetheless, despite the importance of these consequences that the Franciscan does not discuss, Antonio Caballero prefers to close his polemic letter turned *Traité* by asking an essential question and promptly answering it:

> What does it matter whether the ancient Chinese knew God or that they did not? We come here to announce the Holy Gospel and not to be apostles of Confucius. This is not the point of the difficulty. Here it is: the majority of Chinese literati, when they have embraced the Christian religion, fear that they will be reproached for having preferred a foreign law, so that they have imagined that what they name Heaven or *Shangdi* (The Above Sovereign) or *guishen* (geniuses and gods) is truly what we call God, angels, and guardians [Caballero 1701, *104*].

Leibniz's Criticism and Philosophical Alternatives

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz was naturally the most prominent lay philosopher to comment upon Caballero's *Traité*; in fact, we can say that he was the only one since the Spanish Franciscan letter-treatise was largely ignored. Leibniz had no interest in discussing the immense collection of examples and cases with which Caballero criticized the Jesuits' model of accommodation, preferring naturally to bring the debate to the more solemn and fertile terrain of philosophy (doctrine) in his manuscript letter to Rémond turned into a *Discours*: "I speak here only of doctrine and will not examine ceremonies or worship, which require longer discussion" [Leibniz 1977, *75*]. Trying to criticize the main argument of Antonio Caballero who, in summary, stressed that arcane Chinese philosophy, including Confucian writings, didn't remotely correspond to Christian teachings, instead informing a set of superstitious, idolatry and pagan credos, Leibniz counterargues against the Franciscan *Traité* by highlighting three very organized and reasoned sequential perspectives.

First, contrary to the Franciscan critics of intrinsic materialism in Chinese rituals and religious practices, the German philosopher admits that created spirits can have bodies; even the rational soul is not entirely devoid of matter: "I myself am inclined to believe that Angels have bodies; which has also been the opinion of several ancient Church Fathers. I am also of the opinion that the rational soul is never entirely stripped of all matter" [Leibniz 1994, *75*]. Furthermore, argues Leibniz, when the Chinese attribute "spirits to the elements, to the rivers, and to the mountains, it represents either the power of God who appears through them, or perhaps (according to the opinion of some of them), they represent particular spiritual substances which are endowed with the force of action and with some knowledge, although they attribute subtle and ethereal bodies to them like the ancient philosophers and Fathers attributed to genii or Angels" [Leibniz 1994, *76*]. Accordingly, Leibniz also criticizes Caballero's materialist interpretation of the ancestors' cult since "those among the Chinese who believe that their ancestors and great heroes are among the Spirits, come rather close to the words of our Lord [Matt. 22:30], which suggests that the Blessed resemble the Angels of God" [Leibniz 1994, *76–77*].

Secondly, following the Jesuit perspectives, Leibniz believes that a spiritual categorization exists in the primary concept of *li* corresponding to divinity: "in order to determine whether the Chinese recognize spiritual substances, one should above all consider their *Li*, or order, which is the prime mover and ground of all other things, and which I believe corresponds to our Divinity; it is impossible to understand this [correspondence] with reference to a thing purely passive, brutish and indifferent to all, and consequently without order, like matter" [Leibniz 1994, *76*]. Thus, for the German philosopher, the Chinese do have a conception of the spiritual and an equivalent to divinity, and therefore, it was absurd to conclude that they reduced everything to matter since they were able to build up a natural theology: "if we focus instead on the classical texts, for me I find all this quite excellent and quite in accord with natural theology. Far from finding any distorted understanding here, I believe that it is only by strained interpretations and by interpolations that one could find anything to criticize on this point. It is pure Christianity, insofar as it renews the natural law inscribed in our hearts except for what revelation and grace add to it to improve our nature" [Leibniz 1994, *104*].

The third and final consequential argument aims to be methodical and epistemic and, therefore, definitive. Leibniz doubly accuses Caballero of using texts in his *Traité* that

were neither ancient nor original but modern commentaries, in addition to treating Chinese philosophy in scholastic, therefore sectarian, terms. The first part of the criticism is absolutely scathing: "it seems to me that the good Father is being misled by a strange prejudice which comes to him not from classical authors but from the discourses of some modern impious ones who, in China as elsewhere, see themselves as free thinkers in order to set themselves above the people" [Leibniz 1977, *100*]. Furthermore, adds Leibniz, "I should say at the outset that I am inclined to believe that these are not the express doctrines of Confucius, but opinions which have been ascribed to him on the basis of modern interpretations. For the actual words recorded of him do not bear this meaning, unless one wanted to claim that he spoke under the veil of religion simply to fool his unsophisticated readers" [Leibniz 1994, *111*]. Regarding the second term of the critique, Leibniz declares peremptorily that it is "presumptuous on our part, having newly arrived compared with them, and scarcely out of barbarism, to want to condemn such an ancient doctrine simply because it does not appear to agree at first glance with our ordinary scholastic notions" [Leibniz 1977, *76*].

Situating his philosophical reflection even beyond the accommodation proposals of the Jesuits, Leibniz regarded Confucianism as a possible ethical complement of Christianity since it had, in the remote past, innate, natural knowledge of a monotheistic God. Unfortunately, the original Confucianism had been corrupted over its history by polytheist, pantheist, and atheist ideas, leading to a set of perverted interpretations that formed the backdrop of doctrines, texts, and practices justly criticized by Antonio Caballero. However, it is precisely Leibniz who follows and quotes Zhu Xi and other later Neo-Confucian commentaries gathered during the Ming dynasty around 1422 in the *Xingli Da Chuan Shu* or *Compendium*, encompassing the readings required for the imperial exams. Although Leibniz ignores the original Confucian texts and attributes to arcane Chinese philosophers the "modern" perspectives and commentaries of the Neo-Confucians of the Ming period, his main goal is not heuristic but rather hermeneutic: the Jesuit accommodation doctrine was an essential instrument for a dialogue between the revealed religion of Europe and the natural ethics of China taught by original Confucianism. It would allow for higher forms of moral knowledge since Europe had the superior Christian faith and logical philosophy, while the Chinese empire had the superior civil organization and practical philosophy that built up a long-term empire of peace, social harmony and dreaded justice as the Jesuits accounts and letters had extolled since Matteo Ricci's foundational mission [Fuchs 2006, *42*]: "China is a great Empire, no less in area than cultivated Europe, and indeed surpasses it in population and orderly government. Moreover, there is in China a public morality admirable in certain regards, conjoined to a philosophical doctrine, or rather a natural theology, venerable by its antiquity" [Leibniz 1994, *77*].

Caballero, Leibniz and Transcultural Exchanges

In the person of Antonio Caballero, we recognize one of those singular examples of European Catholic missionaries "transported" to China and becoming involved in a problematic transcultural dialogue with Chinese philosophical and moral concepts but refusing to follow the prevalent solution of Jesuit accommodation or submission to dominant political and ritual practices. What occurs through Caballero's writings is something like a transfer of the European "baggage" of dualism in the Christian understanding of the sharp distinction between God and matter to a cultural and intellectual tradition that is not inherently dualistic. This transcultural exchange also involved the "ricochet" of the transfer of the ideas of Europeans in China back to Europe, where it nourished the continuing debate on the problem of dualism, body-soul, and matter-spirit, but also fueled from the late 17th century onward the process of formation of an autonomous moral philosophy free from theological orthodox constraints, which is the precise interest of Leibniz. Caballero's concern about the Catholic theological subjection of the Chinese

missionary program is instrumental in guiding evangelical work. In fact, far from Leibniz's transcultural dialogic suggestions mobilizing Jesuit texts, the Spanish Franciscan denies the very possibility of insinuating anything close to a natural theology substantiation even in primordial Chinese doctrines and concepts. Thus, in the final pages of his letter-treatise, Caballero is absolutely critical of the most remote trans-religious accommodation perspective, clarifying with a simple but important distinction that

> all these reports and all these comparisons resemble the statue of Nebuchadnezzar. Head of gold, body of silver, and feet of clay. These Chinese opinions appear good in Physics and in Metaphysics; but the feet are made of clay and mud, similar to the raw material, or to the chaos that the Chinese take for God and for the Creator. Their thoughts are brilliant chimeras, which, under the name of Sky, Sun and Moon, seem to remind us of the idea of our God and his Angels. However, what they offer us are the works of God, and not God himself [Caballero 1701, *105*].

As a result, both in his work and in his missionary practice, the horizon that, with some generosity, can be called transcultural is limited to accepting an inevitable zone of contact between different cultures, strictly speaking, a missionary territory marked by other people, culture and religious practices that, far from any accommodation, are systematically categorized as paganism. It remained, therefore, to visit that others' culture to learn, above all, their language, starting to use it rigorously as a vehicle for propagating and teaching Christian doctrine. The Franciscan missionary even believed that many of the errors of the Catholic mission in China stemmed from the difficulties in learning and correctly interpreting the written Chinese language and its expressions, explaining: "It is not surprising that we, who want with ardent zeal to make them taste the truths of our holy Religion, are easily mistaken in the meaning and intelligence of their characters and expressions. *Fides ex auditu, auditus autem per verbum Christi*"[4] [Caballero 1701, *105*]. Thus, mobilizing the truth of the Christian religion through the evangelical verb of Christ, Catholic missionary work in China should involve extensive translation work, which is what Caballero's work is closest to a transcultural perspective, singularly distinguishing what he considered the completely asymmetrical mobilization of letter and spirit in Christian and Chinese cultures:

> To do this, it is necessary to translate into their language the holy words, which they have difficulty comprehending. For in those places, where they seem to speak of our God and his Angels, they are only Monkeys of the truth or, if you like, they resemble the Peacock, whose feet dishonor the superb and rich plumage. The primary substance is that which God used to produce the marvels that we admire; but if we look at it closely, it is almost nothing; and we can say that instead, in the Holy Scripture, the letter kills and the spirit vivifies, on the contrary in Chinese books the spirit kills and the letter vivifies [Caballero 1701, *105–106*].

There is, in conclusion, a huge cultural gap between Leibniz and Caballero, which is the difference between a moral philosophy much more autonomous and a theology regarded as mainly a pious and devotional flag of missionary proselytism regarded as a true sacrifice. Leibniz is engaged in building a moral philosophy much less theological and divine that includes transcultural exchanges between the Western culture and the Chinese civilization, and, in contrast, Caballero was involved in following a normative theology applied far from any lay moral philosophical independence, be it directly Chinese or suggested by the intermediation of the Jesuit "accommodation" system. Their paths could only be utterly diverse: Leibniz published very little during his lifetime, but his fame did not stop growing after his death in 1716; Caballero was practically forgotten after his exile and death in Canton in 1669. In a simple conclusion, Friar Antonio de Santa Maria Caballero was denied beatification, whereas Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz was actually fully consecrated.

[1] "Circa caeremonias, quibus Sinae Magistrum suum Confucium, & mortuos venerantur, nota, sequenda omnin. sunt. Responsa S. Congregationis Universalis Inquisitionis à Sanctissimo Domino nostro Alexandro VII. Approbata Anno Domini 1656. Quia fundantur in valde probabili opinione, cui nulla contraria evidentia opponi potest. Qua posita probabilitate non est occludenda janua salutis innumerabilibus Sinis; qui arcerentur à Christiana Religione, si prohiberentur ea facere, quae licite, ac bona fide facere possunt: & non sine ravissmis incommodis praetermittere cogerentur" [Cicé 1700, *32–33*].

[2] See: [Couplet et. al. 1687].

[3] It does not seem credible that during their exile in Canton, Caballero and the other missionaries had at their disposal any library other than the books they had in hand, which is why the Franciscan misquotes St. Augustine from memory, whose precise statement is "dæmones enim, non cadaverinis nidoribus, sed divinis honoribus gaudent" (for it is not the smell of burning corpses but the divine honors associated with them that makes the demons rejoice) (St. Augustine. *De Civitate Dei*, lib. X, cap. XIX).

[4] "Ergo fides ex auditu, auditus autem per verbum Christi (Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ)" – Romans 10:17.

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І. К. де Соуза

Місіонерська діяльність брата Антоніо де Санта-Марія Кабальєро в Китаї XVII ст. та "Міркування про природну теологію китайців" Лейбніца

У цій статті розглядаються життя та діяльність іспанського місіонера Антоніо де Санта-Марія Кабальєро (1602–1669), який відіграв значну роль у відновленні присутності францисканців у католицьких місіях Китаю протягом XVII ст. Кабальєро розпочав свою активну місіонерську діяльність 1633 року й добре вивчив китайську мову та культуру, зосереджуючись переважно на студіюванні праць Конфуція та інших класиків. Завдяки своїй наполегливості в 1653 році він склав суворі імператорські іспити в Ліпу (місті на північний схід від Гуансі). Праці Кабальєро опубліковані іспанською, португальською, французькою та китайською мовами, зокрема це книги, трактати, коментарі та листи, що свідчать про його місіонерську теорію та практику. Він рішуче виступав проти пропагованої єзуїтами пристосуванської моделі, що дозволяла наверненим у християнство китайцям і далі поклонятися предкам та Конфуцію. Кабальєро критикував будь-яке домішування до християнської доктрини традиційних китайських вірувань. У 1666 році Кабальєро разом із 24 іншими католицькими місіонерами був заарештований у Китаї і засланий до Кантону, де через три роки помер. У вигнанні вцілілі місіонери – 20 єзуїтів, троє домініканців і Кабальєро – задля вироблення узгоджених положень щодо місіонерської стратегії провели з 18 грудня 1667 р. до 26 січня 1668 р. низку зустрічей, що згодом стали відомі як "кантонські конференції". Під впливом єзуїтської пристосуванської моделі остаточний документ із латинською назвою "Acta Cantoniensia authentica" підписали всі присутні місіонери, за винятком Кабальєро, який одразу став працювати над письмовим обґрунтуванням своєї критичної позиції. Результатом став довгий лист (написаний спочатку іспанською мовою під назвою "Tratado que se remitió al muy R. P. Luís de Gama de la Compañia de Jesús sobre algunos puntos de esta misión de la Gran China" – "Надісланий самому Р. П. Луїсу да Ґамі з Товариства Ісуса лист щодо деяких пунктів цієї місії у Великому Китаї), надісланий 1668 року португальському єзуїту Луїсу да Ґамі (1610–1672), тодішньому архієпископу Китаю та Японії. Поглиблено залучаючи головну конфуціанську й неоконфуціанську класику, Кабальєро в цій праці детально розкритикував культи предків і Конфуція як язичницькі, а також заперечував будь-яку можливість знайти в давніх традиційних ученнях, що лежать в основі місцевих культів, бодай віддалені форми природної теології та наближення до християнського Бога. Водночас, прагнучи обґрунтувати свою критичну позицію роботами деяких єзуїтів, Кабальєро за цей період вигнання переклав латиною трактат, написаний португальською мовою італійським єзуїтом Ніколо Лонгобардо, наступником Маттео Річчі, критиком пристосуванської моделі і, зокрема, запропонованих китайських перекладів імені Бога. Дві праці (лист Кабальєро й трактат Лонгобардо) було перекладено французькою мовою та опубліковано в Парижі 1701 року Паризьким товариством іноземних місій – конгрегацією, що вкрай вороже

ставилася до єзуїтської місіонерської моделі в Китаї. Наприкінці 1715 року француз Ніколя-Франсуа Ремон де Монфор ознайомив з цим виданням (під назвою “Anciens Traitez de divers auteurs sur les ceremonies de la Chine” – “Стародавні трактати різних авторів про церемонії Китаю”) німецького філософа Ґотфріда Вільгельма Лейбніца, з яким Ремон листувався. Критичне прочитання Лейбніца породило його написані 1716 року французькою мовою незавершені роздуми про етичну сумісність китайської класичної моральної думки та християнської доктрини – “Lettre sur la philosophie chinoise à Monsieur de Rémond” (“Лист до пана де Ремона про китайську філософію”). Цей текст Лейбніца, перевиданий 1977 року як “Міркування про природну теологію китайців”, захищає єзуїтську місіонерську систему пристосування, підкреслюючи її внесок у його особисті поточні дослідження можливостей автономної, універсальної моральної філософії, базованої на транскультурних засадах.

Ключові слова: Антоніо де Санта-Марія Кабальєро; Ґотфрід Вільгельм Лейбніц; католицька місія; Китай; китайські обряди; природна теологія; пристосування; транскультуралізм

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