

# Christian-Muslim Relations A Bibliographical History

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Edited by  
David Thomas and John Chesworth  
with Clinton Bennett, Lejla Demiri,  
Martha Frederiks, Stanisław Grodź, Douglas Pratt



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## CONTENTS

Foreword .....	vii
List of Illustrations .....	xi
List of Maps .....	xiii
Abbreviations .....	xiv
Peter Riddell, <i>Introduction: Christian-Muslim Relations in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century (Asia, Africa and the Americas)</i> .....	1
Barbara Watson Andaya, <i>Islam and Christianity in South-East Asia 1600-1700</i> .....	15
Martha Frederiks, <i>Enforced migration: an Indian Ocean Africa narrative</i> .....	29
David D. Grafton, <i>Enforced migration: an Atlantic narrative in Christian-Muslim relations</i> .....	49
Works on Christian-Muslim relations 1600-1700 .....	69
South Asia .....	71
South-East Asia, China and Japan .....	269
Africa and the Americas .....	467
Index of Names .....	623
Index of Titles .....	632

## Roman Catholic orders in 17<sup>th</sup>-century China

### BIOGRAPHY

The Society of Jesus was founded in 1534 and given formal recognition in 1540. The Jesuit mission to Asia was intimately linked to the spread of the Portuguese who, in 1493, had gained from the pope exclusive rights to the East Indies and to the civil and religious administration over the lands they had there or were to discover. Portuguese traders visited China as early as in 1514, and the first ambassadors in 1517. However, plans to establish a permanent commercial and ecclesiastical presence did not reach fruition until 1557 and 1581, respectively. Despite the provision of exclusive rights to the missions in both China and Japan by Pope Gregory XIII in 1585, the joining of the Portuguese and Spanish crowns in 1580 complicated matters.

In China, it was not until 1633 that non-Jesuit organisations began to arrive. Amongst these were Franciscans, who were returning to the Chinese missionary field, having first visited in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Dominicans and Augustinians, who had intermittently visited China in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, these orders were joined by the *Société des Missions Étrangères de Paris* (Paris Foreign Missions Society), which had been established in the late 1650s and early 1660s, as well as individual Protestant and Catholic visitors travelling to Asia for the purposes of trade and exploration. As with the missionaries to Japan, missionaries to China interacted with Muslims in a variety of ways and contexts, especially en route. In China, they interacted not only with Muslims amongst the general population, but also with a prominent Muslim elite, which had taken ancestral government roles since the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368).

This entry looks at the works of selected 17<sup>th</sup>-century Roman Catholic authors, including Emmanuelis Pignero (dates unknown), Gasparo Spitilli (1560-1640), Johannes Busaeus (1547-1611, also known as Iohannes Busaeus, Johann Busaeus, Jean Busée, Joannes Busius, Jan Buys, Jean Buys and other variants), Joannes Oranus (1544-1603, also known as Jean d'Heur, Ioannes Oranus, Jan Oranus and Jean Oranus), John Hay (1546-1607), Giulio Alenio (1582-1649, also known as Giulio Aleni and Ai Rulue), Emmanuel Diaz (1574-1659, also known as Manuel Dias Jr. and Yang Manuo), Nicolò Longobardo (1559-1654, also known as

Nicholas Longobardi, Niccolo Longobardi, and Long Huamin), Alexandre de Rhodes (1591-1660), François Pallu (1626-84), Domingo Fernández de Navarrete (1610-89), Buenaventura Ibáñez (1610-91), and Philippe Avril (1654-98).

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## WORKS ON CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS

### *Jesuits and other Roman Catholic orders in 17<sup>th</sup>-century China: Literature on Muslims and Islam*

DATE 17<sup>th</sup> century

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE Chinese, Dutch, English, French, Italian, Latin, Portuguese, Spanish

### DESCRIPTION

Emmanuelis Pignero's letter (*Auuisi della missione del regno del gran Mogor*) was included in a compilation of texts entitled *Copia d'una breve*

*relazione della Christianità di Giappone, del mese di marzo del M.D. XCVIII. insino ad Ottob. del medesimo anno, et della morte di Taicosama signore di detto regno*, translated into Italian (from Portuguese) and edited by Gasparo Spittili (1560-1640) in 1601. That same year, the collection, including reports by Emmanuelis Pignerio, Pasio Francesco, Peter Gomez and others was translated into Latin by Johannes Busaeus (1547-1611), a Dutch Jesuit scholar who spent much of his career at the Jesuit College in Mainz after studying in Cologne, Mainz and Rome. Busaeus's work, published in Mainz, is entitled *Recentissima de Amplissimo Regno Chinae. Item de statu rei Christianae apud magnum regem Mogor. Et de morte Taicosamae Iaponiorum monarchae* and, like its source, it includes reports from the Chinese and Japanese mission fields.

Also in 1601, Joannes Oranus's (1544-1603) *Iaponica, Sinensia, Mogo-rana. Hoc est, de rebus apud eas gentes a Patribus Societatis Jesu, ann. 1598 et 99 gestis*, was published in Liège. This compilation juxtaposed Pignerio's letter (here entitled *Narratio brevis rerum a Societate in Regno magni Mogor gestarum*) with those from the East Asian mission field. The letters were also included in *Historia s. Petri presice conscripta, simulque multis modis contaminate* (1639) by the Protestant Louis de Dieu (1590-1642).

These two letters by Pignerio were originally dispatched from Lahore (1598) and Agra (1599). They report on a conversation between the Mughal leadership and a Muslim merchant, as well as the circumstances of the mission more generally. The merchant described the country of Cathay (a term taken from the work of Marco Polo and from interactions with Arabs and Persians), and stated there were a large number of Christians, but he also noted the existence of Jews and Muslims. The Mughals responded by making known their desire for the king of Cathay to be converted to Islam. In other sections of the text, Muslims are treated primarily as targets of conversion and are viewed in negative terms, with their creed on occasion described as 'evil' and understood as encouraging immorality and criminality. The letters were of great historical significance for the missions in East Asia. They inspired debate as to the nature of Cathay and China between the missionaries in India, who believed that the places were separate, and the missionaries in China, who believed that they were the same. They were the cause of Bento de Góis's mission to Cathay, and allowed the missionaries in China to affirm that there were indeed native Christians there. It is certainly pertinent to recognise that the impetus of such debates and the resultant changes to

European geographical and religious understandings was the missionaries' own interactions with Muslims.

Terminologically, the term *Maurus* (Moorish), and its derivatives, is used to refer to Muslims in Latin versions of the texts, although in the Spanish text the term *Moro* is used. The term *Mahometanae* is also used on occasion. The Spanish and two Latin texts also differ.

John Hay (1546-1607) was a Scottish Jesuit scholar who worked in Toulon and Lorraine. His *De rebus Iaponicis, Indicis et Peruanis epistolae recentiores*, published in Antwerp in 1605, is a collection of missionary reports and letters, including Jerome Xavier and Emmanuelis Pignerio's *Narratio brevis rerum a societate in regno magni Mogor gestarum*, copied from Joannes Oranus's collection. Another text that referred to Islam, entitled *Exemplum epistolae F. Francisci de Castro sacerdotis Societatis Jesu, ad P. Laurentium Xara ex hispanica lingua in latinam conversae*, was also included. This text contains an account of the execution of the Jesuit Petrus Elcius in Morocco in 1580, which had also been included in some late 16<sup>th</sup>-century collections of missionary reports. Like the work of Spitilli, Busaeus and Oranus, these texts did not deal directly with the Chinese mission field, but were juxtaposed with reports about it.

Giulio Alenio (1582-1649) was an Italian Jesuit missionary to China. In 1623, Alenio and Yang Tingyun published a geography entitled *Zhi fang wai ji*, under imperial commission. It was a continuation of the unfinished geography started by Diego de Pantoja and Sebantino de Uris (Chinese: Xiong Sanba, 1575-1620). Like Matteo Ricci's *Xi guo ji fa*, Alenio's work limits its exploration of Islamic lands in order to portray Christianity as the world's prevalent religion. Moreover, like Ricci's work *Zhi fang wai ji*, it was drawn upon by later Chinese Muslim and non-Muslim scholars as a source for their own works. Countries with predominantly Muslim populations are explored, but there is little mention of religion as such. Judea is given an extensive treatment, however, with the focus on biblical and Christian history, and so the contemporary reality that the region was predominantly Muslim is ignored. Despite efforts to avoid addressing Islam, Alenio notes, in reference to religion, that heterodoxy in foreign countries has led to infringements on European territory (quoted in Qiong, *Making the New World*, p. 318). His focus on a Judeo-Christian Judea is also present in his *Tian zhu jiang sheng chu xiang jing jie* (1637). His biography of Ricci's life, entitled *Da xi Xitai Li xian sheng xing ji* (1630), also includes a version of the story of Ricci's conversation

with the Jew, Ai Tian, in which Muslims are discussed, and which also featured in Trigault and Ricci's accounts.

Emmanuel Diaz (1574-1659) was a Portuguese Jesuit missionary to China. His *Relatione delle cose più notabili scritte ne gli anni 1619, 1620 e 1621 dalla Cina* was published in Rome in 1624, and includes the Italian version of Diaz's *Relatione dell'anno 1619*. In this, Diaz writes that the Jesuits had found a mixture of religions in Henan province, including Islam. He notes that Muslims were held in high esteem, although the passage primarily concerns Christianity and Judaism in China. Islam is appended to this, and its minimalistic treatment, without any comment on its moral status, suggests that it does not hold importance for Diaz.

Nicolò Longobardo (1559-1654) was a Sicilian Jesuit missionary to China who acted as the mission's Superior General from 1610 to 1622. His 1641 missionary report (see Archivio Storico de Congregazione de Propaganda Fide (ASCP) – Fondo Scritture Referite nei Congressi (S.C.), India Orientali, Cina, vol. 1: 1623-74, fols 49-55), written in Portuguese, provides the earliest extensive treatment of interactions between the missionaries and Chinese Muslims. In this, Longobardo recounts the conversion of Zhu Yishou (baptismal name: Pedro), which he attributes to Zhu and his father's years of interaction with the Jesuits and Portuguese. Zhu had believed that Islam was superior to Chinese religion, but following Longobardo's victory during debates with Muslim leaders, Zhu embraced Catholicism. Longobardo attributes this victory to his adequate understanding of Islam and his debating partners' lack of understanding of Christianity. (See Po-Chia Hsia, 'Christian conversion', pp. 282-3, for a description of the contents of the report.)

Alexandre de Rhodes (1591-1660) was a French Jesuit missionary to Vietnam and China. In his *Sommaire des diuers voyages et missions apostoliques du R.P. Alexandre de Rhodes, de la Compagnie de Iesus, à la Chine, & autres royaumes de l'Orient, avec son retour de la Chine à Rome, depuis l'année 1618 jusques à l'année 1653*, he refers positively to a 'civil' Muslim with whom he regularly spoke about mathematics, but laments that the man would not accept baptism (p. 95). He refers to this Muslim again in his *Divers voyages et missions du P. Alexandre de Rhodes en la Chine et autres royaumes de l'Orient, avec son retour en Europe par la Perse et l'Arménie*, published in the same year, where he notes the person's fondness for the Portuguese and dislike of the Dutch (p. 295). In the same work, he again laments the fact that people in some areas of Asia are more apt to convert to Islam than to Christianity, as the Muslims arrived

there first (p. 295). He does not know whether to blame the poor reasoning of the people or the lack of zeal of the Christian missionaries, but he notes that in either case the Muslims were so well established they were able to repulse the Christians (p. 295). Because it is noteworthy to de Rhodes that he met a Muslim of good character, it can be understood that he normally felt that Muslims were not congenial. Within the text, however, any anti-Islam sentiment derives first and foremost from the desire to spread Christianity, and the understanding of Muslims as competitors with Christians in this regard. De Rhodes primarily uses the terms 'Mahometan', and 'superstitions de Mahomet'.

Buenaventura Ibáñez (1610-91) was a Franciscan missionary to China, where he was known as Wen Dula. He refers to Muslims in several of his letters, although such references are sparse. In *Carta al P. Sebastián Rodríguez* (1644), he makes brief mention of the Moorish manned ships in Siam ('Carta al P. Sebastián Rodríguez', p. 28). *Historia y relacion escrita por el P. Fr. Jamie Tarín* (1689) includes references to a conversation in which Islam and the punishment of Moors by God was discussed (p. 289). In *Relacion de mi nacimiento y vida hasta el día y año presente de 1690* (1690), he recounts being pursued by Moorish pirates during a voyage (p. 238). Ibáñez's work takes an anti-Muslim approach, in which Muslims are described as belonging to an absurd or nonsensical sect ('secta disparatada') and are subject to the wrath of God because of their incorrect religious beliefs and practices. Terminologically, Ibáñez primarily uses the term *Moro*.

François Pallu (1626-84) was a founding member of the Société des Missions Étrangères de Paris and a missionary to East Asia. He acted as bishop of Heliopolis and Vicar Apostolic of Tonkin, Laos, and an area of South China. In *Relation abrégée des missions et voyages des Evêques françois envoyez aux royaumes de la Chine, Cochinchine, Toquin et Siam* (1668), Pallu notes his worries about needing to use a Muslim vessel in order to travel between Siam and Tonkin. The tone of this lone passage is negative and anti-Islamic in sentiment.

Domingo Fernández de Navarrete (1610-89) was a Spanish Dominican missionary to the Philippines and China. In 1676, he published *Tratados históricos, políticos, éticos y religiosos de la monarquía de China* in Madrid. The text contains fleeting references to Islam, which reflect an anti-Islamic perspective in descriptive rather than polemical format. However, Islam lacks overt importance to the author and rarely features in the text. He generally uses the term *Moro*.

Philippe Avril was a Jesuit missionary who travelled to China by land. In 1692, he published *Voyage en divers états d'Europe et d'Asie entrepris pour découvrir un nouveau chemin à la Chine*, which was translated into English in 1693 and into Dutch in 1694. It contains sparse references to Muslims. Avril does, however, write of meeting a slave from 'Tartary in Poland' who was inclined towards Christianity (p. 196). Avril, who was able to communicate with the slave, was employed to explain Christianity to him (p. 196). The slave is referred to as a half-converted infidel, but he is viewed in positive terms nonetheless; his adherence to Islam is seen as the result of his place of birth rather than of his obstinacy (p. 196). The man is described as having a mild disposition and it is noted that he accepted baptism (p. 196). On several occasions, Avril laments Christian conversions to Islam. He also refers to religious debates with Turks, noting that it is erroneous to believe that Muslims do not debate or doubt their teachings, and that they do not desire other knowledge.



Illustration 11. Frontispiece of *Voyage en divers états d'Europe et d'Asie*, representing the range of peoples encountered by Avril

Terminologically, he uses the terms *Turc* and *Mahometan* with greatest frequency.

As a general rule, Islam is rarely referred to directly in earlier texts. The sources primarily use national or ethnic terms such as Moor, Saracen, Arab, Turk or Kaffir, and their respective translations. This reflects the different understanding of religion and religious identity held by the authors. Religion is intimately linked to national identity. So, when an author uses the term 'Arab' or 'Moor' the reader is expected to understand that a part of that national identity is his adherence to Islam. Nevertheless, as the century progressed authors increasingly used the terms 'Mohammedan', 'Law of Mohammed', etc., utilising various spellings, to refer to Muslims and Islam. This suggests changing views on Islam and the nature of religious identity more generally.

#### SIGNIFICANCE

For the Christian missionaries, Muslims could often provide an important source of geographical and social information. Nevertheless, the letters and documents examined here illustrate first and foremost a desire to shift the focus away from the important place of Muslims to the mission and in the contemporaneous world. The documents are marked by a tendency to accentuate the relative unimportance of Islam compared with Christianity, and when the intended audiences of a text are East Asians, it appears to create a conscious block to, or censoring of, the significance of Muslim existence, if not the very fact of it. None of this suggests that the missionaries were uninterested in Muslims and Islam; in fact, the scarcity of references and often silence on the topic almost contradictorily illustrates the interest with which the missionaries viewed Muslims, understanding them as rivals whose expansion they wanted to combat.

Despite this, it must be noted that other concerns were generally of greater importance to the missionaries: whether the texts approach Islam from anti-Islamic, polemical, 'neutral' or positive stances, the scarcity of references to it is the common element. Islam and Muslims are often viewed in negative frames, but this does not mean that every author is a polemicist; rather Islam and its adherents are often ascribed redeeming features. Nevertheless, for the most part Islam is treated dismissively, as is to be expected from authors invested in an enterprise seeking to convert Muslims and reduce the expansion of Islam. Even in cases where a text appears to be seemingly neutral and lacking value judgment, this does not imply that the author or his intended readership did not understand the contents in anti-Islamic terms.

The majority of texts included in this entry are missionary histories, reports, or hagiographies. Other works are mainly concerned with Western learning; they include geographies, histories and scientific works. Missionary histories and reports were composed for both public and private European audiences; they sought to record information relating to the mission with a focus on conversion, the achievements of converts, their heroism and suffering. In situ, these texts were primarily religious works, only acquiring the status of 'histories' over time. They were selectively written, emphasising successes and avoiding reference to difficulties, in order to attempt to gain financial assistance and to edify their readers. As a result, myths could be created, or stories lacking an historical basis propagated.

In the texts noted above, Muslims and Islam always formed something of a footnote to narratives primarily concerned with other things. They therefore had little bearing on Muslim-Christian relations in subsequent centuries, although they certainly reflect perceptions about, attitudes towards, and assessments of, Muslims by the Christian authors. All of the texts are important for the history of Christian missions to East Asia and this has been reflected in contemporary scholarship on the topic, which has generally explored Christianity and Islam in 17<sup>th</sup>-century China by way of comparing their efforts to accommodate to Chinese culture, rather than by exploring direct interaction between Muslims and Christians. Generally, the 17<sup>th</sup>-century texts deal with Islam and Muslims descriptively, albeit often taking an anti-Islamic stance; rarely are the works actively polemical – perhaps due to the non-proselytising nature of Islam in China, as some of the texts indicated, or perhaps due to Jesuit policies of accommodation.

The primarily theological nature of these texts contributed to the prejudiced view of Islam and Muslims, grounded in an episteme that dichotomised Christendom on the one hand, and the lands of the barbarous and uncivilised on the other. Muslims, like other non-Christians with whom the missionaries came into contact, were conversion targets, their conversions the work of God, their rejection of Christianity grounded in heathen error. Such aspects were not absent from works on Western learning, as they were an important facet of the episteme that informed the perceptions of the authors of these texts. Nevertheless, as these types of text were concerned primarily with mundane rather than religious matters, anti-Islamic sentiment is less prominent than in the reports and histories mentioned above.

Perhaps of great significance is that the texts betray (although without acknowledgement) the fact that it was Muslims who corrected European geographical understandings of East Asia; such an admission cannot have been easy for scholars writing for European audiences. Further references to Muslims who assisted the religious orders or who were described as civilised, illustrate the slow turning away from the anti-Islamic polemical stance commonly held at the time, and perhaps shocked the texts' readership. A second point of significance is that the texts mark the beginning of changes in European understandings of religious and national/ethnic identities. At the dawn of the century, texts often used national or ethnic terminology to refer to Muslims but, although this continued throughout the period, authors increasingly began to use other terms that had a religious rather than ethnic connotation to describe the religion and its followers.

Three general approaches seem to exist in the texts and they differ in the ferocity of their charges, or lack thereof, against Islam. First are the descriptive accounts that are generally devoid of overt anti-Islamic sentiment. These are seemingly neutral, if only because they lack negative or positive value judgments. Second are the mostly anti-Islamic accounts, which include negative descriptions or judgments, but may include positive assessments and do not attack Islam in its totality. Third are polemical texts, which are unrelenting in their anti-Islamism and where attacks on Islam and the characters of individual Muslims are a central feature of the author's discourse. These three approaches are unsystematic, applying varyingly within the literature; an individual author may make seemingly neutral descriptions in one part of his text and attack Islam in another.

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Hieronymus Xavier and Emmanuelis Pignerio, 'Narratio brevis rerum à Societate in Regno magni Mogor gestarum', in Joannes Oranus (ed.), *Iaponica, Sinensia, Mogorana. Hoc est, de rebus apud eas gentes a patribus Societatis Jesu, ann. 1598 et 99 gestis*, Liege, 1601 (the original manuscript can be found at Sophia University, Toyo Bunko and the University of Tsukuba); JL-1601-KB2-249-853 (digitalised version available through Laures Virtual Rare Book Library)

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- Domingo Fernàndez de Navarrete, *Tratados historicos, politicos, ethicos, y religiosos de la monarchia de China. Descripcion breve de aquel imperio y exemplos raros de emperadores y magistrados del. Con narracion difusa de varios sucessos y cosas singulares de otros reynos, y diferentes navegaciones. Añadense los decretos pontificios y proposiciones calificadas en Roma para la mission Chinica; y una bula de N.M.S.P. Clemente X. en favor de los missionarios. Por el P. Maestro Fr. Domingo Fernandez Navarrete, cathedratico de prima del Colegio, y Universidad de S. Thomàs de Manila, missionario apostolico de la gran China, Prelado de los de su mission, y procurador general en la corte de Madrid de la provincia del Santo Rosario de Filipinas, orden de predicadores. Dedicada su obra al serenissimo señor Don Ivan de Austria*, Madrid, 1676; R/2012 (digitalised version available through *Biblioteca Digitale Hispànica*)
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James Harry Morris