

Christian-Muslim Relations A Bibliographical History

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the Americas (1600-1700)

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Diego de Pantoja

Diego Pantoja, Didaco Pantoia, Didacus de Pantogia,
Jacobus Pantogia, Jacob Pantogiae, Pang Diwo,
Pang Die or Shunyang

DATE OF BIRTH 1571
PLACE OF BIRTH Valdemoro, Spain
DATE OF DEATH 1618
PLACE OF DEATH Macau

BIOGRAPHY

Born in Valdemoro (Spain), Diego de Pantoja joined the Society of Jesus in 1589 and was ordained during the 1590s in Toledo. He arrived in Macau in 1597, and then moved to Beijing on the first mission there in 1601. In 1611, he was commissioned by the Ministry of Rites to begin translating European astronomical works, setting a trend for later Jesuits to work within the fields of astronomy and mathematics. In 1617, an astronomical controversy headed by Chinese scholars led to the persecution of the Jesuits and their exile. De Pantoja died in Macau the following year.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Primary

Diego de Pantoja, *Relación de la entrada de algunos padres de la Compañía de Jesús en la China, y particulares sucesos que tuvieron, y de cosas muy notables que vieron en el mismos reyno*, Seville: Alonso Rodriguez Gamarra, 1605

Secondary

R.R. Ellis, 'Representations of China and Europe in the writings of Diego de Pantoja. Accommodating the East or privileging the West?', in C.H. Lee (ed.), *Western visions of the Far East in a transpacific age, 1522-1657*, London, 2016, 101-16

Qiong Zhang, *Making the New World their own. Chinese encounters with Jesuit science in the age of discovery*, Leiden, 2015

R.R. Ellis, *They need nothing. Hispanic-Asian encounters of the colonial period*, Toronto, 2012

- C. Jami, P. Engelfriet and G. Blue (eds), *Statecraft and intellectual renewal in late Ming China. The cross-cultural synthesis of Xu Guangqi (1562-1633)*, Leiden, 2001
- Zhang Kai, *Diego de Pantoja and China (1597-1618). A study on the Society of Jesus's 'policy of adaptation'*, Beijing, 1997
- A. Waltner, 'Demerits and deadly sins. Jesuit moral tracts in late Ming China', in S.B. Schwartz (ed.), *Implicit understandings. Observing, reporting, and reflecting on the encounter between Europeans and other peoples in the early modern era*, Cambridge, 1994, 422-48

WORKS ON CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS

Relación de la entrada de algunos padres de la Compañía de Iesús en la China, y particulares sucesos que tuvieron, y de cosas muy notables que vieron en el mismos reyno, 'Account of the entry of some Fathers of the Society of Jesus into China, of the singular events that occurred and the remarkable things they saw in the kingdom'

Litterae P. Jacobi Pantogiae e Societate Jesu ad P. Ludovicum Guzmanum provinciae Toletanae praepostium, datae Pachino, urbe regia Sinarum, 1602, 7 Idus Martias, 'A letter of father Diego de Pantoja, one of the Company of Jesus, to Father Luys de Guzman, provincial in the province of Toledo'

DATE 1605

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE Spanish

DESCRIPTION

In 1602, Diego de Pantoja dispatched a letter to Luís de Guzmán in Toledo, which was published in 1605 as *Relación de la entrada de algunos padres de la compañía de Iesús en la China*, and which subsequently featured in a number of compilations of letters and reports. The 1605 version was 131 folios in length, but the reprint the following year was 183 pages. According to the reprint of Samuel Purchas's English

translation in his *Hakluytus posthumus or Purchas his pilgrimes* (1906, vol. 12, pp. 331-410), de Pantoja notes that reports spreading from the Mughal Empire about the kingdom then known as Cathay suggested to the Jesuits in China that Cathay and China were a single kingdom, thereby invalidating extant European geographical understandings and maps (p. 362). According to de Pantoja, conversations with Moorish and Turkish traders allowed the Jesuits to affirm that Cathay and China were the same place, and that a desert divided China from other kingdoms in the West (pp. 333-4). He describes Moorish and Turkish caravans in China at length, noting that the traders already had a knowledge of Europe (p. 362).

De Pantoja argues that Moors and Turks visit China every five years in the name of their respective monarchs in order to pay tribute to the Chinese leadership, but that they use fraudulent letters to gain passage through the country (p. 362). Such letters and the travellers themselves deceive the Chinese leadership into thinking that the leaders of the known world acknowledge their vassalage to China, although it is common knowledge amongst the Chinese that the reality is somewhat different (p. 362). He notes that, in spite of their fraudulent credentials, these caravans and travellers are permitted to come to China and are maintained luxuriously at government expense because of the value of their trade, which consists mostly of precious stones (pp. 362-63). De Pantoja also makes some comments on the origins and nature of Islam in China, dating its entry to the Mongol invasions (from 1205 onwards, after which Muslims were able to maintain their teachings and keep their own places of worship (p. 384)).

He notes that Muslims generally do not bear arms, as doing so would be considered dishonest and they are without use (p. 384); the Muslims prefer to fight hand-to-hand when settling disputes (p. 384). He also refers to a prominent Turk who, some 40 years earlier, had presented a previous ruler with the gift of two lions, but notes that, because the man is not someone of learning, people avoid him (p. 398).

De Pantoja's references to Islam are descriptive and for the most part lack an overt anti-Islamic tone, although the idea that Muslims entered the country with false credentials, and the story of the avoided Turk, could be construed as anti-Islamic. But the description is not so much about decrying Islamic practices or truth claims as about portraying the realities, as perceived by de Pantoja, of the Moorish and Turkish caravans and residents.

Although lacking anti-Islamic tone, the text is neither pro-Islamic nor admiring of Islam. For the most part, it focuses on the failures of European geographical knowledge and cartography, failures that had been corrected by Muslim traders and to which a value judgement is not applied. In Purchas's translation, the terms 'Moor', 'Turk', and 'Law of Mahomet' are used in reference to Muslims and Islam. These appear to be accurate translations of the original Spanish language text, which uses the terms *Moro*, *Turco* and *Mahoma*.

SIGNIFICANCE

This is a very early source written by Christians on Muslims in China proper. The almost non-judgmental treatment of Islam is particularly interesting, although it must be noted that the text was written before the Jesuit-Muslim conflicts of the later part of the 16th century, so it might be possible to assume that relations at this time were fairly amicable. Linked to this is the admission that Muslims had attained a greater geographical understanding, which assisted with changing European understandings. Such an admission would be quite unusual in later texts. This is perhaps connected to de Pantoja's early life in Spain, where the Muslim population would have provided him with greater contact and understanding of Muslims and their customs. The descriptions of Muslim life in China are fairly extensive in comparison with other texts of the early 17th century, although, like its counterparts, the text focuses more on other religions such as Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism and Judaism. Almost identical descriptions are found in the works of Matteo Ricci, Nicolas Trigault and Bento de Gois, suggesting either that the text had a wide influence after its composition or that the ideas, observations and understandings within it were common to the Jesuits in China. Whether these are accurate summations of Muslim life remains to be seen, but some aspects are certainly embellished or misunderstood, such as the concept that Muslim traders had somehow duped the emperor, and the idea that Muslims had existed in China since the Yuan dynasty (they had in fact arrived earlier than this). Like other early 17th-century texts, concepts of religious identity do not seem to have fully developed, and so ethnic terminology is more prominent.

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- Diego de Pantoja and Aegidius Albertinus (trans.), *Histori Und eigentliche beschreibung/ erstlich was gestalt/ vermittelt sonderbarer Hülff und Schickung deß Allmächtigen/ dann auch der Ehrwürdigen Vätter der Societet Jesu gebrauchten Fleiß/ und außgestandener Mühe/ Arbeit und Gefahr/ numehr und vor gar wenig Jahren hero/ das Evangelium und Lehr Christi in dem grossen und gewaltigen Königreich China eingeführt/ gepflantz und geprediget wirdt: Am andern/ wie sie alle andere Politische und Weltliche Sachen unnd Gelegenheiten aldort beschaffen/ befunden; Alles lustig und nutzlich zulesen. Durch Egidium Albertinum, auß einem Italienischen / und auß besagtem Königreich China herauß geschicktem Tractätl verteutschet*, Munich: Adam Berg, 1608 (German trans.; digitalised version available through <http://www.univie.ac.at/Geschichte/China-Bibliographie/blog/2010/04/21/diego-de-pantoja-aegidius-albertinus-histori-und-eigentliche-beschreibung/>)

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Diego de Pantoja, 'A letter of father Diego de Pantoja, one of the Company of Iesu, to father Luys de Guzman, provincially in the province of Toledo', in *Hakluytus posthumus*, ed. Samuel Purchas, London: William Stansby, 1625, vol. 3, 350-79 (English trans.; repr. in Samuel Purchas, *Hakluytus posthumus or Purchas his pilgrimes*, Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1906, vol. 12, 331-410)

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Ellis, 'Representations of China and Europe'

A. Chan, *Chinese books and documents from the Jesuit Archives in Rome. A descriptive catalogue*, London, 2015²

Ellis, *They need nothing*

Zhang Kai, *Diego de Pantoja and China*

Waltner, 'Demerits and deadly sins'

James Harry Morris