Modern Intellectual History (2022), **19**, 29–53
doi:10.1017/S1479244320000426

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ARTICLE

Rethinking the Rites Controversy: Kilian Stumpf's *Acta Pekinensia* and the Historical Dimensions of a Religious Quarrel

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The Chinese rites controversy (c.1582–1742) is typically characterized as a religious quarrel between different Catholic orders over whether it was permissible for Chinese converts to observe traditional rites and use the terms tian *and* shangdi *to refer to the Christian God. As such, it is often argued that the conflict was shaped predominantly by the divergent theological attitudes between the rites-supporting Jesuits and their anti-rites opponents towards "accommodation." By examining the Jesuit missionary Kilian Stumpf's* Acta Pekinensia*—a detailed chronicle of the papal legate Charles-Thomas Maillard de Tournon's 1705–6 investigation into the controversy in Beijing—this article proposes that ostensibly religious disputes between Catholic orders consisted primarily of disagreements over ancient Chinese history. Stumpf's text shows that missionaries' understandings of antiquity were constructed through their interpretations of ancient Chinese books and their interactions with the Kangxi Emperor. The article suggests that the historiographical characterization of the controversy as "religious" has its roots in the Vatican suppression of the rites, which served to erase the historical nature of the conflict exposed in the* Acta Pekinensia.

On 4 December 1705, the Vatican's *legatus a latere* Charles-Thomas Maillard de Tournon (1668–1710) reached Beijing, having been sent by Pope Clement XI (b. 1649, r. 1700–21) to investigate the developing conflict between different Catholic orders over the so-called Chinese rites controversy. Tournon, a Savoyard aristocrat-cum-cardinal, who was neither a Jesuit nor a member of any monastic order, was tasked with concluding on behalf of the Holy See whether or not it was appropriate for Chinese Christians to observe traditional rites honoring deceased ancestors and use the terms *tian* and *shangdi* to refer to the Christian God.[1] The complex negotiations and discussions between missionaries of different orders, Tournon, Qing officials, and the Kangxi Emperor (b. 1654, r. 1661–1722) were recorded in meticulous detail by the Würzburg-born Jesuit astronomer, historiographer, and papal notary Kilian Stumpf (1655–1720) in the *Acta*

[1]Paul Rule and Claudia von Collani, "Introduction," in *The* Acta Pekinensia, *Or, Historical Records of the Maillard de Tournon Legation*, ed. Paul Rule and Claudia von Collani, vol. 1 (Rome, 2015), xiii–lxxxviii, at xxii.

Pekinensia. This mammoth manuscript, consisting of 1,467 folios written in a hotchpotch of Latin, Italian, French, Portuguese, Spanish, and Romanized Chinese, was only recently published in English in 2015 by Paul Rule and Claudia von Collani and offers valuable new information about the topics over which different actors in the quarrel disagreed.

The rites controversy, described by Collani as one of "the longest and the most acrimonious conflicts in the history of the Catholic Church in the early modern period," began as early as the China mission itself, in the late sixteenth century.[2] Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), one of the founders of the mission in the early 1580s, permitted his Chinese neophytes to observe traditional rites, and designated *tian* (Heaven), *shangdi* (Supreme Emperor), and the neologism *tianzhu* (Lord of Heaven) as appropriate terms to refer to the Christian God.[3] Moreover, although Ricci considered the contemporary Chinese to be "atheists," he noted "that in the beginning they worship[ed] a supreme divine being."[4] Thus, Ricci argued, contemporary "atheistic" Confucianism had degenerated from an ancient primitive monotheism. As historian Wu Huiyi puts it, "the strategy of 'accommodation' advocated by Ricci [was] based on wishful thinking that the Confucian tradition derive[d] from the same source as the Christian religion."[5] Michael Lackner explains that, attuned to the Renaissance preoccupation that contemporary reproductions of ancient texts may have been corrupted through mistranslation, Ricci and his successors attempted "to minimize the influence of [Song Dynasty (960–1279 CE)] Neo-Confucian thought [in their exegeses of the Confucian canon] which they regarded as a late and degenerate distortion of the original meaning of the classics."[6] Indeed, as Jacques Gernet argues, at the time that Ricci was working in China, "the idea that the Neo-Confucianism of the eleventh and twelfth centuries was not the true Confucianism of Antiquity … was in the air."[7] Ricci's hermeneutics kindled a centuries-long historical endeavor by Jesuits to examine the connections between what they believed to be primitive Chinese monotheism and biblical narratives of the early history of humanity. By translating elements of what they perceived to be Chinese religious doctrines for European readers, missionaries were required to both position and characterize the position of the material they were representing within both the European and the Chinese canons; by virtue of this, every translator—or missionary—had to be a historian.

The Jesuits' conception of ancient Chinese history, despite varying in minor details from missionary to missionary, generally held that the Chinese had known

[2]Claudia von Collani, "The Jesuit Rites Controversy," in Ines G. Županov, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the Jesuits* (Oxford, 2019), 891–917, at 893.

[3]*Tianzhu* was coined in 1583 by Cin Nicò, a Chinese convert who labored as a caretaker in a mission house in Zhaoqing. It was first appropriated by a European in Michele Ruggieri's (1543–1607) Chinese translation of the Ten Commandments. See Lionel M. Jensen, *Manufacturing Confucianism: Chinese Traditions and Universal Civilization* (Durham, NC, 1997), 73.

[4]Matteo Ricci and Nicolas Trigault, *Entrata nella Cina de' Padri della Compagnia del Gesu* (Naples, 1622), 82

[5]Wu Huiyi, *Traduire la Chine au XVIIIe siècle: Les jésuites traducteurs de textes chinois et le renouvellement des connaissances européennes sur la Chine (1687–*ca. *1740)* (Paris, 2017), 208.

[6]Michael Lackner, "Jesuit Figurism," in Thomas H. C. Lee, ed., *China and Europe: Images and Influences in Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries* (Hong Kong, 1991), 129–49, at 134.

[7]Jacques Gernet, *Chine et christianisme: La première confrontation* (Paris, 2009; first published 1982), 37.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244320000426 Published online by Cambridge University Press

and worshipped the Christian God at least since the time of the biblical Flood and that the traces of their primitive monotheism could be detected through the exegesis of Chinese texts. These historical positions were closely related to elements of the rites controversy—particularly to the conflict over Chinese names for God. For example, the missionary Martino Martini (1614–61) wrote in 1658 that the

> Chinese … use the word XANGTI [*shangdi*] to refer to the Supreme Lord of Heaven … They say similar things about the sky [*tian*], and since these cannot be attributed to the visible and material sky, it is very probable that with this name the Chinese wish to indicate the Supreme ruler and Lord of Heaven and I would say in fact that they were the first to have notions of God, already from the times of Noah or not much later.[8]

In 1703, the French Jesuit missionary Joachim Bouvet (1656–1732) finished writing the *Tianxue benyi* (The True Meaning of the Study of Heaven), which "made just one assertion: that both in the ancient and in contemporary Chinese texts the one true God is known by the words *Tian* and *Shangdi*."[9] As soon as Tournon's legation reached Beijing in 1705, the legate "prohibit[ed] Father Bouvet's book."[10] Stumpf wrote in the *Acta Pekinensia* that Tournon "rendered the book useless, forbidding it so strongly that the superiors of the author were obliged by their Ordinary to … swear an oath that no further copies or woodblocks were extant."[11] This article suggests that Tournon's (and many other non-Jesuit Catholics') hostility towards the Jesuits' accommodation of Chinese rites and terms for God can be framed in terms of historical disagreements over whether the ancient Chinese had known the Christian God.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, this lengthy and multifaceted conflict has presented significant challenges for historians of Christianity in China. Describing the controversy as a "historiographical curse," Gianni Criveller points out that almost every work "omit[s] fundamental aspects or episodes" of the diatribe.[12] Although David Mungello's edited volume *The Chinese Rites Controversy* (1994) offers a wide-ranging overview of the quarrel through several episodes and different interpretations of their meanings, one of the collection's contributions, by the sinologist Erik Zürcher, identifies a crucial historiographical issue that characterizes the majority of twentieth-century works on the controversy and, I contend, has yet to be fully corrected in contemporary studies.[13] Zürcher explains that an unwarranted focus on the theological aspects of the conflict, which necessarily entailed the Eurocentric assumption that the outcome would be settled *in the Vatican* by

[8]Martino Martini, *Sinicae historiae decas prima* (Munich, 1658), 2.

[9]Kilian Stumpf, *The* Acta Pekinensia, *Or, Historical Records of the Maillard de Tournon Legation*, 2 vols., ed. Paul Rule and Claudia von Collani (Leiden, 2015–19), 2: 712.

[10]Ibid., 1: 27.

[11]Ibid., 2: 713.

[12]Gianni Criveller, "The Chinese Rites Controversy: A Narrative of an Ill-Fated Misunderstanding," in Barbara Hoster, Dirk Kuhlmann, and Zbigniew Wesołowski, eds., *Rooted in Hope/In der Hoffnung verwurzelt*, vol. 1 (Sankt Augustin, 2017), 205–27, at 208.

[13]David Mungello, ed. *The Chinese Rites Controversy: Its History and Meaning* (Nettetal, 1994); Erik Zürcher, "Jesuit Accommodation and the Chinese Cultural Imperative," in ibid., 31–64.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244320000426 Published online by Cambridge University Press

a pope, persisted throughout earlier treatments of the controversy.[14] In his words, "it is quite obvious that many of the twentieth century publications dealing with the early China mission are implicitly apologetic and polemic."[15] For example, Rule writes that the "Chinese Rites Controversy is a question that is as much ecclesiastical or missiological as sinological," and insists that although it "was, of course, an argument about cross-cultural understanding (and misunderstanding) … the controversy itself was ecclesiastical, among ecclesiastics, and it was the papacy and its offices which determined the outcome."[16] Consequently, many studies that focus predominantly on the seemingly "religious" aspects of the controversy unwittingly ignore the role played by Chinese rites and names for God (and their genealogies) in *shaping* different missionaries' attitudes towards them. These studies tend to conclude that the Jesuits were sympathetic towards the rites as they were doctrinally inclined to take risks and accommodate unfamiliar traditions, whereas the mendicants (Dominicans, Franciscans, and Augustinians) were hostile due to their scholastic dogmatism.[17] Such an approach is fundamentally orientalist, as it erases the Chinese contributions to the controversy and renders Chinese books, rites, and people powerless in shaping a narrative in which they were involved.[18] This Eurocentrism has been acknowledged—albeit not always entirely abandoned—by a growing number of scholars.[19]

In 2017, Nicolas Standaert made an essential historiographical intervention by problematizing and historicizing the category of "religion" as it is applied by modern historians to the early modern context of the China mission.[20] He points out that by using the term "religious" with its current definition to describe early modern debates, intellectual historians run the risk of writing anachronistically.[21]

[14]Zürcher, "Jesuit Accommodation," 63.

[15]Ibid., 63.

[16]Paul Rule, "The Chinese Rites Controversy: Confucian and Christian Views on the Afterlife," *Studies in Church History* 45 (2009), 280–300, at 280.

[17]For example, George Minamiki, *The Chinese Rites Controversy: From Its Beginnings to Modern Times* (Chicago, 1985).

[18]Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1978). See also Eun Kyung Min, *China and the Writing of English Literary Modernity, 1690–1770* (Cambridge, 2018).

[19]For instance, in his exploration of the Dominican perspective in the quarrel, John Willis noted that "the study of the Rites Controversy as we know it seems to encourage a Eurocentric approach. The debate was among the missionaries and between them and their superiors in the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church." In the last decade, Nicolas Standaert and Wu have authored excellent monographs that reorient scholarly work on the controversy towards China, evincing the intercultural interactions that shaped the development of the quarrel. John E. Willis, "From Manila to Fuan: Asian Contexts of Dominican Mission Policy" in Mungello, *The Chinese Rites Controversy*, 111–27; Nicolas Standaert, *Chinese Voices in the Rites Controversy: Travelling Books, Community Networks, Intercultural Arguments* (Rome, 2012); Wu, *Traduire la Chine*.

[20]Nicolas Standaert, "Early Sino-European Contacts and the Birth of the Modern Concept of 'Religion'," in Hoster, Kuhlmann, and Wesołowski, *Rooted in Hope*, 3–27.

[21]In arguing this, Standaert is following the approaches of Wilfred Cantwell-Smith, Ernst Feil, and Michel Despland. However, by identifying a European encounter with non-European peoples as a major catalyst in the transformation of the term "religion" into something closer to its modern meaning, Standaert's argument draws on Carmen Bernand's and Serge Gruzinski's work, which explores the genealogy of the concept among missionaries in South America in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. See Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (New York, 1963); Ernst Feil, *Religio* [vol. 1] *Die Geschichte eines neuzeitlichen Grundbegriffs von Frühchristentum bis zum Reformation* (Göttingen, 1986);

He suggests that encounter between Catholic missionaries and the Chinese played an important role in the separation of the "superstitious" from the "civil" in European religious discourse. Standaert reorients the rites controversy as being fundamentally about a distinction between whether the rites were "superstitious"—that is, practiced by heretics, schismatics, and idolaters—or "political and civil," rather than whether they were "religious" or "secular." This article, along similar lines, examines the ways in which the rites controversy can be recast as a set of *historical* disagreements about Chinese antiquity between Jesuits and their opponents. I argue that papal rulings against the rites—in spite of the large quantity of historical evidence Stumpf compiled in their favor in the *Acta Pekinensia*—demarcate an important caesura between "history"-oriented *controversiae* and "religious" conflicts.[22] Rather than construing the rites controversy as exclusively religious or historical, this article suggests that—at least prior to the papal rulings that declared all rites to be superstitious—the categories of "history" and "religion" were closely intertwined and mutually determinant. Thus intellectual historians can begin to address the anachronism of characterizing the rites controversy as "religious" by recognizing that for the actors involved, ostensibly "theological" conflicts included disagreements over "historical" matters.

The very existence of the *Acta Pekinensia* underlines the entanglement and tensions between orientalism and Sino-European co-construction immanent in the rites controversy and its historiography. On the one hand, Clement XI commissioned the document as a means of transporting the quarrel in its entirety to Europe. In Collani's words, "learned Europe had become the centre of the controversy."[23] This captures the orientalist nature of the Vatican's approach, which attempted to remove—and arguably succeeded in doing so—Chinese agency from a controversy in which many Chinese actors and old Chinese books were active participants. On the other hand, as part of his task, Stumpf was required to collect the many Chinese voices and interpretations of ancient Chinese books that shaped the controversy in order to be able to produce the *Acta Pekinensia*. His compilation of these voices in the manuscript ensured that the syncretic, co-constructed aspects of the controversy were documented. However, although the *Acta Pekinensia* contains Chinese voices present in the controversy, the document's bureaucratic function was to ensure that those voices would not influence the Pope's ruling on the rites. Indeed, as Rule and Collani remark, "There is no evidence that the *Acta Pekinensia*, after so much effort by its compiler and his

Michel Despland and Gérard Vallée, *Religion in History: The Word, the Idea, the Reality* (Waterloo, 1992); Michel Despland, *La religion en Occident: Évolution des idées et du vécu* (Montréal and Paris, 1979); Carmen Bernand and Serge Gruzinski, *De l'idolâtrie: Une archéologie des sciences religieuses* (Paris, 1988), 43–4, 234; Kathryn Lofton, "Why Religion Is Hard for Historians (and How It Can Be Easier)," *Modern American History* 3/1 (2020), 69–86.

[22]By *controversiae*, I mean the debates between different Christian orders over heresies, schisms, and idolatries. The article's argument somewhat resonates with Bruno Latour's claims that the caesura between "the social" and "the natural" as categories emerged as a definitive aspect of the modern period. See Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, 1993).

[23]Claudia von Collani, "Salvation or Condemnation? Vincentius Mascarell's 'Apologia' in the Chinese Rites Controversy," *International Journal of Sino-Western Studies* 3 (2012), 89–114, at 90.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244320000426 Published online by Cambridge University Press

informants, was ever read by Clement XI or his advisers."[24] Thus, by mobilizing the *Acta Pekinensia* (without reading it) as a weapon with which to condemn the Jesuits' proselytizing practices in China, Clement XI silenced a profoundly complex and, above all, historical dispute and couched it in a new language of theological conflict.

The first part of this article presents a chronology of the rites controversy and explains why the seemingly theological disagreements throughout the quarrel can equally be understood as disputes over conflicting interpretations of history. It outlines the figurist reading of history and explains Tournon's animosity towards one of the movement's prominent proponents, Joachim Bouvet, during his legation in Beijing. Subsequently, through a close reading of relevant conversations in the *Acta Pekinensia*, the article shows how Stumpf's accumulation of evidence in favor of Chinese rites and in Bouvet's defense illustrates that the controversy possessed a clearly historical dimension. The article shows that Stumpf believed (like most of his confrères) that the ancient Chinese had been monotheists, and that this opinion was co-constructed by his access to Chinese and Jesuit historical texts and through his interactions with Kangxi and Qing literati. Then, by comparing Stumpf's rhetoric in the *Acta Pekinensia*—which for the most part was sympathetic to Bouvet—with his later comments on the figurist and his work, the article suggests that Stumpf's attitude towards Bouvet and his interpretation of history was shaped both by the ever-changing precarity of the China mission and by a belief that Bouvet's historical scholarship was insufficient to demonstrate the verity of his figurist claims. This article's underscoring of the historical aspect of what has elsewhere been treated predominantly as a religious dispute shows how intertwined "history" and "religion" were in Catholic discourse up until the early eighteenth century. Moreover, by highlighting that the caesura between the two categories was kindled by missionaries' engagement with Chinese histories, I hope to counter the narratives that—by virtue of focusing overwhelmingly on "religious" differences between Catholic orders—offer a Eurocentric analysis of a decidedly global controversy.[25]

Was the rites controversy a theological or a historical conflict?

The German theologian Johannes Beckmann suggests that the chronology of the rites controversy is best examined in four stages.[26] The earliest period consisted of an "internal dispute" between Jesuit missionaries, lasting from the early 1580s until the early 1630s. An exemplary episode of this phase centered around the actions of Ricci's successor as superior of the China mission, the Sicilian missionary Nicolò Longobardo (1559–1654). In 1618, Longobardo wrote a treatise calling on

[24]Rule and Collani, "Introduction," lxxxviii.

[25]By focusing on the multicultural and co-constructed nature of ostensibly European categories such as "religion," this article draws on Kapil Raj's "circulation"-based historiographical approach to the history of science. See Kapil Raj, *Relocating Modern Science: Circulation and the Construction of Knowledge in South Asia and Europe, 1650–1900* (Basingstoke, 2007); Catherine Jami, ed., *Individual Itineraries and the Spatial Dynamics of Knowledge: Science, Technology and Medicine in China, 17th–20th Centuries* (Paris, 2017).

[26]Johannes Beckmann, "Ritenstreit," in Michael Buchberger, ed., *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, vol. 8 (Freiburg, 1986), 1322–4.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244320000426 Published online by Cambridge University Press

missionaries and converts to only use Latin words to refer to Christian concepts, arguing that the Chinese language lacked the appropriate terms to describe phenomena exclusive to the Judeo-Christian scriptural tradition.[27] Although it is not often emphasized in the historiography, Longobardo's opposition to Ricci's "accommodation" of Chinese terms was fundamentally rooted in a historical-philological disagreement with his predecessor regarding the interpretation of ancient Chinese texts. Whereas Ricci implied some form of historical connectedness between ancient Chinese philosophy and the Christian faith, Longobardo viewed the Chinese as a population entirely historically detached from Europeans, and thus considered Chinese "theology" to be incommensurable to Christian scripture.

The second phase of the controversy began shortly after Pope Urban VIII (b. 1568, r. 1623–44) issued the bull *Ex debito pastoralis officii* in 1633, which ended the Portuguese *padroado*'s monopoly on China. The bull enabled mendicants stationed in the Philippines to engage in proselytization activities in China. Due to the very real rivalries between Jesuits and mendicants, it is perhaps unsurprising that a significant portion of the historiography explains the orders' divergent positions in the rites controversy as shaped by their moral–theological discords. For example, although she also examines the influence of "power politics in Europe, China, and the Indies" on Jesuit accommodation, in a recent review of the controversy Collani still attributes at least part of the difference between the Jesuits' and mendicants' positions to doctrinal disagreement.[28] She characterizes the mendicants' *rigorist*, moral theology—which holds that in the case of moral uncertainty, agents should always adopt the "safer" position—as "narrow-minded and sometimes rather weak," in contrast to the Jesuits' "open, 'enculturated'" *probabilism*—which compelled agents to take whatever side possessed a preponderance of evidence in its favor.[29]

This "Jesuits-versus-mendicants" stage of the quarrel is aptly represented by a Dominican attack on the rites as blasphemous, presented to the Propaganda Fide in Rome by Juan Bautista de Morales (1594–1664) in 1643 and a subsequent defense of the Jesuit position put forth in 1651 by Martino Martini. On 12 September 1645, Pope Innocent X (b. 1574, r. 1644–55) accepted Morales's critique of the rites and banned Chinese converts from practicing them, declaring that "it cannot be allowed. As the case is presented, Christians may not pretend to participate" in Chinese rites.[30] However, on 23 March 1656, Alexander VII (b. 1599, r. 1655–67) reversed the decision, ruling that Christians "could be allowed to use

[27]Nicolò Longobardo, "Respuesta breve, sobre las controversias de el Xang Ti, Tien Xin, y Ling Hoen," in Domingo Fernandez Navarrete, ed., *Tratados Históricos, politicos, ethicos y religiosos de la Monarchia de China* (Madrid, 1676), 245–89.

[28]Collani, "The Jesuit Rites Controversy," 895.

[29]"*Rigorism*," also called "*tutiorism*," was a common moral–theological system in the Catholic world until it was condemned by the Vatican in 1690. On the controversy between rigorism and probabilism see Robert Markys, "From Medieval Tutiorism to Modern Probabilism: 'Spoils of Egypt' and the Making of the Jesuit Conscience from Loyola to Pascal" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Fordham University, New York, 2005); Collani, "The Jesuit Rites Controversy," 895.

[30]Ray Noll, ed., *100 Roman Documents Concerning the Chinese Rites Controversy (1645–1941)*, trans. Donald F. St Sure (San Francisco, 1992), 2.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244320000426 Published online by Cambridge University Press

these ceremonies honoring their deceased, even with pagans, as long as they are not doing any thing superstitious."[31] At this stage too, historical conflicts played a significant role in shaping the controversy. By the mid- to late seventeenth century the Jesuits Martino Martini, Philippe Couplet (1623–93), and Louis Le Comte (1655–1728) had published several books on Chinese chronology, which, drawing on Chinese sources, claimed that the empire's history stretched back further than the biblical Flood.[32] Assuring his European readers that "one can have full faith in Chinese chronology," in *Sinicae historiae decas prima* Martini asserted "that this extreme part of Asia … was populated before the Flood."[33] Martini's work captures how supposedly theological questions—such as whether the Flood was local or universal, or whether the Chinese were descendants of Noah—were fundamentally historical in nature. Indeed, Jesuit interpretations of the Chinese empire's culture, social organization, and customs more broadly—referred to as "civility" by the Vatican—were often inseparable from questions of whether or not its subjects were descendants of Noah. As Simon Schaffer notes, "The wisdom of Qing polity, its distinction and isolation from all nations, and especially its culture's remarkable and early skill in arts and techniques, were taken by European admirers as evidence for this direct link with the Ark."[34] By presenting Chinese antediluvian history as credible in *Sinicae historiae decas prima*, Martini justified the Jesuits' position in the rites controversy, which depended upon the Chinese having known the Christian God in ancient times. Martini's (and other Jesuits') chronologies, which problematized the hegemonic and purportedly universal narrative of Genesis from the Vulgate and contained contentious claims about the early history of humanity, were generated through the interpretation of Chinese texts; they were not merely an *application* of European pre-Adamite concerns to a Chinese context.[35]

Not only did Martini accept Chinese chronological claims, but he also went to great lengths to render the Chinese historical methodologies, which produced these claims, credible to other Europeans; he asserted that Chinese historical annals contained

> the record of many astronomical observations, which date back to times in the proximity of the origin of the world, more ancient than those made by Diogenes, by Eratosthenes, or by Hipparchus and which in every chronology have always been considered points of reference in the

[31]Ibid., 5–6.

[32]On the Chinese sources used by different European scholars in works on chronology see Nicolas Standaert, "Jesuit Accounts of Chinese History and Chronology and Their Chinese Sources," *East Asian Science, Technology, and Medicine* 35 (2012), 11–87, at 32–76. On Chinese chronology in Europe see John W. Witek, "Chinese Chronology: A Source of Sino-European Wide-ning Horizons in the Eighteenth Century," in *Actes du IIIe colloque international de sinologie, Chantilly 1980: Appréciation par l'Europe de la tradition chinoise, à partir du XVIIe siècle* (Paris, 1983), 223–52.

[33]Martini, *Sinicae historiae decas prima*, A1r–v, 10.

[34]Simon Schaffer, "The Ark and the Archive," *Studies in Romanticism* 58/2 (2019), 151–82, at 162.

[35]The Vulgate is Saint Jerome's late fourth-century CE Latin translation of the Bible. It places the Flood around 2348 BCE.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244320000426 Published online by Cambridge University Press

computation of years or a species of natural basis for time, which they punctuated with precision.[36]

Marking "the beginnings of Chinese figurism," according to Sebald Reil, *Sinicae historiae decas prima* was the first European-authored work to take Chinese history, and its ramifications for the Catholic Church, seriously.[37]

The third stage of the quarrel covers the period between the 1670s and 1705, during which time, Collani writes, "the rites controversy had made its way from China to the European public."[38] In 1675, Kangxi gave the Jesuits a tablet inscribed with the characters *jing tian*, which roughly means "revere heaven."[39] Jesuit missionaries displayed copies of this tablet at their churches across the Qing empire. By the 1680s, missionaries of the Société des missions étrangères de Paris (MEP) were working in China and, much like the mendicants, they were highly critical of what they viewed as Jesuit accommodation of pagan ceremonies, the use of blasphemous terms for God, and—again pointing to a historical dimension of the ostensibly theological conflict—Christians placing trust in the ancient *Yijing* and its purportedly "superstitious" prophecies.[40] Although Christian prospects in China briefly improved after Kangxi issued the "Edict of Tolerance" in 1692, which granted Christianity the same societal status as Daoism and Buddhism in the Qing empire, things took a rapid turn for the worse the following year.[41] On 26 March 1693, the MEP missionary and vicar-apostolic of Fujian Charles Maigrot (1652–1730) issued a mandate accusing Jesuits and Chinese Christians of heresy, writing, "If any missionary … does not endeavor to bring the rules we have laid out into customary usage, we now revoke [the] faculties granted [to] him by us and by any other Vicar and Pro-Vicar Apostolic."[42]

Among the many iconographic elements of Chinese Christianity that Maigrot found blasphemous were the *jing tian* tablets placed over churches. Maigrot's mandate was delivered to the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 1697 by his Parisian confrère Nicolas Charmot (1655–1714). The conflict this mandate

[36]Martini, *Sinicae historiae decas prima*, A1r.

[37]Sebald Reil, *Kilian Stumpf, 1655–1720: Ein Würzburger Jesuit am Kaiserhof zu Peking* (Münster, 1978), 160; Edwin van Kley, "Europe's 'Discovery' of China and the Writing of World History," *American Historical Review* 76/2 (1971), 358–85; Alexander Statman, "The First Global Turn: Chinese Contributions to Enlightenment World History," *Journal of World History* 30/3 (2019), 363–92. On Martini's time at the Imperial Astronomical Bureau in Beijing with Johann Adam Schall von Bell (1591–1666) see Claudia von Collani, "Two Astronomers: Martino Martini and Johann Adam Schall von Bell," in Luisa Paternicò, Claudia von Collani, and Riccardo Scartezzini, eds., *Martino Martini: Man of Dialogue* (Trento, 2016), 65–94, at 76–9.

[38]Collani, "The Jesuit Rites Controversy," 897.

[39]Claudia von Collani, "Jing tian: The Kangxi Emperor's Gift to Ferdinand Verbiest in the Rites Controversy," in John W. Witek, ed., *Ferdinand Verbiest (1623–1688) Jesuit Missionary, Scientist, Engineer and Diplomat* (Nettetal, 1994), 453–70.

[40]Claudia von Collani, "Charles Maigrot's Role in the Chinese Rites Controversy," in Mungello, *The Chinese Rites Controversy*, 149–84.

[41]Nicolas Standaert, "The 'Edict of Tolerance': A Textual History and Reading," in Artur K. Wardega and António Vasconcelos de Saldanha, eds., *In the Light and in Shadow of an Emperor: Tomás Pereira, SJ (1645–1708), the Kangxi Emperor and the Jesuit Mission in China* (Cambridge, 2012), 308–58.

[42]Noll, *100 Roman Documents*, 10.

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kindled eventually culminated in Clement XI's appointment of Tournon as his legate and investigator in 1702 and the composition of the *Cum Deus optimus* decree in 1704, which restated earlier prohibitions of the rites. Two passages in the Pope's ruling appear to be particularly relevant for this article's argument: Clement XI decreed that Chinese neophytes were to be forbidden from participating in the rites "even if beforehand they declare openly or secretly that they are not performing them as a *religious*, but only as a *civil* or *political* cult toward the dead."[43] Shortly below this, however, he wrote, "Likewise, the same answers are not opposed to other things being performed in honour of the dead, if they are keeping with the *customs* of those pagans, if they are *not really superstitious*, and *do not look superstitious*, but are within the limits of *civil* and *political* rites."[44] These passages show that at the beginning of the eighteenth century—prior to Tournon's legation to Beijing—the Vatican understood that Chinese rites consisted of both "superstitious" and "civil and political" practices, and designated the former as impermissible and the latter as permissible. This recognition that some—albeit very few—Chinese rites were tolerable to the Holy See by virtue of being "civil" or "political" rather than "superstitious" or "religious" suggests that at the turn of the eighteenth century the Vatican acknowledged the cultural complexity of the rites and understood that the issue could not simply be demarcated as "religious" or "historical," but rather consisted of a heterogeneous set of practices and knowledges. Standaert writes that between the mid-seventeenth and mid-eighteenth centuries, "within Church documents, one observes how the sphere of religion/superstition starts to be further distinguished from the political/civil sphere."[45] The "political/civil" sphere that Standaert refers to was taken by a number of eighteenth-century actors, including the German polymath Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716), to consist of geographically and historically situated practices and cultural "customs" whose origins and relation to Christianity could be understood through historical investigations.[46] As the papal decrees on the rites grew increasingly restrictive during the eighteenth century (with two forceful anti-rites rulings in 1715 and 1742), *all* Chinese rites and terms for God were eventually characterized as "superstitious," thereby eliminating the previously acknowledged historical dimensions of the controversy.

Leibniz was drawn into the rites controversy in 1700 or 1701 and wrote a letter on the topic to the Parisian Jesuit Antoine Verjus (1632–1706). Leibniz claimed that

[43]Ibid., 22. Italics my own.

[44]Ibid., 22. Italics my own.

[45]Standaert, "Early Sino-European Contacts," 20.

[46]This resonates with Larry Wolff's argument that eighteenth-century European cultural perspectivism (or proto-"anthropology") often consisted of historical scholarship that situated non-European peoples and their "customs" in universal historical narratives. Statman also argues, albeit writing about a slightly later period, that "[t]he discovery of an apparently separate Chinese historical tradition … created the conditions of possibility for doing comparative historical work. It was the comparison of European and Chinese records that led Enlightenment scholars to see their histories as also connected." Larry Wolff, "Discovering Cultural Perspective," in Larry Wolff and Marco Cipolloni, eds., *The Anthropology of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, 2007), 3–34; Statman, "The First Global Turn," 392.

> [i]n the cult which the Chinese display towards Confucius and other deceased worthy of merit, especially their own ancestors, it apparently happens that there are rites which many elsewhere would view as religious ones. But it is quite certain that these symbols are mostly so ambiguous that their veneration can be seen as some sort of political cult, like emperors—even Christian ones—who employ the name of the divinity.[47]

As Standaert writes, for Leibniz, whose understanding of China, Confucianism, and the controversy came entirely through his Jesuit network, "the term 'religion' itself acquired new meaning."[48] By problematizing and historicizing the meaning of "religion" at the turn of the eighteenth century, Standaert shows that European actors such as Leibniz may well have understood the controversy as being fundamentally about disagreements over whether Chinese rites were historically situated "civil" and "political" phenomena or whether they were "religious."

As the *Acta Pekinensia* shows, Tournon was an unfortunate choice as an investigator into the rites controversy for the Jesuits, as his actions significantly worsened the precarity of the society's mission in China. He was plagued by chronic ill health, he would frequently lose his temper with other missionaries, and he could neither speak nor read Chinese. One missionary to whom Tournon was especially hostile was the French figurist Joachim Bouvet. As mentioned before, as soon as Tournon reached Beijing in December 1705, he banned Bouvet's *Tianxue benyi*, which, while not a figurist text, claimed that the ancient Chinese had designated the terms *tian* and *shangdi* to refer to the Christian God and thus had been monotheists in ancient times. Stumpf wrote that the book "was proved by no arguments other than those taken from the classic texts, the opinion of scholars, and the proverbs of the ordinary people."[49] This passage, with its references to the Chinese classics, clearly shows that Stumpf considered the book to be of a historical character, and also suggests that it was on historical grounds that Tournon, "acting on his own authority … ma[de] the Fathers hand over all copies, and even the printing blocks; and further … oblige[d] the Superiors in Peking to swear that no other copies, nor other blocks existed."[50]

The banning of Bouvet's book served to vent the flames of the already raging quarrel and accentuated divisions between groups of missionaries. Stumpf, who had been in the Qing court since 23 July 1695, recorded all of the proceedings of Tournon's embassy in the *Acta Pekinensia*, including the legate's three audiences with Kangxi: on 31 December 1705, and on 29 and 30 June 1706.[51] Rule and Collani suggest that Stumpf was favored by the Holy See as an apostolic notary as he was seen as a relatively "neutral" figure by missionaries on different sides of the controversy.[52] However, as the *Acta Pekinensia* markedly shows, Stumpf

[47]Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Writings on China*, ed. Daniel J. Cook and Henry Rosemont Jr (Chicago, 1994), 61–2. See also Michael C. Carhart, *Leibniz Discovers Asia: Social Networking in the Republic of Letters* (Baltimore, 2019).

[48]Standaert, "Early Sino-European Contacts," 20.

[49]Stumpf, *Acta Pekinensia*, 2: 712.

[50]Ibid., 1: 27.

[51]Ibid., 82–98, 405–17.

[52]Rule and Collani, "Introduction," l.

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was clearly sympathetic both towards the rites and towards Bouvet's conception of history during Tournon's legation.

Given Tournon's animosity towards Bouvet, who is often characterized as the unofficial leader of the figurists in China, it is worth briefly examining the missionary's ideology and exploring how it brought together historical and theological concerns. The term "figurism" was coined by the French secular humanist Nicolas Fréret (1688–1749) in a letter to the Jesuit missionary Antoine Gaubil (1689–1759) as a pejorative for the intellectual current in the Society of Jesus that held that the ancient Chinese canonical books prefigured Christian revelation.[53] Lackner writes that figurism in a wider sense developed from syncretic hermeneutical traditions such as Hermetism, which attempted to prove an eternal or perennial nature of Christian revelation by revealing the divine character of texts that were external to the Christian scriptural tradition.[54] Early versions of this hermeneutic method consisted of examining the "letters, words, persons and events" of the Old Testament, commonly thought to contain elements of the *prisca theologia*, to identify Jewish predictions of the coming of Christ.[55] These attempts to extract an "inner" meaning from the Old Testament, Lackner contends, were driven by efforts to convert Jews to Christianity and convince them of the universalism of Christian revelation. The Jesuits' universalism purported that the souls of all different peoples around the world were essentially the same and therefore had the potential to be saved through conversion to Catholicism. This wider sense of figurism, which was inseparable from the Jesuits' universalism, reared its head in a number of different contexts across the Jesuits' extensive global networks—ranging from Canada to China and beyond—during the early eighteenth century.[56] As Lackner writes, "According to this esoteric conception, both Jews and pagans possessed a knowledge of the truth, but this knowledge was represented only in *figura*, in symbolical, allegorical and archetypal forms."[57]

However, in the narrower context of the China mission, as Wu writes, figurism can be understood as taking "one more step" beyond Ricci's accommodation strategies.[58] While many Jesuit missionaries held an implicit belief in the historical continuity between the philosophies of ancient China and contemporary Europe, the figurists were explicit in their faith that the Chinese classics were *so* ancient that they were as authoritative as the Old Testament in prefiguring Christian revelation.

[53]Virgile Pinot, *La Chine et la formation de l'esprit philosophique en France* (Paris, 1932), 50.

[54]Lackner, "Jesuit Figurism." See also Umberto Eco, *La ricerca della lingua perfetta nella cultura europea* (Rome, 1993).

[55]Arnold H. Rowbotham, *Missionary and Mandarin: The Jesuits at the Court of China* (Berkeley, 1942), 374.

[56]On Jesuit universalism in the "classicization" of Iroquois peoples in New France see Gianamar Giovannetti-Singh, "Galenizing the New World: Joseph-François Lafitau's 'Galenization' of Canadian Ginseng, *ca* 1716–1724," *Notes and Records: The Royal Society Journal of the History of Science* (2020), doi:10.1098/rsnr.2019.0037; Sarah Dees, "An Equation of Language and Spirit: Comparative Philology and the Study of American Indian Religions," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 27/3 (2015), 195–219.

[57]Lackner, "Jesuit Figurism," 130.

[58]Wu, *Traduire la Chine*, 157.

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Wu makes the important point that figurism did not represent a "radical break with Ricci's 'accommodation,'" despite frequently being presented as such.[59] Knud Lundbæk describes Bouvet's figurism as "reading into passages of the oldest literature as well as in the structures of the Chinese characters—the hieroglyphs—*figures* or *types* of persons or events in the New Testament, first of all of Jesus Christ."[60] The principal method by which the figurists reached conclusions about the prophetic nature of Chinese texts—scriptural hermeneutics—was among the most common European historical methodologies at the turn of the eighteenth century. However, what distinguished the figurists' history from the biblical narratives with which Tournon, Parisian lay priests, and the mendicants were evidently more comfortable, was that whereas the latter had remained relatively unchanged for millennia, the former were co-constructed during the China mission, through Jesuit interpretations of the Chinese classics and courtly interactions between missionaries and Chinese literati.

A letter sent by Bouvet from the Qing court to the Parisian man of letters Abbé Jean-Paul Bignon (1662–1743) on 15 September 1704 aptly captures the missionary's historical syncretism. In this letter, Bouvet interwove the Chinese classics with the Old Testament, the Corpus Hermeticum, Greek and Egyptian mythology, and the Islamic tradition. In it, he wrote that the

> alleged founder of the Chinese monarchy [Fuxi] is none other than he whom the most ancient nations have recognized … as the founder not only of their laws and customs but also of their religion, sciences, ancient books, writing systems, and languages. Consequently, the Fo-hi [Fuxi] of the Chinese, the Hermes or Mercury Trismegist of the Egyptians and Greeks, the Thot of the Alexandrians, the Idris or Adris of the Arabs, and the Enoch of the Hebrews are one and the same person who is revered by diverse nations under different names.[61]

This co-constructive mode of knowledge production is captured well by Wu, Alexander Statman, and Mario Cams, who write that the Jesuit missionaries in China "produced knowledge not at the intersection between two civilizational blocks, but rather among a plurality of peoples and networks."[62] The conception of history that Bouvet espoused in his letter to Bignon highlights exactly the sort of historical syncretism that Tournon and the Jesuits' opponents found so pernicious during the China mission.

Tournon's vehement opposition to Bouvet documented in the *Acta Pekinensia* shows that, for the legate, there was nothing more dangerous to the authority of the Church than the historical syncretism practiced by Jesuit missionaries, whether

[59]Ibid., 160.

[60]Knud Lundbæk, "Joseph Prémare and the Name of God in China," in Mungello, *The Chinese Rites Controversy*, 129–45, at 130–31, original emphasis.

[61]Claudia von Collani, *Eine wissenschaftliche Akademie für China: Briefe des Chinamissionars Joachim Bouvet S.J. an Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz und Jean-Paul Bignon über die Erforschung der chinesischen Kultur, Sprache und Geschichte* (Stuttgart, 1989), 42.

[62]Wu Huiyi, Alexander Statman, and Mario Cams, "Displacing Jesuit Science in Qing China: Introduction," *East Asian Science, Technology, and Medicine* 46 (2017), 15–23.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244320000426 Published online by Cambridge University Press

figurist or not. On the other hand, for the court-based Jesuits, engaging in historical syncretism was a political necessity to become fully enculturated and accepted in powerful literati circles.[63] The next section explores the heart of the controversy as documented by Stumpf between December 1705 and August 1706 and argues that the papal notary's accumulation of evidence in favor of Bouvet's *Tianxue benyi* and the legitimacy of Chinese rites and terms further evinces the historical nature of the quarrel.

Tournon, Stumpf, and Bouvet in Beijing

Tournon, the son of the governor of Nice, was born in Turin on 21 December 1688. He began his studies at a Jesuit school in Nice, although he never joined the order. He later relocated to Rome, where he studied theology and received a doctorate in canon and civil law—a common trajectory for wealthy young elite men to fast-track their progress towards holding high ecclesiastical office.[64] In 1697, Tournon became the Roman agent to the newly appointed Archbishop of Fermo, Cardinal Baldassare Cenci (1648–1709); although the latter was first offered the legation to China, he declined based on his age and instead recommended Tournon to the Holy See as *legatus a latere*.[65] Tournon was consecrated as the Patriarch of Antioch on 21 December 1701, and traveled to China as the Pope's personal legate shortly after.[66]

Stumpf, the papal notary who compiled the *Acta Pekinensia*, was born in Würzburg, in Franconia, on 13 or 14 September 1655.[67] He began his schooling at the Jesuit College in his hometown before studying mathematics and philosophy at the University of Würzburg. He joined the Society of Jesus shortly before turning eighteen.[68] Stumpf was passionate about traveling the world and sent a number of *indipetae* to the mission of the Indies requesting to undertake proselytizing work in Asia.[69] He was selected in the autumn of 1690 after being ordained as a priest and having gained pastoral and teaching experience in Europe.[70] In 1691, Stumpf departed from Lisbon, and after a journey with lengthy stops in Mozambique and Goa, he reached Macau on 15 July 1694. From Goa to Macau, Stumpf traveled with a veteran of the China mission, the Genoese Jesuit Claudio Filippo Grimaldi (1638–1712), who had been appointed as the successor to Ferdinand Verbiest as director of the Imperial Astronomical Bureau.[71] Stumpf's time with Grimaldi from March to July 1694 may well have contributed to the former's understanding

[63]On the Chinese sources used by Jesuits to compose their syncretic histories see Standaert, "Jesuit Accounts of Chinese History."

[64]Rule and Collani, "Introduction," li–liv.

[65]Mario Guarnacci, *Vitae, et res gestae Pontificum Romanorum et S.R.E. cardinalium a Clemente X. usque ad Clementem XII* (Rome, 1751).

[66]Rule and Collani, "Introduction."

[67]Ibid., xlviii.

[68]Louis Pfister, *Notices biographiques et bibliographiques sur les Jésuites de l'ancienne mission de Chine. 1552–1773: XVIe and XVIIe siècles*, vol. 59 (Shanghai, 1932), #198; Joseph Dehergne, *Répertoire des Jésuites de Chine de 1552 à 1800* (Rome, 1973), #818; C. E. O'Neill and J. M. Dominguez, *Diccionario Histórico de la Compañía de Jesús: biografico-tematica* (Rome and Madrid, 2001), 3651–2.

[69]*Indipetae* were letters of request to travel.

[70]Rule and Collani, "Introduction," xlviii.

[71]Ibid., xlix.

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of the deeply entangled relationship between history, religion, and philology during the rites controversy. In July 1689, Grimaldi, who at the time was acting as an envoy for the Qing empire, met Leibniz on several occasions in Rome, and the two men discussed the history and geography of East Asian languages and the relationships between philology and ancient history.[72] As intellectual historian Michael Carhart writes in his excellent new monograph on Leibniz's correspondence networks with Jesuits in China, to the German polymath "language was clearly the means to determine the origins and connections of nations."[73] Leibniz's concerns, mediated through Grimaldi, may well have had an impact on the young Stumpf and his understanding of the connections between contemporary languages and religious practices, and distant antiquity.

While Grimaldi was allowed to travel to Beijing immediately upon arriving in Macau, Stumpf was ordered to stay in the Portuguese colony by its administrators, who were apprehensive of the growing non-Portuguese European presence in the Qing court.[74] Stumpf caught up with Grimaldi in Guangzhou, where the Würzburger took to repairing the astronomical instruments that had suffered damage on the voyage from Europe; his abilities impressed the mandarins there, who reported these skills to the emperor. Upon hearing of Stumpf's technical prowess, Kangxi invited him to his court, where the missionary arrived on 23 July 1695.[75] Stumpf spent most of his time in Beijing living in the Beitang—the French mission house in the north of the capital—and working in the Astronomical Bureau as an instrument designer and repairman. It has been shown that Stumpf produced over six hundred instruments and machines during his twenty-five years at the bureau, designed for astronomical, surveying, military, and civil uses.[76] Kangxi made Stumpf superintendent of the Imperial Glassworks and the missionary later served as director of the Bureau of Astronomy between 1711 and 1719.[77]

Given his closeness to Kangxi and his formal courtly positions, Stumpf befriended many literati in both the Yangxin Dian (Hall of Moral Cultivation) and the Wuying Dian (Hall of Military Glory) and had access to many Chinese and Manchu texts on a vast array of different subjects, including ancient history. Moreover, in his capacity as an apostolic notary, Stumpf became the archivist of the Jesuit library in Beijing and he had access to the entirety of the Society of Jesus's Chinese collection of books and manuscripts, including several texts on ancient Chinese history.[78] Thus, when Tournon's legation arrived in December 1705, Stumpf was in a good position to serve as an intermediary between the legate, the emperor, and the Jesuits, having gained the favor of the Qing court, of the Catholic church, and of his order, and being profoundly enculturated in both

[72]Carhart, *Leibniz Discovers Asia*, 2, 50, 59.

[73]Ibid., 50.

[74]Rule and Collani. See also Reil, *Kilian Stumpf*, 50–53.

[75]Rule and Collani, "Introduction," xlviii.

[76]Ibid.; Gert Naundorf, "Ignatz Köglers S.J. Elogium für Kilian Stumpf S.J. (1720)," *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* 59 (1975), 269–85.

[77]Emily Byrne Curtis, "A Plan of the Emperor's Glassworks," *Arts Asiatiques* 56 (2001), 81–90. Dehergne, *Répertoire des Jésuites de Chine*.

[78]Claudia von Collani, "The True Mother of the China Mission: Kilian Stumpf's 'Succincta Chronologica Relatio'," in Hoster, Kuhlmann, and Wesołowski, *Rooted in Hope*, 229–76.

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Jesuit and Chinese literati circles. However, despite Stumpf's best efforts to minimize the tensions between Tournon and the Jesuits, whose "accommodating" proselytizing practices the legate had traveled to China to investigate, Tournon immediately showed great hostility towards Bouvet and his writings.

In Bouvet's letter to Bignon, which was written in 1704, little over a year before Tournon's legation reached Beijing, the figurist claimed that "the canonical books of China are the most ancient works of natural law … not even excepting the Pentateuch of Moses; that is true at least for the book *ye kim* [*Yijing*] which can with assurance be regarded as the most ancient work known in the world."[79] He went on to write, "No one among the learned can ignore, that all the nations of the world were sprung from Noah's posterity … preserved from the waters of the universal Flood; their languages, their letters, their arts, their sciences, their laws, their customs, and their religion have all come out of this common origin."[80] He then conjectured that the Chinese language, religions, and sciences comprised the antediluvian knowledge transmitted by Noah's son "Shem … [who] inherited the treasure trove of sacred hieroglyphic books that Noah had saved from the waters of the Deluge after having received them from Methusalem, the nephew of Enoch with whom he had spent several centuries."[81] Bouvet argued that the Chinese, as possessors and sustainers of this Noachian primitive monotheism, could teach Europeans about the secrets of primordial Christianity believed to have been lost in the Flood. His letter is a good indicator of the missionary's interpretation of history, towards which Tournon was so hostile little over a year later during his legation.

In the prolegomena to the *Acta Pekinensia*, Stumpf drew attention to how and why "the Lord Patriarch [Tournon] acted against Father Bouvet's book [the *Tianxue benyi*]."[82] After all, as Stumpf wrote, "the book itself contained nothing but the texts of [Chinese] canonical books, maxims of the wise, and popular sayings about Heaven in which it was shown that knowledge of the true God had flourished in China in the past and still did."[83] Stumpf's tone suggests that he did not consider Bouvet's book to be particularly controversial or dangerous for the mission (indeed, it did not stray from standard Jesuit accommodation), but merely that it transmitted the knowledge of ancient Chinese texts—historical knowledge—to contemporary audiences. Neither does Stumpf contest Bouvet's claim that the ancient Chinese were monotheists in the *Acta Pekinensia*; this rather interestingly differs from the common historiographical characterization of Stumpf as a major critic of Bouvet.[84] Especially in a text like the *Acta Pekinensia*, which was intended to be a comprehensive account of the rites controversy produced for the Vatican by an ostensibly neutral observer, it is remarkable that Stumpf does not once mention that Bouvet's historical approach is unorthodox. Although, as Wu points out, Bouvet's work only became decidedly figuristic in 1707 with his "Essai sur le

[79]Collani, *Eine wissenschaftliche Akademie für China*, 39.
[80]Ibid., 39–40.
[81]Ibid., 47.
[82]Stumpf, *Acta Pekinensia*, 1: 26.
[83]Ibid., 24.
[84]David E. Mungello, *Curious Land: Jesuit Accommodation and the Origins of Sinology* (Honolulu, 1985), 309; Claudia von Collani, *Die Figuristen in der Chinamission* (Frankfurt, 1981), 48–51.

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mystère de la Trinité tiré des plus anciens livres chinois," the missionary's letter from 1704 contains all the elements of figurism to which Stumpf later became hostile.[85]

Stumpf is frequently described as having been relatively ill-disposed towards Bouvet and the figurists, whom he called *Kinistae*, on the grounds of a polemical letter he wrote on 6 November 1715 to Michelangelo Tamburini (1648–1730), the general superior of the Society of Jesus in Rome.[86] The fact that he did not mention the figurists' unorthodox conception of history at any point in the *Acta Pekinensia* suggests that he may have been attempting to minimize Tournon's grounds for condemning the Jesuits' accommodation of the rites. Stumpf, like many of his Jesuit confrères, fully accepted that the ancient Chinese had been monotheists who had known the Christian God. What appears more surprising in Stumpf's writing, however, is that he defended Bouvet—whose interpretation of history took "one more step" than standard Riccian accommodation—from Tournon. However, in the context of the Tournon legation, in which the Savoyard legate was quite clearly hostile to the Jesuits and their interpretations—both figurist and Riccian—of Chinese antiquity, it was in Stumpf's interest, as a Jesuit in a position of administrative power as an apostolic notary, to reduce the number of reasons for which the Holy See could condemn his order. Instead, given that in his letter from 1715 Stumpf was writing *within* his order—to Tamburini—rather than to the Vatican, he had far greater scope to criticize his confrère, knowing that it would not affect a papal ruling on his order's right to proselytize as they wished in China.

Further evidence of Stumpf being sympathetic towards Bouvet emerges again later in the *Acta Pekinensia*, where the Würzburger testified "that the Emperor does know the truths of our religion" in a discussion with Tournon in February 1706.[87] Stumpf informed the legate that "it certainly cannot be denied that [Kangxi] has a remarkable knowledge of the truths of our religion" and claimed that "the Emperor knows the details also of the mysteries of our Holy Faith."[88] Stumpf then told Tournon, "Within the space of the last two months, the Emperor has himself shown that he knows both the details, and quite profound matters [of Christianity]."[89] After quoting Kangxi, who told his Jesuit interpreter that the "*Lamas* (Tartar sacrificing priests) have some things in common with Christians," Stumpf reported that Tournon "was so afraid that this might prove harmful in the eyes of the courtiers who were present, so immediately added that there was a certain similarity in external ceremonies."[90] Dismissing Tournon, Kangxi replied, "This is not what I am saying … The similarity is also in the Mysteries."[91] On the following day, Kangxi said again, "The chief *Lamas*, and the more learned ones believe in a God who is one and three, as the

[85]Wu, *Traduire la China*, 157.

[86]Collani, *Die Figuristen*, 49–51; Reil, *Kilian Stumpf*, 160. *Kinistae* refers to *jing*, meaning "classical book"—as in *Yijing*, or "Book of Changes."

[87]Stumpf, *Acta Pekinensia*, 1: 142.

[88]Ibid., 143.

[89]Ibid., 143.

[90]Ibid., 143

[91]Ibid., 143.

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Christians do."[92] This passage appears to suggest that Stumpf believed that Kangxi possessed a true understanding of the esoteric mysteries of the Christian faith, which very closely resembles Bouvet's characterization of the Qing emperor in his pamphlet *Portrait historique de l'empereur de la Chine*, published in Paris in 1697.[93] Moreover, Stumpf's depiction of Kangxi as knowing the mysteries of Christianity—by virtue of knowing the ancient religion of the *Lamas*—shows that the Würzburger, unlike Tournon, was unafraid of the prospect that the ancient Chinese had known the Christian God. Furthermore, the fact that Stumpf mentioned Kangxi's opinion that Christianity was connected in some way to Chinese monotheism and purported Trinitarianism in the *Acta Pekinensia*, which was an argument made by Jesuits on the historical basis that the ancient Chinese had known the Christian God, suggests that the Würzburger considered it an important element for the Vatican to reach a conclusion on the rites. However, as Clement XI later made an explicitly "religious" ruling on a seemingly historical conflict, a large part of the historical nature of the quarrel was erased and replaced by supposedly "religious" disagreements between Catholic orders. The *Acta Pekinensia* thus offers us a glimpse into an opened black box of the controversy, which foregrounds the historical disagreements between the actors involved.[94]

Stumpf went on to defend his French confrère by listing "[f]ive false reasons given by our adversaries against Father Bouvet's book." Of these, the first and third appear most pertinent to the disagreements over the legitimacy of ancient Chinese monotheism that were taking place between European missionaries in China. These were that "the approbation of a gentile was placed in [the book], while approbations should be sought from ecclesiastics," and that "the gentile doctor [Han Tan] said even foreigners (that is Europeans) examine Chinese books, which is dangerous because it implies Europeans come to learn from the Chinese." The first reason for Tournon to ban Bouvet's book directly calls into question whether or not the "gentile doctor"—Han Tan, the "President of the Sorbonne of China," who wrote the preface to Bouvet's *Tianxue benyi*—could provide approbation instead of a European ecclesiastic. This suggests that those wishing to prohibit Bouvet's book were concerned that a figure they believed to be a descendant of people who had not known the True God—that is, not Jews or Christians—could exercise authority over religious matters. Unlike the majority of Jesuit missionaries, Bouvet's adversaries denied that the ancient Chinese had access to a *prisca theologia*, or knowledge of the Christian God. Therein lies the connection between the actions of anti-rites actors in the quarrel and their skepticism towards the claim that the ancient Chinese had been monotheists, which foregrounds the historical aspect of the conflict over rites and terms. The third reason given by the Jesuits' adversaries highlights their evident fear of subversive historical

[92]Ibid., 143–4.

[93]Bouvet, *Portrait historique de l'Empereur de la Chine presenté au Roy* (Paris, 1697).

[94]I am referring to "black box" in Latour's sense of the word, namely "[w]hen many elements are made to act as one." The *Acta Pekinensia* contains an extensive array of different elements of conversation, negotiation, and historical scholarship documented by Stumpf. The document was "blackboxed" by Clement XI in the sense that these many complicated and disparate (often historical) elements were mobilized in a single, "religious" ruling. See Bruno Latour, *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers through Society* (Cambridge MA, 1987), esp 1–17, 130–31.

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narratives that removed Europeans' privileged genealogical connection to knowledge of the Christian God. If "Europeans come to learn from the Chinese"—which the anti-rites missionaries considered to be "dangerous"—it suggested that they accepted the Jesuits' claim that the ancestors of Europeans (that is, Jewish biblical patriarchs) did not have *exclusive* access to monotheism or knowledge of the Christian God.

Stumpf then "refute[s] in order" all the reasons given by Bouvet's opponents to ban the *Tianxue benyi*. He responds to the accusation that the book contained a preface written by the "gentile" Han Tan instead of a European clergyman, explaining that the "[a]pproval of the gentile was not sought as legal or obligatory, but added to the book as something additional and useful to move native Chinese to reflect on their own fundamental issues about God and understand what they say and write about him."[95] In this response, Stumpf suggests that the Chinese, despite being "gentiles," possessed "their own" substantive understanding of God, which in turn refers back to the Jesuits' historical claim that the Chinese had known the Christian God in distant antiquity. Subsequently, Stumpf counters Tournon's accusation that Bouvet's book encouraged Europeans to "come to learn from the Chinese," something the legate deemed "dangerous," as it suggested that the Europeans were in fact the "barbarians" in the intercultural encounter. Stumpf responded that

> the good Fathers who read the book with the help of some *xianggong* [secretaries] but did not understand it are wrong. They thought that it said that the Europeans were … "barbarians"; but they are greatly honored there. For the doctor [Han Tan …] calls them Western *junzi* [gentlemen], that is literary "heroes" from Europe, which is a title no Chinese has hitherto attributed to any European. Nor is there any greater title which European ambition, if such there be, could desire in this Empire.[96]

In this latter passage, Stumpf accuses Bouvet's critics of poor (historical) scholarship and a lack of familiarity with elite Chinese learned culture. This suggests yet again that for many of the actors involved in the rites controversy, the most contentious issues existed around historical facts and historiographical methods rather than "religious" differences between groups of actors. The Jesuits took Chinese historical literature as credible evidence for a distant but shared past, which in turn helped shape their favorable attitude towards Chinese rites and terms for God. On the other hand, the Jesuits' opponents distrusted Chinese histories and were, for the most part, unfamiliar with the Chinese classics and consequently tended to treat claims about a common "global" history with suspicion.

We should also bear in mind that despite Stumpf's characterization by Rule and Collani as a "neutral," he evidently had ulterior motives for his attack on Bouvet's detractors—it was entirely in Stumpf's interest that the Vatican did not overly interfere in the Jesuit China mission. Given his apparent lack of concern at the clearly partisan claim that "knowledge of the true God had flourished in China" prior to

[95]Stumpf, *Acta Pekinensia*, 1: 27–8.
[96]Ibid., 28.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244320000426 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the birth of Jesus Christ, Stumpf may have been seeking to provide uncontroversial explanations for the more controversial areas of Bouvet's work. We see a similar replacement of potentially inflammatory material in Stumpf's third response dealing with the perceived relegation of Europeans' privileged status with regard to ancient natural theology; while Bouvet's adversaries complained that the *Tianxue benyi* may result in "Europeans com[ing] to learn from the Chinese," Stumpf assured them that they merely misunderstood the book, and that in fact Han Tan was simply using a respectful term to describe Europeans rather than relegating them to the status of "barbarians." In what amounted to a condemnation of Tournon's manner of investigating the rites, Stumpf asserted that "[w]hat leaves such a nasty taste is that a book showing that the worship of the True God flourished and is still flourishing in China has been mistakenly killed off and, even when the mistake was recognised, buried forever."[97] Stumpf concluded that the "Lord Patriarch [Tournon] came to China to condemn rather that to learn."[98]

The controversy in China worsened significantly when Tournon told Kangxi during their last meeting in June 1706 that Charles Maigrot of all people, the Fujian-based MEP missionary whose mandate of 1693 catalyzed the crisis, should meet the emperor and serve his court as an expert in Chinese religion and philosophy.[99] On 2 August 1706, Maigrot met Kangxi in Jehol in Manchuria.[100] During this meeting, Maigrot was forced to admit his lack of knowledge of Chinese literature and history and, consequently, "religion." Kangxi told Maigrot, "you were not able from the books called *Si Shu* to read out even one article … and when I asked whether you were able to explain an inscription of four characters … you neither understood them nor were you able to explain their sense."[101] Disillusioned by the Europeans' lack of understanding of the historical roots of Chinese rites and terms, Kangxi banished a number of missionaries from his empire and, from 1707, required all foreigners to obtain a residence permit, the *piao*, to be allowed to work in China.[102] In February 1707, as he was traveling south, Tournon issued the Edict of Nanjing, further condemning accommodation of Chinese rites and terms. Stumpf described Tournon's edict as follows: "The Lord Patriarch wants an oath to be taken, subject to the most severe penalties, that the true God has never been known nor is now known by the Chinese under the names of Tian and Shangdi."[103] In response to this edict, Kangxi expelled Tournon from China, exiling him to Macao, where he was held under house arrest by the Portuguese until his death in 1710.

Stumpf wrote in April 1707 of the Beijing missionaries' response to Tournon's edict in the *Acta Pekinensia*, commenting that "for the sake of preserving his flock which is now in a situation of extreme peril, [Bernardino della Chiesa (1644–1721), the Bishop of Beijing] should attempt seriously, according to law and with authority, to deflect the Lord Patriarch from such a plan [to publish the Edict of Nanjing,]

[97]Stumpf, *Acta Pekinensia*, 2: 713
[98]Ibid., 714.
[99]Stumpf, *Acta Pekinensia*, 1: 413–14.
[100]Ibid., 575–82.
[101]Ibid., 578.
[102]Collani, "The Jesuit Rites Controversy," 898.
[103]Stumpf, *Acta Pekinensia*, 2: 379.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244320000426 Published online by Cambridge University Press

which will be destructive of the Christian cause in China and neighbouring kingdoms."[104] Stumpf then lists the "various reasons which weaken the Lord Patriarch's decree," noting that Kangxi's declarations on the rites and terms proved "that from the descendants of Noah the Chinese have not been atheists," and that "also the missionaries are able to show starting from the heart of Chinese teaching that they are announcing what was being worshipped by the Chinese even though they were unaware of it."[105] In the first of these passages, Stumpf deploys a historical claim—namely that the Chinese had known the Christian God from the times of the biblical Flood—to defend the Jesuits' accommodation practices from Tournon's charges leveled in his anti-rites Edict of Nanjing. In the second passage, Stumpf subtly criticizes the Jesuits' opponents' historiography. In emphasizing the fact that his confrères "are able to show from the heart of Chinese teaching" that the ancient Chinese had known the Christian God, Stumpf implicitly suggests that anti-rites actors had been unable to credibly argue against this claim. Thus Stumpf frames the central debate in the controversy—about whether or not missionaries should accommodate Chinese rites and terms for God among their converts—as a question about the credibility of a particular historical claim and the scholarly approach used to establish it. According to Stumpf, if the Chinese had indeed known the Christian God in antiquity and if this claim was demonstrable through the exegesis of classical books, then rites and terms were to be accommodated. This way of framing the conflict suggests that, for Stumpf, who was writing the *Acta Pekinensia* for a Vatican audience, the question of legitimacy in the rites controversy was one of historical precedent of Christianity in China, and that precedent was to be found in Chinese antiquity. In compiling the *Acta Pekinensia* for the Holy See, which would officially rule whether or not the rites were permissible, Stumpf presented a historical case for accommodating the rites and terms and a critique of the Jesuits' opponents' scholarship, which, he contended, weakened the anti-rites actors' arguments.

It may well be more fruitful for historians of Christianity in China to reframe their questions about the rites controversy around the legitimacy of different Christian accounts of Chinese antiquity and ancient Chinese "religion" rather than around theological conflicts and doctrinal differences between missionaries of different orders within the Catholic Church. Stumpf's writings in the *Acta Pekinensia* suggest that the actors involved in the controversy tended to view the conflict as a disagreement between the Jesuits and other orders over whether the ancient Chinese had known the Christian God and whether there existed credible methods to prove or disprove this claim. To the twenty-first-century intellectual historian, the debate framed in these terms would certainly appear to resonate more strongly with what we consider a "historical controversy" than with a "theological controversy." However, while this article invites historians to rethink the rites controversy and move away from the dominant historiographical interpretation of the quarrel as overwhelmingly "religious," it is worth bearing in mind the anachronistic nature of the modern term "religious" when applied to an early

[104]Ibid., 377.
[105]Ibid., 379.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244320000426 Published online by Cambridge University Press

modern context.[106] As Standaert argues, the concept of "religion" underwent profound changes between the mid-seventeenth and mid-eighteenth centuries. Prior to the Vatican's anti-rites rulings of 1704, 1715, and 1742, the broader category of "religion" included what we would now deem "culture," "customs," "polities," and "civilities," as well as the "superstition" that we still recognize as a constituent part of "religion." Thus, in asking intellectual historians to rethink the rites controversy and problematize its characterization as a "religious" conflict, this article hopes to challenge the manner in which the term "religious" is deployed in modern historical scholarship.

Conclusion: the aftermath of Tournon's legation

In the decade following Tournon's legation, the rites controversy somewhat calmed down in China, and Stumpf became the new superior of the mission, during which time his earlier sympathy for the less orthodox Jesuit interpretations of Chinese history (elucidated by his *Acta Pekinensia*) at least superficially diminished.[107] On 19 March 1715, Clement XI, who in all likelihood never read the *Acta Pekinensia*, issued the bull *Ex illa die*, which further condemned the Chinese rites and terms and couched the complex historical and cultural conflict in explicitly "religious" language, deeming the rites nothing more than a pagan "superstition." The bull, which was issued with the intention of bringing the centuries-long conflict to a swift close, ordered all Catholic missionaries in China to follow Tournon's Edict of Nanjing from 1707 and banned the use of the terms *tian*, *Shangdi*, and *jing tian*. It contained an oath that all missionaries in China were supposed to take, stating that any Catholic who did not follow the bull's demands was to be excommunicated from the Church immediately. Despite the bull's stringent orders, it was not until 1720 that the Holy See sent a second papal legation, led by Carlo Ambrogio Mezzabarba (1685–1741), to negotiate its acceptance by Catholic missionaries in China. Given the time lag between the bull's publication in Rome and Mezzabarba's legation to China to implement it, most Jesuit missionaries—particularly the figurists—continued to accept Chinese historical narratives and thus permitted their converts to use the terms *tian* and *shangdi* for the Christian God and perform rites honoring their ancestors and Confucius. Clement XI hoped that Mezzabarba's enforcement of the bull in 1720–21 would bring the Jesuits' accommodation practices to an end; however, this did not turn out to be the case and the bull did not succeed in changing Jesuit proselytizing strategies in China.

During his legation in the early 1720s, Mezzabarba failed to reach a compromise with Kangxi and Jesuit missionaries over the *Ex illa die* bull, and as a result the Jesuits continued to proselytize according to "Ricci's practices of accommodation" in the Qing empire for another two decades.[108] On 4 November 1721, Mezzabarba wrote a letter from Macau to the Catholic missionaries across the Qing empire that claimed on the one hand that *Ex illa die* was to be strictly followed, but on the other

[106]Lofton, "Why Religion Is Hard for Historians."
[107]Reil, *Kilian Stumpf*.
[108]Collani, "The Jesuit Rites Controversy," 899.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244320000426 Published online by Cambridge University Press

hand granted "eight permissions" to missionaries to accommodate Chinese rites in certain scenarios. Unsurprisingly, the vast majority of Jesuits took Mezzabarba's "permissions" to mean that they did not have to change their proselytizing practices at all.[109] In 1742, after Mezzabarba's death, Pope Benedict XIV (b. 1675, r. 1740–58) issued the final anti-rites bull, *Ex quo singulari*, requiring missionaries to take an oath forbidding them from ever discussing the rites controversy again or engaging in accommodationist proselytizing, with the threat of immediate excommunication if they failed to abide by its orders. *Ex quo singulari* formally nullified Mezzabarba's "eight permissions" and deemed *all* Chinese rites to be "superstitious" and "blasphemous." This bull completed the caesura between "history" and "religion" that had been gradually taking place during the Jesuit China mission. By banning discussion of the rites and deeming them entirely "superstitious," the complex, syncretic, historically situated Sino-Jesuit practices were expunged from Catholic discourse for almost two centuries. *Ex quo singulari* was eventually reversed in 1939 by Pope Pius XII (b. 1876, r. 1939–58) in *Plane copertum est*, following pressure from the fascist Axis-aligned government of Manchukuo to lift the ban on the rites.

Everything Stumpf included in the *Acta Pekinensia* was, in the end, at the discretion of the apostolic notary himself; thus, given that it was in Stumpf's interest as a practicing Jesuit that the Vatican should rule in favor of the rites, everything he chose to include in the document should be understood as relevant to helping him achieve this aim. Therefore Stumpf clearly believed that it was in the Jesuits' interests to convince the Vatican that the quarrel could be interpreted as being essentially about conflicting understandings of ancient Chinese history. Unfortunately for the Jesuits and for historians of the rites controversy, Clement XI's and Benedict XIV's rulings ignored the historical arguments Stumpf made in favor of the rites and characterized the conflict as "religious" and the rites as entirely "superstitious" rather than based on "customs," "culture," or "civility." Whereas the latter categories were, by the early eighteenth century, increasingly considered to be determined by a group of peoples' histories, "superstition" possessed a more universal character, more closely resembling what we would call "religion" today. The two popes' actions resulted in decades of historiography on the rites controversy making doctrinal difference and theological disputes the central focus of their study. Tournon's Edict of Nanjing from 1707, Clement XI's *Ex illa die* bull of 1715, and Benedict XIV's *Ex quo singulari* bull of 1742 all served to characterize the quarrel as entirely "theological" and thus erase the historical aspects of the rites controversy, which documents like the *Acta Pekinensia* show to have been deeply entangled with understandings of "religion" at the turn of the eighteenth century.

This article's portrayal of Stumpf as a slightly more partisan figure than previously thought is somewhat complicated by the Würzburger's shifting attitudes towards Bouvet. In his letter of 1715 to Tamburini, Stumpf complained of Bouvet's frequent disobedience and of the figurist's obsession with the *Yijing*, which the latter had "been rolling around like the stone of Sisyphus for more than twenty years."[110] Collani writes that Stumpf probably considered Bouvet to

[109]Giacomo Di Fiore, *La Legazione Mezzabarba in Cina (1720–1721)* (Naples, 1989).
[110]Reil, *Kilian Stumpf*, 160.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244320000426 Published online by Cambridge University Press

be "an additional burden," whose heterodox interpretation of history threatened the Jesuit mission in China.[111] This may indeed have been the case once Tournon had died and Kangxi was the closest figure with the power to censure the Jesuits. However, during Tournon's legation it was entirely in the Stumpf's interests to make Bouvet appear significantly less unorthodox than he might have otherwise believed. Moreover, Stumpf's letter of 1715 appears to show that the notary's greatest issue with Bouvet's figuristic work was its historical sloppiness rather than its potential to get the Jesuits proscribed. Writing that "[t]he Chinese book I-Ching [*Yijing*] is unquestionably the oldest in China and is rightly attributed to a time near the deluge," Stumpf's primary concern with his confrère's figurist work was that its scholarly approach was "bad, or at least useless."[112] Stumpf lamented that Bouvet's exegesis "does not explain [the *Yijing*] page by page or section by section, but leaves it in the same darkness as before. He quotes only a few texts from it. Some of them show quite well that there has been a knowledge of the true God in China. The rest, however, are of no importance to our secrets."[113] Thus it appears that one of Stumpf's concerns with Bouvet essentially boiled down to a disagreement of historical methodology; the former did not consider the latter's scholarly approach to be sophisticated enough to make the figuristic claims with which he was closely associated. Therefore, even the Stumpf–Bouvet conflict, normally presented in discussions of the aftermath of the rites controversy, appears to be grounded in historical disagreement.

The afterlife of the *Acta Pekinensia*—the manuscript's mobilization and transformation into a religious decree by Clement XI—consisted of the Vatican silencing the Chinese histories, books, and voices (belonging to figures such as Kangxi and books such as the *Yijing*) that made the actors involved in the controversy realize that the challenges they faced around the rites and terms were fundamentally historical in nature. By blackboxing the intricate and complex historical–doctrinal disagreements between missionaries, their negotiations with mandarins and with Kangxi, and their interpretations of Chinese books, as a purely "religious quarrel," Clement XI ensured that the historiography of the rites controversy would focus on analyses of "religious" categories rather than on the complex historical–cultural–religious–political character of the conflict that the actors involved experienced. In recasting the older, much wider concept of "religion" as simply referring to the "superstitious" aspects of Chinese rites, Clement XI severely limited the scope of European understandings of China, its history, and culture that were previously an integral part of the Jesuits' justification for accommodating the rites.

The Vatican's rulings on the rites presented them, as this article has shown, in terms of being "superstitious" or "civil and political." Practices deemed "civil and political" were to be tolerated among Chinese converts to Christianity, as the Holy See recognized (in the earlier stages of the mission) that the Chinese followed different cultural "mores" from Europeans. These "civil" practices were situated in a historical context by the Jesuits, who engaged in attentive exegeses of the Chinese classics to determine whether the ancient Chinese had known the Christian God. If

[111]Collani, *Die Figuristen*, 50.
[112]Ibid., 102, 104.
[113]Ibid., 103.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244320000426 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the Chinese had indeed known the Christian God in antiquity, then their "civil" rites would have been shaped by centuries of experience of a legitimate "religion" and were therefore to be considered acceptable. Conversely, "superstitious" rites were to be forbidden by missionaries, as they were considered to be manifestations of a blasphemous pagan "false religion." While the earlier Vatican rulings were more sensitive to the differences between "superstitious" and "civil and political" rites, later bulls such as *Ex illa die* and *Ex quo singulari* placed *all* Chinese rites in the sphere of "superstition" and as such considered them to be nothing more than impermissible manifestations of "false religion." By erasing the "civil and political" rites—which were historically situated by Jesuits through exegesis of the Chinese classics—the Holy See reclassified complex, hybrid practices, which included both what we would today call "history" and "religion," as entirely "superstitious." This reductive characterization of a complicated historical quarrel permeated a great deal of twentieth-century historiography on the rites controversy, with many historians of Christianity in China examining the conflict in terms of the "religious" differences between Jesuits and other Catholics in China. Instead, by examining the newly translated and republished *Acta Pekinensia*, modern intellectual historians can for the first time open up a black box that played such an important role in the emergence and crystallization of the modern category of "religion" and the effacement of the historical aspects of one of the longest and loudest disputes in the history of the Catholic Church.

Acknowledgements. I am greatly indebted to Dániel Margócsy and Simon Schaffer for their outstanding mentorship and enlightening supervision, advice, and comments on many different versions of this paper. Discussions with them helped shape and refine the article's arguments at every stage of its development. I owe many thanks to Wu Huiyi for detailed comments on this essay and for stimulating conversations on the Jesuit China mission more generally. I am very grateful to Darrin McMahon for useful notes and suggestions on the article. I would also like to thank Liba Taub, three anonymous readers for *Modern Intellectual History*, and two anonymous examiners from the Department of History and Philosophy of Science at the University of Cambridge for valuable feedback on earlier versions of the article. I would like to acknowledge the essential labor contributed by this article's proofreader. The responsibility for any mistakes remains, of course, mine alone.

Cite this article: Giovannetti-Singh G (2022). Rethinking the Rites Controversy: Kilian Stumpf's *Acta Pekinensia* and the Historical Dimensions of a Religious Quarrel. *Modern Intellectual History* **19**, 29–53. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244320000426