

Religious Cultures in the Early Modern World

CATHOLIC MISSIONARIES IN EARLY MODERN ASIA

PATTERNS OF LOCALIZATION

Edited by
Nadine Amsler, Andreea Badea, Bernard Heyberger,
and Christian Windler

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Catholic Missionaries in Early Modern Asia

Over recent decades, historians have become increasingly interested in early modern Catholic missions in Asia as laboratories of cultural contact. This book builds on recent groundbreaking research on early modern Catholic missions, which has shown that missionaries in Asia cooperated with and accommodated the needs of local agents rather than being uncompromising promoters of post-Tridentine doctrine and devotion.

Bringing together some of the most renowned and innovative researchers from Anglophone countries and continental Europe, this volume investigates how missionaries' entanglements with local societies across Asia contributed to processes of localization within the early modern Catholic church. The focus of the volume is on missionaries' adaptation to four ideal-typical social settings that played an eminent role in early modern Asian missions: (1) the symbolically loaded princely court; (2) the city as a space of especially dense communication; (3) the countryside, where missionary presence was only rarely permanent; (4) and the household – a central arena of conversion in early modern Asian societies.

Shining a fresh light onto the history of early modern Catholic missions and the early modern Eurasian cultural exchange, this will be an important book for any scholar of religious history, history of cultural contact, global history and early modern history in Asia.

Nadine Amsler is Postdoctoral Fellow at the Department for Early Modern History at the Goethe University Frankfurt. She is the author of *Jesuits and Matriarchs: Domestic Worship in Early Modern China* (Seattle 2018). She is also one of the editors of a special issue of the *International History Review* entitled *Transformations of Intercultural Diplomacies. Comparative Views on Asia and Europe (1700 to 1850)* (2019).

Andreea Badea is a researcher at the Department for Early Modern History at the Goethe University Frankfurt. She is the author of *Kurfürstliche Präeminenz, Landesherrschaft und Reform: Das Scheitern der Kölner Reformation unter Hermann von Wied* (Münster 2009). She is also one of the editors of *Establishing Credibility in Early Modern Catholicism: Making and Administering Truth* (forthcoming, Amsterdam 2020).

Bernard Heyberger is Directeur d'Études at the École des Hautes Études des Sciences Sociales and at the École Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris. He is the author of *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient au temps de la Réforme catholique* (Rome 1994) and, more recently, *Les chrétiens au Proche-Orient: De la compassion à la compréhension* (Paris 2013).

Christian Windler is Professor of Early Modern History at the Department of History of the University of Bern. He is the author of *La diplomatie comme expérience de l'Autre. Consuls français au Maghreb (1700–1840)* (Geneva 2002) and *Missionare in Persien: Kulturelle Diversität und Normenkonkurrenz im globalen Katholizismus (17.–18. Jahrhundert)* (Cologne 2019).

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Catholic Missionaries in Early Modern Asia

Patterns of Localization

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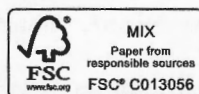
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Contributors

Nadine Amsler, Postdoctoral Fellow, Department for Early Modern History,
Goethe University Frankfurt

Andreea Badea, Researcher, Department for Early Modern History, Goethe
University Frankfurt

Birgit Emich, Professor, Department for Early Modern History, Goethe Uni-
versity Frankfurt

Bernard Heyberger, Directeur d'Études, EHESS and EPHE, both in Paris

Ronnie Po-chia Hsia, Edwin Erle Sparks Professor of History, Pennsylvania
State University

Eugenio Menegon, Associate Professor, Department of History, Boston
University

Cesare Santus, Postdoctoral Researcher, Université Catholique de Louvain

Nicolas Standaert, Professor of Sinology, KU Leuven

Hélène Vu Thanh, Maître de conférences, Université de Bretagne-Sud, Lorient

Felicita Tramontana, Associate Researcher, University of Warwick

Carla Tronu, Associate Researcher, Kyoto University

Haruko Nawata Ward, Professor of Church History, Columbia Theological
Seminary, Decatur, Georgia

Christian Windler, Professor, Department of History, University of Bern

Ines G. Županov, Directrice de Recherche, CNRS, Paris

Introduction

Localizing Catholic missions in Asia

*Nadine Amsler, Andreea Badea, Bernard Heyberger,
and Christian Windler*

Since the sixteenth century, the narratives of mission history have been shaped by the Catholic Church's claims to universality and have been connected with the history of European expansion. It was at that time that the Latin term *missio* gained its double meaning of spreading faith among non-Christians and intensifying faith among Christians.¹ The missions became a central motif in the self-fashioning of the papacy, religious orders, and secular Catholic rulers, as they facilitated a demarcation from the churches that emerged from the Protestant Reformation, which were less active in this field.² Members of religious orders wrote the histories of the missions of their communities, in order to legitimate their claims to a well-respected position within church and society. The Jesuits were especially successful in this, but less well-known orders, such as the Discalced Carmelites, also tried to emulate their example.³

The varying levels of self-promotion of missionary orders make their effects felt even today in the one-sided focus of research on the Jesuits. However, it has been research on this very order, which has fundamentally changed our view of the Catholic missions in recent times. During the last decades, scholars have increasingly read the mission orders' self-representations against the grain and started to question their universalist-expansionist framework. As a result, the trajectory of the history of religious missions has moved away from the Eurocentric history of religious orders, and toward broader questions of cultural history. These questions are facilitating a renewal of the research on the Catholic missions of the early modern period, which, in turn, offers stimulating impulses for the investigation of intercultural communication.⁴

Research on early modern Catholic missions in China has been a case in point. The controversies about the admissibility of local ritual practices – specifically in the Chinese rites controversies – had already found broad resonance with European contemporaries in the seventeenth century, whose interest in the Chinese missions increased steadily. In the course of the twentieth century the practices of accommodation to local sociocultural contexts associated with the Jesuits have become a central line of historical inquiry. While this research was still mainly focused on missionaries, research from

6 Conflicting views

Catholic missionaries in Ottoman cities between accommodation and Latinization

Cesare Santus

In the last decades, the spread of Catholicism in the Near East has been contextualized as the fruit of the encounter between missionaries trained in the cultural climate of Counter-Reformation Europe and the local dynamics of Ottoman society, while more recent studies aim to integrate the study of the Christian Orient into the connected history of the so-called "Global Catholicism."¹ In this regard, an important paradigm shift in the historiography of the missions has coincided with the refusal to describe the missionary phenomenon as a simple process of diffusion from a center to its periphery, instead trying to consider the peculiar characteristics of the various local "Catholicisms" deriving from the encounter between the European religious and the indigenous faithful.² Furthermore, while the study of the agency of the missionaries has shed light on the extent of their compromises and accommodation to local realities, new interpretations have revealed the continuation of behaviors that crossed confessional borders even within Tridentine Europe.³ In sum, what has become increasingly apparent is that the early modern Catholic Church was characterized by a pronounced internal diversity. This plurality often turned into rivalry, competition, and conflict – not only in the Far East, where missions were shaken by the great missionary controversies concerning the Chinese or Malabar rites but also in the Ottoman Empire and Persia.⁴

In this chapter I address this issue by taking into account the different strategies employed by the religious (especially Capuchins, Jesuits, and Franciscans) in the urban settings of the Ottoman Empire. The focus will be on the missionaries' relations with the local Orthodox and pre-Chalcedonian Christian communities, which constituted the preferential target of Catholic apostolic efforts. I have chosen three main points of inquiry: the adaptation of European missionaries to the local social structures and the different forms of dependence or rivalry they entertained with the European consular network; their approach toward Eastern Christian rites and traditions (respect versus "Latinization"); and, finally, the measure of tolerance or intolerance they displayed toward the practice of sacramental intercommunion between Catholic converts and non-Catholics.

The first decades of the eighteenth century saw the rise of several controversies revolving around these questions. These were motivated not only

by ideological rivalry or competition but also by the different social and political conditions specific to each mission. By discussing some examples related to the cities of Jerusalem, Damascus, Constantinople, Aleppo, and Cairo, I will demonstrate how local circumstances influenced the missionaries in their relationship with the Ottoman Christians, with the officials of the Sublime Porte, and with the representatives of the Crown of France and the Roman Church. I thus aim at showing that, contrary to widespread stereotypes, the different strategies of the missionaries did not necessarily depend on their belonging to different orders but were primarily determined by the contexts in which they interacted.

1 Protected by consuls, threatened by pashas – or vice versa?

By perusing the correspondence of European missionaries in the Levant, one can observe how frequently they mention the "protection" granted by the French king through his ambassador to the Sublime Porte and through the consular network. Although there was no institutionally established patronage comparable to the colonial territories of the Iberian monarchies, the successful commercial and diplomatic penetration achieved by France during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries practically forced Catholic missionaries to rely on its material and human support.⁵ Despite the dangers this reliance entailed, especially at times when Gallican tendencies re-emerged, the Congregation of *Propaganda Fide* accepted this situation and even proposed French protection as the primary means of handling the political and economic troubles encountered by the missionaries in their daily activity. In fact, there was no alternative: especially since the second half of the seventeenth century, French mediation was necessary to obtain the authorization required for the installation of new missions from the Ottoman authorities, the *berat* of investiture for the Eastern prelates of Catholic tendencies, and to ensure the naval connection that allowed men and information to circulate between Rome and the Levant.⁶ In 1685 and 1690, for example, Ambassadors Guilleragues and Châteauneuf obtained two imperial commands that authorized the Jesuits to settle in any city in which a French consul resided, by also giving them "the faculty of explaining the points of faith to the Greeks and Armenians who would voluntarily come to them."⁷ Accordingly, the newly founded but already promising mission of Erzurum, one of the most thriving commercial hubs in the eastern provinces of the empire, was quickly regularized by appointing one of the local Armenian merchants as a consul. Whenever the Jesuits tried to settle in a town without the help of a permanent representative of France, as in the nearby Trabzon, local pashas found it easy to harass them by applying the Capitulations in a strict way.⁸

However, this does not mean that the relations between the missionaries and the diplomatic personnel of the French Crown were idyllic – quite the contrary. The religious active in the Middle East were of different origins and political affiliations (as for example Italian, papal, or imperial subjects),

and, in many cases, national rivalries and different priorities fueled the conflicts between them: in this situation, the missionaries had to rely on appeals to Rome or, more frequently, on local solidarity networks built over time. In Jerusalem, for example, the situation was almost the opposite of that of Erzurum and Trabzon. The Franciscans of the Holy Land had settled there since the fourteenth century, while the French attempts to open up a consulate had always met with a strong opposition from the Muslim inhabitants of the city, who claimed that the Caliph 'Umar, as well as Saladin, had forbidden the installation of European representatives in the third most holy place of Islam.⁹ Although the Franciscan Custos (who was also the "Guardian of Mount Zion and of the Holy Sepulchre") had the powers of apostolic prefect for the missions of Palestine, Syria, Egypt, and Cyprus, evangelization was not the main activity of the Friars of the Holy Land, whose main task was rather the preservation of the Latin presence in the "holy places." Moreover, the Custody of the Holy Land was a complex organization with a large budget, mostly funded by the Crown of Spain and through the alms collected in its Iberian and Italian domains, from where the majority of the friars also came. This set of circumstances, which allowed the Franciscans not to rely on the French diplomatic network in the same way as the other religious often needed to, also caused some politically motivated quarrels from time to time, such as one in 1661, when a French pilgrim threatened the Guardian of the Holy Land with a sword because one of the friars had mentioned the King of Spain before the King of France in a public prayer.¹⁰ This also helps to explain why Sebastien de Brémont (or Brémond), who was appointed French consul of Jerusalem in 1700, accused the Franciscans of plotting against him because of his intentions to examine their management of the generous alms sent from Europe. When the pasha asked him either to show the imperial license justifying his presence (for which he had been waiting in vain for three months) or to leave the city, Brémont claimed that this ultimatum was due to the intrigues of the procurator of the Holy Land, the Mallorcan father Rafael Ventayol. To justify himself, the latter mobilized all his acquaintances, providing the French ambassador in Constantinople with memorials in his favor signed by members of all the local Christian communities and even by the Jewish physician of the city, a close friend of the pasha.¹¹

Besides proving that the allegations of Brémont were unfounded, these documents show the extent of the network surrounding the Custody of the Holy Land and, above all, the different degree of knowledge of local practices between the newly arrived consul and the experienced procurator. Indeed, Ventayol complained that Brémont had never followed his advice to be cautious, but had, on the contrary, behaved in a haughty manner with the Ottoman authorities, for example by denying them the usual gifts, even when he was explicitly requested to hand them over.¹² Moreover, while aware of his own precarious position until the arrival of the *berat*, he had nonetheless provoked the pasha by demanding the punishment of one of his servants

who had been involved in a fight with a French servant. When Ventayol had tried to calm the pasha down, the latter was surprised by the intercession of the friar in favor of the consul: "Do you know he claims that you friars are Spanish and Italian, and that he will drive you out of Jerusalem in six months' time because he has orders from his king to seize your accounts and to take the alms management away from you?," he allegedly asked him.¹³ Brémont exaggerated, but his claims were not at all implausible: nine years later, the consul of Sayda put the Guardian of the Holy Land Gaetano da Palermo back on a ship to Europe because of internal frictions with other members of the order but also for political reasons.¹⁴ However, whenever the missionaries could count on solid local support, this would not happen: Ventayol stayed in place for many years, and his confrere Tomás Díaz de Campaya managed to be the principal Catholic authority in Damascus against the will of the French Crown and of the other missionaries, also thanks to his influence on the local pasha, whom he had healed from an illness.¹⁵

2 Local networks and European rivalries: The "missionary jealousy"

The case of Damascus just mentioned is particularly interesting because it also introduces another fundamental element, namely the complex system of rivalry and competition between the various religious orders present in the Ottoman Levant, as well as the conflicts of jurisdiction between them and the local Eastern Catholic clergy. In the eighteenth century, the Syrian urban landscape hosted the activity of Capuchins, Jesuits, and Friars of the Holy Land: the Capuchins were simple missionaries, the Jesuits were often employed as chaplains of the French consuls, but only the Friars of the Holy Land were officially entrusted the pastoral care of local Catholics, therefore also competing with the local Maronite and Melkite hierarchies, who repeatedly tried to reaffirm their rights over the faithful and to prevent their passage to the Latin rite.¹⁶

In Damascus, where the Franciscans were in charge of a renowned hospice, for a long time they exercised their parish duties in the only Catholic church, formally owned by the Maronites. In 1718, when the Maronites succeeded in recovering the church, the friars decided to build a small church inside the hospice. As is widely known, it was, in theory, forbidden to build new churches or to expand existing ones in the Ottoman Empire. In practice, however, this was made possible precisely thanks to the good relations between the local Ottoman authorities and the President of the Hospice, the already mentioned friar Tomás Díaz de Campaya, who even managed to obtain an authorization from the qadi.¹⁷ Paradoxically, criticism and resistance to his work were then expressed not by the Muslim population, but by fellow Catholics: Jesuits and Capuchins denounced the risk that such construction would, sooner or later, cause the intervention of the Sublime

Porte and a severe punishment toward the religious, but the main reason for their opposition was actually due to the harsh competition for the control of the faithful. In the area of Greater Syria and Egypt, the missionary orders joined forces against the monopoly of the Holy Land, failing to notify the Guardian of new converts to Catholicism in order to prevent the local parish priests from exerting their parochial rights over them. For, in the words of the Guardian Lorenzo Cozza, Eastern Catholics were like "the beasts of the woods, falling under the dominion of the first who finds them."¹⁸

This rivalry was also fueled by the different strategies employed by the missionaries in the urban landscape of the empire. The Jesuits, for instance, wore the clothes of Eastern Christian priests in order to secretly visit the houses of their penitents, hearing their confessions and teaching them the catechism; another typical feature was their insistence on the direction of female devotees, completely loyal to the teachings of their spiritual father. This kind of apostolate was criticized by the other missionaries (as well as by the representatives of *Propaganda Fide*) because its secrecy and exclusiveness were deemed suspicious by Ottoman authorities, while the excessive familiarity with women was viewed as scandalous among the most conservative groups of local Christians.¹⁹ Both the Capuchins and the Franciscans of the Holy Land often resorted to their medical knowledge in order to gain converts, but while the former used their ascetic lifestyle to elicit the admiration of the people, the latter preferred to use their wealth and brokerage capabilities to build friendly and cooperative relations with the Ottoman authorities and with the leaders of the Eastern Christian communities. Moreover, in the first half of the eighteenth century the Franciscans proceeded with a gradual work of Latinization of their Eastern faithful, urging them to follow the calendar and fasts according to the Western model, mainly through adherence to the Third Order of Saint Francis. This is exactly the case of the aforementioned Tomás Díaz de Campaya, who in the 1720s found himself in the middle of a series of strong objections coming from the other missionaries as well as from the Eastern hierarchy. Summoned back to Rome, he was able to clear himself of these accusations by producing a long series of statements in his favor and by emphasizing the high number of conversions he had obtained, particularly among Syrians and Greeks. Rejected by the superiors of his own order and thwarted by the French diplomacy, he was able to come back to Damascus and maintain his authoritarian rule over the local Catholics thanks to a powerful network of protection, both in Syria (the local Melkite community, through the procurator Uṣṭā Maṣṣūr, a friend of 'Uthmān Pasha Abū Tawq) and inside the Roman Curia (the *minutante* of *Propaganda Fide* Carlo Uslenghi and probably Cardinal Zondadari himself, who, previously, had been nuncio to the court of Spain). When, in 1745, the Discalced Carmelite Emmanuel Ballyet de Saint-Albert was sent to Syria as Apostolic Delegate in order to assure the respect of the encyclical letter *Demandatam*, which urged the Catholic inhabitants of Damascus to respect the Eastern rite, he faced the outright opposition of Campaya: in a letter to

Rome, the Delegate expressed his concern about suffering the same fate as Maillard de Tournon during his unfortunate legation to China.²⁰

I did not quote this unexpected reference only to highlight that both cases concerned the question of the authority of the Holy See in a hostile political and religious context, where Catholics could rely on non-Catholic authorities against a representative of Rome. Up until this point we have seen that conflicts among the missionaries were mainly due to issues of jurisdiction, national pride, and what the French Ambassadors called *jalousie de métier*. In the eighteenth century, however, one of the main reasons of debate inside the Ottoman Catholic world was linked to a complex and long-lasting dispute, which in some ways is reminiscent of the contemporary and much better-known "Chinese Rites" controversy. I am referring to the issue of *communicatio in sacris*, an expression with which the Roman Church labeled all kinds of participation of Catholics in the liturgical celebrations and sacraments of non-Catholic worship.²¹

This practice was almost inevitable among Eastern Christian converts to Catholicism: first of all, a complete break with pre-existing personal and family ties between Catholics and Orthodox was perceived as traumatic and very difficult to achieve; secondly, the early missionary strategy of secret conversions did not demand a formal rejection of the original community (even allowing, in some cases, neophytes to continue to attend their old churches); finally, and most importantly, according to the juridical framework of the Ottoman Empire, Greek, Copt, Syriac, and Armenian faithful were forced to resort to their national "schismatic" clergy for all those sacraments and rites that held civil effects, i.e., baptism, marriage, and funerals. Those who refused could also be considered rebels from a political point of view because of their refusal to obey their legitimate patriarchs, appointed by the Sultan. While these were the practical problems of the converts, the Catholic missionaries were also confronted with the conceptual challenges posed by the *communicatio in sacris*: first, the question of the validity and orthodoxy of the sacraments imparted by the Eastern Churches, especially when their form was very different from the one used in the Latin Church; second, the theoretical question of the liceity of the Catholic participation in the liturgy of the "schismatics and heretics," much debated among canonists and theologians; and finally, the crucial question concerning what form of tolerance should be granted to those converts who were forced to resort to the priests and churches of their own nation for fear of violence or persecution.

Constantinople was one of the main centers of this controversy. There, the large Armenian community was the target of both Jesuits and Capuchins. In this case, however, the balance of power and the traditional contraposition between rigorism and accommodation were reversed. Contrary to what happened in Syria and Egypt, in the Ottoman capital city the role of French chaplains belonged not to the Jesuits, but to the Capuchins, and they exerted, right at the core of the empire, a function of mediation and

brokerage similar to that of the Franciscans in the Holy Land.²² Their high degree of integration in the social structure of Constantinople is attested by the large number of notarial records and arbitral decisions concerning the local Greek and Armenian population that were kept in their archives, together with the translations of official acts coming from qadi courts and Ottoman chancellery.²³ On the other hand, if we are accustomed to thinking of the Jesuits as the missionaries more willing to adapt to local cultures and circumstances, in Constantinople they followed a stricter stance and tried in every way to separate the Armenian converts from their original churches and rites, even though this provoked violent clashes and quarrels.²⁴

Consequently, the Jesuits opposed all compromises or tentative agreements promoted by the Capuchins between the Catholic and Apostolic Armenian members of the community. In 1701, a truce of this kind was signed by the representatives of both parties under the auspices of the French ambassador Charles de Ferriol and with the consent of all the other missionaries. In the text of the agreement, the Armenian Catholics promised to resume their attendance of national churches and to follow their native rite in its entirety, but the others were not to demand of them a profession of faith and agreed to erase the most evident anti-Catholic parts of the liturgy. The Jesuits were the only ones who refused to sign the agreement. Their local superior, François Braconnier, wrote to Rome that the text had been conceived by the Capuchins in following a political and not a theological criterion, while the support of the French ambassador was even more dangerous, since "it is dangerous that private individuals decide anything in matters of religion."²⁵ This last statement sounds somewhat ungrateful if one considers that in the first six years of the century the ambassador Charles de Ferriol spent 7,900 *livres* only for religious affairs.²⁶

In contrast, the guardian of the Capuchins Hyacinthe-François de Paris denounced the Jesuit attitude as motivated not by doctrinal opinions but rather by material interests. According to him, the members of the Society of Jesus did not want to lose the copious alms given by the Armenian faithful to their church in Galata. Indeed, when some years later someone advanced the idea of obtaining a separate place of worship for Catholic Armenians, the Jesuits were equally opposed, although in this case their concerns about orthodoxy seemed less justified.²⁷

3 "From place to place, the status of the dispute may change": The missionaries' attitude toward *communicatio in sacris*

The controversy around *communicatio in sacris* is particularly useful for understanding the different approaches deployed by Catholic missionaries according to local circumstances. During the first 20 years of the eighteenth century, a deluge of questions and doubts about the legality of the practice came to the Holy Office, concerning especially (but not only) the Armenian communities of Anatolia and Syria. In 1720, two years after Abbot Mekhitar (Mxit'ar Sebastac'i) had once more raised the issue, the congregation

seized the opportunity and decided to address the problem in a more serious way.²⁸ First of all, it was necessary to collect more detailed information on the extent and characteristics of the phenomenon, including the opinion of the Latin missionaries but possibly also that of the Eastern Catholic clergy. Such a survey was to be carried out as widely as possible because, depending on the place, the terms of the dispute could change, and what in one country could be seen as scandalous, in another could be acceptable. In other words, the Cardinals recognized that the conditions were not the same everywhere, and so the final judgment about the lawfulness of *communicatio in sacris* could vary. As a consequence, *Propaganda* was asked to submit three questions to the most experienced missionaries active in the East, or recently returned to Italy: (1) whether there was a real need for Catholics to resort to the "schismatic" churches and clergy for the celebration of baptisms, marriages, and funerals; (2) whether they otherwise incurred any serious or life-threatening danger; and (3) whether this form of *communicatio in sacris* could be performed "without making profession of a false sect, without scandal, and without danger of perversion." The 29 replies that were received were collected in a thick dossier of 250 leaves, together with the votes of the consultors and other material related to their bureaucratic examination.²⁹

As could be expected, half of the replies came from the three main cities of the Ottoman Empire (Constantinople, Aleppo, and Cairo), but it is interesting to note that soon after those came Venice, where three among the questioned missionaries resided. The inclusion of places where there were no Armenians (like the island of Corfu, for example), might seem surprising but the choice to consult other Eastern Christian communities was made "for greater security of the truth, lest the Armenians do not hide some illicit rite, or defend themselves with false excuses." With regard to the religious affiliation of the missionaries, the most represented groups were the Franciscans of the Holy Land and the pupils of the Urbanian College (directly dependent on the Congregation of *Propaganda Fide*), followed by the Jesuits, Capuchins, and Discalced Carmelites. As already mentioned, what is most interesting is the diversity of their opinions, which often seems to depend on their place of activity. For example, the majority of the missionaries who denied the need to attend the "schismatic" churches was constituted of the religious working in Egypt. According to one of them, the Franciscan Agostino da Morano, the local Ottoman authorities had little interest in regulating Christian religious practices, especially in Cairo, where "the government is almost republican and it is possible to enjoy a certain freedom of religion."³⁰ Similarly, his confrere Giacomo d'Albano wrote that in the Egyptian capital "the Turkish government is very different, and not as despotic and absolute as it is in Aleppo or Damascus": in many years of mission he had never heard "that any Catholic of any nation had been imprisoned or beaten for coming to our church to hear the mass and receive the sacraments."³¹

This position, however, was not shared by all the missionaries: the Franciscans accused the local Jesuits of allowing Catholic Copts to take communion

from the "schismatic" priests, provoking confusion among their faithful. Indeed, the Jesuit superior in Egypt, Claude Sicard, personally wrote that in his opinion Eastern Catholics were always allowed to perform baptisms, weddings, and funerals in their own national churches, *quamquam schismatica*; it was also acceptable to occasionally go "to the mass of the schismatics," but only in terms of physical presence yet without any real participation, as long as the Sunday obligation was then fulfilled in a Catholic church.³² As we have seen, his ideas were not shared by his confreres in Constantinople, with the partial exception of Jacques Caschod, who – as a personal friend of Abbot Mekhitar – tried to hold a compromise position, which balanced the pastoral needs and the principles of orthodoxy.³³ The Jesuits of Aleppo were even more explicitly opposed to *communicatio in sacris*, claiming that by entering non-Catholic churches there was no way to avoid the danger of scandal. On this point the local Franciscans completely disagreed, and Luigi Antonio di Casalmaggiore admitted that he had allowed his penitents to assist "externally" to the "schismatic mass."³⁴

In other words, the rivalry between religious orders could take different forms: as we have seen, in Syria the confrontation was the opposite of the one in Egypt. This variety and divergence of views confused the conscience of the Eastern faithful, who did not know what the true doctrine was to follow. As a layman from Aleppo wrote to Rome,

we find ourselves in great perplexity in spiritual things, because some missionaries teach us one thing, and others a different one: the Franciscans teach us that it is not a sin to attend the liturgies performed in the Armenian church, if we do not intend to communicate with the heretics . . . the Capuchin fathers neither say 'yes' nor 'no', while the Jesuits and Carmelites absolutely forbid it, so much that they do not even allow us to approach the church door.³⁵

This situation was deemed unacceptable by the Roman congregations: after some cautious statements and an *interim* decree in 1723 that only increased the confusion, an instruction which prohibited *communicatio in sacris* in a broader way was finally issued in 1729.³⁶

However, even this clear stance was not sufficient to eradicate the phenomenon, which remained widespread in the East for decades. Armenian Catholics were now caught between the Roman prohibition and the Ottoman obligations, finding it impossible to respect both. Throughout the eighteenth century, continuous requests to soften the norm were sent to Rome from the Near East, while, periodically, scandals erupted about the permissiveness shown by some missionaries toward their faithful. At a certain point, the rivalry between missionaries led to a rupture even within the Armenian nation itself, since the religious trained in Rome (the so-called *Collegiani*, pupils of the Urbanian College of *Propaganda Fide*) accused the disciples of Abbot Mekhitar (based in the Venetian island of San Lazzaro)

of being too much friendly with the "schismatics." In fact, while the *Collegiani* had introjected a theological and ecclesial system based on Western Scholastic tradition, on the Latin liturgy and on the Counter-Reformation model, the Mekhitarists struggled to remain faithful to both the Catholic Church and the Armenian tradition, convinced as they were of its substantial orthodoxy.³⁷ Such an approach exposed the order to continuous accusations and controversies, especially when the intransigent pro-Roman missionaries ended up victims of the Ottoman persecutions (often in the aftermath of confessional troubles they had promoted), unlike the more tolerant monks from Venice.³⁸ On 30 July 1770, *Propaganda Fide* decided that every Mekhitarist about to leave for the Levant was obliged to take an oath not to engage in *communicatio in sacris*.³⁹

4 Conclusion

As I have tried to show, the endless competition between the missionaries and their conflicting views on some fundamental topics are not easily explained by traditional or stereotypical contrapositions (such as "Jesuit accommodation" versus "Franciscan rigorism"), which have been increasingly questioned by scholars in different geographical and historical contexts.⁴⁰ In fact, despite the real specificities of each order (for example in terms of authority management or information flow), it is not possible to speak of consistent missionary policies, as different opinions could be found within the same religious families, among fellow nationals, and even in the same residency, depending on varying circumstances. Concerning the problem of *communicatio in sacris*, for instance, some missionaries even changed their minds over time, after being put in close contact with the local situation: this was the case for the Franciscan Guardian Lorenzo Cozza and for the Jesuit Provincial of Syria Pierre Fromage, who both switched from a rigid approach to a tolerant one toward the practice of *communicatio in sacris*.⁴¹ If a generalization must be made, we may say that European missionaries were ready to adapt to local customs and power networks whenever they were exposed to economic insecurity or political isolation. In contrast, where the missionaries were able to gain positions of power and a strong control over their followers, they did not feel the need "to go native," maintaining a strict view about the possibility of attending national churches (as the Jesuits did in Aleppo and Constantinople) and even promoting some forms of Latinization: in the case of the Franciscans of the Holy Land, this option was also a result of their being not so much a missionary order as the guardians of Latinity in the Middle East.

As for the missionaries of local origin and the Eastern Catholic clergy, their different stances derived from two opposite strategic choices: on the one hand, a "Latinizing attitude" – embodied here by the pupils of *Propaganda Fide* but also by some Uniate prelates – was perceived both as a greater guarantee of catholicity (against the proclamations of Rome itself,

which in theory emphasized the need to respect the Eastern rites) and as a tool to gain the trust of the European political authorities; on the other, the fidelity to one's own ritual tradition served to reaffirm the existence and specificity of an Eastern Catholic identity, while the good relations with the "schismatic" hierarchies also helped to protect Catholic converts from any harassment on the part of Ottoman officials.

Finally, we should also underline the role played by the different urban contexts, either in stimulating rivalry and competition among the missionaries (as in Damascus, "the commercial scale where the diversity of religious orders has produced the greatest troubles," according to a French ambassador)⁴² or in allowing greater or lesser freedom of action: such is the case of Cairo, which was deemed different from the other cities of the Near East for its "republican" regime – an allusion to the oligarchic system of government established by the Mamluks, which had somewhat survived the Ottoman conquest of Egypt.⁴³ While the large urban areas offered greater opportunities for the apostolate, they could also prove to be dangerous places: "persecutions are more easily excited in Aleppo, in Constantinople, and in Damascus than elsewhere; in the case of smaller and less populated places, it is rare that this happens."⁴⁴ All the aforementioned distinctions and contradictions made up an extremely complex picture, suggesting that generalizations or oversimplifications should be avoided: only the careful consideration of particular local dynamics and the refusal to follow established patterns can lead to a correct understanding of the missionary activity in the urban settings of the Ottoman Empire.

Notes

- 1 Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient*; Clines, "Society of Jesus."
- 2 Ditchfield, "De-centering the Catholic Reformation," 186–208; Menegon, *Ancestors, Virgins, and Friars*.
- 3 Luria, *Sacred Boundaries*; Kaplan, *Divided by Faith*; Dixon, Freist, and Green-grass, *Living With Religious Diversity*. These are just a few examples among many.
- 4 Županov and Fabre, *Rites Controversies*; Windler, *Missionare in Persien*; Santus, *Trasgressioni necessarie*.
- 5 Since the beginning, this was also due to the explicit will of the French Crown to promote its own interests in the Levant through a network of missionaries of French origin, especially Jesuits and Capuchins (who were soon to become rivals). See Pierre, *Le Père Joseph*; Ruij, "Missionaries and French Subjects," 181–204.
- 6 See Girard, "Impossible Independence," 67–94.
- 7 Châteauneuf to Pontchartrain, 17 June 1692 (AN, AE, B/I, vol. 381, fol. 203v). A French translation of the 1690 text was published by Fleuriau d'Armenonville, *Estat présent*, 98–111.
- 8 AN, AE, B/I, vol. 381, fol. 204r/v.
- 9 The first attempt to establish a French consul in Jerusalem dates back to 1621, with the appointment of Jean Lempereur, who actually resided there for only 2 years (1623–1625). He was accused by the Ottoman authorities in Damascus of being a spy and an ally of the Druze Emir Fakhr al-Dīn II; he was imprisoned in Damascus and eventually expelled. See Pietro Verniero di Montepiloso, *Croniche*, vol. 2, 61–69.

- 10 Lemmens, *Acta S. Congregationis*, vol. 1, 190–191.
- 11 Ferriol to Pontchartrain, 4 August 1700 (AN, AE, B/I, vol. 383, fol. 190r–199v); letter from 15 April 1700 with attached documents (AN, AE, B/I, vol. 628, fol. 82).
- 12 Pietro Verniero di Montepiloso, Deputy Custos in the 1630s and first real chronicler of the Franciscan presence in the Holy Land, left an interesting testimony on the vast experience and know-how acquired over the centuries by the friars about how to deal with local Islamic authorities. The first draft of the second book of his *Chronicles* is devoted to detailed listing of all the donations (in cash, clothes, or other goods) that should be offered to the "Turks" according to the occasion and the degree of the officer involved. See Pietro Verniero di Montepiloso, *Croniche*, vol. 4, 18–32, 32 ff.
- 13 According to Ventayol, part of the responsibility for this lay on the bad advice given to the consul by a French friar, the Vicar François Macé, deemed too young to have real knowledge of the local dynamics. Ventayol to Ferriol, 20 June 1700 (AN, AE, B/I, vol. 383, fol. 200r–205v).
- 14 See Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient*, 245–246.
- 15 Previously, Ventayol had played a key role in obtaining from the Ottoman Porte the victory over the Greeks in the long-running dispute concerning the control of the Holy Sepulchre; he died in Jerusalem on 9 January 1726. On the Castilian Friar Tomás Díaz de Campaya, who graduated as a doctor from the University of Alcalá de Henares, see later in this chapter: The mention of his friendship with the pasha of Damascus is in APF, CP, vol. 77, fol. 107v. It should be noted that there was no French consulate in Damascus; in order to undermine Campaya's power his opponents tried several times to move him to another city where a French representative could keep him under control.
- 16 See the protests of the Maronite Patriarch Iṣṭifān al-Duwayhī and of the Melkite Patriarch Cyril Tanas against the "usurpations" of the Friars of the Holy Land: Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient*, 446–447.
- 17 Memorial of Campaya, 1724 (APF, SOCG, vol. 648, fol. 192r/v). On the previous situation, see Lemmens, *Acta S. Congregationis*, vol. 1, 401–402 (General Report on the Custody of the Holy Land, 1717–1719). On the pragmatic attitude of Ottoman authorities concerning church renovation, see Gradeva "From the Bottom Up and Back Again," 135–163. On relations between the Ottoman authorities and the Christian community of Damascus, see also Marino, "Le 'Quartier des Chrétiens.'"
- 18 Letter to the Congregation of Propaganda fide, 28 February 1714, in Castellani, *Atti del Rev.mo Lorenzo Cozza*, 288–296, 294. In another letter, he suggested that this was also due to the exaggerated or false claims of conversions boasted by the Jesuits (14 March 1714, in *ibid.*, 301). See also Heyberger, "Terre Sainte," 127–153.
- 19 Memorial of a dragoman from Aleppo, 1725 (APCP, Constantinople, series E, doc. 23). On the creation of groups of female devotees and consecrated virgins, see Heyberger, "Individualism and Political Modernity," 71–85; Heyberger, *Hindiyya*.
- 20 Report of Emmanuel de Saint-Albert from Tripoli, January 1745 (APF, CP, vol. 83, fol. 390v). On the previous accusations against Campaya, see APF, Acta, 1724, fol. 366r; Acta, 1725, fol. 321r ff.; SOCG, vol. 648, fol. 169r–176v; CP, vol. 75, fol. 62v–68v, 106v–113v; CP, vol. 77, *passim*. See also Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient*, 346, 352, 487–489.
- 21 Vries, "Communicatio in Sacris"; Santus, "communicatio in sacris"; Santus, *Trasgressioni necessarie*. The interweaving of this issue with the famous Chinese and Malabar *querelles de rites* is at the core of a research project that I will carry out at the Université Catholique de Louvain. See also Windler, *Missionare in Persien*, 589–607.

- 22 In 1685, before taking up his post as French Ambassador to the Sublime Porte, Pierre de Girardin resorted to the diplomatic experience of a Capuchin from Constantinople, who instructed him about the right people to approach in order to deal effectively with the Ottoman Court. See Ghobrial, *The Whispers of Cities*, 46–48.
- 23 See the documents in APCP, Constantinople, especially in the series F, R, S, T, U, V, X, and Z. One of the most stunning examples concerns the request addressed in 1705 by the qadi of the Greek Islands Yüsuf Agha, who asked Fr. Hyacinthe-François to intercede on his behalf with the French ambassador in order to quickly receive from the Kapudan Pasha the passport required to exert his duty; in return, the qadi sent three wheels of cheese to the friar as a gift! (APCP, Constantinople, series P, doc. 46).
- 24 This negative stance was shared by the Jesuit Curia in Rome, whose theologians explicitly rejected any form of *communicatio in sacris*: ARSI, Gallia 104, fol. 269r–271r, 280r–282v. Not all the Jesuits, however, were of the same mind: while the local superior François Braconnier and Pierre Ricard were hardliners, some years later their confrere Jacques Caschod seemed to have expressed more conciliatory positions (see later in this chapter).
- 25 ARSI, Gallia 104, fol. 274r–279v. The memorial is not signed, but the handwriting of Braconnier is recognizable. On the 1701 agreement, see De Craon, “Le projet d’union,” 47–67; on the historical background, see Kévorkian, “Documents d’archives français,” 333–371.
- 26 *Mémoire des dépenses que j’ay faites pour les affaires de la Religion depuis le premier Janvier 1700 jusqu’au 20 Juin 1706* (AN, AE, B/I, vol. 385, fol. 49r–51v).
- 27 Letters dated 18 October and 14 November 1714 (APCP, Ms. 1261, 108–117); see Santus, “La comunità armena,” 51–59. For a more detailed analysis of the local context, see Santus, *Trasgressioni necessarie*.
- 28 Nurikhan, *Il servo di Dio abate Mechitar*, 255. See the *Informatione alla Sacra Congregazione del S. Offitio fatta dal Pad. Michitar Petro, Abbate delli Monaci Armeni del titolo di S. Antonio Abbate, circa la questione controversa nell’Oriente, se sia lecito alli Catolici di andare nelle Chiese delli Scismatici* (ACDF, SO, St. St., M 3 a, fols. 338r–352v). See also Mekhitar of Sebastia, *Lettere del Servo*, 396–403.
- 29 ACDF, SO, St. St., M 3 a, fol. 166r–416v. This dossier is examined in Santus, *Trasgressioni necessarie*.
- 30 4 May 1721 (ACDF, SO, St. St., M 3 a, fol. 288r). This peculiar condition may also be explained by the rather marginal status of the Coptic Church in the Ottoman Empire: “unlike their Armenian and Greek correlates, who had active patriarchates in Istanbul, [the Copts] were primarily governed by local power-holders in Egypt . . . as such, they scarcely provoked the interest of sultans or their deputies.” Armanios, *Coptic Christianity*, 9.
- 31 27 April 1721 (ACDF, SO, St. St., M 3 a, fol. 259r).
- 32 The reason behind Sicard’s tolerant attitude was not only the idea that the Eastern liturgy and sacraments were valid and substantially devoid of errors, but also the awareness that those Eastern Christians who refused to take part in the social and religious ceremonies of their rite were doomed to be expelled from their communities. Letter from Cairo, 6 April 1721 (ACDF, SO, St. St., M 3 a, fol. 249r–250v). Sicard could publicly express his tolerance toward *communicatio* (in 1725 he even wrote an Arabic and French pamphlet, *Dissertation sur la communication qu’on peut avoir avec les hérétiques et schismatiques dans les prières et les sacrements*: APF, CP, vol. 77, fol. 95r–98v) perhaps thanks to his reputation as a scholar and to his network of patrons, fascinated by the many Egyptological discoveries he had previously made: See Sicard, *Œuvres*. At any rate, he died

- in 1726, before any Roman censorship could hit him. The history of the Jesuit mission in Cairo can be studied in detail thanks to the documents published by Libois, *Monumenta Proximi-Orientis*, vols. 5 and 6; more in particular, see Hamilton, *The Copts and the West*, 85–91.
- 33 On Jacques Caschod (or Gachoud), known for his apostolate both among the galley slaves of Constantinople and the local Armenians, see Jordan, “Le P. Jacques Gachoud.” In his reply to Rome he stated that both an absolute ban on attending national churches and widespread tolerance of *communicatio in sacris* would have caused serious problems. However, he pointed out that a distinction was needed between the simple assistance to prayers and psalms (which did not offend anyone), participation in the mass, reception of the sacraments, etc.: 4 July 1721 (ACDF, SO, St. St., M 3 a, fol. 255r–256v).
- 34 17 April 1721 (ACDF, SO, St. St., M 3 a, fol. 278r–279v).
- 35 Giorgio Lucas, 1 June 1722 (ACDF, SO, St. St., M 3 a, fol. 284r–285v).
- 36 5 July 1729 (ACDF, SO, St. St., M 3 a, fol. 476r–483v). See Santus, “*communicatio in sacris*,” 330–332. However, even at a later phase some missionaries continued to express resistance and dissenting opinions. See Windler, “Ambiguous Belongings.”
- 37 See Zekiyan, “Armenians and the Vatican,” 251–267; Abagian, “La questione della *communicatio in sacris*.”
- 38 In 1721, the Collegian missionary don Giovanni Minas had already attributed the ultimate responsibility of his sufferings not to the “schismatics,” but rather to those “coward Catholics” that were stirred up by the Mekhitarists to refuse the rigor of the Roman norms: 17 May 1721 (ACDF, SO, St. St., M 3 a, fol. 274r–275v).
- 39 APF, Acta, 1770, fol. 321v; APF, SC, Armeni, vol. 19, fol. 395r–397r.
- 40 On the dissent within the Jesuit order concerning the rites controversy, see for example Županov, *Disputed Mission* and Pavone, “Dentro e fuori la Compagnia,” 943–960. One example of how accommodation could also be promoted by other missionary orders is the case of the Discalced Carmelites in Persia, recently studied by Windler, *Missionare in Persien*.
- 41 Compare Lorenzo Cozza’s stance in 1721 (ACDF, SO, St. St., M 3 a, fol. 316v–318v) with that he expressed a decade earlier (Castellani, *Atti del Rev.mo Lorenzo Cozza*, 112–121); in 1727 Pierre Fromage explained that his previous negative stance was due to his lack of awareness about the local circumstances (APF, CP, vol. 77, fol. 9v–10v).
- 42 See the Memorial of the Ambassador Louis-Sauveur de Villeneuve (1740) in Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, 561–578, 564.
- 43 See above, footnote 30; Winter, *Egyptian Society*.
- 44 Letter of Lorenzo Cozza, 10 March 1721 (ACDF, SO, St. St., M 3 a, fol. 319r/v).