

REVIEWS

Claudia von Collani (ed.), *Joachim Bouvet S.J. Journal des voyages*. Taipei: Taipei Ricci Institute (Variétés Sinologiques New Series; 95), 2005. iv, 374 pp.

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Joachim Bouvet (1656-1730) was one of the five French Jesuits who entered China in 1687, sent to the Kangxi Emperor (r. 1662-1722) by Louis XIV (r. 1643-1715) as his “Mathematicians.” He worked at the Qing court, serving mainly as an imperial tutor in the sciences. In 1693, the emperor sent him back to France, where he was to ask Louis XIV to send to China more Jesuits versed in the sciences. The book under review is an annotated edition of the diary kept by Bouvet during “three and a half years of a hard and tedious trip” (p. 285): having left Beijing on 8 July 1693, he reached Brest on 1 March 1697.

While the text of the diary itself is in the original French, the sixty-page introduction and the footnotes are in English. The introduction contextualises the diary: it gives an outline of Bouvet’s career as a missionary from his first departure from France in 1685 until his return to China in 1698. This gives the editor an opportunity to describe the complex situation brought about in the Catholic missionary enterprise in Asia by the competition among European countries and religious orders, as well as the efforts by the Holy See to gain control over missions. In particular, Bouvet was eager to defend the Jesuits against the attacks of other priests working in China in what came to be known as the “Rites Controversy”: whereas the Jesuits described Confucian rituals such as ancestor worship as “civil,” other missionaries labelled them “superstitions” and aimed at forbidding the Chinese Christians to take part in such rituals.

The manuscript published here, which is kept at the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, München, is not an autograph. According to the editor it was copied (and sometimes abridged) by Bouvet’s brother, after the former arrived in France. In several places the text is supplemented in the footnotes by the longer version, parts of which are still available at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Paris).

Abundant footnotes elucidate most of the names of places, persons, and Chinese terms encountered in the diary.

The longest part of the diary is devoted to the background of Kangxi's commission, and to the trip from Peking to Canton and the time spent between Canton and Macao looking for a ship to board (pp. 61-222). Bouvet travels as an imperial envoy (*qinchai* 欽差), and is escorted by a cousin of the emperor (p. 114). Fresh horses and boats are put at his disposal whenever necessary, he receives ceremonial greetings and is offered banquets by local officials everywhere he stops: these travel conditions give us a glimpse of the network through which imperial authority extended throughout the empire. We also get a view of the geography of Christianity in late seventeenth-century China: Bouvet describes all the parishes that he visits, and lists the missionaries he meets. His status enables him to recommend them to local officials: again one can see how the Jesuits could use their position at Court to protect "grass-root" missionaries and Christians in the provinces. Most of the places mentioned in Bouvet's diary have been identified and are listed in the very valuable index; a map would have helped too. Some small omissions: for example, when on p. 124 one reads that Bouvet has crossed the border between the province of "Peking" and that of "Canton"—where, as we learn on p. 129, Confucius was born—, a footnote referring the readers to Shandong 山東 would have been welcome.

No more than sixty-two pages (pp. 222-284) are devoted to the hazardous trip that took Bouvet back to France. From Macao (January 1694) he sailed to Surat (May 1694); there he boarded a Turkish ship (March 1695) which took him to Gidda (April 1695), where, hearing rumours of an attack led by the son of the Great Moghul, Bouvet felt it was safer to retrace his steps to Surat (December 1695). He finally boarded a French ship there (April 1696), which took him back via the Cape of Good Hope and Brazil, as was usual at the time; the final destination was Brest (March 1697), from where Bouvet had first sailed to China twelve years earlier. According to his account, it was the wars and rivalry among European countries, as well as with "Mahometans," and the unreliability of some ship captains and local custom officers, that made this trip lengthy and dangerous, rather than the hazards of climate or the shortcomings of naval technology. His status as envoy from the Kangxi Emperor could still be of use in such a context, although it no longer granted comfort or safety as it had in China. This second part of the diary is somewhat less gripping than the account of the land travel through China; this is probably due to the fact that Bouvet understood less of what he saw around him; most of the time he needed an interpreter.

In addition to a map of this second part of the journey (pp. ii-iii), the editor has supplied a chronology ranging from January 1693, when the narrative of the diary starts, until November 1699, after Bouvet returned to Beijing. After a well-documented bibliography of Western sources and secondary literature, she gives an index that has been divided into the following seven sections: persons (with Chinese characters where relevant); Chinese terms; science and subjects; astronomical and mathematical instruments and gifts; ships; church missions and

parishes; geography. Where relevant, Bouvet's transcriptions, Chinese and Manchu names and Chinese characters are given, when the author has been able to identify them, that is in most cases. This makes the volume a very useful research tool: readers who are not very familiar with the French language can conveniently locate material relevant to, for instance, history of science and medicine or history of missions.

There are a few mistakes in the transcription of the French: for example, p. 71, "conferté" should be "conserté," for which the standard modern spelling is "concerté." As this example suggests, the irregularity of the spelling of the manuscript makes it very difficult to make the right guess when the reading is not obvious. There are also a few repetitions, inaccuracies and inconsistencies in the footnotes; for example, note 425 (p. 197) claims that "the so-called 'Glorious Revolution' [was] initiated by [...] William of Orange"; in fact it was the English Parliament that caused the downfall of James II, and the Parliament which then invited William of Orange to succeed him. This example, by the way, gives a glimpse of the breadth of topics mentioned in Bouvet's diary.

This diary is of direct relevance to the history of science in Qing China, as it gives a glimpse of the Jesuits' work in the service of the emperor during the Kangxi reign. It also provides access to an interesting sample of a genre that was to flourish in eighteenth-century Europe, that of travel literature, which has recently been the object of much research. Bouvet's view of China is that of a "correspondent" of the Paris Royal Academy of Sciences (before that status was formally defined in 1699) in charge of sending information on natural history and Chinese medicine,¹ as well as that of a missionary well versed in the customs of the empire. Just like the volume Bouvet published in France in 1697,² his diary is probably intended for royal reading (p. 59): as mentioned above, he had been sent by Kangxi to ask Louis XIV to send him more Jesuit mathematicians. Therefore it comes as no surprise that it emphasises the favour in which the emperor held the French Jesuits in 1693, and interprets it in terms of the prospects for evangelisation in China. My most important reservation about this volume is that it relies solely on Western sources and secondary literature, and effectively adopts Bouvet's viewpoint. Claudia von Collani's contextualisation of the diary is indeed relevant as regards mission history. But she misses possible readings of his diary in the light of Chinese history, and in particular of Chinese history of science. Despite this, historians of science who themselves use Chinese sources, now have access to a valuable and carefully edited source.

¹ See Archives des Missions Etrangères de Paris, V 479, p. 32.

² Joachim Bouvet, *Portrait historique de l'empereur de la Chine présenté au Roy*. Paris, 1697.