

Journal of Chinese Studies

Volume 1 • Number 1 • Summer 2012

Journal
of Chinese
Studies



The Southern Base of Confucius Institute Headquarter



Overseas Education College of Xiamen University

Journal of Chinese Studies

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JOURNAL OF CHINESE STUDIES

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Christianity and Chinese Rites Controversy: Spirit Tablets in 17th Century¹

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The funeral practices promoted by the European Catholic missionaries in China provide an interesting example of the adaptation of the Asian world in the 17th and 18th century. In this scope one must highlight the specific problem of the worship of the ancestors and more specifically the design of the spirit tablets for this purpose. The movement of the Chinese population and of the missionaries between the continent and other Christian settlements in Asia facilitated the arrival of these models to territories such as the Philippines. Yet in this archipelago, the prolonged establishment of other religious orders in a radically distinct context came to prohibit the use of said models.

The art promoted by the Society of Jesus in China and in other neighboring territories prior to their dissolution has been a field of study traditionally concerning the encounter of diverse religious practices. Also the presence of Dominicans and Franciscans in the southern part of the Chinese empire has attracted the interest of investigators; however, the artistic references in these cases are much less. The practices of the Jesuits, the members of the Propaganda Fide, the Franciscans and Dominicans and including the intervention with their own power on the part of the Chinese Empire were marked as the distinct stages of the aforementioned Controversy of the Chinese Rites. In order to explain the missionaries' problems in adapting in this context, one must assess recent studies concerning popular rites written by Menegon (2009), from which one can extract interesting conclusions in the field of art-history. Unfortunately, the shortage of graphic sources and of conserved works has made rather difficult the monographic study of this crossing of traditions and its comparison with what occurred in culturally similar circumstances.

Within the general interest that can be caused by the artistic production prior to the prohibition of the Chinese rites, one must distinguish the relation with Christian funeral practices. The problem has recently developed from a perspective not exclusively artistic, allowing for an approach to a more general context from a scarcely addressed problem (Standaert, 2008). It is precisely within the framework of this study that results in the better understanding of the new graphic documentation about the ancestral tablet located in the Casanatense Library, as well as the representations of those in the Archive of the Order of Jesus in Rome that have already been published².

Within the set of problems that provided synthesis between funeral traditions as disparate as those of the Catholic and the Chinese—there already was Buddhist or neo-Con-

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2 Biblioteca Casanatense, Roma. Mss. 2569. Ff. 338r-340v.

fucionist—the missionaries were able to identify especially significant obstacles, the cult of worship to the ancestors being one of the most well known. These types of rituals were very well established in the Chinese population and maintained a double quality serving both civil and religious purposes. To understand its complete dimension in the case of the Emperor, one can consult Rawski (1988). The missionaries decided to reinterpret these same rituals within the sphere of the Christian tradition, while at the same time modifying some aspects. After these first attempts at reinterpreting the rituals, they observed that the superstition that surrounded this liturgy was difficult to eradicate. In the same way, the sacrifices connected to the wakes appeared as heretical practices and did not conform to the Council of Trent. Finally, the Chinese belief that the spirit of the dead resided in the board and that it could move itself from one tablet to the other, practicing a particular ceremony, resulted in a difficulty to interpret from a Christian perspective³. The incorporation of the cross and of allusive inscriptions to the Creed was also behind the attempt to Christianize the ritual, but the practice did not spread as was expected. For this reason, Europe raised the radical option of its prohibition. For this reason, the Chinese government came to pronounce the rituals to be civil celebrations, and therefore, had nothing to do with Christianity (Mungello, 2009, p. 168). On the other hand, it was evident that to ban them, would have brought the Chinese Christians to face severe penalties as stipulated by the legislation in force, and that to the rest of the population it would be interpreted as a gesture of disloyalty to their ancestors⁴.

Before the attraction that continued supposing the spiritual conquest of China, this controversy was the main subject of the missions throughout the 17th century. One of the first effects was the editing of various writings in which were discussed the validity of the rites to the ancestors and also the configuration of the tablets. The liturgical-theological cast a shadow on the artistic problem, and perhaps for this reason, the graphic examples are especially limited. In this discussion—very active in the south of China—the Hispanic missionaries took on some of the key roles. The Spanish Dominican, Francisco Varo was responsible for the initiation of an internal dispute in China on the problem of the rites (Menegon, 2008). Within his writings, it can be highlighted his entitled catechism *Shengjiao Mingzheng* 聖教明證, and his work titled *Bianji* 辨祭 (ca. 1656) in which he expresses his position against the practice of sacrifice to the tablets, the manuscript of this remained hidden until the Jesuit Simao Rodrigues located it again in 1681 (Standaert, 1995). With its finding, there began a new discussion on the topic in the Fujian province, where there was involved other central characters like Li Liangiue and Yan Zanhua, the father of Yan Mo, who also would write a response to the *Bianji*, also arising other texts that came to examine the popular religious practices about the cult to the ancestors⁵. In this respect, the works

3 One of the annotations to the drawings it expressly mentions: *Omnino (igitur) non possunt re/sidere in tabella lignea, nunquam possunt bibere, aut comedire, neque largini felicitates, aut infelicitates. Si ergo clare sciamus, animas non residere in tabellis...* Biblioteca Casanatense, Roma. Mss. 2569. F. 339v.

4 Finally they were prohibited by Clement XI in bulls of 1704, 1710 and 1715. In spite of these measures the tablets continued to be widely used by Chinese Christians until at least the end of the 19th century. Therefore, the knowledge of the génesis of their models is particularly interesting.

5 Some of the texts of Yan Mo are the *Jizukao*, 祭祖考 (ARSI, Jap-Sin I, 38/42, 41/1a), or the *Kaoyi*, 考疑 (ARSI, Jap-Sin I, 28/42, 40/6b), Although some of the most remarkable for this topic will be discussed later on.

of Yan Mo should be highlighted, 嚴謨, studied by Standaert, or more specifically, Muzhu kao 木主考, *Study on the tablets of deceased persons*, or of Muzhu zonglun 木主總論, *Summary on the tablets of deceased persons*⁶.

The area of Fujian had been converted into the center of operations for the Order of Preachers in China, together with some straggling Franciscans and some Jesuits in clear deterioration (Fernández, 1958). It should be remembered that the second quarter of the 17th century was highlighted by the Hispanic attempt to establish themselves in current day Taiwan, which provided a perfect link between the convents of Manila and the continental missions in China (Borao, 2009). The traditional contact of this part of the continent with archipelagos such as the Philippines, where missionaries used to spend several years in training and acclimatization, made them think that the effect they would produce in the entire region would be much more than until that point had been intuited (San Roman, 2001).

Surely the accumulated experience in the Philippines with the Chinese, there called sangleyes, pre-ceded by the direct knowledge of the Mexican initiatives, produced its own interpretation from the adaptation of the Chinese method opposite of that of the Company. Fujian, which was much more heterogeneous in the missionary practices and with a popular religion distinct from that of the North, offered a more suitable scenario from which the missionaries there were able to highlight to the Christian cultural elites various theological and liturgical chapters. The geo-strategic position of the province facilitated that this discussion was made global, permitting the participation in it missionaries of the metropolis and of Puebla de los Angeles (St. Clair Segurado, 2000). The texts of the Spanish missionaries such as Pedro de la Piñuela, a collaborator of Varo, and from Marbella Agustín de San Pascual (1637-1697), as well as the responses from others like Bartolomé Marrón created a discussion in all the Order that served as background to the problem of design of the tablets of the ancestors⁷.

The central element of the discussions was the rituals to the ancestors and their tablets, a widespread practice of worship at the time. Within the different types of traditional Chinese tablets at the time, one can highlight 神主牌 shenzhupai (spirit master sign) and the 神位 shenwei (spirit seat). This type of plate, customarily crafted out of wood, is an important part of the popular religious practices that had gone and mixed with the larger Oriental religions. Actually, they can be equally found on domestic altars as in temples. On the other hand, its constitutive materials usually have an important role, since in some cases its first version is produced on paper, from which the ancestral spirit is then transferred to another wood engraving by means of the appropriate ceremony (Menegon, 2009).

The function and location of each one of the memorial stones deserves a commentary that consequently should be based on the investigations of Menegon. The cult of the ancestors was ordinarily found in the domestic sanctuaries (jiatang, 家堂), or in the ancestral halls (citang, 祠堂). In general terms, it can be said that the first of the dead to be remembered were those closest to the immediate family, meanwhile the second tombstones perpet-

6 The location of this document is given by the Ricci Institute in ARSI, Jap-Sin I, (38/42) 41/1b.

7 From between these they would be able to highlight la *Refutación del uso de las tablillas por el P. Marrón*. Provincial Archive of Ávila. 2-Derecha. Section of Chinese Rites (RCh). Tomo 35. Tomo 6. Ff. 98-147. *La Respuesta a la que escribió en 1693 un franciscano en defensa de las tablillas chinas [...] por Bartolomé Marrón*. APA. 2-Derecha, RCh, T. 35.

uated the memory of the more distant yet prominent dead. In any of these spaces, this cult of the ancestors was mixed with Taoist and Buddhist images and/or with other popular devotions. In this way, it served a ceremonial function in a high-status family, while the more humble family would make due with just a domestic altar, thus avoiding the liturgy of the mausoleums. As was to be expected, the Chinese Christians of different areas maintained this type of space in an attempt to Christianize the altars, such as occurred in Zhangzhou or Fu'an. To do this, it seemed to be that the missionaries generated a series of models that were exhibited in missions, which thus facilitated their Order and production by traditional artisans. Once the inscription was completed, it was then necessary for it to be inspected and assessed by a missionary. The graphic documentation about these models was especially scarce until now, and could be summed up in two examples offered up by Jesuit sources. Fortunately, a series of annotated drawings has been uncovered where these practices are described. They deal with three pages in whose fronts offer concrete examples of the tablets. Aspects such as its date, authorship or specific purpose are left for speculation or confirmation from other secondary sources⁸. The inscriptions on the drawings are made in Chinese characters, along with its phonetic transcription and Latin translation⁹. These models go along with explanations written principally in Spanish, although other explanations are even interspersed in Latin with Italian phrases. The unity of the whole work makes one think it is the product of one author, most likely a Spanish missionary, along with the assistance of local helpers in other works of greater format.

The drawings found today are linked to documentation dating from the middle of the 18th century, although it is likely these respond to problems dating to the end of the previous century in the coastal region of China, owing to Fu'an and Shanghai as well as Fujian¹⁰. Their subsequent binding with documents within a later collection are fundamental to the understanding of the ambassadorship of Cardinal Tournon and the Controversy of the Chinese Rites at the beginning of the 18th century. In actuality, other texts of this particular Dominican origin dating from the 17th century are conserved in the same Casanatense library. Supporting the connection with the world of the Order of Preachers, exists a decorative element of questionable interpretation. Finishing off the composition, on many Jesuit tombstones from early on appeared the IHS, that without totally generalizing were found in various later cases. In these drawings, that option is substituted with two stars in the form of a pointed cross, or of the cross of Saint John, that can be linked to one of the attributes of Saint Domingo, the founder of the order.

If this dating is to be considered valid, the drawings would be contemporaneous of the other two drawings known to date—those that were sent by the French Jesuits in the 17th

8 In the same volume of the library can be found *la Memorie e notizie delle missioni della Cina in forma di giornali, fatte come per mandarle ad un amico in confidenza e con segretezza*, written by Giovanni Pietro da Mantova between 1746 and 1749.

9 The phonetic transcription of some characters suggest that the Chinese used came from the south of the country as can be seen in examples 厶, currently *yes* in Mandarin, *mou* in Cantonese and transcribed as *meu*.

10 In the coastal strip which grouped discussions in this regard are known with special interest in the problema of the tablets, which did not generate as much documentation as other missions in China.

century, or included in Spanish publications¹¹. Well known is the funeral cross of Cándida Xu (d. 1680) (Cuplet, 1691). Very similar to this is the funeral cross of Philippe Xu Yongchang (d. 1684) (Standaert, 2008). All of them seem to have been disseminated in the region of Songjian and Shanghai, creating a few different particularisms that were common in the Jesuit community in the capital. The similarity between its composition and that of the presented drawings is evident, which can help support the dating offered. Both share a common interest in reincorporating the cross, including inscriptions taken from the Creed, although in the cases presented now, the inscriptions are much more extensive.

Along with these similarities, there are some relevant variants to take into consideration. As was indicated in both examples, these types of crosses used to be made of wood, copper, or in rarer cases, such as that of Cándida Xu, in silver. With the exception of wood—which is very rare—there has been no documentation as to the make-up of the Christian Chinese tablets. These types of materials are logical for the liturgical furnishings, though less appropriate for its exposure, but what's more is it is thought that these works were made long before the death of the faithful. In the first place, these crosses were objects of the Christian devotion and its death passed to form part of its furnishings, while the tablets would be created just after the death. Another notable difference is that these two crosses had inscriptions on the front and back of the cross, while those represented in the drawings only included it on the one side. The difference should have implied a distinct function, since it does not seem logical to have a tablet of commemorative steel with two faces. This explains that, when taking into account its function, it would not be that of a traditional tablet, but would come to serve as prayer tablets in Chinese which were used in burying the deceased¹². Clearly, the ritual problems created by the tablets were minimized.

The material utilized to make the traditional tablets in China did not seem to be of any great significance to the missionaries. Actually, although the author of the drawings did not make a distinction between the significance of each one of them in the ritual of the ancestors, according to Menegon, each material would correspond also with a ceremonial state in the Chinese tradition. This can be interpreted that the missionaries wanted to make the difference between a characteristic based on the economic level of the dead and his family, thus avoiding the problems that were offered in the transfer of the spirit from one tablet of a certain material to another. Actually, as soon as there was a newly deceased member in the family, the first temporary piece was made in silk, then after the name it was added, *seat of the spirit*, *lingwei* 靈位. This work should have been replaced during the funeral with a tablet of wood, known as *muzhu*, 木主, which then after the funeral would pass to the domestic sanctuary. When various generations had passed, some of these tablets would be moved more developed family mausoleums. In other instances, tablets were created to unite and group different members of the lineage.

11 *Figure de la Croix avec laquelle les chrestiens de la Chine ont accoustumé de se faire ensevelir*. Impr. F. de Louvment.

12 Standaert translates the instructions that the engraving quotes definitely on the use of this type of crossings: *One should make this cross in advance: cast it in copper; engrave it with the inscriptions; and expose it in the house, only leaving blank the date of decease in order to inscribe it after death. In this way it will be kept for ever and will not decay. If, however, this is not possible, then there is no problem in using wood to make it. For making this cross one should go to the church to get a model*. Ibid. P. 123.

Although these last typologies were exclusive to families of higher status, the missionaries designed models to more properly respond to the custom of honoring entire families that would join other models more commensurate with the individual memory of the dead. The tablets of a complete family used to make reference to two generations would be developed dually to the left and right of the central column, while that on the ends of the tablets space was left for two accessory columns reserved for the most distinguished ancestors.

Between the rituals carried out by both Christians and the gentiles for the memory of its families, five versions appear, still the two square ways being the most common in contemporary's China. In the first case, there is a tablet covered in lace where the names of the deceased are not in sight¹³. Besides this, there exists a more common second method with the tablets in which the names of the ancestors of the previous two generations are cited. These two models, used commonly in China without being linked to any specific religion, would be necessary to add to the three strictly Christian typologies. As stated in the annotation in the margin, their use was not yet common among the growing Christian community, yet surely they would be in the minds of the missionaries as they sought to spread them among the population. Two of them incorporate the stature of the cross on what is inscribed the phonetic transcription of the name of Christ in vertical writing, 我信一耶穌基利斯督我等主¹⁴. In some cases, the arms of the cross would be inscribed: 費 / 唯其¹⁵. In contrast to what was happening in the crosses with described prayers, in these models, under the arms of the cross were the typical columns with the paternal family to the right and the maternal family to the left. To this group of three types of exclusively Christian tablets, one must add one more typology, this time without a cross, ended by a cross of St. John. Two corresponding tablets are inscribed in a single solution, with the memory of the father to the right and the memory of the mother to the left. In those cases, in some ways more similar to the individual tablets, the birth and death dates were added to both.

Before moving on to individual wakes, it must be stressed that in the new interpretation the missionaries made the final character of the translation of the Creed. This affirmation is only incorporated in these two models—undoubtedly Christian and they finish with the character *zhu* 主, which does not occur in the orations on the crosses. In the Chinese tradition, the inscription always ended with the character *wang* 王, that was completed with the superior accent when the wake was installed on the domestic altar, symbolizing the descent of the spirit to his tablet (Menegon, 2009). Obviously this proved to be ill suited for the missionaries, who took the steps to re-interpret it before prohibiting it. They took the character 主 but took caution that its interpretation was that of Dominus and not the one of the two-syllabled *shenzhu* 神主, table of the spirits, that finished with the traditional inscrip-

13 This form of Tablet is common to Christians, and gentiles, it has a table of lace, and as such the names of the deceased do not appear, that there is written in it. The interpretation of “table of lace” is not easy. It probably refers to a piece of wood prepared to accommodate other pieces of the same material that can subsequently be adjusted. Perhaps each corresponds to a character which would incorporate the names of the deceased family at a later date.

14 我信一耶穌基利斯督我等主, originally translated as “ngo sin ie Iesukilisuto ngo tan cju” and translated as *Ego credo [in] unum Jesum Christum Dominum nostrum*. The second option, very similar to this, incorporates the inscription 耶穌基利斯督我等主, *Jesus Christus Dominus noster*. In this case there are not inscriptions on the arms of the cross.

15 費 / 唯其, translated as “liofo//ueiki” or *Filium solum*.

tions. This linguistic game made it so that the Christian tablets differed little from the most common tablets and therefore the reference to the cross was obliged. When this did not appear, it was preferred not to incorporate the Creed.

The other large group of monuments is composed of the solutions for individualized memories for the deceased contributes seven different formulas. The first differentiation, in the same vein as to that seen in the family, is that they correspond to the general uses of the area, or if they are exclusive to the Christian community. From the first group, four models are posed; they distinguish between themselves as one being for male burial, a second for females, and two more common models pertaining to both sexes, and in all cases always being made on paper. All are characterized for them leaving an ample space for decoration. Two of them are crowned for registry with a flower, while those of paper are decorated on its ends by vegetable elements such as lotus flowers.

To these four typologies, it is necessary to add three more. The first is extremely similar to those treated with inscribed crosses, but in this case exclusively pertains to a single deceased person. It is used more for men than for women, and the inscription is formed as 天主矜憐故母父享年十歲之記¹⁶. Here the preference is to invoke the Father of the Sky (天主), as the term translates the Christian concept of God, rather than the phonetic transcription of Jesus Christ (耶穌基利斯督). In addition, it includes a reference to the father and mother, as well as to the year of death, as well as age. The remaining two are very similar and the tablets equally correspond for both men and women. In the center of the tablet is set an inscription that differentiates it as a Christian tablet, since the rest are entirely traditional¹⁷. Additionally, it incorporates a phonetic transcription of the Christian name received at the person's baptism, although the possibility to include the original Chinese name existed as well¹⁸.

The above document explains the degree to which each of the aforementioned models was accepted. This serves on hand the knowledge of the Chinese preferences of the moment in addition to the actual Christian preferences. The five principal models drawn by the author are known by specific names and perhaps therefore with their own particularisms, moreover, any of these five models were utilized equally by both gentiles as well as Christians. The first is known as 祖宗牌, or even 祖宗牌辨. In any case they are known as 神祖牌¹⁹. In addition to these, two models make reference to names used more frequently today such as lingpai 靈牌 and also lingweipai 靈位牌²⁰. Finally a last option for *rustic people*, or in other words, those that did not continue in their studies is usually written after the name of his grandparents "xiangwei"²¹. According to the drawings, a much less common

16 *Caelum Dominus misereri mortuus mater pater talis talis talis frui annus talis decem aetas meminisse*

17 清故考名聖△諒△字△老府君, ["tsin ku kao minsein men loei men tsu men lao fu kiun"]. *Nitidum mors generatio nomen sanctum men nomen defuncti tale litera talis senex domus princeps.*

18 *Li cristiani cinesi / hanno il nome del santo, che loro fu imposto nel bat/tesimo, che si esprime nella loro lingua alla meglio / che si può [...] e poi hanno / il loro proprio nome cinese, con cui sono da tutti chiamati.*

19 祖宗牌辨 is transcribed phonetically by chuchungpay and translated by *Progenitorum Tabella*. 神祖牌 transcribed in the document as "xinchupay" and translated as *Spiritus Domini Tabella*.

20 The document speaks of 靈牌 transcribed as lingpay and translated as *Anime Tabella*; also appears 靈位牌 linggoeypay, *Anime sedes tabella*.

21 Transcribed originally as Hiangoey.

option for the model was in wood, and that was known as 木牌²².

Of the five models, Christians utilized three of them exclusively for use. All of them were represented with a cross, which surely helped to facilitate the acceptance of this practice by all of the missionaries. However, this would seem to be clearly too obvious for the Chinese community, thus they were not the most common models utilized, instead, the use of traditional tablets with Christian messages was preferred. In one-way or another, these drawings point to a mature solution to the issue that was at hand. The extensive incorporation of the cross or the care of the inscriptions suggest that the discussions born in the first half of the 17th century had born its fruits in the century's final decades.

This dating, that comes to be supported from various perspectives, provides one further clues to answer the important question as to the authorship of the drawings. First of all, it should be recalled that the notes were discovered to be written in Spanish, Chinese, Latin and even Italian. In short, it is a missionary most likely of Hispanic origin with extensive experience in China at the end of the 17th century, which also fits well with participation of Spanish missionaries in the discussions on Fujian. The local religious traditions should also be taken into account, as well as a grasp and fluency of the Chinese language that went well beyond what is strictly necessary for indoctrination. In view of the known documentation, the possibilities are relatively few. Firstly there is the Sevillian Dominican Francisco Varo (Wan Jiguo, 萬濟國) (Sevilla, 1627-Fuzhou, 1687), who meets all of the previously stated requisites, but perhaps comes a little too early²³. Working in his favor are his texts, which were sent to Rome, and are which today conserved as these drawings in the Casanatense Library—those which have provoked a new chapter in the Controversy of the Chinese Rites (Menegon, 2000). In the event that it is not the work of Francisco Varo, it is easy to think that it could be any of the other missionaries of peninsular origin that arrived in China around that time, such as Juan Bautista Morales, 黎玉范 (Écija, 1597-Funing, 1664), Juan de León García (Moral de Calatrava, 1605-Fu'an, 1665), or even other who experienced a sudden death in China such as Francisco Díez (1606-1646), Francisco Capillas (Baquerín de Campos, 1607-Fogan, 1648). A preliminary result, which can be drawn from these names, is that probably in the context in which these drawings were made was not within a Jesuitical but within the Dominican coastal foundations. In fact this theory connects well with the approaches of Propaganda Fide against the Chinese Rites, although it also coincides with some previous Jesuit solutions.

To this generation of Spanish missionaries and especially those of Andalucía origin, who are responsible for the beginnings of the discussion in this sense, it should be added

22 木牌, "mopay", *lignea tabella*. Cited expressly that *this final is uncommon*.

23 Francisco Varo (Sevilla, 1627-Fu'an, 1687) arrived in China in 1649 via his passage by New Spain. His first years are related with the translation of a Pontificate decree against the Chinese Rites. His labor in this liturgical sense, within the Order of the Preachers, continued for the rest of his life. In 1670 he finalized his Vocabulary of the Language comparative Mandarin with the Portugués and the Spanish, but began years later his Art of the Mandarin Language, published post-mortem in Canton in 1703. His prodigious work as a linguist has to be added to his labor about the ancestral Chinese Rites with his *Treaty in that lay the foundations that the religious preachers have to prohibit their Christians some ceremonies that the gentiles do in veneration of his teacher Confucious and their dead parents* (manuscript conserved in the Casanatense Library, ms. 1070). Coinciding with his death, Propaganda Fide named him Chief Archbishop of Lydda (Palestine) and Vicar Apostolic of Yunnan, Guangdong and Guangxi.

what helped to develop the theme up until the early 18th century, and the dreaded consequences brought upon by its prohibition. New Hispanics such as Pedro de Piñuela (México, 1650-Zhangzhou, 1704) or Agustín de San Pascual (Marbella, 1657-Acapulco, 1697) kept alive the discussion concerning ancestral rites and its corresponding tablets. Perhaps this second character offers more possibilities of being the author of the drawings due to the fact that San Pascual was an active advocate of the use of these stars in opposition to other semi-secular positions, as well as being a great connoisseur of the local language.

There is no doubt that the spiritual tablets posed a major theological liturgical problem, which was at the root of the Controversy of the Chinese Rites. Up to here, it has been possible to clearly differentiate the particularities of the tablets and of the funeral crosses, but why would it be necessary to add an element that could drink in these models for its definitive configuration: the funerary headstones? Unfortunately the number of Christian headstones from this period that have been conserved are extremely limited after the Cemetery at Zhalan was razed by the Boxers in 1900 (Malatesta & Gao, 1995). Among the remaining headstones, it would be necessary to note those that are currently kept in the Temple of the Five Towers in Peking (wutasi 五塔寺) (Witek, 2011). Among them can be identified the headstones of twenty Franciscan Jesuits and four Chinese, all of them dating from the beginning of the Qing period. In addition, it would be necessary to add nine more European tombs and six Chinese headstones. Actually, the models are not literal transferences of the exposed typologies. The Jesuit influence in the capital should be of much greater note. But in some sense they remind some of the diagram of the original tablets, wherein the rectangular form was topped by vegetable decoration, very characteristic and developed in the case of the headstones.

Peking, although it is a large account with the biggest collection, is not the only location to conserve this type of headstone. Recently, similar examples have been located in Shanghai (Clarke, 2006). According to Clarke, the headstones, although having barely been studied properly, should correspond with the tomb of a local Jesuit from the 19th century, after the return of the Company to China. In any case, the models that are seen in the tombs of Zhalan from the beginnings of the 17th century and those of Shanghai seem to follow the same general parameters. In this coastal area there is evidence that the tablets of spirits have remained in use among Christians and probably were re-used as models for the headstones.

Closer chronologically, but in a slightly different environment, are the remains of headstones of Chinese Christians of Manila. Currently, both doors of the Church of Santa Cruz in Binondo—parishes historically dedicated to the religious administration of the Chinese, known here as *sangleyes*, there are multiple remnants of headstones that can dated back to the 18th century. Among them are many of the preserved original headstones that show the models used by the local Christian community. The Chinese headstones—very limited and in bad shape—maintain, in a few sporadic cases, the Chinese characters. Unfortunately it is difficult to reconstruct the original message from the existing remains. There is no doubt that the capital of the archipelago was aware of the problem of the tablets and served to broadcast the same to the rest of the Hispanic territory. It would be incongruous to think that missionaries belonging to the same province, whether it be that of the Holy Rosary of the Dominicans or of Saint Gregory of the Franciscans, adopted solutions for the administration of the Chinese that would be distinct from location to another.

That is why, besides the cited vestiges, it was made important to locate new Philippine

sources from which to reinterpret the problem of artistic syncretism. The Franciscans, although not in charge of any particular Chinese community, should have received—at least since the first decades of the 18th century—the request of the Sangley community for burial in the interior of the temple, and if not, in other units. The Seraphic Province had to include an interesting chapter in regards to its renewed statues, in which the installation of vertically installed headstones was prohibited in the interior of the friars' minor convent churches²⁴. Surely, the numerous milestones would have made the temples' interior impractical, thus exclusively allowing only the traditional form of horizontal headstones (Luengo, in press).

The Franciscans, and surely other Orders, also should have reinterpreted the European model and the Chinese solutions for an improved setting. Up to what can be rebuilt, it seems fit to think that the headstones were designed to be installed horizontally. The inscriptions should have been done in both Spanish and Chinese. Some of the biggest headstones in Sangleyes today also have a great groove in the center of the tombstone whose meaning is difficult to assess. One possibility is that it was a measure to eliminate those Chinese inscriptions which surely would have made mention of theologically problematic terms such as *Lord of the Sky*, 天主. The very presence in Manila of the Cardinal Maillard of Tournon at the beginnings of the 18th century and other members of the retinue in charge of eradicating the Rites in China could be behind the suppression of these inscriptions.

In addition to the leftover lapidary remains, there exist other documented references about the achievement of these funerary pieces. Its invoice was in charge of stone-masons who also were employed in the constructive supply. Thus the measures of the headstones became a model transplanted as tablets to architecture. It is most specific in the case of Manila documenting the degree of assimilation of these practices in the archipelago. At the beginning of the 18th century one of the terms of stereotomy used in Manila was that of *tablilla*, a term of clear Castilian, but rare in the Hispanic architectonic vocabulary. The measurements were known more-over of these pieces that customarily used as graves (Luengo, 2010). For more details, Chinese Christian coming from in many cases Fujian monopolized the market of stone carving. One might think that continental solutions to the Christian Chinese funeral practices were assumed by the Sangley community of Manila with the aforementioned Franciscan alterations, which would be extended to other orders of the city. This would highlight the possibility of linking the remains preserved today in Binondo or between other points of the city with the funeral traditions of the continent.

Any of the tablet models displayed here offer a clear example of the religious syncretism that arrived in China in the 18th century with sometimes conflicting solutions and others complementary to the Society of Jesus. But the same missionaries saw the problem of indoctrination of the Chinese as a problem that concerned not only the continent, but also other territories, especially the Philippines, where the missionaries used to gain experience before their leap over to the Chinese Empire. Although this type of training was less documented in the Sangley communities of Manila, it is possible they were equally present. In the face of direct communication that was offered to Peking by Rome at the time of dealing with the problem of the Chinese Rites, the measures taken in Fujian affected other territories, some of which where Catholicism had spread with success for quite a long time. By the incorporation of the Philippines to the problem or the doubts raised in New Spain in

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the metropolis or including in Rome, the problem of the tablets of the ancestors was made global, giving place to a discussion of great interest, especially focused in its theological branch and liturgy and not so much artistic. This study offers a new source, which completes this wide controversy with the contemporary graphic apparatus.

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Author's Biodata

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Appendix:

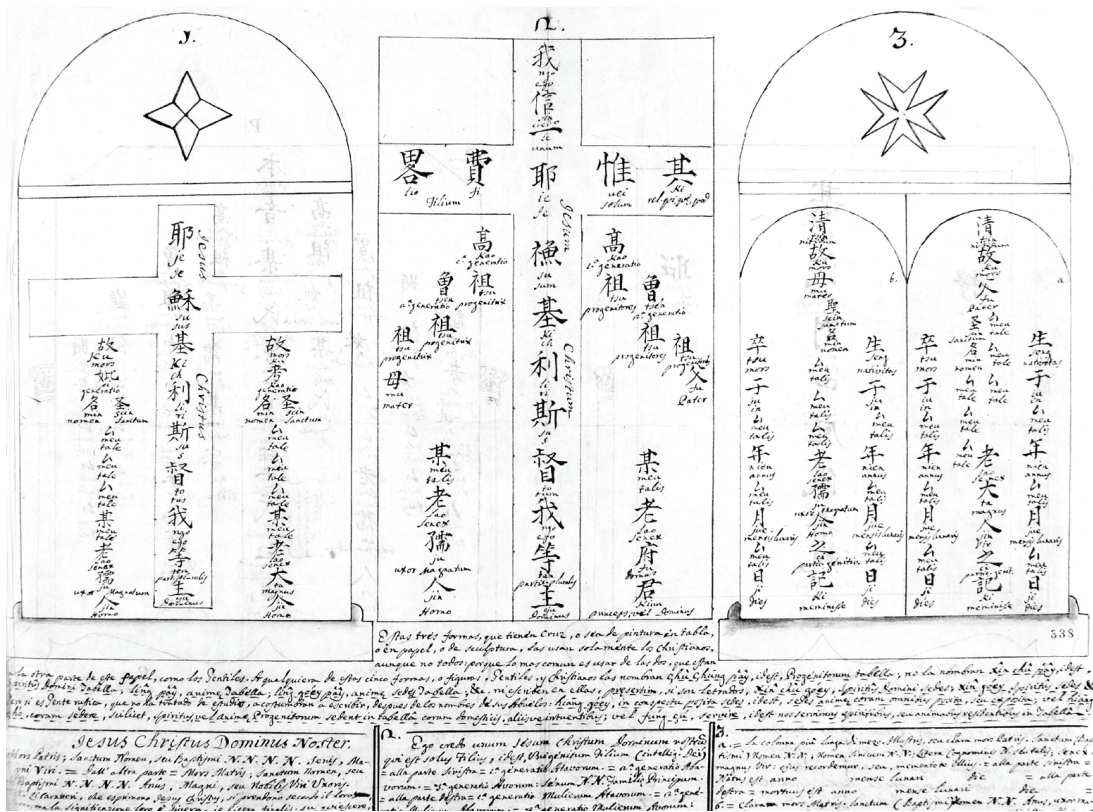


FIGURE 1 Christian Tablets. Casanatense Library, Rome. Mss. 2569. F. 338r.



FIGURE 4 Chinese Tablets Used by Christians.
Casanatense Library, Rome. Mss. 2569. F. 338v.

JOURNAL OF CHINESE STUDIES

Volume 1 • Number 1 • Summer 2012

Editor-in-Chief Tongtao Zheng
Executive Editor Yu Zhu
Editorial Assistant Amy Sung
Art Design Shanyao Wu & Hanmei Chen
Sponsored by The Southern Base of Confucius Institute Headquarter
Overseas Education College Of Xiamen University
Edited by Journal of Chinese Studies Editorial Office
Address: Overseas Education College of Xiamen University,
China 361005
0086-592-2187430 (TEL) 0086-592-2093346 (Fax)
E-mail: jcs@xmu.edu.cn
Published by Journal of Chinese Studies Publication
Available online www.cnconfucius.com

ISSN 2224-2716

