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HANDOUT

Jesuit Roman Archives and Its Latin Sources Concerning the Far East

The Jesuit Roman Archives (*Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu*; abbreviated: ARSI) are archives of the central government of the Society of Jesus. Thus, they preserve rich documentation concerning the Jesuit Order's administration and activity from the beginning of the Society's existence (1540) up to the present. Located in the Jesuit General Curia in Rome, they welcome numerous scholars from all over the world, who come to research in their collections.

As a mirror of the Jesuits' history, these archives also contain a considerable number of documents related to the Order's missionary activity in all continents. Quite a number of those missions took place in Far East (China, Japan, Indochina, Philippines). From all of those, just as from all other Jesuit provinces and missions, regular letters and reports came to the Society's Roman headquarter. One part of this rich documentation is in Latin and thus fits well to the present symposium's theme.

The following examples taken from the main literary genres represented in ARSI are to be quoted here:

1. Final vows formula (*ultima vota*).

All the Jesuits always wrote personally their final vows in Latin (there were only few exceptions from that rule!), thus we have thousands of these original handwritten texts. Among those formulas are some written by famous missionaries such as Matteo Ricci or Michał Boym, showed here. Many others exist, which often are the only text of those Jesuits who are less known or of whom we do not have more documents.

2. Yearly reports (*litterae annuae*).

From the beginning of the Society, its members were required to report to Rome about their missionary, pastoral and pedagogical endeavours. Two different kinds of letter were expected. The first, later called *littera annua* because of its frequency, was supposed to be written in a way which made it presentable to anybody. The second letter (see below, nr 3) was destined for the General Superior only, and could contain what was to be read and known by him and not by a wider public. The *annuae* were copied in Rome and then sent to other Jesuit houses and provinces in order to insure that the confreres know about each other. Some were published and even translated in several languages. The official Latin edition of the *annuae* started in Rome in 1583. The one showed here is an example of that: a Latin handwritten copy of Matteo Ricci's text from 1607 and an Italian translation of it published in a printed form.

The authors of those letters were also asked to provide information about the country they were working in or travelling through, as we can see in the example, which Fr. Boym sent from Mozambique in 1644.

3. Letters (*litterae, litterae ex officio*).

Besides the letters sent to the General (there are many, but not all of them were in Latin), there are some others as the one showed here: its author is Andrzej Rudomina, member of the Lithuanian Province and missionary in China, and his addressee was his provincial Michael Ortiz, to whom the Jesuit was sending books in Chinese.

4. Catalogues (*catalogi*).

To assure an efficient administration of the worldwide Order, the Jesuits developed a kind of database containing basic information about all the members of the Society of Jesus and all its houses. Regularly (once a year in the case of the *catalogus annuus* and every third year in the case of the *catalogus triennalis*) updated lists were redacted in Latin and sent to the Roman headquarter. Among them, there are many from the Asian Provinces of the Society, e. gr. those shown here from the Japanese Province and Chinese Vice-Province.