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Alessandro Valignano S.J., Uomo del Rinascimento : ponte tra Oriente e Occidente,
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The fourth centenary of the death of Matteo Ricci in 2010 was marked nearly all around the world by many and various academic and cultural activities. Now that it is done, people will have learned that Ricci called Alessandro Valignano the father of Chinese mission. Probably not only experts on China, but many more interested in cultural exchanges between East and West, and on the history of Catholic mission or Church history are familiar with the name of Valignano.

Indeed he was the Jesuit superior who called and sent Ruggieri and Ricci in China, and supported their approach to this country, especially at the imperial court and among its *lettrés*. It may also easily be proved that he was the instigator of the missionary strategy so well illustrated in Beijing by the Jesuits in late 16th and 17th centuries. This strategy, actually, was what he recommended, then planed and followed in Japan. He spent long months during three stays in this country, where he re-organized the mission quite differently from the Franciscans. He was appreciated by the General Superiors of the Society of Jesus, who gave him wide powers as visitor and provincial superior in the Indies and the Far East during his life in this part of world.

His writings, such as *Observations on the Habits and Particular Customs of Japan*, *Summario de las Cosas de Japon*, and an apology to defend Jesuits missionary working in Japan and China, were considered with great attention, and today are still read and scholarly studied. The fourth part of the book presented here, with the sub-title “Lo Scrittore”, gives academic analysis of them, and another one, by M. Di Russo, who, while presenting one letter by Valignano to his brother, happily discovered in a monastery, informs the reader that the abundant correspondence of Valignano still wait to be published. Maybe such a publication could enlarge the research on the man, the person and his work. So far, too often, even scholarly papers, are somewhat repetitive, saying what is already more or less known. The book reviewed here is no exception.

Of course, this does not diminish the significance of the international conference held in 2006 in Chieti, Italy, where Valignano was born in 1539; he died in Macau in 1606. It was one of the major events during that year 2006, fourth centenary of his death. Other organizations or academia did the same elsewhere; it was indeed proper that the Macau Ricci Institute, in collaboration with the Ricci Institute of the University of San Francisco, convene an international conference since Valignano has lived and was buried there; the proceedings were published later on. Still, as it

becomes more and more obvious, other investigations should research less known aspects of Valignao under a wider range of angles.

Let us signal two particularly alerting chapters of the book to prove it. First the one by Paolo Aranha, “Gerarchie razziali e adattamento culturale: la ‘ipotesi Valignano’” The Jesuit visitor of the Indies showed no great esteem toward the Africans and most of the population in India. There, only Thomas Christian of south-India, because closer to the admired population of Japan and China, received better appreciation. Aranha concludes his challenging analysis by indicating that Valignano, Ricci, and Nobili “promoted a christianization of traditional hierarchy that is very different from the notion of *accomodatio* prevailing within contemporary models of inculturation” (p.98). The great missionaries, among others, were influenced by their own political conception of society when evaluating other racial groups. The power of coercion of the Portuguese, evident in Africa and India, was not possible in Japan and China; so, the population there was considered as inferior; for the better racial groups, accommodation was the only way of entry into their culture.

Turning to the present, the text. presented by V. Volpi and F. Mazzei, “La Lezione del Valignano nella gestione della diversità culturale nell’era della globalizzazione”, offers a reflection on globalization, localisation, and what has been termed “glocalization”. The balance in multinational or transnational corporations between specific contribution by the initiators, or the centre, and the characteristics of various locale, where the corporation develops its activities, is not easy... The attitude of Valignano may still inspire international managers today.

So, much can be researched about Valignano: his personality, his life as a Jesuit, his style in governing, positive and negative prejudices, etc. This book, which contains beautiful illustrations, and a useful, detailed “Chronological Valignanea”, but only an “Indice dei nomi e dei luoghi”, may be read as a timely reminder of the impact of Valignano in his time, and an encouragement to more research into less trodden paths, which would still be inspiration for today. Having done that, it renders a great service.