

MAPPING AND TRANSLATING SPACES, CULTURES, AND LANGUAGES: THE MISSIONS CONNECTED TO THE PORTUGUESE EMPIRE (1540-1700)

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ROME, 29-30 JANUARY 2026

ISTITUTO DI STORIA DELL'EUROPA MEDITERRANEA, CONSIGLIO NAZIONALE DELLE RICERCHE

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DIPARTIMENTO DI STUDI EUROPEI, AMERICANI E INTERCULTURALI, SAPIENZA UNIVERSITÀ DI ROMA

PROGRAMME AND BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

EDITED BY

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PROGETTI DI RICERCA DI RILEVANTE INTERESSE NAZIONALE (PRIN 2022) - REF.: 20222SY2K7

"MAPPING AND TRANSLATING SPACES, CULTURES AND LANGUAGES.

EXPERIENCES FROM THE MISSIONS CONNECTED TO THE PORTUGUESE EMPIRE (1540-1700)"

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SYNOPSIS

This conference marks the conclusion of the PRIN 2022 project **“Mapping and Translating Spaces, Cultures and Languages: Experiences from the Missions Connected to the Portuguese Empire (1540-1700)” - MAT**, funded by the Italian Ministry of University and Research and by the European Union (NextGenerationEU).

The MAT project brings together history, linguistics, and translation studies to investigate the processes of cultural and linguistic mediation—and miscommunication—that characterized missionary encounters across the Portuguese Empire and the system of *Padroado* between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Missionary spaces are approached as privileged laboratories of encounter, in which languages, worldviews, religious practices, material cultures, and systems of knowledge were continuously **negotiated, adapted, transformed, and at times imposed**, within asymmetrical relations of power.

Within this framework, the project examines the heterogeneous missionary contexts connected to the Portuguese Empire between circa 1500 and 1700. Through a systematic analysis of missionary, mercantile, and institutional archival sources, the research pursues three main objectives:

- (1) to document interactions between European agents—primarily missionaries—and African, Amerindian, and Asian communities, in order to develop a comparative history of the processes that led either to mutual linguistic learning and accommodation or to resistance and rejection;
- (2) to trace the emergence of early modern multilingual spaces, communities, and identities;
- (3) to analyse how power asymmetries shaped cross-cultural encounters and influenced their linguistic and cultural outcomes.

The diversity of missionary settings connected to the Portuguese Empire—ranging from small-scale societies with predominantly oral traditions to highly structured polities with long-standing written cultures—provides a particularly productive framework for this analysis. By foregrounding such variability, the project contributes to early modern global history while also addressing questions of linguistic mediation, cultural translation, and asymmetrical exchange that remain highly relevant today.

From a methodological perspective, this research is situated at the intersection of global history, the history of written and visual cultures, historical linguistics, and translation studies,

with a strong emphasis on the materiality and spatial embeddedness of sources. Through the analysis of maps, books, grammars, dictionaries, catechisms, missionary writings, and archival documents, the project contributes to the valorisation of multilingual corpora often marginal to established historiographies, highlighting the central role of cultural mediators, multilingual communities, and local practices of appropriation and reinterpretation.

The conference is conceived as a moment of synthesis and conceptual consolidation, structured over two days that reflect complementary analytical perspectives.

Day One: Operational Concepts and Practices of Mediation

The first day of the conference is devoted to clarifying and refining the **core operational concepts** of the project—*mapping* and *translating*—understood not as neutral or merely technical activities, but as historically situated practices of knowledge production, cultural mediation, and power.

Mapping is approached in its broadest sense: not only as cartographic representation, but as a set of intellectual, visual, linguistic, and epistemic frameworks through which early modern Europeans perceived, ordered, and rendered intelligible unfamiliar spaces and societies. Maps, atlases, toponymic systems, and geographical texts are examined alongside conceptual and symbolic mappings—biblical, demonological, and historical—that situated new worlds within pre-existing cosmologies and narratives of salvation.

Translating is likewise treated as a multifaceted process that extends beyond the transfer of meaning between languages, encompassing linguistic, cultural, epistemic, and interepistemic forms of translation. Translation involved practices relating to texts, prayers, images, objects, performances, scripts, and material culture, through which different systems of knowledge, belief, and representation were rendered commensurable—or strategically reframed. It included strategies of domestication and accommodation, phonetic transcription and semantic innovation, visual mediation and ritual enactment. Rather than resolving alterity, translation often generated zones of tension, ambiguity, and creative hybridity across epistemic boundaries.

Through interdisciplinary dialogue, the first day explores how these practices operated within missionary contexts: how linguistic competence, visual culture, material circulation, and institutional frameworks shaped encounters between European missionaries and local communities; how translation and mapping were embedded in theological, political, and

pedagogical agendas; and how they functioned simultaneously as tools of communication, persuasion, governance, and exclusion.

Day Two: Case Studies

The second day shifts the focus from conceptual frameworks to **historically grounded experiences**, examining specific missionary contexts, regions, and actors across Africa, Asia, the Atlantic world, and the Americas.

Through a series of detailed case studies, the conference investigates how mapping and translating practices were concretely enacted in diverse settings: Jesuit linguistic and educational programmes in China; the production and circulation of geographical knowledge in Sino-European encounters; the translation of prayers, catechisms, and core Christian doctrines in Japan, Brazil, and West-Central Africa; the role of indigenous clergy, creole societies, and local mediators; and the circulation of languages and religious knowledge across imperial, confessional, and linguistic boundaries.

These contributions highlight the variability of missionary experiences and challenge any unified model of cultural encounter. They reveal how local conditions—political structures, existing literary traditions, social hierarchies, and linguistic ecologies—shaped missionary strategies and outcomes. At the same time, they underscore the global interconnectedness of these experiences, tracing the circulation of texts, models, and practices across continents.

Taken together, the two days of the conference aim to demonstrate that *mapping* and *translating* were not ancillary activities of missionary expansion, but central mechanisms through which early modern global encounters were conceptualized, negotiated, and remembered. By combining conceptual reflection with close historical analysis, the final conference of the MAT project seeks to advance a more nuanced understanding of missions as dynamic spaces of intercultural interaction in the early modern world.

Icon of the Conference

We have selected as one of the visual references for the conference a porcelain dish produced in China for the Portuguese market between circa 1520 and 1540, today held at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York - <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/204716>.

This artefact provides an early material example of the processes of cultural and symbolic mediation that characterised the missionary enterprises associated with the Portuguese

Empire. The juxtaposition of Chinese decorative motifs (the doglike lions) with the Portuguese royal arms and the armillary sphere points to a shared yet profoundly asymmetrical space of negotiation between distinct systems of knowledge, belief, and representation.

The presence of the *IHS* Christogram—rendered by an artisan operating outside the Latin alphabetic tradition and thus imitating unfamiliar graphic forms—later adopted by the Society of Jesus, anticipates the central role that visual and material forms would play in the translation and transmission of Christian doctrine. The object thus illustrates how processes of translation extended well beyond language, encompassing images, symbols, and material culture. As such, it constitutes a privileged source for examining early modern encounters as sites of hybridity, power relations, and cross-cultural communication.



Details from a Chinese porcelain dish produced for the Portuguese market, ca. 1520–1540, featuring four Chinese doglike lions, the royal arms of Portugal, an armillary sphere—one of the Portuguese heraldic emblems associated with King Manuel I of Portugal (1469–1521; r. 1495–1521) and the so-called 'Age of Exploration'—and two *IHS* Christograms, derived from the Latin transliteration of the Greek Ἰησοῦς (*Iēsous*).

On view in New York at The Met Fifth Avenue, Gallery 201, and available in digital form at: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/204716>



Scan the QR code for *The Programme and Book of Abstracts*, available online at:
<https://sites.google.com/uniroma1.it/mapping-translating-prin22-cnr/workshop-2026>



MAPPING AND TRANSLATING SPACES, CULTURES, AND LANGUAGES: THE MISSIONS CONNECTED TO THE PORTUGUESE EMPIRE (1540-1700)

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

ROME, 29-30 JANUARY 2026

PROGRAMME

Thursday, 29 January 2026 - Sapienza Università di Roma, Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia, Aula di Archeologia

9:30 - WELCOME GREETINGS AND INTRODUCTION

Arianna Punzi (Preside della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia, Sapienza Università di Roma)

Paola Avallone (Direttrice, Istituto di Storia dell'Europa Mediterranea/CNR)

Angelo Cattaneo (Istituto di Storia dell'Europa Mediterranea/CNR), Simone Celani (Sapienza Università di Roma), *Introduction*

10:00 - Session 1 - MAPPING

Chair: Angelo Cattaneo (Istituto di Storia dell'Europa Mediterranea/CNR)

Jean-Marc Besse (CNRS-EPHESS), *The Forms of Cartographic Culture in Europe in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*

Paolo Aranha (Consulente storico del Pontificio Collegio Urbano), *Mapping and Translating India: Biblical and Demonological Frameworks in Early Modern Catholic Missions*

11:00 - Coffee break

11:30 - Session 2 - MISSIONS AND INDIGENOUS CLERGY

Chair: Linda Zampol D'Ortia (Ca' Foscari Università di Venezia)

Flavio RURALE (Università di Udine), *Early Modern Missions (Sixteenth-Eighteenth Centuries): between Dialogue and Conflict*

Massimo Carlo GIANNINI (Università di Teramo), *Indigenous Clergy and Linguistic Knowledge in and beyond the Missions Connected to the Portuguese Empire*

Giovanni PIZZORUSSO (Università di Chieti), *Languages at Propaganda Fide: From Alphabets to Texts (Seventeenth–Eighteenth Centuries)*

13:00 - Lunch break

14:30 - Session 3 - TRANSLATING CULTURES AND LANGUAGES

Chair: Massimo Carlo Giannini (Università di Teramo)

Linda Zampol D'Ortia (Ca' Foscari Università di Venezia), *Issues in the Cultural Translation of Prayers: The Early Modern Jesuit Mission in Japan*

Valentina BOTTANELLI (FSCIRE), *Translating God, Transcribing Prayer: Jesuit Linguistic Strategies in China*

Antonio GERACE (University of Coimbra), *Translating Faith across the Luso-Atlantic: Missionary Theory and Practice in Brazil and West-Central Africa*

16:00 - Coffee break

16:30 - Session 3 - TRANSLATING CULTURES AND LANGUAGES (CONTINUED)

Chair: Angelo Cattaneo (Istituto di Storia dell'Europa Mediterranea/CNR)

Alexandra Curvelo (FCSH NOVA), *Visualising Translation and Cultural-Transfers: Early Modern Japan (c.1590-c.1600)*

Sabina Brevaglieri (Humboldt Universität zu Berlin), *Dissonant Objects in Translation: Missionary Engagement and (In)Visible Collecting in Baroque Rome*

17:30 - Session 4 - ROMANIZATION

Chair: Paolo De Troia (Sapienza Università di Roma)

Emanuele Raini (Università di Napoli "L'Orientale"), *Romanization and the Cross-Cultural Mediation between Writing Systems: The Latin Alphabet in Early Modern China*

Antonio Perri (Università degli Studi Suor Orsola Benincasa, Napoli), *From Tacuilolli to Machiyotlatoliztli: Scripts and Cultures Contact in Early Colonial Mexico*

Friday, 30 January 2026 - CNR - Sede centrale, Biblioteca Centrale "G. Marconi", Sala A

10:00 - Session 5 - LINGUISTIC POLICIES AND DEVICES

Welcome Greetings

Salvatore Capasso (Direttore, Dipartimento di Scienze umane e sociali, patrimonio culturale/CNR)

Chair: Tjerk Hagemeijer (FLUL, Lisbon)

João Luís Lisboa (FCSH NOVA), *Printers and Language in Lisbon and Coimbra in the Sixteenth Century*

Paulo Feytor Pinto (CELGA-ILTEC, UCoimbra), *Portuguese Language Policy(ies) in the Overseas Territories: Communication with African, Asian, and South American Populations (1540-1700)*

John Considine (University of Alberta), *Variety, Alterity, and Familiarity in Portuguese Missionary Lexicography*

Simone Celani (Sapienza Università di Roma), *Variety, Alterity, and Familiarity in Portuguese Missionary Grammars*

12:15 - Transfer on foot to Sapienza, Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia, Museo dell'Arte Classica (approx. 350 meters)

Lunch break

14:00 - Session 6 - CHINA

Emanuele Raini (Università di Napoli "L'Orientale")

Isabel Pina (Centro Científico e Cultural de Macau), Cristina Costa Gomes (Centre for Classical Studies/University of Lisbon), *Mapping and Translating Chinese through Portuguese: Jesuit Approaches, Methods and Linguistic Tools (1570s–1700)*

Giulia Falato (Università degli Studi di Parma), *Mapping Intellectual Interactions in Late Imperial China: the Jesuit Educational Programme and Discourse*

Paolo De Troia (Sapienza Università di Roma), Irene Verzì (Sapienza Università di Roma), *Cultural and Linguistic Encounter in Sino-Jesuit Geographical Works*

Marco Caboara (The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology), Matteo Neroni- *A Renaissance Cosmographer between China and America, Florence and Rome*

16:00 - Coffee break

16:30 - Session 7 - AFRICA AND THE ATLANTIC WORLD

Chair: Simone Celani (Sapienza Università di Roma)

Francesco Genovesi (CLEPUL, Lisbon), *“To Leave Those Foolish Toyes, and to Have Some Understanding of Gods Word”: Portuguese Language and West African Christianization in Early British Sources*

Beatrice Akissi Boutin (Sapienza Università di Roma), *A Priest from Luanda Instructing in Gbè Language Enslaved Africans in Brazil at the Beginning of the 18th Century?*

Tjerk Hagemeijer (FLUL, Lisbon) *On the Crossroads of Language and History: The Case of the Gulf of Guinea Creole Societies and Languages*

18:00 - Roundtable with all the participants and Final Remarks

Angelo Cattaneo, Simone Celani, *Final Remarks*

MAPPING AND TRANSLATING SPACES, CULTURES, AND LANGUAGES THE MISSIONS CONNECTED TO THE PORTUGUESE EMPIRE (1540-1700)

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

ROME, 29-30 January 2026

SAPIENZA, FACOLTÀ DI LETTERE, AULA DI ARCHEOLOGIA
CNR - SEDE CENTRALE, BIBLIOTECA CENTRALE, AULA A



BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

PROGETTI DI RICERCA DI RILEVANTE INTERESSE NAZIONALE (PRIN 2022)

“MAPPING AND TRANSLATING SPACES, CULTURES AND LANGUAGES.

EXPERIENCES FROM THE MISSIONS CONNECTED TO THE PORTUGUESE EMPIRE (1540-1700)”

REF.: 2022SY2K7 - CUP: B53D23001120006

Thursday, 29 January 2026 - Sapienza Università di Roma, Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia, Aula di Archeologia

9:30 - WELCOME GREETINGS INTRODUCTION

Arianna Punzi (Preside della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia, Sapienza Università di Roma)

Paola Avallone (Direttrice, Istituto di Storia dell'Europa Mediterranea/CNR)

9:40 - INTRODUCTION

Angelo Cattaneo (Istituto di Storia dell'Europa Mediterranea/CNR), Simone Celani (Sapienza Università di Roma), *Introduction*

Angelo Cattaneo is Principal Investigator for the CNR - National Research Council, Rome and Adjunct Professor at the University of Florence. His research focuses on the history of mapping, travel literature, and of cultural encounters, in particular on missionary practices, mapping and linguistics at the interface of European and Asian empires (1250-1700). He is the P.I. of the PRIN 2022 Project "Mapping and Translating Spaces, Cultures and Languages. Experiences from the Missions connected to the Portuguese Empire (1540-1700)". His publications include *Fra Mauro's Mappa mundi and Fifteenth-Century Venice* (2011), *The Global Eye. Dutch, Spanish and Portuguese Maps in the Collections of the Grand Duke Cosimo III de' Medici* (2019); *Tradurre il mondo. Le missioni, il portoghese e nuovi spazi di lingue connesse nella prima età moderna* (2022), and the edited volumes *Interactions between Rivals. The Christian Mission and Buddhist Sects in Japan* (2021), and *Language Dynamics in the Early Modern World* (2022). In 2024 he was appointed Visiting Professor at Yale University.

Simone Celani is Full Professor of Portuguese and Brazilian Language and Translation at Sapienza University of Rome and local coordinator of the "António Vieira" Chair (Instituto Camões/Portugal). His main areas of research are related to linguistic historiography, translation, literary linguistics, philology of contemporary works (in particular Fernando Pessoa), and Lusophone Africa. He is the co-P.I. of the PRIN 2022 Project "Mapping and Translating Spaces, Cultures and Languages. Experiences from the Missions connected to the Portuguese Empire (1540-1700)". He has more than a hundred publications to his credit; including *L'Africa di lingua portoghese: storia, cultura, letteratura* (Sette Città, 2003), *Alle origini della grammaticografia portoghese* (Nuova Cultura, 2012), *Riscritture d'autore. La creazione letteraria nelle varianti macro-testuali* (Sapienza Università Editrice, 2016), *O espólio Pessoa* (Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, 2020) and, in collaboration, *Lingue romanze in Africa* (Sapienza Università Editrice, 2021) and *Culture di lingua portoghese* (Hoepli, 2023).

10:00 - Session 1 - MAPPING

Chair: Angelo Cattaneo (Istituto di Storia dell'Europa Mediterranea/CNR)

Jean-Marc Besse (CNRS-EPHESS), *The Forms of Cartographic Culture in Europe in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*

Paolo Aranha (Consulente storico del Pontificio Collegio Urbano), *Mapping and Translating India: Biblical and Demonological Frameworks in Early Modern Catholic Missions*

Jean-Marc Besse (CNRS-EPHESS)

The Forms of Cartographic Culture in Europe in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

The aim of this paper is to examine the forms and directions involved in the constitution of a specific “cartographic culture” in Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This cartographic culture provided Europeans—merchants, missionaries, and scholars alike—with the intellectual, visual, and graphic frameworks through which they perceived the world, interpreted it, and acted within it. From an anthropological and epistemological perspective, it is first necessary to recall the distinction between spatial competence and cartographic competence. Reading and navigating space does not always require the use of maps. By contrast, cartographic culture represents a specific mode of relating to territory mediated by cartographic representation. The exercise of cartographic competence presupposes the learning and mobilization of a set of techniques that combine the arts of measurement, drawing, and language, through which images of territory are produced.

The paper seeks to identify and analyse the specific contents and contributions of these techniques. To develop this argument, it focuses on three case studies: the formalization of local surveying techniques in Paul Pfinzing's *Methodus geometrica* (1598); the deployment of philological research applied to toponymy in Abraham Ortelius's *Thesaurus geographicus* (1596); and the progressive standardization of the editorial form of the atlas during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Jean-Marc Besse, *Directeur de recherche* emeritus at the CNRS and *Directeur d'études* at the EHESS, is a philosopher and historian. His research focuses, on the one hand, on the history of spatial representations and practices and landscape theory, and, on the other, on the epistemology of geographical knowledge in modern and contemporary periods. His publications include: *Les Grandeurs de la Terre. Aspects du savoir géographique à la*

Renaissance (2003); *Face au monde. Atlas, jardins, géoramas* (2003); *Le goût du monde. Exercices de paysage* (2009); *Habiter. Un monde à mon image* (2013); *La nécessité du paysage* (2018); *Forme du savoir, forme de pouvoir. Les atlas géographiques à l'époque moderne et contemporaine* (2022); *Quelle est la raison des cartes ?* (2023); *L'œil de l'histoire. Espace et cartographie* (forthcoming 2026); and *Une terre nouvelle. Savoirs et pratiques géographiques en Europe au XVIe siècle* (forthcoming 2026).

Paolo Aranha (Consulente storico del Pontificio Collegio Urbano)

Mapping and Translating India: Biblical and Demonological Frameworks in Early Modern Catholic Missions

This paper argues that early modern Catholic missionaries shaped their proto-ethnographic observations of India within biblical and demonological frameworks. The perceived otherness of India was domesticated through its spatial and linguistic placement within a familiar and well-established system of references. Conceptual maps, which were not displaced by the cartographic maps produced in the wake of oceanic discoveries, together with strategies of domesticated translation, allowed cultural differences to be bridged. Conversion could thus be represented as a return to the “true” Christian faith of “pagan” descendants of ancient believers. Jewish traces were identified in names, peoples, and customs. Caste divisions were connected to the ancient tribes of Israel, while Brahmans could be understood as descendants of the patriarch Abraham. In this way, India appeared not simply as a world newly encountered by the Portuguese, but as an integral part of the sacred history and geography of Salvation. Central to this reconfiguration was the tradition of the evangelisation of India by the apostle Thomas, which marked India’s passage from the Old to the New Testament. This inclusive paradigm also enabled the conceptualisation of irreconcilable difference, particularly Indian “heathenism”. Indic religions, and particularly the various communities later classified under the label of Hinduism, were interpreted as forms of diabolical veneration that either preserved distorted traces of an earlier “true” faith or deliberately mimicked and subverted it. In conclusion, this paper highlights how early modern Catholic missionaries situated India within established epistemic maps and affirmed confidence in translation that resisted claims of cultural incommensurability.

Paolo Aranha is a Church historian specialising in early modern Catholic missions to India. He studied Political Science and International Relations at “La Sapienza” University (Rome) and earned a Master of Research in History and Civilisation at the European University Institute (Florence). He was a Marie Curie Intra-European Fellow at the Warburg Institute (London) and

subsequently held a Marie Curie – Gerda Henkel Fellowship at the Chair of Church History in the Faculty of Evangelical Theology at Ludwig Maximilian University (Munich). He later held fellowships at the University of Hamburg and, more recently, at the Istituto Italiano di Studi Germanici (Rome). He has published an Italian monograph on Latin Christianity in India during the sixteenth century and has long been preparing a comprehensive history of the Malabar Rites controversy. In addition, he has contributed several articles and book chapters. He currently works as a historical consultant, notably supporting the Vatican Dicastery for Evangelisation in a research project on the history of the Pontifical Urban College.

11:30 - Session 2 - MISSIONS AND INDIGENOUS CLERGY

Chair: Linda Zampol D'Ortia (Ca' Foscari Università di Venezia)

Flavio Rurale (Università di Udine), *Early Modern Missions (Sixteenth-Eighteenth Centuries): Between Dialogue and Conflict*

Massimo Carlo Giannini (Università di Teramo), *Indigenous Clergy and Linguistic Knowledge in and beyond the Missions Connected to the Portuguese Empire*

Giovanni Pizzorusso (Università di Chieti), *Languages at Propaganda Fide: From Alphabets to Texts (Seventeenth–Eighteenth Centuries)*

Flavio Rurale (Università di Udine)

Early Modern Missions (Sixteenth-Eighteenth Centuries): Between Dialogue and Conflict

The geography of early modern missions was deeply intertwined with political control and with the logistical and financial organization of European powers. Missionary activity cannot be understood solely within ecclesiastical frameworks—whether those of the papal curia, the Congregation of Propaganda Fide, or individual religious orders—but must be situated within broader political, economic, and institutional contexts. The recruitment, training, and organization of missionaries required individuals endowed with physical and mental resilience, intellectual curiosity, and a wide range of skills. Linguistic competence was paramount, yet missionaries were also expected to acquire historical and geographical knowledge, as well as economic, ethnographic, military, astronomical, architectural, and medical expertise, developed in diverse sites and moments of learning.

Missionary experience was fundamentally shaped by encounters—and often confrontations—with cultural and religious alterity. These interactions generated new forms of knowledge production and international cooperation, while simultaneously giving rise to misunderstandings, conflicts, and at times severe violence. Missionary enterprises thus contributed both to the circulation of knowledge and to the consolidation of Western dominance and colonial practices on a global scale. The paper also examines the profound shift in paradigm between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when earlier notions of “civilization” attributed to non-European societies, such as China, were progressively replaced by hierarchical conceptions asserting their inferiority to the Christian West.

Flavio Rurale is Professor of Early Modern History at the University of Udine. His research focuses on the history of the Roman Church, with particular attention to the interplay between politics and religion and to the cultural and political role of the regular clergy in Spanish Italy. He has published extensively on religious orders and ecclesiastical culture in the early modern period. His major publications include *I Gesuiti a Milano. Religione e politica nel secondo Cinquecento* (1992), *Monaci frati e chierici. Gli ordini religiosi in età moderna* (2008), *Ecclesiastico e gentiluomo. Clero, sesso e politica nella prima età moderna* (2018), and *Marie, Maria, Mariana* (2021, with Alice Boeri).

Massimo Carlo Giannini (Università di Teramo)

Indigenous Clergy and Linguistic Knowledge in and beyond the Missions Connected to the Portuguese Empire

This paper examines the issue of the so-called “indigenous clergy” (a term absent from early modern vocabulary), focusing on the access to the Catholic priesthood of non-European individuals—Africans, Asians, Amerindians—and people of mixed ancestry, commonly referred to in contemporary sources as *mestizos* and *mulattos*. Through selected early modern case studies, the paper analyses the arguments advanced both in favour of and against the ordination of “non-white” candidates, with particular attention to the role attributed to knowledge of local languages. Linguistic competence emerges as a key criterion in debates on clerical suitability, revealing the tension between pastoral effectiveness, racialized hierarchies, and institutional norms. By situating language at the intersection of evangelization, governance, and identity, the paper contributes to a broader understanding of how early modern Catholicism negotiated inclusion and exclusion within missionary contexts.

Massimo Carlo Giannini is Full Professor of Modern History at the Department of

Communication Sciences, University of Teramo. From 2023 to 2024, he was Research Fellow at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid with the project *ChurchMove – Churchmen on the Move: The Routes of Religious Orders between Italy and Spain and Beyond (1560–1700)*, funded by the H2020 MSCA-COFUND programme. He is a member of the Accademia Ambrosiana (Classe di Studi Borromaici) and *Investigador de referencia* at the Instituto Universitario *La Corte en Europa* (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid). He has been Visiting Scholar at KU Leuven and Université Catholique de Louvain and serves on the Rome Advisory Committee of the Cushwa Center for the Study of American Catholicism (University of Notre Dame). He is Scientific Director of the Sangalli Institute for History and Religious Cultures. His research focuses on early modern Catholicism, religious orders, global networks, and the emergence of indigenous clergy between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries.

Giovanni Pizzorusso (Università di Chieti)

Languages at Propaganda Fide: From Alphabets to Texts (Seventeenth–Eighteenth Centuries)

The idea for this paper arose from a question found in Leopold von Ranke's *History of the Popes* (1834-36): “Who does not know what Propaganda Fide has done for languages?” This was a rhetorical question for the Protestant Ranke, but what do we really know today about the relationship between this pontifical and missionary institution and languages? Taking a historical approach, based on recent studies and analyses, we can highlight various aspects relating to language, starting from a general fact: languages are important to Propaganda for missionary purposes, to facilitate conversion and to enable converts to continue in the Catholic religion. The significant aspects for gaining an understanding of this relationship with languages are: 1) the Congregation's knowledge of languages useful for missionary activity through the collection of texts (mainly Eastern languages), also for the purpose of identifying non-Latin alphabets or resorting to Latin transliteration; 2) the teaching of languages in colleges and *studia linguarum* for missionary preparation (the Urban College of the Congregation and others dependent on it); 3) the practice of the language in apostolic activity and the verification of such use; 4) the printing of books in the language in the Propaganda Printing Press. This presentation will briefly outline these lines of research.

Giovanni Pizzorusso, DL (Pisa), Ph.D. (Genova), is a Professor of Early Modern History at Università G. d'Annunzio (Chieti-Pescara). He has been visiting professor at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (Paris), the Max-Planck Institut (Frankfurt am Main), and Université Paris Cité. His main research interests are the history of Catholic missionary

institutions in the age of early globalization and the role of the missionaries in the circulation of knowledge from a global perspective. He recently published *Propaganda Fide I. La Congregazione pontificia e la giurisdizione sulle missioni*, Roma, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2022. He is co-editor (with Fabien Simon) of the special issue of “Quaderni Storici” on *Orientalismo in tipografia*, 2024.

14:30 - Session 3 - TRANSLATING CULTURES AND LANGUAGES

Chair: Massimo Carlo Giannini (Università di Teramo)

Linda Zampol D’Ortia (Ca’ Foscari Università di Venezia), *Issues in the Cultural Translation of Prayers: The Early Modern Jesuit Mission in Japan*

Valentina Bottanelli (FSCIRE), *Translating God, Transcribing Prayer: Jesuit Linguistic Strategies in China*

Antonio Gerace (University of Coimbra), *Translating Faith across the Luso-Atlantic: Missionary Theory and Practice in Brazil and West-Central Africa*

Linda Zampol D’Ortia (Ca’ Foscari Università di Venezia)

Issues in the Cultural Translation of Prayers: The Early Modern Jesuit Mission in Japan

This paper examines key issues affecting the transmission of Catholic prayers to Asian contexts, focusing on the missionaries of the Society of Jesus in Japan as a case study. It identifies the principal prayers that Jesuits sought to teach to Japanese catechumens and the strategies they employed to achieve this goal, with particular attention to the ways in which Japanese needs and requests shaped the process. The paper maps the use of two distinct modes of rendering prayers—translation and transliteration—and the resulting emergence of four different categories of texts. It then analyses the reasons behind this plurality of strategies and explores how Japanese Catholic communities engaged with and made use of the Jesuits’ textual productions.

Linda Zampol D’Ortia is Young Researcher Fellow at Ca’ Foscari University of Venice, where she is developing a project on the role of emotional practices in producing and justifying new structures of power in sixteenth/seventeenth-century extra-European Catholic missions. Linda also held research fellowships at Ruhr Universität Bochum, the National Library of Australia,

and Giorgio Cini Foundation in Venice. Her research interests include Christianity in Japan, early modern Catholic missions, gender history, the history of Asia-Europe contacts, materiality, emotions, and failure studies. She is among the founding members of “MEEM – Mediterranean Emotions.” She has recently published *A Failed Mission? Salvation in the Jesuit Mission in Japan under Francisco Cabral* with Ca’ Foscari University Press (2024) and is co-editor of a special issue of the *Journal of Religious History on Gender and Emotions in Premodern Japanese Christianity* (2025).

Valentina Bottanelli (FSCIRE)

Translating God, Transcribing Prayer: Jesuit Linguistic Strategies in China

This paper analyses the dual strategies of translation and phonetic loan employed to convey Christian concepts in early modern China. It examines how these approaches were combined, contested, and applied inconsistently by Jesuit missionaries during the late 16th and early 17th centuries, prior to the formal Chinese Rites Controversy.

While a clear preference existed for translating nomina sacra, evidenced in debates between terms such as *Shangdi* and *Tianzhu* for God, phonetic loans like *Deusu* remained marginal but central to the debates. Beyond these core terms, however, a more nuanced pattern emerges. This study proposes a functional framework to explain these linguistic choices: creative translation for intelligibility in catechisms (e.g., angel rendered as heavenly person by Ruggieri), versus phonetic loans in liturgical texts and prayers to preserve sacrality (even for terms like Father). The sustained use of Latin in the Mass, despite pronunciation difficulties and proposed but unused missal translations, further underscores this tension. These linguistic choices emerged from a triangulated dialogue involving the Japanese mission, Roman authority, and, decisively, the pastoral and pedagogical needs of local catechumens and aspiring Chinese clergy.

Valentina Bottanelli is a postdoctoral fellow at the Fondazione per le Scienze Religiose Giovanni XXIII (FSCIRE) in Bologna. Her research focuses on intercultural encounters in religious and philosophical texts between China, East Asia, and Europe, with particular attention to Protestant literature in Chinese from the 17th and 18th centuries. She has worked as a research fellow at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia for the project “Images of China from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment”, and as a research assistant for the project “Transforming the East” (University of Sydney), which investigates the translations of the Confucian classics by the early Society of Jesus.

Antonio Gerace (University of Coimbra)

Translating Faith across the Luso-Atlantic: Missionary Theory and Practice in Brazil and West-Central Africa

The Portuguese overseas expansion during the 16th and 17th centuries created a complex religious and linguistic network connecting the shores of the Atlantic. Missionaries played a pivotal role in this process, translating Christian dogma into diverse cultural contexts while navigating the social realities of the African kingdoms and the indigenous populations of Brazil. This paper investigates the translation of the core tenets of the Christian faith—the Apostles' Creed [AC], the Lord's Prayer [LP], and the Ten Commandments [TC]—as found in catechetical and linguistic works produced for Tupi-Guarani, Kipeá-Kiriri, Kikongo, and Kimbundu speakers. By adopting a comparative approach, this study examines how the "translation of faith" adapted to different colonial environments: from the mission villages in South America to the political structures of the Kingdom of Kongo and the transit points of the Atlantic slave trade. A central focus will be the comparison between the works produced for the "Gentio de Angola"—notably the Kimbundu catechism by Francisco Pacconio and Antonio de Couto (1642) and its later Latin adaptation (1661)—and the linguistic strategies developed in Brazil. Through the analysis of authors such as Luis de Bolaños, Antonio Ruiz de Montoya, and Giacinto Brusciotto, this investigation explores the tension between European theological theory and daily missionary practice. Particular attention will be given to the linguistic negotiations and the creation of neologisms used to fill conceptual voids, revealing how this transatlantic flow of texts and models shaped a globalized, yet locally adapted, Christian discourse.

Antonio Gerace is an early modern historian specializing in the history of doctrine, tracing it from its scholastic, canonical, scriptural, and exegetical foundations to its dissemination through various means, including sacred art and catechesis. He has published two monographs (2019; 2024), and several articles and book chapters.

16:30 - Session 3 - TRANSLATING CULTURES AND LANGUAGES (CONTINUED)

Chair: Angelo Cattaneo (Istituto di Storia dell'Europa Mediterranea/CNR)

Alexandra Curvelo (FCSH NOVA), *Visualising Translation and Cultural-Transfers: Early Modern Japan (c.1590-c.1600)*



SAPIENZA
UNIVERSITÀ DI ROMA

Dipartimento di Studi Europei
Americani e Interculturali - SEAI

Sabina Brevaglieri (Humboldt Universität zu Berlin), *Dissonant Objects in Translation: Missionary Engagement and (In)Visible Collecting in Baroque Rome*

Alexandra Curvelo (FCSH NOVA)

Visualising Translation and Cultural-Transfers: Early Modern Japan (c.1590-c.1600)

The use of images was central to the missionary presence in Japan, leading to the establishment of a Painting Seminary operated under the guidance of the Jesuit Giovanni Niccolò from around 1590 until the expulsion of missionaries in 1614.

The remaining works produced by this Seminary, along with the information we either have or can infer from the available data, reveal interesting networks of transmission and exchange between two cultural and religious spheres: Christianity and Buddhism. What emerges is a complex environment for image production, involving a constellation of institutions and individuals. The Painting Seminary served as a crucial centre for learning and communication, playing an essential role in shaping the mission's visual and material culture while serving as a mediator to a broader audience.

This was accomplished not only by gathering a diverse group of people but also by engaging in various activities. The Mission and the Painting Seminary, in particular, incorporated practices beyond painting and engraving, including music, theatre, and other performative activities that were fundamental to Christian religious ceremonies.

My lecture will analyse the pivotal role of the Painting Seminary in developing processes of translation and cultural and religious interaction through the emergence of a new visual culture, which included not only printed and painting images, but also religious celebrations and performances.

Alexandra Curvelo is a Full Professor in the Art History Department at NOVA FCSH in Lisbon. From January 2023 to July 2025, she was the Director of the Art History Institute (IHA-NOVA FCSH). She earned her PhD in Art History in 2008, with a focus on Nanban Art and its circulation between Japan, China, and New Spain (c.1550-c.1700). Her research centres on the material and visual cultures of the Iberian presence in Asia during the early modern period, including exploring processes of production, circulation, reception, consumption, and cultural transfers. From 2012 to 2015, she was the Principal Investigator of the FCT-funded project *Interactions between Rivals: the Christian Mission and Buddhist Sects in Japan (c. 1549-c. 1647)*. This project is associated with an open-access book published by Peter Lang in 2021 and a corresponding database (<https://www.peterlang.com/document/1190560>). Between 2018 and 2020, she was appointed Cultural Adviser for Amakusa Nanban Heritage in Japan.

Sabina Brevaglieri (Humboldt Universität zu Berlin)

Dissonant Objects in Translation: Missionary Engagement and (In)Visible Collecting in Baroque Rome

Within polycentric Catholic worlds entangled through burgeoning cultures of translation, missionaries of the Portuguese Empire, from both Brazil and West Central Africa, engaged with Baroque Rome as a site of competition, negotiation and legitimation. In this setting of missionary politics of comparison, «dissonant objects» played a significant role in the translation of distant spaces, agencies, and claims, while simultaneously calling for processes of value-making and cultural transmission.

This paper examines the presence of dissonant objects within an interdependent urban space configured by tensions and interplay between display, and (in)visibility, archival repositories and non-archival collections; “public” and “private”, writing and images, paper and stone.

Focusing on the material presence of objects from Kongo, this paper argues that dissonant objects were entrusted with a pivotal role in intermedial networks of (miss)translation and mutual entrapments, opening space for asymmetric forms of agency and competing processes of patrimonialization.

Sabina Brevaglieri is currently Professor of Church History (Vertretung 2025–2026) at Humboldt University in Berlin and is also affiliated at the University of Vienna. In recent years, she has been a Fellow at the Italian Academy for Advanced Studies in America at Columbia University, New York (2022) and a Visiting Professor at the IMT School for Advanced Studies, Lynx – Lucca, Italy (2023). As an early modern historian shaped by micro-historical thinking, her research focuses on Rome as a complex site of knowledge production, at the intersection of a trans-local urban fabric, and the Papal court and universal institutions. Within this context, she has explored the entanglements between natural knowledge from the “new worlds” and informal political communication (*Natural Desiderio di Sapere*, Rome, 2019). Her background in art history and interests in cultural heritage practices inform her engagement with material history, both as a methodological framework and through close engagement with diverse sources and their interdependencies. In recent years she has increasingly focused on the interplay between material and religious agency, through the lens of Catholic missionary material engagement and missionary collections and museums (*Missionary Collecting*, a *Quaderni Storici* special issue, 2022).

17:30 - Session 4 - ROMANIZATION

Chair: Paolo De Troia (Sapienza Università di Roma)

Emanuele Raini (Università di Napoli "L'Orientale"), *Romanization and the Cross-Cultural Mediation between Writing Systems: The Latin Alphabet in Early Modern China*

Antonio Perri (Università degli Studi Suor Orsola Benincasa, Napoli), *From Tacuilolli to Machiyotlatoliztli: Scripts and Cultures Contact in Early Colonial Mexico*

Emanuele Raini (Università di Napoli "L'Orientale")

Romanization and the Cross-Cultural Mediation between Writing Systems: The Latin Alphabet in Early Modern China

This paper examines the Romanization of Chinese within early modern missionary encounters, situating it within a broader cross-cultural history of writing and its epistemological implications. The various systems of phonetic transcription devised from the late sixteenth century onward were not merely practical tools for indicating pronunciation; rather, they embodied what Roy Harris (2000) has termed *phonocentrism*—the belief that the phonetic alphabet represents the most rational form of writing and therefore constitutes a universal standard for linguistic knowledge.

Although missionaries frequently praised the aesthetic refinement and structural ingenuity of the Chinese logographic script, they nevertheless felt compelled to “translate” it into Latin letters. Some explicitly sought to “teach the Chinese” the use of alphabetic writing. A key example is the *Xiru Ermu Zi* (*Western Aid to the Eyes and Ears*), a three-volume treatise published in 1626 by the Flemish Jesuit Nicolas Trigault (1577–1628), with the encouragement and collaboration of the Chinese scholar Wang Zheng (王征, 1571–1644). The work proposed a systematic representation of Chinese pronunciation through the Latin alphabet, aiming, as Trigault himself stated, to reveal to China’s “eyes and ears” the analytic power of Western letters.

Romanization practices also mirrored national orthographic traditions and confessional rivalries within the missionary enterprise. Early systems developed by Matteo Ricci, Martino Martini, and other Jesuits operating under the Portuguese *Padroado* adopted Portuguese spelling conventions. Later, missionaries affiliated with the Spanish *Patronato* devised distinct

Spanish-based transcription systems, while subsequent generations connected to the French crown employed French orthographic norms. Italian missionaries responding directly to the Holy See in Rome likewise relied on Italian or Latin spellings. Romanization, therefore, was not only a linguistic and epistemological project but also a practice deeply embedded in political, institutional, and confessional dynamics.

Emanuele Raini is a Tenure-track Research Fellow in Chinese Language and Literature at “L'Orientale” University of Naples. He holds a Ph.D. in Asian Studies at Sapienza University of Rome, where he studied the history of Romanization Systems of Mandarin Chinese in the centuries XVI to XVIII. His research covers the field of Chinese missionary linguistics, the history of missions in China and the intellectual exchanges between China and Europe.

Antonio Perri (Università degli Studi Suor Orsola Benincasa, Napoli)

From Tacuilolli to Machiyotlatoliztli: Scripts and Cultures Contact in Early Colonial Mexico

Paths toward the Romanization of written texts in sixteenth-century colonial Mexico confronted the resilience of Aztec pictorial writing, a tradition that remained vital for nearly two centuries after the Conquest. Colonial Nahua elites—and, increasingly, members of the middle strata—rapidly adopted alphabetic writing as a system of *machiyotlatoliztin* (“signs of speech,” that is, letters) in order to “translate” traditional oral and pictorial genres. In the process, however, they produced hybrid textual forms in which patterns originally associated with oral performance and the reading of glyphic texts were reshaped to conform to Western layouts and conventions.

At the same time, a countervailing current of translation developed. Pictorial Nahua scripts, which continued to be actively used, absorbed “foreign” contents—religious, economic, historical—and colonial users of glyphic writing rendered new subjects through visual formats and compositional principles inherited from pre-Hispanic *tlacuilolli* (“picture-writing”). These pictorial systems, in turn, incorporated phonetic values that proved effective for transcribing Spanish words.

An ethnolinguistic approach to writing and graphic notation requires close attention to the interplay and mutual interference of content, scripts, and graphic organization, grounded in empirical textual analysis. This paper adopts such an approach to examine three emblematic case studies: an excerpt from the sixteenth-century *Codex Mexicanus*; folio 44v of the *Codex*

Telleriano-Remensis, dating to the same period; and folio 1v of the *Codex de Zempoala*, produced in the late seventeenth century.

In the analysis, these “public” texts are understood as products shaped by technological, cultural, and ideological forces, revealing how scribes’ choices reflect their cultural backgrounds and how writing practices function as a means of articulating and reinforcing identity.

Antonio Perri is an Associate Professor of Linguistics and Sociolinguistics at the Università degli Studi di Napoli “Suor Orsola Benincasa”. His main research focuses on theory of writing systems and graphic notations (especially Aztec pictorial writing, topic to which he devoted many papers and two monographs) and to translation theory – more specifically, intersemiotic translation.

Friday, 30 January 2026, morning session - CNR Sede centrale, Biblioteca Centrale "G. Marconi", Sala A

10:00 - Session 5 - LINGUISTIC POLICIES AND DEVICES

Welcome Greetings

Salvatore Capasso (Direttore, Dipartimento di Scienze umane e sociali, patrimonio culturale/CNR)

Chair: Tjerk Hagemeyer (FLUL, Lisbon)

João Luís Lisboa (FCSH NOVA), *Printers and Language in Lisbon and Coimbra in the Sixteenth Century*

Paulo Feytor Pinto (CELGA-ILTEC, UCoimbra), *Portuguese Language Policy(ies) in the Overseas Territories: Communication with African, Asian, and South American Populations (1540-1700)*

John Considine (University of Alberta), *Variety, Alterity, and Familiarity in Portuguese Missionary Lexicography*

Simone Celani (Sapienza Università di Roma), *Variety, Alterity, and Familiarity in Portuguese Missionary Grammars*

João Luís Lisboa (FCSH NOVA)

Printers and Language in Lisbon and Coimbra in the Sixteenth Century

Throughout the sixteenth century, printing activity across much of Europe responded to growing social pressures to appropriate written culture within elite circles. In this context, Portugal—particularly the cities of Lisbon, as the seat of the court, and Coimbra, home to the university—emerged as key centres in which successive generations of craftsmen from diverse backgrounds produced hundreds of printed works. Typographers arriving from Moravia, Saxony, the Rhineland, Lombardy, France, Spain, and Flanders, alongside local printers, played a crucial role in the consolidation of the Portuguese language and in the production of educational tools for the training of Portuguese elites.

João Luís Lisboa is a Full Professor in the Department of History at NOVA FCSH (NOVA School of Social Sciences and Humanities). He completed his PhD in History and Civilization at the European University Institute (Florence) in 1998, with a dissertation entitled *Mots (dits) écrits. Formes et valeurs de la diffusion des idées au XVIIIe siècle au Portugal*. His research focuses on the history of books and reading, particularly their material and formal aspects, European information networks and their agents, with special emphasis on early modern Europe. He has participated in and coordinated several national and international research projects in these fields. He is currently a senior researcher and Head of the Board of CHAM – Centre for the Humanities (NOVA FCSH and the University of the Azores), where he is a member of the research group *Information, Reading and Forms of Writing*. Between 2001 and 2002, he served as Director of the Portuguese Institute for the Book and Libraries at the Ministry of Culture. From 2004 to 2014, he was Director of the Centre for the History of Culture at NOVA FCSH.

Paulo Feytor Pinto (CELGA-ILTEC, UCoimbra)

Portuguese Language Policy(ies) in the Overseas Territories: Communication with African, Asian, and South American Populations (1540-1700)

Although this paper focuses on the period between 1540 and 1700, it spans from the first contact of the Portuguese with Asians, in the coast of Malabar, in 1498, to the first Portuguese official document ever about language use, making Portuguese compulsory in Brazil, in 1758. The paper is mostly based on Portuguese and Brazilian historiography about communication practices between the Portuguese and the populations overseas they wanted to control, to convert to Christianity or to trade with. But it also considers religious and linguistic books in,

and about overseas languages published by the Portuguese and other indirect evidence of language use and language contact that allows an outline of *de facto* Portuguese language policies. This evidence is the creole languages based on Portuguese lexicon scattered along the coasts and islands of the three continents under scrutiny and the significant number of Portuguese words of African, Asian and South American origin documented since the early contacts in the sixteenth century.

The Portuguese of the maritime expansion period viewed each of the three continents in different ways and that mindset has influenced communication practices with Africans, Asians and South Americans. Black Africa was considered a land of inferior civilization. Asia competed with European standards because of their political structure and written culture. South America was seen as a primordial paradise. Accordingly, Africans were supposed to learn oral Portuguese, in Asia the Portuguese used their mother tongue but also learned local languages and in South America communication was based on local languages.

Paulo Feytor Pinto is a Teacher of Portuguese Language in Secondary Education, integrated researcher at the Center for Studies in General and Applied Linguistics (CELGA-ILTEC), at the University of Coimbra, Portugal. Graduation in Modern Languages and Literature (UPorto, 1985), Postgraduation in Teaching Portuguese and French (ULisboa, 1992) and in Lusophone Studies (ULusofona, 1996), Masters in Intercultural Relations (UAberta, 1999) and PhD in Language Planning (UAberta, 2008). He was president of the Association of Teachers of Portuguese Language (1997-2011) and an invited professor at the School of Education of the Polytechnic Institute of Setubal (2009-2016). He participated in the writing of the Dictionary of Portuguese Language of the Academy of Sciences of Lisbon (1993-1995) and is the author of several books about sociolinguistics and language planning. He currently is president of the Association of Teachers for Intercultural Education and an invited professor at UAberta, the Portuguese Open University.

John Considine (University of Alberta)

Variety, Alterity, and Familiarity in Portuguese Missionary Lexicography

Why were the lexicographical products of the different missions connected to the Portuguese Empire from circa 1540 to 1700 so various? In sub-Saharan Africa, very few dictionaries seem to have been undertaken until the nineteenth century. In Brazil, the anonymous *Vocabulário na língua brasílica* (1621/2) was the source for a manuscript tradition which may have included all the early wordlists. In India, by contrast, there was a more complex manuscript tradition of Konkani wordlists, and Antão de Proença's Tamil dictionary was published as a printed book in

1679. In China, the Portuguese–Mandarin dictionary attributed to Michele Ruggieri and Matteo Ricci (1580s?) was followed by other substantial manuscript dictionaries; in Japan, the Latin–Portuguese–Japanese *Calepino* printed in 1595 was followed by a major Japanese–Portuguese dictionary; Alexandre de Rhodes’s Vietnamese–Portuguese–Latin dictionary of 1651 had manuscript predecessors. This considerable diversity might be explored by thinking in terms of a scale from familiarity to alterity. A number of factors might make missionary lexicographers feel that they were engaging with material which, for all its strangeness, was tractable, for instance, the pre-existence of a written tradition, or the presence of sociolinguistic features which could be mapped onto comparable features of Portuguese or Latin. Conversely, as well as the surprises which non-Indo-European languages were bound to present, the culture of their speakers might also seem untranslatable for dictionary purposes. But does the opposition of familiarity and alterity fully explain the variety of the missionary wordlists? What other factors might have operated?

John Considine is Professor Emeritus of English at the University of Alberta, Canada. He was the editor of the *Cambridge World History of Lexicography* (2019). His other major publications are three volumes on lexicography in Europe from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century — *Dictionaries in Early Modern Europe* (2008), *Academy Dictionaries 1600–1800* (2012), and *Small Dictionaries and Curiosity* (2017) — and the trilogy-in-progress *Dictionaries in the English-Speaking World, 1500–1800*, of which the first volume, *Sixteenth-Century English Dictionaries*, appeared in 2022. He has served the *Oxford English Dictionary* as an assistant editor and as a consultant, and the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* as a contributor and an advisory editor.

Simone Celani (Sapienza Università di Roma)

Variety, Alterity, and Familiarity in Portuguese Missionary Grammars

Missionary grammars share a common framework rooted in the Hellenistic grammatical tradition and in the Latin tradition derived from it. However, both the structural models and the systems of categorization inherited from this tradition were subject to processes of reworking—indeed, of translation—through which they were adapted, in diverse ways, to the languages the missionaries set out to describe. These adaptations often produced innovative and highly differentiated results. They range from the linguistic and cultural complexity of João Rodrigues’s *artes* (1604, 1620), devoted to the Japanese language, to the strikingly economical structure of Pedro Dias’s grammar of Kimbundu (1697), with a wide spectrum of intermediate solutions in between. The Latin grammatical apparatus is thus variously preserved or strained,

applied rigidly or critically rethought and expanded, yielding a broad range of descriptive strategies and outcomes. Such differences can be attributed to multiple factors. They clearly depend on the individual abilities, intellectual sensibilities, and levels of engagement of the authors, as well as on the amount of time and ingenuity invested in the grammatical enterprise. At the same time, they are shaped by the ways in which the described language is perceived—according to gradients such as the degree of cultural distance attributed to it, the level of consideration accorded to its speakers, and the extent to which relationships between missionaries and local communities were conceived as more or less symmetrical.

Simone Celani is Full Professor of Portuguese and Brazilian Language and Translation at Sapienza University of Rome and local coordinator of the "António Vieira" Chair (Instituto Camões/Portugal). His main areas of research are related to linguistic historiography, translation, literary linguistics, philology of contemporary works (in particular Fernando Pessoa), and Lusophone Africa. He is the co-P.I. of the PRIN 2022 Project "Mapping and Translating Spaces, Cultures and Languages. Experiences from the Missions connected to the Portuguese Empire (1540-1700)". He has more than a hundred publications to his credit; including *L'Africa di lingua portoghese: storia, cultura, letteratura* (Sette Città, 2003), *Alle origini della grammaticografia portoghese* (Nuova Cultura, 2012), *Riscritture d'autore. La creazione letteraria nelle varianti macro-testuali* (Sapienza Università Editrice, 2016), *O espólio Pessoa* (Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, 2020) and, in collaboration, *Lingue romanze in Africa* (Sapienza Università Editrice, 2021) and *Culture di lingua portoghese* (Hoepli, 2023).

Friday, 30 January 2026, afternoon session - Sapienza Università di Roma, Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia, Aula di Archeologia

14:00 - Session 6 - CHINA

Chair: Emanuele Raini (Università di Napoli "L'Orientale")

Isabel Pina (Centro Científico e Cultural de Macau), Cristina Costa Gomes (Centre for Classical Studies/University of Lisbon), *Mapping and Translating Chinese through Portuguese: Jesuit Approaches, Methods and Linguistic Tools (1570s–1700)*

Giulia Falato (Università degli Studi di Parma), *Mapping Intellectual Interactions in Late Imperial China: the Jesuit Educational Programme and Discourse*

Paolo De Troia, Irene Verzi (Sapienza Università di Roma), *Cultural and Linguistic Encounter in Sino-Jesuit Geographical Works*

Marco Caboara (The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology), Matteo Neroni- A *Renaissance Cosmographer between China and America, Florence and Rome*

Isabel Pina (Centro Científico e Cultural de Macau)

Cristina Costa Gomes (Centre for Classical Studies/University of Lisbon)

Mapping and Translating Chinese through Portuguese: Jesuit Approaches, Methods, and Linguistic Tools (1570s-1700)

Knowledge of local languages was one of the crucial principles of the Society of Jesus's strategy in its various missions across the globe. This language policy led the Jesuits to study an impressive number of about 170 non-European languages during the early modern period (Schlieben-Lange 1999). Within this global framework, the Jesuits in Macau and the mendicant friars in the Philippines began to study Chinese systematically from the 1570s.

This paper examines the Jesuits' study of Mandarin Chinese, analyzing the strategies they implemented, the methods they followed, and the pedagogical resources they developed. Particular attention is given to three documents produced in this context: a 1624 program by Manuel Dias Senior (ca. 1560–1639), which represents the first attempt to regulate the study of Mandarin Chinese, and two late seventeenth-century primers for beginners, attributed to José Monteiro (1646–1720) and Jean-François Foucquet (1665–1741).

We argue that an integrated analysis of these documents reveals a dynamic, creative, and dialectical process involving Jesuit missionaries and their Chinese collaborators. We also highlight the circulation and reuse of linguistic tools among missionaries, both Jesuits and non-Jesuits alike, and draw attention to the central and enduring role of the Portuguese language in this process.

Cristina Costa Gomes and **Isabel Murta Pina** hold a PhD in Early Modern History from the University of Lisbon and New University of Lisbon, and post-doctoral degrees in Classical Studies. Gomes is a senior researcher at the Centre for Classical Studies/University of Lisbon and Pina at the Macau Scientific and Cultural Centre (Lisbon). Their main shared areas of research are related to the exchanges between Europe and China during the Ming and Qing periods, linguistic historiography, palaeography and edition of texts. They have published extensively on subjects connected with the early modern period. They are concluding a book on Jesuit linguistic tools for the learning of Chinese (17th century). Both were engaged in the

project *Res Sinicae. Digital Base of Documentary Sources in Latin and Portuguese on China (16th-18th centuries)* [PTDC/LLT-OUT /31941/2017] and are currently involved in a project for the edition of the manuscripts related to Luís de Camões.

Giulia Falato (Università degli Studi di Parma)

Mapping Intellectual Interactions in Late Imperial China: the Jesuit Educational Programme and Discourse

From their arrival in Ming China, the Jesuits engaged in an intercultural dialogue with local literati, grounded in European scientific and philosophical disciplines that could pave the way for the introduction of Catholic doctrine. In particular, moral philosophy and pedagogy proved well suited to the contemporary intellectual debate between the School of Principle (*Lixue* 理學) and the School of the Heart/Mind (*Xinxue* 心學), advancing educational precepts that drew on values shared by both traditions while emphasising Christian teachings. Between the late Ming and the early Qing periods, a Jesuit “educational programme” thus took shape, bringing canonical texts of the Confucian tradition into conversation with works from the classical and Renaissance tradition, in an effort to revitalize a model of the family that had entered into crisis alongside the perceived decline of Neo-Confucian values.

Drawing on pivotal publications such as Alfonso Vagnone’s (1568–1640) *Tongyou Jiaoyu* 童幼教育 (*On the Education of Children*) and *Qijia xixue* 齊家西學 (*On Governing the Family according to Western Learning*), Giulio Aleni’s (1582–1648) *Xixue fan* 西學凡 (*Outline of Western Learning*), as well as doctrinal texts aimed at the spiritual cultivation of the young, like Francesco Brancati’s (1607–1671) *Tianshen hui ke* 天神會課 (*Lessons for the Confraternity of the Angels*, 1661), this study explores the development of Jesuit educational strategies and discourse from the late Ming to the early Qing period. By mapping the interactions between European and Chinese pedagogical traditions at different stages of the Jesuit China mission, this paper argues that pedagogy functioned as a crucial space of intercultural negotiation, through which Jesuit authors sought not only to convey Christian doctrine, but also to reconfigure notions of moral cultivation, family order, and childhood in late imperial China.

Giulia Falato is Associate Professor of Chinese Language and Literature at the University of Parma. Her main research interest lies in the history of Sino-Western cultural relations, with a particular focus on exchanges in the fields of pedagogy, moral philosophy and lexical innovation. She also works on educational theories and practices in early imperial and

mediaeval China. Her recent publications include a study on the cultural translations of catechisms in late-imperial China, and on Tang booklets for women education. She also published a monograph on Alfonso Vagnone S.J.'s *Tongyou jiaoyu* 童幼教育 (On the Education of Children, c. 1632, Brill 2020). Until Dec 2023, she acted as co-investigator of the project "Education and Representations of Children in Chinese Sources between Tradition and Modernity", which has been awarded the BA/Leverhulme Small Research Grant in 2021.

Paolo De Troia (Sapienza Università di Roma)

Irene Verzi (Sapienza Università di Roma)

Cultural and Linguistic Encounter in Sino-Jesuit Geographical Works

From the late sixteenth century onward, Jesuit missionaries introduced in China a new, globally oriented vision of the world shaped by European cartography. Maps, atlases, globes, and descriptive accounts associated with Ortelius, Mercator, and others circulated among Chinese scholars, yet they were never merely Western imports. Integrating local information, adopting Chinese terminology, and blending multiple intellectual traditions, these works became hybrid products of sustained cultural and linguistic encounter. Despite extensive research on this exchange, a key instrument is still missing: a systematic record of the geographical names coined or reshaped through these interactions. Seventeenth-century missionary texts contain numerous toponyms for distant regions, but tracing their origins and later trajectories remains challenging.

This presentation introduces a project within the MAT framework that addresses this gap through a digital analytical dictionary of Chinese toponyms in early missionary geography. The database catalogues each attested name, correlates it with modern equivalents, and analyses the linguistic strategies and cultural circumstances behind its formation. This methodological approach is illustrated through a case study on several Melanesian place names found in Matteo Ricci's *Kunyu Wanguo Quantu* (1602). Ricci's unprecedented designations for the South Pacific initiated a long circular trajectory: transformed by Dutch and Portuguese cartographers, refracted through diverse navigational traditions, and eventually reabsorbed into Chinese usage via phonetic transcription, semantic reinterpretation, and cartographic revision. Reconstructing these pathways highlights the multidirectional agency—Jesuit, European, Asian, and Chinese—that shaped the evolving lexicon of global geography and shows how toponyms operated as both products and vectors of early modern intercultural exchange.

Paolo De Troia is an Associate Professor and researcher at the Istituto Italiano di Studi Orientali at Sapienza University of Rome. His expertise encompasses Chinese language and literature (Ming/Qing fiction, contemporary media language) and the History of Sino-European cultural and scientific contacts.

He has notably focused on the transmission of geographical knowledge, translating Giulio Aleni's 17th-century Atlas and analysing the development of Chinese toponyms from Western languages. He has recently completed the English translation and related research of Ludovico Buglio's "Treatise on Falcons," a key text in the introduction of Western zoology to China.

He is a member of the European Association of Chinese Studies, the Italian Association of Chinese Studies (Board Member), European Association of Chinese Linguistics.

He is also a Principal Investigator for the PRIN project: Mapping and Translating Spaces, Cultures and Languages.

Irene Verzi is a Research Fellow at Sapienza University of Rome and an Adjunct Professor of Chinese Language and Literature, holding a Ph.D. in Asian and African Civilizations.

A major focus of her current research is the PRIN 2022 project Mapping and Translating Spaces, Cultures and Languages, within which she investigates the linguistic, cultural and historical layers embedded in the toponyms appearing in seventeenth-century Sino-Jesuit geographical and cartographic works. Her academic background also includes doctoral research on the acquisition of Chinese characters by dyslexic Italian students, and extensive teaching experience as an Adjunct Professor at the Università degli Studi della Tuscia and as a Chinese Language Teacher at the Confucius Institute at Sapienza University of Rome.

Marco Caboara (The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology)

Matteo Neroni: A Renaissance Cosmographer between China and America, Florence and Rome

Matteo Neroni, a Florentine Renaissance cosmographer, painter, and creator of globes, is a figure whose work has only recently gained significant attention in the field of cartography. Thanks to the recent rediscovery and identification of his maps and globes located in Rome, Florence and Paris, his contributions to the mapping of the early modern world, particularly in integrating knowledge of East Asia and the Americas into European cartographic traditions, can be now recognized as a key node in the network of intellectual and cultural exchanges of the late 16th and early 17th centuries, a period marked by the blending of European, Asian, and American geographical knowledge. The talk will specifically focus on the rediscovery of his role in the history of Chinese geographical knowledge.

Marco Caboara is Senior Lecturer in the History of Cartography and the History of Science at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST).

He studied History, Linguistics and Chinese at Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa, Beijing University, and City University of Hong Kong and received his Ph.D. from the University of Washington, Seattle with a study of the linguistic features of Classical Chinese Bamboo Manuscripts from Guodian. His main areas of interest are related to the history of cartography, history of the book, East-West interactions and Classical Chinese linguistics. He is currently working on a digital project on maps of Tartary (1500-1800). His monograph *Regnum Chinae, the first comprehensive study of European printed maps of China from 1580 to 1735*, was published by Brill in 2022. He has also published on Jesuit maps of East Asia in manuscript and in print, his most recent study being “A Manuscript Map of East Asia Assembled by Jesuits in Nagasaki and Macau,” in Cams and Papelitzky (eds.) *Remapping the World from East Asia*, University of Hawai'i Press 2024.

16:30 - Session 7 - AFRICA AND THE ATLANTIC WORLD

Chair: Simone Celani (Sapienza Università di Roma)

Francesco Genovesi (CLEPUL, Lisbon), “To Leave Those Foolish Toyes, and to Have Some Understanding of Gods Word”: *Portuguese Language and West African Christianization in Early British Sources*

Beatrice Akissi Boutin (Sapienza Università di Roma), *A Priest from Luanda Instructing in Gbè Language Africans Enslaved in Brazil at the Beginning of the 18th Century?*

Tjerk Hagemeijer (FLUL, Lisbon), *On the Crossroads of Language and History: The Case of the Gulf of Guinea Creole Societies and Languages*

Francesco Genovesi (CLEPUL, Lisbon)

“To Leave Those Foolish Toyes, and to Have Some Understanding of Gods Word”: Portuguese Language and West African Christianization in Early British Sources

This paper investigates the role of the Portuguese language in early British sources on Christianization in West Africa, focusing on how linguistic mediation shaped transcontinental

religious (mis)understandings in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century writings (cf. Rafael 1988; Zwartjes2011). Within this framework, it argues that British perceptions of Portuguese underwent a significant shift: what initially functioned primarily as a practical linguistic tool—a necessary commercial lingua franca—came to operate as a cultural and religious medium through which African beliefs and contemporary processes of Christianization were interpreted, translated, and evaluated within British authorship and readership. The philological basis of this study consists of the major corpora of the period—both original and translated texts, notably Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations* (1589) and Samuel Purchas's *Purchas his Pilgrimes* (1625–1626)—alongside individual accounts by British travellers, as well as John Barbot's late seventeenth-century writings, published posthumously in 1732. Through this trajectory, the paper aims to demonstrate that these early accounts began to articulate an emerging British perspective (cf. Lake 1988; Armitage 2004) on the complex religious dynamism of West Africa, thereby developing an ongoing dialogue with, and often in opposition to, Portuguese forms of linguistic and cultural mediation.

Francesco Genovesi, Ph.D in Romance Philology, taught in several Italian universities before moving to Sub-Saharan Africa where he spent a year in Mozambique for a Post-doc research and he taught for two years at the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. He is currently a member of CLEPUL - Centro de Literaturas e Culturas Lusófonas e Europeias at the University of Lisbon. His main field of research and publication focuses on the African Literatures in Portuguese, the impact of fifteenth-sixteenth centuries Portuguese explorations on shaping the global modernity, and on the Portuguese influence outside the Lusophone official world.

Beatrice Akissi Boutin (Sapienza Università di Roma)

A Priest from Luanda Instructing in Gbè Language Enslaved Africans in Brazil at the Beginning of the 18th Century?

The so-called “language of the Ardes” is known from a few primary sources from the 17th century, notably the *Doctrina christiana; y explicacion de sus Misterios, en nuestro idioma español, y en lengua Arda* from 1658 (Labouret & Rivet 1929, Fernandes 2012, Adjeran & Boutin 2023). A second important source is a letter dated July 28, 1708, from a certain Emmanuel de Lima, a Jesuit priest, which is kept at the Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (ARSI) in Rome. In this short letter addressed to the general of his order, Michaeli Angelo Tamborino, he claims to be the foremost expert on the language of the “Ardes,” to use it in his pastoral work with them, and to have written a catechism in that language.

The works of Leite (1938 to 1950) attest to Emmanuel's birth in Luanda, his religious profession,

his pastoral activity (*Apostolo dos Ardas*) and his death, albeit with some confusion. Primary sources also exist, in particular the *Littera Annua* of 1719 by Provincial Joannes Honoratus reporting his death.

These sources, together with earlier works, provide answers to several questions: Who is Emmanuel de Lima, who are the “Ardes,” what language do they speak, both in their own country and during their enslavement in Brazil? We will propose answers with a view to producing an annotated edition of the letter.

Beatrice Akissi Boutin is a researcher at Sapienza University of Rome (Department of Political Science) and at the Institute of Applied Linguistics in Abidjan (Felix Houphouët-Boigny University). A linguist and sociolinguist, she is interested in present and past situations of multilingualism, linguistic change, and emerging mixed languages. She has led or participated in several international French corpus projects and several sociolinguistic surveys in Senegal, Ivory Coast, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and the Central African Republic. She has published several books on the French of Côte d'Ivoire and eighty publications on African French, Baoulé, and Dioula/Malinké, including phonological and syntactic descriptions and sociolinguistic studies on the dynamics of these languages, such as *Exploring Hybridity in Ivorian French and Nouchi* (in Hurst-Harosh & Mesthrie (eds), *Youth Language Practices and Urban Language Contact in Africa*, CUP, 2021), *Les langues gbè dans les premiers écrits européens* (with Moufoutaou Adjeran *Status Quaestionis*, 2023).

Tjerk Hagemeijer (FLUL, Lisbon)

On the Crossroads of Language and History: The Case of the Gulf of Guinea Creole Societies and Languages

The expansion of the Portuguese empire in Africa led to the settlement of the island of São Tomé (West Africa) in the late 15th century. In this context, marked by the rise of a plantation economy and slavery, contact between Portuguese and African languages from the Benue-Congo family gave birth to a Portuguese-lexified contact language. Over time and through geographical diffusion, this language evolved into four different languages, the so-called Gulf of Guinea creoles, spoken on three islands: São Tomé, Príncipe, Annobón. Despite their emergence in the 16th century and their arguable social dominance, references to these creoles and the linguistic landscape on the islands remain scarce until the late 19th century, when scholars, missionaries, and others began to take a more active interest in them. This talk aims to demonstrate that, despite the scarcity of early sources, we still have means to gain

meaningful insights into the sociohistorical and linguistic processes that shaped and stratified new societies, while also satisfying the communicative needs in a highly challenging social and multilingual environment. To achieve this, we will draw on comparative research on the Gulf of Guinea creoles, alongside available historical sources.

Tjerk Hagemeijer is an Associate Professor of Linguistics at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Lisbon (FLUL) and a researcher at its Centre of Linguistics (CLUL). His research primarily focuses on syntax and language contact, with a strong emphasis on both diachronic and synchronic aspects of the four Portuguese-related Gulf of Guinea creoles, privileging descriptive, comparative, typological, and interdisciplinary approaches. In addition, he has worked on postcolonial varieties of Portuguese in Africa. These research areas have also fostered his growing involvement with the fields of African languages and linguistics and language policy. His publications include *A grammar of Fa d'Ambô* (De Gruyter, 2020) and *Dicionário livre do santome-português* (Hedra, 2013). Institutional page: [Tjerk Hagemeijer | CLUL](#)

18:00 - ROUNDTABLE WITH ALL THE PARTICIPANTS AND FINAL REMARKS

Angelo Cattaneo, Simone Celani, *Final Remarks*

ADDRESS AND CONTACTS

The conference will be held in Rome on 29 and 30 January 2026, at Sapienza Università di Roma, Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia, Aula di Archeologia. Piazzale Aldo Moro, 5 - 00185 Rome and at CNR - Sede Centrale, Biblioteca Centrale "G. Marconi", Sala A, Piazzale Aldo Moro, 7 - 00185 Rome (30 January, morning).

The *Programme and Book of Abstracts* is available online at:

<https://sites.google.com/uniroma1.it/mapping-translating-prin22-cnr/workshop-2026>

The conference is conceived, organized, and hosted by the **PRIN 2022 Project "Mapping and Translating Spaces, Cultures and Languages: Experiences from the Missions connected to the Portuguese Empire (1540-1700)"** - Ref. 20222SY2K7 - CUP: B53D23001120006:

<https://sites.google.com/uniroma1.it/mapping-translating-prin22-cnr/home>

There are no registration and participation fees.

Scan the **QR code** for the route from the entrance of Sapienza (Piazzale Aldo Moro, 5) to the entrance of the 'Facoltà di Lettere'. To reach the 'Museo dell'Arte Classica' and the 'Aula di Archeologia': go up the stairs to enter the 'Facoltà di Lettere', walk through the atrium to the end, and go down one floor using the stairs on the right.



29 and 30 January 2026 (afternoon)

Sapienza Università di Roma
Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia
Aula di Archeologia
P.le Aldo Moro, 5
00185 Rome

30 January 2026 (morning)

CNR - Sede Centrale
Biblioteca Centrale "G. Marconi",
Sala A
P.le Aldo Moro, 7
00185 Rome

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Mapping and Translating Spaces, Cultures, and Languages. The Missions Connected to the Portuguese Empire (1540-1700)

Concept and Scientific Organisation

Angelo Cattaneo (CNR-ISEM), Simone Celani (Sapienza-DSEAI)

Scientific Committee

Angelo Cattaneo (CNR-ISEM), Simone Celani (Sapienza-DSEAI), Béatrice Akissi Boutin (Sapienza-DiSp), Paolo De Troia (Sapienza-ISO), Michela Graziosi (Sapienza-DSEAI), Giulia Maggiore (Sapienza-DiSA), Carlo Pelliccia (UNINT), Flavio Rurale (UNIUD)

Organising Committee

Michela Graziosi (Sapienza-DSEAI), Giulia Maggiore (Sapienza-DiSA)

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Chinese porcelain dish commissioned for the Portuguese market, decorated with the *IHS* Christogram, the Portuguese Royal Arms and armillary sphere, and Chinese doglike lions, ca. 1520–1540. Hard-paste porcelain with underglaze cobalt blue decoration, 9.5 × 52.7 cm. © New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art - <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/204716>

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