Jesuits
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Rare Italian translation of series of seven letters regarding Confucian rites controversy

1. [ALEXANDRE, Noel]. Lettera di un dottore dell’ordine di S. Domenico, sopra le cerimonie della China.
Cologne [=Amsterdam?], heirs of Cornelis van Egmond, 1700. 8º. Contemporary sheepskin parchment. € 3500

Only edition of a surprisingly rare Italian translation of Noel Alexandre’s lettre d’un docteur de l’orde de S. Dominique sur les cérémonies de la Chine published in the same year also by Van Egmond at Cologne, a name and address common in false imprints by Dutch publishers between 1666 and 1769. In this anonymously issued series of seven letters, the French Dominican Alexandre responds to the Jesuits who were permitting converts to continue practicing the Confucian rites and who falsely claimed the Dominicans were also permitting this.

First ten leaves with minor dampstains. Very good copy.

116 pp. KVK & WorldCat (1 copy); Michel, Repertoire des Ouvrages Imprimés en Langue Italienne au XVIIe siècle I, p. 87; cf. Löwendahl 238; Lach & Van Kley III, p. 386. ➤ More on our website
Biography of the well-known martyr Ignacio de Azevedo

2. BEAUVAIS, Gilles-François. La vie du venerable pere Ignace Azevedo, de la Compagnie de Jesus. L’histoire de son martyre, & de celui de trente-neuf autres de la meme Compagnie. Le tout tiré des procès-verbaux dressés pour leur canonisation. Dédiée au Roi de Pologne.

Paris, Hippolyte-Louis Guerin, 1744. 12º. With engraved armorial headpiece above the dedication to King Stanislaus I of Poland. Contemporary mottled calf, gold-tooled spine, gold fillets on board edges. € 2250

First edition of a French biography of the Jesuit martyr Ignacio de Azevedo, by Father Gilles-François Beauvais (1695–1773), who modelled his book on the Italian biography by Father Cabral (pseudonym of Giulio Cesare Cordara) (1704–1785), published at Rome in 1743 under the title Relazione della vita e martirio del venerabile padre Ignazio de Azevedo. In the present biography, dedicated to King Stanislaus I of Poland, Beauvais made several additions, for example the “Martyre du Vénérable Père Diaz et de ses Compagnons”, pp. 193–262.

Most of the book is devoted to the life of the martyr Ignatius de Azevedo from Porto (1528–1570), who worked in Brazil as Visitator for the Jesuit Order. On 15 July 1570, he and his 39 companions at sea were killed by French Calvinist pirates near the Canary Islands. In 1854, these “40 martyrs of Brazil” were canonized.

Beauvais’s biography may be regarded as a loose translation, with additional material, of Cordara’s biography, which was translated into Spanish in the same year and into German in 1856. A second edition of Beauvais’s version was published at Brussels in 1854. The martyrdom of Ignacio de Azevedo and his companions has inspired many literary works up to the present day.

Some faint marginal stains, a small corner of the last 2 leaves (and larger corners of the following endleaves) restored, not approaching the text. Boards scratched. In good condition. xlviii, [5], 300 pp. Borba de Moraes, p. 93; De Backer & Sommersvoel, 1080, 4; Chadenat 754; not in Beuch, Sabin. More on our website
Letters from the Jesuit mission in Japan and the East Indies


Leuven, Rutger Velpius, 1570. 2 parts in 1 volume. 8º. Each part with woodcut publisher's device on last blank and numerous decorated woodcut initials. Contemporary sheepskin parchment. € 19 500

Two important collections of letters written by Jesuit missionaries in Japan and the East Indies. Here for the first time published together, containing both the third edition of “Epistolae Indicae” and the third edition of “Epistolae Japanicae”. The first part contains letters primarily from missionaries in the East Indies such as: Gaspar Berse (mentioning Arabia), Henricus Henriquez, Antonius Quadrus, Michael Barulus, Emanuel Tesceira, Joannes Meschita and Joannes Berra. And the second contains letters primarily from missionaries in Japan such as: Francisco Xavier, Pedro Alcaçova, Baltasar Goa, Melchior Nunes Barreto, Luís de Almeida and Gaspar Vilela.

Some occasional minor spots, a few leaves slightly browned, corner of one leaf torn off, not affecting the text, and the inner hinges worn. Very good copy.

[24], 361[=316], [20]; 401[=399], [35] pp. Alt-Japan-Katalog 468 & 472; Cordier, Japonica, cols. 52–53; Streit VI, p. 245.

☞ More on our website
First edition of an account of the Jesuit Mission in Syria, with a description of the region & people

4. BESSON, Joseph. La Syrie Sainte. Ou la mission de Jesus et des peres de la compagnie de Jesus en Syrie.
Paris, Jean Henault, 1660. 2 parts in 1 volume. 8º. With a folding engraved map of Syria (including Lebanon, eastern Cyprus, and Palestine as far south as Gaza and the Dead Sea), with an inset map of the Lebanese coast from Beirut to Lebanese Tripo. Contemporary mottled tanned sheepskin, with gold-tooled fillets on the spine and boards. € 11 000

First (and only early French) edition of an account of the Jesuit mission in Syria, along with a description of Syria in general, by the French Jesuit Joseph Besson (1610–1691). He covers much more territory than the modern “Syria”, including the whole of Lebanon and much of Palestine, so that there is, for example, a chapter on the churches of Jerusalem. The second part also includes travels in other parts of the Middle East. Before Bresson travelled through Syria, Persia and Arabia, he was rector at Nimes and taught rhetoric and philosophy. The first part specifically recounts the establishment, development and progress of the Jesuit mission in Syria. The second part (with a drop-title and its own pagination) describes the holy and sacred sites Bresson visited. It gives a very detailed and interesting description of Syria and of the various customs and habits of the Druse, Maronite, Armenian (Catholic and Apostolic), Turkish, Jewish and other people there. With the author's five-page dedicatory letter to Queen of Poland (Maria Ludwika), whose husband King Jan Casimir II had joined the Jesuit order in 1641.

The binding has been restored at the head and foot of the spine, but appears to retain the original headbands. The mottling has caused some surface damage, but the binding remains structurally sound. With a water stain on lower outside corner in the second half, not reaching the text, and a stain along a repaired tear in the map, but still a good copy.


Rare edition of a well-known and much reprinted life of François Xavier (1506–1552) by Dominique Bouhours (1628–1702), a French Jesuit priest, essayist and neo-classical critic best known to English readers for his lives of Ignatius of Loyola (Paris, 1679), and the present François Xavier (Paris, 1682). Xavier’s life is especially interesting for his travels and work as a missionary in Japan and elsewhere in the Far East. The first edition with the present augmentations appeared in 1826.

Spine of volume 1 somewhat worn and slightly damaged at the top; school prize for Alexis Montens from Malines as pupil of the College d’Alost, dated 18 August 1841, in both volumes tipped in; library stamp on title-pages. Fine set of a popular biography of the famous 16th-century missionary in Japan and the Far East.

[4], 246; [4], 262 pp. G. Smith (ed.), Jesuit thinkers of the Renaissance (1939), pp. 63–74; this ed. not in De Backer & Sommervogel; Cordier, Bibl. Japonica; Alt-Japan-Kat. ➔ More on our website
Letters (including an annual report) on Jesuit missions in Japan and China 1588–1590


First edition of one long and eight short letters written from 1588 to 1590 by Jesuit missionaries in Japan, reporting on the extremely confusing political and religious situation there and elsewhere in Asia. Six of the letters primarily concern Japan, two China and one the East Indies. The kampaku (imperial regent) Toyotomi Hideyoshi (ca. 1536–1598), the de facto ruler of Japan, officially banished Christianity from Japan in 1587, but active persecutions were just beginning in the first few years and the anti-Christian legislation was not yet generally enforced, giving the Jesuits a fairly free hand to continue their activities. The present reports were written from Arima (Kobe), Omura, Firando/Hirado and Goto (Nagasaki), Amakusa (Kumamoto), Bungo/Hoshu (Kyushu), Meaco/Kyoto, and Yamaguchi. The Portuguese Jesuit missionary Gaspar Coelho (1531–1590) wrote the longest and one of the shorter letters. Though one of the most astute observers of political activities in Japan, he proved naïve in his interpretation of them. Other writers and sources cited for information include Luis Fróis, Antonio d’Almeida, Duarte de Sande, Egidio della Matta and Franciscus Pires. With a few repairs in the gutter margin, minor foxing and occasional, mostly marginal, stains, but otherwise in good condition. The sewing is somewhat loose, the vellum slightly wrinkled and stained, with a few small worm holes.

“114” [= 214] pp. Alt-Japan Kat. 835; Cordier, Japonica, cols. 115–116; USTC 812503; for background: C.R. Boxer, Christian Century in Japan (1951); Lach & Van Kley, Asia I, p. 305 & passim. ➞ More on our website
Only Portuguese edition of Crasset’s history of the Jesuits in Japan, the only edition with a map of Japan

7. CRASSET, Jean and Maria Antonia de São Boaventura MENEZES (translator). Historia da Igreja do Japão, . . .

Lisbon, Manoel da Sylva (vols. 1–2), Manoel Soares (vol. 3), 1749–1751. 3 volumes. 4º. With 5 folding engraved plates, 1 folding engraved map of Japan (28×42 cm) and 1 engraved illustration in the text. Contemporary tanned sheepkin, gold-tooled spines.

€ 12 000

First and only Portuguese edition of Jean Crasset’s Histoire de l’eglise du Japon (1679), the only edition in any language to include a map of Japan. Jean Crasset, a French Jesuit, based his work on François Solier’s Histoire ecclésiastique des isles et royaumes du Japon (1627) and continued the account from 1624 to 1658. It gives an elaborate history of the Jesuit mission in Japan, beginning with Francis Xaver. The plates, by Miguel (Michel) le Bouteux, show Japanese costumes, the emperor’s palace and an execution of Jesuit missionaries. Bouteux copied the map from a 1646 map of Japan titled “Japponiae nova” in Antonio Francisco Cardim’s Fasciculus e Japponicis floribus, an illustrated history of Jesuit martyrdom in Japan. Manoel da Sylva published a Portuguese translation of Cardim’s history in 1650, which most likely served as Bouteux’s direct model. It includes a key locating 36 Jesuit colleges, residences, seminaries and churches.

With bookplate and owner’s entry. In very good condition, with only a tiny marginal worm hole in a couple leaves and a few leaves slightly browned. The bindings contain several small wormholes and the spines and corners are slightly damaged, but they are otherwise in good condition.

Alt Japan Katalog 381; Cordier, Japonica, col. 401; for the map: Hubbard, Japoniae insulae 96. ☞ More on our website
Fierce Jesuit attack responding to a 1605 polemic
by the great Leiden professor J.J. Scaliger


“Metelloburgi Mattiacorum” [= Antwerp?], “apud haeredes Matthianos” [printed by Hendrik Swingen?], 1609. 12º (14 × 9 cm). Contemporary limp sheepskin parchment. € 3250

Rare First and only edition of a fierce attack on the brilliant French-born linguist and leading Protestant scholar Joseph Josephus Scaliger (1540–1609), professor at Leiden University, by Martin Antonio Delrio (1551–1608), a learned Jesuit jurist born in Antwerp as the son of a Spanish nobleman. In 1605, a war of words had broken out between Jesuits and Calvinists in a series of polemical works published under readily recognizable pseudonyms and with false imprints. One was an attack on Scaliger and others by the Jesuit Carolus Scribani. Scaliger joined in the fray under the pen-name M. de Lescalle with a Latin poem attacking Scribani, the Jesuit Society, Juan Maldonatus and Delrio. In the present work, with the text dated at the end 26 June 1606, but not published until 1609, Delrio responds with an satirical attack on Scaliger. The text set to the shape of a carafe or decanter is supposed to represent a drinking vessel containing humility and modesty, which Delrio thought Scaliger needed.

Delrio had been one of the judges of the Inquisition in the Low Countries, the so-called “Blood Council”. By his own account, his merciless Disquisitionem magicarum (624) waged war on swarms of witches laying waste to northern Europe, and on Muslims and (Protestant) heretics, testifying to the furious atmosphere of Counter-Reformation Europe.

With quires G and H slightly browned and a faint water stain in the fore-edge margin of quires A-C, but still in good condition. The parchment is wrinkled and shows some stains and dirt, and there are some holes in the endleaves, but the binding remains structurally sound.

Early reports on Jesuit missions in India, the East Indies, Southeast Asia, China and Japan


First edition of nine important letters written by Jesuit missionaries in Asia in the years 1556 to 1558: an essential primary source for any study of Asia in the period and especially its relations with the Jesuits. The longest letters were written by Baltasar Díaz in Malacca in the southern Malay peninsula in the East Indies, giving information on Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and the East Indies, especially the Moluccas; Luís Fróis in Goa in India, discussing events in Goa and Indochina; and Melchior Nunes Barreto, writing from Goa about the Islamic population in India and (after returning from a four-month stay in Japan) writing from Kochi about China and Japan. Anrique Anriquez (Henrique Henriques) writes from and about the Kingdom of Travancore in southern India. An excerpt of a letter from an anonymous Jesuit writing from Ormuz in the Gulf relates information from the Jesuit bishop Andrea Oviedo, Patriarch of Ethiopia. Melchior Carneiro, first Bishop of Macao and Oviedo’s successor as Patriarch of Ethiopia, discusses Malabar and Cochin (Kochi). The last two items, excerpts of letters from Gonçalo da Silveira, Provincial Superior of India in Calicut (Kozhikode), cover several subjects. “In almost every case, the first reliable accounts of the Far East which reached Europe were such letters from the Jesuit missionaries, full of first-hand information: social, political, cultural, ethnographic, commercial, geographical, economic and religious etc. It was the details and the apparent accuracy of their scholarly yet practical reports which prompted merchants, seamen and governments to follow their advice in opening up to European interests the farthest corners of the known world.” (Laures).

With some underlining and a few marginal marks and notes in blue pencil and red ball-point pen. The lower outside corner of the margin has been cut out of 3 leaves (restored in 1 of the 3), but book and binding otherwise in good condition. Good copy of one of the earliest and most important collections of Jesuit letters from Asia.

[4], 59 ll. Alt-Japan-Katalog 80; Borba de Moraes, p. 59; Cordier, Japonica, cols. 46–47; Laures Kirishitan Bunko database, JL-1559-KBt-122–54. More on our website
Astronomical and geographical information on regions in China and India


Paris, Imprimerie Royale (colophon: Jean Anisson), 1692. 4º. With woodcut coat of arms on title-page, 2 double-page engraved maps and 1 engraved plate. Contemporary calf, gold-tooled spine.

Rare first edition of an extensive account of several scientific observations made to improve the astronomical and geographical information on regions in China and India. The work contains several reports on China and Siam, made by various Jesuits, including father Richaud who comments on the astronomy and calendar of the Siamese, and François Noël who calculated the longitude and latitude of several villages in China. Other reports concern, among others, Cassini’s tables of Jupiter’s satellites, Tartary at the frontier with China, a journey from the Junnam province in China to the city of Ava as it was made by some 30 000 Chinese fleeing from Tartary, and observations on a comet that had appeared in 1689. All these reports were collected and provided with commentaries by father Thomas Gouye (1650–1725). The two engraved maps depict a part of India, one showing the course of the river Ganges and the other the course of the river Ava. The engraved plate depicts the different letters and numbers of the Bengali language.

With a tiny inscription (shelf mark?) on title-page. Slightly browned, title-page slightly thumbed, some occasional small spots, 1 map water stained in the margins, lower corner of page 63 torn off, but overall in good condition. Leather of the binding a bit cracked, otherwise in very good condition.

[4], 114 pp. De Backer & Sommervogel III, cols. 1640–1641; WorldCat (6 copies); not in Lust. ☞ More on our website
The most popular spiritual love emblem book ever published, with woodcuts by Christoph van Sichem the Younger

Hugo, Herman. *Pia desideria emblematis, elegiis & affectibus SS. patrum illustrata.*

Antwerp, Hendrick Aertssen, 1628. Small 8° (12.5 × 8 cm). With letterpress title set in an emblematic woodcut, woodcut coat of arms of Pope Urban VIII, introductory woodcut emblem, 45 woodcut emblems by Christoph van Sichem the Younger after Boetius van Bolswert and 18 white on black oval ornamental woodcut tailpieces. Contemporary vellum. € 950

Second edition, in the original Latin, of the most popular spiritual love emblem book ever published, here for the first time with woodcuts by Christoph van Sichem the Younger (ca. 1582–1658), after the beautiful emblematic designs of the great baroque artist Boetius Adamsz. van Bolswert (ca. 1580–1633).

Herman Hugo (1588–1629), a Jesuit priest who lived in Antwerp and elsewhere in the southern Low Countries, made the genre popular throughout Europe. It appeared in dozens of editions and heavily influenced the new spiritual movements arising in the 17th and 18th century all over Europe. Though the use of the Latin language would have demanded a fairly well-educated reader, it was still the language of the Catholic Church and the book clearly spoke to the common people. For this reason, the emblems depict people (often represented by putti) in daily life: a ceramic sculptor at his potter’s wheel, a miller whipping a bindfolded girl (?) who must operate the millstones in place of a horse, a toddler in a walker, a skeleton catching a rich person in a net trap, a frightened person appearing before a magistrate, etc. For this reason the images also form a window into daily life ca. 1624.


More on our website
Jesuit letters from Japan

12. [JESUITS–JAPAN]. Cartas que los padres y hermanos de la Compañía de Jesús, que andan en los Reynos de Japon[,] escriven a los dela misma Compañía, desde el año de mil y quinientos y quare[n]ta y nueve, hasta el de mil y quinientos y setenta y uno.

Alcala, Juan Ignuez de Lequerica, 1575. 4º. With woodcut of the Crucifixion on the back of the colophon, charming woodcut initials, and 1 page (p. 72) with woodcut Japanese characters for 12 words in text. Contemporary limp sheepskin parchment, reinforced with 2 pieces from a 16th-century(?) manuscript.  € 35 000

First Spanish edition of 82 Portuguese letters written by Jesuit missionaries in Japan, first published in Portuguese, at Coimbra in 1570, with 10 important Jesuit letters added, never published before. Cordier gives a list of these additional letters, dating from 1567 to 1571, written by Luís Frois, Melchior de Figueredo, Luís de Almeida, Juan Baptista Italiano and Gasper Vilela. Also newly added are the life of Franciscus Xavier, “Relacion de las cosas de la India” by Manuel Acosta, and “Breve relacion de la Isla y Reynos del Japon”. Alt-Japan notes an addendum leaf at the end. In our copy it is bound between the preliminaries and the main text, but is also preceded by a conjugate leaf not noted by Alt-Japan or the other references: a licensing statement signed by Gonçalo Pumarejo, “secretario del Consejo de su Magestad” at Madrid, 20 November 1575.

With owner’s inscription. Title-page somewhat worn, with a marginal chip at the foot and some holes at the upper left restored. Otherwise in good condition, with a defect in the corner of one leaf just touching the text, some slight water stains and spotting. Two bifolia (G3–G6) are bound in reversed.

[10], 315, [5] ll. Alt Japan Kat. 298; Cordier, Japonica, cols. 67–68; Palau 46311. ☞ More on our website
One of the earliest separately published Jesuit letters entirely devoted to the Philippines

13. **LOPEZ, Gregorio**. Lettera annua della Provincia delle Filippine dell’ anno M.DC.VIII.

Rome, Bartolomeo Zanetti, 1611. Small 8º (16 × 11.5 cm). 18th-century limp sheepskin parchment.

€ 12 500

Rare first Italian edition of the annual report and letter on the events that had taken place in the Philippines during the year 1608, especially regarding the Jesuit mission there. It is one of the earliest works published in the West solely devoted to the Philippines. The letter (pp. 3–124) reflects on the dramatic strides made by the Jesuits in the first decade of the 17th century and the corresponding increase in European interest in the region. The letter treats the difficulties with the Muslims in the “Pintados” (the Bisayan islands) and in Mindanao, the Dutch invasion of the region, the crocodile plague in Taitai, Indians in Santiago, the island Bohol, the mission in Ottana and other matters.

Lach lists the present work among the earliest separately published Jesuit letters entirely devoted to the Philippines, characterizing them all as “exceedingly rare”. Gregorio Lopez the elder (1561–1614) arrived in Manila in 1601 and made Philippine history by serving as the region's first Provincial, the highest-ranking administrative post, holding this office from 1605 until 1612. He was instrumental in suppressing the Chinese rebellion of 1603 and in dramatically increasing the educational activities of the Colleges of Manila and Cebú.

With the title-page detached and re-attached and occasional minor foxing but book and binding otherwise in very good condition.

124, [2 blank] pp. De Backer & Sommervogel IV, col. 1948; ICCU, UMT1E 004899 (8 copies); Lach & Van Kley, pp. 372–373; Palau 140000. ☞ More on our website
Jesuit eye-witness account
of a 1585 shipwreck near the Cape of Good Hope


Venice, Giovanni II & Giovanni Paolo Giolito, 1588. Small 8º (15 × 9.5 cm). With a woodcut Jesuit IHS device on the title-page. Contemporary(?) sheepskin parchment.

€ 18 500

Probably the second edition (following the edition published at Rome in the same year), in the original Italian, of an important eye-witness account of a voyage and spectacular shipwreck, written by the Jesuit Pedro Luis Martínez (1542–1598). On 10 April 1585 he set off from Lisbon for the East Indies in the ship *Saint Jacques*. It struck a rock in August 1585 near Cape of Good Hope, leading to a dramatic shipwreck. Martínez survived to write his account, most notably describing the shipwreck in detail, but also sites he visited and people he saw along the coasts of Africa, Arabia and India. When he reached Goa, he sent his account in the form of a letter dated 9 December 1586 to the Reverend Preposito General della Compagnia di Giesù, that is, the head of the Jesuit order in Rome, called the Superior General in English. Martínez was to become the first Bishop of Japan in 1596.

With the corner of one leaf damaged and restored (at an early date), slightly affecting the last letters of a few lines on one page, and with some small smudges on the last text page. Otherwise in very good condition.

Important work on China, witnessing the violent overthrow of the ancient Ming dynasty

15. **MARTINI, Martino.** Tartaros en China, historia.
Madrid, Joseph Fernadez de Buendia for Lorenço de Ibarra, 1665. Small 8° (14.5×10 cm). Late 18th-century gold-tooled mottled goatskin. € 9500

First edition of the Spanish translation of an “important and extremely popular work on the history of China. Many editions followed [after the original Latin edition of 1654], … testifying of the enormous interest for China all over Europe and the impact the book had on the European image and conceptions of the Empire” (Hanotiau). The Italian Jesuit Martino Martini (1614–1661), travelled to China in 1643 at a time of great internal unrest, witnessing the violent overthrow of the ancient Ming dynasty in the years 1643–1644. Besides the present work, Martini is also well-known for the atlas of China that he published together with Joan Blaeu.

With owner’s inscription on title-page. The title-page is somewhat worn, a small corner of D2 torn off, a minor ink stain in the outer margins of 3 leaves and the head margin trimmed close to the running heads. Still a good copy. Some very minor damage to the spine of the binding, otherwise very good.

[40], 188 pp. Cordier, Sinica, col. 626; Lust 45; cf Hanotiau 15; Löwendahl 107. ☞ More on our website
On the authority of bishops and other questions of dogma, by the “father of the history of dogma”


First edition of a controversial work by Denis Pétau containing the results of his historical research on the functioning of Christian clerical authorities (primarily bishops) from the time of the Church Fathers to his own time, followed by a discussion of various questions of dogma. The text contains many citations from Latin and Greek Fathers. It is divided into two “books”: liber primus “qui est de episcopis, & eorum jurisdictione, ac dignitate” (pp. 1–160) discusses the very delicate subject of the authority of bishops, a major issue in the disputes between Catholics and Protestants; and liber secundus “in quo certae fidei, vel rerum ecclesiasticarum quaestiones disputantur” (pp. 161–354) discusses various other questions of dogma related to widespread heresies.

Pétou was a prodigious author and “one of the most distinguished theologians of the seventeenth century” (Catholic encyclopaedia), with works ranging over chronology, history, philosophy, patristics and the history of dogma. He is now best known for his vast, but unfinished six-volume work on dogma, the first systematic attempt to treat the development of Christian doctrine from an historical point of view.

With the foot margin of C5 (pp. 41–42) cut away, with no loss of text, otherwise in fine condition. The binding has some cracks in the hinges but is still in very good condition.

In a 17th-century richly gold-tooled Jesuit prize-binding

17. PLUTARCHUS. Moralia, quae usurpantur. sunt autem omnis elegantis doctrinae penus: id est, varij libri: morales, historici, physici, mathematici, deniq; ad politiorem litteraturam pertinentes & humanitatem: omnes de Graeca in Latinam linguam transcripti. Basel, Thomas Guarini, 1570. 2º. With woodcut printer’s device on title-page and repeated on last page, some mathematical woodcuts in text and numerous historiated woodcut initials. Early 17th-century Jesuit prize binding in richly gold-tooled light brown calf, sides with arabesques in the style of Gascon, richly gold-tooled double borders and inner panel with small bands in a geometrical pattern. € 4250

Scholarly edition of Plutarch’s *Moralia* in a beautiful and very richly decorated prize binding, probably from the Southern Netherlands for one of the Jesuit Colleges, with the “IHS” device and the legend “Jesus Maria” within a crown of thorns. The Plutarch edition is the first edited by Xylander, and contains Plutarch’s collected studies in the fields of ethics, religion, physics, natural history, music, politics, philosophy and literature, cast in Dialogues or Diatribes. The book is well produced, printed mainly in roman type with small italics for the Latin quotations and the legenda in the margins. Small stamp on title-page; a few leaves slightly stained. Very good copy.

[12], 857, [91] pp. BMC STC German, p. 706; VD 16, P368t (8 copies); this edition not in Adams; Dibdin; binding not in De Prijs is het Bewijs. ☞ More on our website
Promoting Catholicism through missionary work as the Jesuits lost power:  
a manuscript from the Sir Thomas Phillipps collection

[Rome and perhaps elsewhere, ca. 1758–1764 (transcribing original documents going back to at least 1664)]. 4º. Collection of manuscript transcriptions of about 30 letters and other documents. Contemporary Italian sheepskin parchment over flexible boards. € 39 500

A large collection of about thirty 18th-century transcriptions of letters and other documents from Catholic missionaries writing from or concerning the missions in Africa (including Madagascar, Algiers and the Barbary Coast), Greece, Italy (including the Mekhitarist Armenian Catholic monastery on the island San Lazzaro degli Armeni in the Venetian lagoon) and Japan. The exact number depends how one defines “one” document. Most of the letters transcribed here were originally written at the time of the Portuguese, French and Spanish efforts to suppress the Jesuits in their territories, both at home and in their colonies, beginning around 1750 and leading to the banning of Jesuits from the Portuguese empire (1759), France (1764) and Spain (1767). The Pope finally dissolved the Jesuit order in 1773, but it was re-established in 1814. The documents from this period, some explicitly about attempts to suppress the Jesuits, were clearly transcribed when they were still new, but the collection also includes transcriptions of older letters and documents.

Nearly all concern the Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide, “the department of the pontifical administration charged with the spread of Catholicism and with the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs in non-Catholic countries” (Catholic encyclopedia). While the Jesuits, prior to their suppression, were a highly evangelical branch of the Catholic Church, the Propaganda Fide was the papal office that coordinated the missionary activities of all the orders. The letters provide good evidence both of the relations between the Catholic Church as a whole and the Jesuit Order, and of the Church’s efforts to continue their evangelical missionary activities at a time when the Jesuits were no longer able to lead them.

The manuscript belonged to Frederick North (1766–1827), 5th Earl of Guilford, and was bought for Sir Thomas Phillipps (1792–1872) at the 1830 Guilford sale. It was sold in the 1919 Phillipps sale. In very good condition, with a few documents showing minor foxing or small stains, but most leaves fine. The binding is somewhat rubbed, most of the sewing supports have broken at the joints and the cover has come loose from the bookblock at the inside of the front hinge, but the sewing and case remain structurally sound. Many of the 30 documents no doubt transcribe originals that have since been lost, so the present collection forms an important source for the history of Catholic missionary work in the period, for information about the regions where they operated and for the relations of the Church as a whole with the Jesuits.

[416] pp., including about 15 blank leaves. Evans, Catalogue ... manuscripts ... Guilford, 8 December 1830, lot 361; Phillipps manuscripts 5580; Sotheby, Bibl. Phillippica, 1919?, lot 1473. ☞ More on our website
Original study of military architecture for the Collegium Theresianum, with 22 plates

19. RIEGER, Christian. Universae architecturae militaris elementa brevibus recentiorum observationibus illustrata conscripta. Vienna, Johann Thomas Trattner, 1758. 4º. With engraved frontispiece, 22 (folding) engraved plates, 5 letterpress folding tables, and 9 smaller military illustrations (1 on title-page, 6 as head- or tailpieces and 2 in text). Contemporary mottled, tanned sheepskin, richly gold-tooled spine. € 850

First and only edition of a study of military architecture by the Austrian professor of mathematics Christian Rieger (1714–1780), published as a follow up to his Universae architecturae civilis elementa (1756), “one of the few original ... works of the period to attempt a complete study of civil architecture in the compass of a small and inexpensive volume” (BAL). It is divided into three parts covering: the layout of camps, the placement of artillery and fortification, is dedicated to Maria Theresa of Austria and was in use at the Collegium Theresianum, an academy founded by the Jesuits for Maria Theresa. With owner’s initial and library stamp. Including the errata leaf. Some minor wormholes in the foot margin of the first few leaves, a few minor smudges and some occasional spots, otherwise in very good condition. Spine heavily worn at the ends, but the binding is otherwise good.

[12], 348, [11], [1 blank] pp. BAL 4088 note; Berlin Kat. 3546; Jähns, p. 2762; Jordan 3130; VD18 14907267.

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Pioneer Portuguese Jesuit missionary to Japan


First edition of the second Latin translation of the annual report and letters of the Jesuits in Japan during the years 1609–1610, translated by Andreas Schottus. The report was written by the “Pioneer Portuguese Jesuit missionary to Japan” (Howgego), João Rodriguez (also called Giram, Giron Girao or Roiz; 1558–1633) and is addressed to Father Claudius d’Aqua-viva. It deals with the events that had taken place in Japan concerning the Jesuit mission. Heavily browned and a restoration to the last leaf, but otherwise a good copy.

[24], 111, [1 blank] pp. Alt-Japan-Katalog 1311; Cordier, Japonica, col. 268; Howgego, to 1800, R54. ☞ More on our website
Reports from Japan by two famous Jesuits (1589 & 1590)

Rome, Luigi Zanetti, 1593. Small 8º (15 × 10.5 cm). Limp sheepskin parchment (ca. 1700?). € 12 500

First edition of an important Jesuit work, publishing for the first time the annual letters of 1589 and 1590 reporting on the situation in Japan, written by the Jesuit missionaries Alessandro Valignano in “Cansuca” (Katsusa in Kyushu) on 7 October 1589 (pp. 3–42), and Luís Fróis in Nagasaki on 12 October 1590 (pp. 43–125). They provide valuable information on the Jesuit missions in Japan and elsewhere in Asia as well as on the daily life, customs and political situation. This includes the establishment and development of Jesuit residences, churches and colleges, along with other activities, in Katsusa, Arima, Omura, Nagasaki, Bungo and many other cities and regions. Valignano wrote from the newly established Jesuit college at Katsusa, where in the following year he brought in a printing press from Macao and set up the first Jesuit printing office in Japan, publishing its first efforts in 1591. The Portuguese Jesuit missionary Luís Fróis (1532?–1597) joined the Jesuits and worked from 1548 at Goa, where he succeeded Gaspar Berse. His first attempt to reach Japan failed in 1554, but he finally succeeded in 1563 and became one of the first Europeans to gain a deep knowledge of Japan and its culture. With quires C and G slightly browned, a small marginal tear in C8 and occasional minor and mostly marginal foxing, but otherwise in very good condition. An essential source for Japan in the 1580s and especially its relations with Europe and the Jesuits: an eye-witness account by two of the best-informed Europeans on the subject of Japan.

Collection of unpublished Jesuit missionary letters from China

22. VISSCHERS, Pieter Jozef. Onuitgegeven brieven van eenige paters der Societeit van Jesus, missionarissen in China van de xviiide en xviiiide eeuw, met aantekeningen.

Arnhem, Josue Witz, 1857. 12º. Blue paperboard wrappers. € 450

First edition of a work with previously unpublished letters from Jesuit missionaries in China, dating from the 17th and 18th centuries. The 29 letters, compiled by father Visschers, come from, and are directed to, several Jesuit fathers, including letters from the missionaries Ferdinand Verbiest (1623–1688), Philippe Couplet (1623–1693), and Petrus van Hamme (1651–1727). All the letters are published in their original languages, mostly in Latin, but some in Dutch and Portuguese.

With some owners’ stamps on title-page. Slightly foxed, a tear in page 53 and lacking the index following the text. Overall a good copy, most of the quires still unopened.

First edition of the first major collection of Jesuit letters from Japan, India, the Moluccas, Macao and Brazil, many published here for the first time

23. Xavier, Francis, Luís Fróis and others. Epistolae Japanicae, de multorum gentilium in variis insulis ad Christi fidem per Societatis nominis Jesu theologos conversione. In quibus etiam mores, leges, locorumque situs, luculenter describuntur. [Volume 2: Epistolae ... gentilium ad Christi ... Societatis Jesu theologos. Pars altera.].

Louvain, Rutger Velpius, 1569. 2 volumes bound as 1. 8º. Contemporary gold- and blind-tooled calf.

First edition, in Latin, of the first major compilation of letters written by Jesuit missionaries in Japan, also including letters from India, the Moluccas, the Malay peninsula, Macao and Brazil, many published here for the first time. It includes thirty letters in total, dating from 1549 through the end of 1568, all but a few of more than ten pages and many of thirty or more. Some are complete and other excerpted. While these letters are obviously of the utmost importance for the history of the Jesuit missions in these regions and Jesuit interactions with the native cultures, they also document a great deal of the history of Asian politics, religion, customs, culture and traditions that might otherwise have been lost. Thirteen of the letters were written from Japan and others also discuss Japan. The earliest letters were written by Francis Xavier (1506–1552), the founding father of the Jesuit mission in Asia, from Kochi (Cochin) in India and Kagashima in Japan in the years 1549 to 1552. After his death many followers took up the missionary work, here represented by letters from Japan, India, the Malay peninsula and Macao. Both volumes include letters by Luís Fróis, one of the ablest observers and chroniclers among the Jesuits in Asia.

The main series of initials was certainly not made for this edition, but are interesting, each showing a man, woman or couple engaged in a common activity, including breast-feeding an infant, carving meat, vomiting, milking a cow, etc., used by Volpius since 1564. Would the Jesuit Baltasar de Almeida have appreciated the initial B of his name showing the bare bottom of a defecating man (vol. 1, p. 83)? A contemporary reader has diligently corrected the main text in manuscript as indicated in the addenda, where the corrections have been struck though. With a half page of contemporary manuscript notes upside down on the first free endleaf (now detached). With small tears in the gutter margin of 4 leaves, but otherwise in very good condition internally, with only minor foxing in the title-page and a couple other leaves. Spine damaged.
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