



UNIVERSALITAS & PERVASIVITAS

IL COSTITUIRSI E DIFFONDERSI DELLA S.J. E SUOI ECHI (1540 - 1773)

di A. Pisani

Schede autori Sotto attacco

Francisco Varo

Francisco Varo (October 4, 1627 - January 31, 1687) was a Dominican monk, missionary in China, and author of the first grammar of Mandarin Chinese, "Arte de la lengua mandarina" (1703). His Chinese names were Wan Fangjige (Chinese: 萬方濟各; pinyin: wàn fāngjìgè Vuán Fāng Chí kǒ) and Wan Jiguo (Chinese: 萬濟國; pinyin: wàn jìguó)

Life

Varo was born in the city of Seville. On October 8, 1643 Varo joined the Dominican order in the convent of San Pablo. Varo then embarked on his journey to China when Juan Bautista de Morales recruited volunteers to carry out missions in the East, Varo was among them. He began a journey to China via Mexico and the Philippines. On June 12, 1646, Varo sailed to Veracruz in Mexico from Sanlucar de Barrameda. The trip to Manila in the Philippines was delayed by the presence of Dutch ships, but they started out from April 12, 1648, arriving in early July.

It was planned from the beginning that Varo go to China, but he still spent a year among the Chinese community in Manila to learn the language. On July 10, 1649, he departed from Pasig, near Manila, and arrived on August 3 in Fujian, at a part near Amoy, and then moved onto Fuan to his mission. Fujian's coast came under attack by the Ming dynasty loyalist Koxinga, who was very active between 1624 to 1662. the Qing Emperor ordered the avacuation of the coast in 1662 to undermine support for Koxinga, which allowed Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch influence to increase on the coast. From 1671 to 1672 Varo was exiled to Canton by the Qing dynasty government for religious reasons.

Varo studied the Chinese language there, both Mandarin and the local dialect. He was among the few who managed to master the complicated form of the language of the legal system and formal hearings. His superiors made him Chinese teacher for other missionaries.

He was appointed Vicar provincial repeatedly. On January 31, 1687, he was elected Vicar Apostolic of the provinces of Guangdong, Yunnan, and Guangxi.

He died in Fuzhou, China.





UNIVERSALITAS & PERVASIVITAS

IL COSTITUIRSI E DIFFONDERSI DELLA S.J. E SUOI ECHI (1540 - 1773)

di A. Pisani

Schede autori Sotto attacco

Work

Most of Varo's numerous writings were not printed during his lifetime due to lack of funds. He wrote several religious works, including a treatise on the Chinese Rites controversy. During his exile in 1671 he wrote "The Manifestor and Declaration", two treatises heavily influenced by the thought of his superior Juan Bautista de Morales and were later used as the basis of the decrees of the nuncios in the East Indies and China. His letters are an excellent source about life in the missions of his time.

He also wrote two Romanized Chinese dictionaries, "Vocabulario da lingua mandarina", in Portuguese, and finished in 1670, and the "Vocabulario de la lengua Mandarina" in Spanish, finished in 1692.

His most important work was "Arte de la lengua mandarina" (1703), the first grammar of The Chinese language by a western which survived, it which was published after his death. Varo knew of a previous grammar by Francisco Diaz, and possibly the work of Juan Bautista de Morales, grammars which have both been lost, and he was also influenced by the grammar of Nebrija. Varo's grammar is not of the Mandarin Chinese of Beijing, so it is not a "predecessor" of modern Standard Mandarin, but it is a Koine which was spoken between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries in Nanjing.

Grammars on Mandarin

"Arte de la lengua mandarina" (1703)

.Weldon South Coblin, ed. (2000). *Francisco Varo's grammar of the Mandarin language (1703): an English transl. of Arte de la lengua Mandarina*. Volume 93 of [*Amsterdam studies in the theory and history of linguistic science*](#) / 3. John Benjamins Publishing Company. pp. 282. ISBN 1-55619-606-7.. Retrieved 23 September 2011.

Varo advised people learning Mandarin (Guanhua) to specifically seek out Chinese from Mandarin speaking provinces to learn the language properly, using Nanjing as an example.

Other Wors

Estratto del trattato composto dal reverendissimo padre fr. Francesco Varo de l'Ordine de'Predicatori ... circa il culto, offerte, riti, e cerimonie, che praticano i chinesi in honore del loro maestro Confusio, e progenitori defonti (1700)

About: This page was last modified on 2 January 2013 at 15:32.

Text is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License

Cfr.: Wikipedia.en - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francisco_Varo

In 1649, the Spanish Dominican Francisco Varo arrived in Southern China. Seeking a more direct way to master the language, he wrote *The Art of Mandarin Language* in Spanish. Here we see displayed the addendum, "Brevis methodus confessionis instituendae," written by Father Basilis of



BIBLIOTECA UNIVERSITARIA DI GENOVA – PERCORSI TEMATICI

UNIVERSALITAS & PERVASIVITAS

IL COSTITUIRSI E DIFFONDERSI DELLA S.J. E SUOI ECHI (1540 - 1773)

di A. Pisani

Schede autori Sotto attacco

Glemona from the apostolate of Shensi province, in northern China. It is important evidence of missionary practices. Its romanized version of the common spoken Cantonese rapidly taught new missionaries how to perform rites and sacraments and hear confessions for potential converts in Chinese by rote; this tool was a Dominican answer to the Jesuits's method of long preparation in literary Chinese.

Cfr.: *Rome Reborn: The Vatican Library & Renaissance Culture, Rome to China* - <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/vatican/romechin.html>