

Paradoxes of Religious Toleration in Early Modern Political Thought

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Toleration in China and Siam in Late-Seventeenth-Century European Travel Literature

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"Go to India, Persia, and Tartary and you will see the same tolerance and the same tranquility."¹ This provocative sentence of Voltaire's *Essai sur la tolérance* had a twofold value: it was a denunciation of the scandal of European and Christian intolerance and, at the same time, the opening of a universal perspective on the issue of toleration, proposing that there are positive examples of toleration rules and practices diffused all over the world, and particularly in Asia.² The whole Asiatic world offered clear evidence, in Voltaire's view, of attitudes and manners which reveal that the religious and civil persecution so widely spread in European history is a monstrous exception. One could easily object that Japan and China, in his times, showed examples of exclusion and persecution of European missionary penetration, particularly cruel in the Japanese case; but Voltaire was ready to reply that a correct judgment on those events should have interpreted them not as a direct expression of intolerance but as an understandable and unavoidable reaction, reasonable from a political point of view, to the religious conflicts and the spirit of intolerance introduced by the Europeans (51–52).³ That "fury of proselytism," which marked the missionary activities in Asia—Voltaire wrote in his *Siècle de Louis XIV*, where a brilliant picture of the Chinese rites controversy was presented—was really "a disease peculiar to our climate"; a disease which "was unknown in the Far East."⁴

These judgments are directly connected to central topics of Voltaire's philosophical-political reflections, which a long and rich tradition of

studies has deeply investigated.⁵ Moreover, they clearly show the extent and impact of Asian examples and references in the making and development between the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries of some fundamental notions of European culture that were essential for Enlightenment identity: progress, civilization, and toleration.⁶ Reflections on Asiatic diversity and approaches stressing similarities and comparisons with the European context are an important element in a particularly rich and varied conceptual field where materials were increasingly piling up in European philosophical, religious, historical, and political works.

The provocative formulation by Voltaire could be considered the result of representations of Asiatic toleration which can be found in various publications, mainly travel literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It would be misleading, however, to consider Voltaire's idea of Asiatic toleration a mere registration and reproduction of judgments and attitudes expressed in travel literature, and particularly in the missionary reports, stressing too much for instance his debt to Jesuit sources. Instead, beyond the fundamental importance of these sources for knowledge of the Asian world in all eighteenth century culture, it is necessary to appreciate some substantial differences in notions of toleration, and the varieties of judgments and tensions which characterized the dynamics of European reflection on toleration in this age.⁷ In order to bring out some aspects of this topic I will draw attention to some examples of travel and missionary literature of the late seventeenth century concerning China and Siam, not forgetting that the whole subject is much wider, including for instance the multiple faces of Islamic contact.⁸

One of the most interesting documents for showing the varieties of ideas about Chinese toleration in late seventeenth century culture is the *Nouveaux Mémoires sur l'état présent de la Chine* by Louis Lecomte, published in 1696 as a series of fourteen letters addressed to eminent personalities of French court and politics, which in the following years had a large European diffusion.⁹ In this text, highly important for eighteenth-century Sinological culture, specific attention was paid to the evaluation of Chinese toleration of the Christian missionary presence which culminated in the famous Kang-hsi edict of 1692, giving freedom of worship and missionary work to the Jesuit missionaries. This delicate topic is not examined in great depth in Lecomte's text, but it is clearly and unambiguously treated.

The edifying scenery which frames his considerations, showing the authentic reasons, in Lecomte's reconstruction, for the favorable attitude of the emperor toward the Jesuits, points out the strong impact—beyond the interest in Western science and technology—of the Jesuits' moral and religious behavior on the emperor's mind, and the result was his slow but progressive approach to religious truth (I.61–62). Lecomte's text insists on the signs of a conversion process (I.76) and on the emergence of a new and different attitude, in comparison with the indifferent tolerance to-

ward all kinds of religion diffused in the Chinese Empire based on political and practical reasons such as the conservation of public order. It was an attitude which showed, instead, repentance and an understanding of the substantial difference between various idolatries and the truth which should have prevailed "sur leurs ruines" (I.64), referring to the edifying making of a Christian sovereign.

It was impossible to deny that superstitions and idolatries had been tolerated in China and supported by many Chinese emperors, and that it was difficult to overcome this traditional attitude, well rooted in the institutional and social structure of the empire. It was fostered by a diffused notion of superiority over all nations, which infused in the Chinese mind the idea of being "a chosen people, that heaven had given birth to in the middle of the universe in order to give it the law; the only people capable of instructing, polishing, and governing the nations" (I.173). China had however an extraordinary advantage in comparison with other idolatrous nations, because in China the ancient seeds of the religious truth were present since the Noachid diffusion and the origins of the Chinese empire; these seeds had taken root during a long period before the growth of new superstitions like Buddhism, which infected and corrupted the Chinese spirit (II.88–89 and 93–94).

Thus, religious truth had ancient roots and idolatry was only a poisoned fruit ripened in more recent times. As father Charles Le Gobien—who was directly involved, like Lecomte, in the Chinese rites controversy and censured by the Sorbonne faculty of theology¹⁰—wrote, the opening to Christianity by the present Emperor was not to be considered an affirmation of a foreign doctrine, but the recovery of an ancient truth buried for a long time under superstition.¹¹

Lecomte supported his positions—which surely were not an absolute novelty and were set in an interpretative framework in which we can place, for instance, Athanasius Kircher, John Webb, or the whole figurist tradition—with an interpretation of the figure of Confucius. He emphasized Confucius's prophetic profile against philosophical and rationalist approaches (II. 278),¹² and stressed ancient evidence of a Christian presence in China, the St. Thomas Christians and the Nestorians (II.128ff.). Nevertheless, and notwithstanding these good premises, Christianity found in China a spiritual ground withered by centuries of diffusion of Buddhist and Taoist idolatries, and by Neo-Confucian doctrinal streams which had proposed rationalist and potentially deist or atheist opinions, choking the seeds of knowledge of the true God which were alive in China since the most ancient times.

The main task of missionary activity, and an essential element of the Jesuit adaptation strategy, was to revitalize these old seeds of truth instead of planting them *ex-novo*, thus preparing a fertile ground for the triumph of the true religion. For achieving this goal, in a political and social structure as deeply marked by the hierarchical dimension of au-

thority as the Chinese, it was necessary to establish a relationship with the emperor based on trust and find an adequate place for the Christian religion in imperial religious policy.

The image of Chinese political institutions and government was accordingly positive to the point of being an exemplary model: "among all of the ideas of government formed in antiquity," Lecomte wrote, "there has perhaps been none that has established a monarchy more perfect than the Chinese" (II.2). The excellence of Chinese government had its fundamental merits in continuity and invariability, really extraordinary if compared to the normal life length of states (II.2-3), and in an impermeability to alteration of a political structure established in its essential character since the first ages of the world.¹³ As a proof of this excellence one could observe that "during that long series of centuries the Chinese never knew the word 'republic'" (II.3).¹⁴

Together with the rejection of the spirit of republicanism, the Chinese notion of a good government rejected tyranny, conceived as the result of "a prince's own wildness that neither reason nor divine laws could approve" (II.3). The same extent and power of the Chinese imperial authority were a warrant for its wise and moderate exercise, and had guaranteed stability and order throughout the course of Chinese history (II.4).

Lecomte offered a careful description of the structure and principles of this government, whose main goal was "public tranquility," and in this picture an important role was played by religious politics. He explicitly remarked upon the necessity and positive value, consistent with the goals of government, of separation from other countries and closing of the borders, setting sure barriers against the risk of cultural contamination and the introduction of elements extraneous to tradition. That contamination, in fact, "necessarily entails a diversity of customs, languages, attitudes, and religions" (II.51) which unavoidably generates tension, conflict, and, eventually, turmoil and revolts.

"Never allow foreigners to establish themselves in their empire" (II.51) was a fundamental rule, ancient and wise, of Chinese politics; and intolerance was necessary to protect a social and political structure where all members were as "children of the same family, raised with the same feelings, accustomed to the same ideas" (II.51). These principles were the consistent and positive result of the principles of continuity and invariability identified as the great virtues of the Chinese system.

Unfortunately this political rule, "undoubtedly very wise when applied to false religions" (II.51), was not regularly applied by Chinese emperors, who usually left large opportunities for the diffusion of various idolatries and superstitions. On the other hand, if it had been fully applied, it would have produced an insurmountable barrier to Christian preaching, preventing the spread of religious truth. This is a particularly tricky moment in Lecomte's reasoning, because the positive judgment about the principle of Chinese politics which prevented foreign influence

is not contested, despite the negative consequences that it would have had on the spread of the Christian message. If it was not possible to avoid the penetration of foreign idolatry, and if political reasons induced the Chinese emperors to tolerate, and sometimes support, Taoist and Buddhist superstitions or rationalist philosophies such as the "sect of the savants," all this maintained the strong mark of a fault. Also the shiny image of the last emperor, Kang-hsi, was touched by this stain. The emperor, "naturally wise and politically cautious" (II.123), was understandably compelled to strengthen the claim to the imperial throne of a still recent dynasty and to guarantee political and social stability for the welfare and peace of his people; and this was the main reason why "he thus permits, or better, tolerates the superstition" (II.123). It was an imperfection and not a virtue. Toleration of erroneous religious beliefs always deserved criticism, and the main problem was the establishment of a virtuous intolerance on the new basis given by the triumph of religious truth. How was it possible, in other words, to avoid the risks and faults of toleration, to limit it and eventually to stop it, and, at the same time, to allow the penetration and diffusion of the Christian message, which evidently were made possible only by toleration?

Lecomte's answer insists on the idea that the conversion process of the emperor toward religious truth, and not the value and extent of toleration, was the core of the problem, and, from this point of view, the intervention of Providence was essential. Commenting on the events which brought about the promulgation of the famous Edict of Toleration by Kang-hsi, an imposing and edifying image is presented in which, stressing the extraordinary advantages that Christianity would provide for the strengthening of the principles of social order and the good government of the Empire, the actual hope of the triumph of religious truth over idolatry in that great country was explicitly expressed (II. 293). The mistake that many Chinese emperors had made of accepting the presence of many false religions—a fault inconsistent with the wise principles of Chinese monarchy—should have been definitively corrected by the accomplishment of the conversion of the emperor to Christianity. This would have made possible the grounding of social order and good government not in the erroneous toleration of religious diversity, but in the establishment of Christian truth and virtue. Thus, a virtuous intolerance would be the solid foundation of a perfect Christian monarchy. The recent trend of Chinese politics, and mainly the emperor's attitude, offered a lot of hope from this point of view, and the interpretation of the Edict of Toleration was centered on this point, very far from a general appreciation of practices of toleration which would also include Christianity alongside other religions practiced and preached in China. In summary, in Lecomte's text toleration does not come out as an absolute and positive value—and is thus quite different from Voltaire's thought. Toleration is a providential tool which gave Christianity the possibility of strengthening her roots in

the Chinese empire, and on this foundation it would have been possible to establish intolerance based on knowledge of religious truth; this was an absolutely positive value, perfectly consistent with the orthodox character of catholic faith.¹⁵

What particularly complicated the confrontation with Siamese practices of religious toleration, in comparison with the Chinese ones, was the stronger and anciently rooted pure indifference toward every kind of religion which the Siamese sovereign did not seem disposed to change—as Kang-hsi had done, in the Jesuits' eyes—by recognizing the superiority of Christian truth. Interesting evidence of this confrontation can be found in the *Relation du voyage*, which Father Jacques de Bourges published in 1666, the result of an experience in Siam some years before.¹⁶ He related his astonished observation of the multiplicity of worship and idolatries present in that country, and of systematic toleration toward them adopted by political authorities.

In de Bourges's opinion, the Siam of Phra Narai's age, when the opening to the West was particularly large, connected with skillful diplomatic and commercial politics by Western countries and parallel to the European development of missionary activity,¹⁷ clearly exposed the character of a firmly established and effectively managed monarchy. "The whole country is a monarchy, and it is governed perfectly well" (157), de Bourges wrote, and in the exercise of monarchical authority one can find the expression of a principle of subordination which was the fundamental core of Siamese government (157). It was a version of Oriental despotism, we could say, as one can see in the absolute dependence of the various functions of government and administration on the monarch, from which stability and order were conceived to result (158–159). The utmost veneration for the figure of the sovereign, similar to religious worship (159), was a distinctive character of the Siamese political system, together with a custom of toleration which was particularly extended and had given to Christians the possibility of finding their place among the various religious communities and nourish great expectations for the success of their missionary activity (164).

De Bourges's judgment on this widespread custom was nevertheless severe, and he remarked on its discrepancy from the principles of good government and the main goals of order and stability of the Siamese despotism. It was highly surprising, he wrote:

that the King of Siam permits so easily in his state and in his capital city so many religions, since it is a maxim of the best political thinkers that one ought not to permit more than one out of fear that if they multiply the diversity of beliefs will divide people's ideas, which could only lead to trouble (165).

It was possible, in de Bourges's opinion, to explain this attitude by the political exigency of not hampering the foreign presence in Siam, which

was so important for the progress of commercial activities and the whole economic structure of the kingdom. On the other hand, the idea that "every religion is good" was deeply rooted in the Siamese mind, and it was easily verifiable that the Siamese "are not against any religion that can coexist with the laws of the government of the country" (166). In fact, what could be considered a source of conflicts and disorders produced a peaceful acceptance of the diversity of religious opinions and worships, which proved to be useful for the kingdom's economy.

This particular inclination to toleration was so rooted in the Siamese mind as to be considered something like a "national character," and was clearly expressed in an incisive picture:

Thus they say—de Bourges wrote—that heaven is like a grand palace at the end of many roads. Some are very short, others are more used, others more difficult, but all of them end at the palace of happiness that all men seek. It would be a too difficult discussion to try to decide which road was the best since there are a great number of religions, the examination of all would be too boring, and studying them all would consume one's whole life before it was settled. And since they believe in numerous Gods, they add that they are all great lords, they demand different forms of worship, and they want to be honored in many different ways. (166)

The essential point was the substantial "indifference" of Siamese culture toward the variety of rites and religious worship, and this was an extremely hard obstacle for Christian preaching and the work of conversion to religious truth (167).

Siamese toleration, therefore, was not an episodic or accidental attitude which providentially opened the way to Christian missionary activity, as in China—as we have seen in Lecomte's representation—but a principle of government and an opinion well established in society and custom, consistent with the economic exigencies of the state. It was much more difficult, then, to conceive the possibility of restoring a wise intolerance of the religious truth where traditional attitudes of acceptance and integration of religious diversity, including Christianity, were so widespread and consolidated, in a framework of harmonious equilibrium which established the equivalence of all possible ways leading to the "palace of happiness."

Probably the most celebrated witness of this contrast between religious indifference in Siam and the reasons for evangelization is to be found in the *Voyage* of the Jesuit Guy Tachard, eminent member of the embassy to Siam in 1685.¹⁸ Reporting a colloquy with the king, Phra Narai, Tachard quoted the king's answer to his request about supporting the diffusion of knowledge of the true God in the following way:

the true God who created the heavens and the earth and all of the creatures that exist—Phra Narai said—, and has given them natures

and inclinations so different, couldn't he have given men, if he had wanted to, similar bodies and souls, inspired them to have the same ideas about the religion that they should follow, and about which cult was the most agreeable, and have every nation born under the same law? That order among men and that unity of religion would depend entirely on divine providence, which could just as easily introduce into the world that diversity of sects that have been established in all times; so shouldn't one believe that the true God enjoys being worshipped by different cults and ceremonies and to be glorified by a prodigious quantity of creatures each of which praises him in their own manner? The beauty and variety that we admire in the order of nature, could they be less admirable in the supernatural order, or less worthy of the wisdom of God? (309–310)

Tachard was nevertheless convinced that conversion to the Christian faith remained an attainable goal in Siam, and he remarked—too optimistically, as the future of missionary activities in Siam revealed—that significant progress could be perceived in the emperor's attitude toward Christianity. At the same time, in his thoughts on the Siamese religious mind—especially in book VI of his *Voyage*—he drew attention to the exigencies of adaptation, following the method introduced by Roberto De Nobili, on the basis that “the Siamese believe in God” even if “they do not have the same idea as we do” (378).

A remarkably different picture of society and the religious culture of Siam, in comparison with the reasoning and goals of missionary travel literature, was proposed at the beginning of the 1690's by the French diplomat Simon de La Loubère. His *Du royaume de Siam*, published in 1691, soon became the most important reference work for Siam in seventeenth and eighteenth century culture, because it was not merely a ‘recit de voyage’ but based on thorough research by a writer who took his place outside the aims and problems of missionary culture.¹⁹ Every aspect of the Siamese world—from natural environment to economy, society, and politics—was treated in his work, and a major place was given to the problems of religious culture, adding some remarks concerning the best method to be adopted by those who are engaged in the difficult task of evangelization.

The despotic nature of Siamese government, consistent with the character of other Asiatic political systems, is particularly pointed out. It was a system grounded on fear (353) and on a chronic and diffused state of precariousness with regard to the safety of each member of society, and mainly of political authorities and the sovereign as well. The widespread sentiment of suspicion and the cruelty systematically practiced by Asiatic princes toward potential enemies were the most evident manifestations of this reality (355).

Together with the social and political system, Siamese religion particularly attracted La Loubère's attention, and especially the notions of mo-

rals and virtue which one can observe in the doctrine of the Talapoins, the Siamese Buddhist monks. In fact it was certain, in La Loubère's opinion—which nevertheless was not a scholarly analysis of Siamese religion—that in the doctrine of the Talapoins, as in other religious worship in Siam, it was not possible to find any idea of God. Notwithstanding the idea of the immortality of soul—in the various meanings that this notion has in Siamese culture—and notwithstanding the funeral rituals and the worship of the souls of those who behaved well in their lives and became beneficent "geniuses" (391–392), in all East Indies religious worship, and in the Siamese particularly, there was no idea of "any intelligent being who judges the goodness or evil of human actions and who orders punishment or reward" (392). Instead, the idea of "a blind fate which makes goodness accompany virtue and evil accompany vice like it makes heavy objects fall and light objects rise" (392) prevailed.

It was this kind of mechanical materiality of fate which established the relationship between human actions and the transmigration of the soul, and so there was, La Loubère wrote, "no concept of divinity" (400). Unlike the ideas about divinity of ancient paganism, "one can be assured that the Siamese have no idea about God, and their religion consists of no more than a cult of the dead" (401). It was possible to see a strong similarity between this essential idea, which for La Loubère was one the "égarements" of human reason, and Chinese religious culture, in spite of the fact that, as the Jesuits asserted, it was possible to find in the most ancient Chinese records some signs of the knowledge of the true God (402). This is an important side of La Loubère's reasoning, from our point of view, because it has direct implications for Siamese toleration, which was clearly connected to the absence of an idea of deity and to what amounted to atheism.²⁰

Siamese religious indifference, and their acceptance of the equivalence of all forms of religion and worship, basically was grounded in an atheist mind, which excluded—and which Catholic missionaries were much less disposed to accept—the possibility of recognizing the superiority of the religious truth preached by a particular religion, and thus blocked evangelization:

All the Indians, in general—he wrote—, are thus persuaded that different peoples should have different ceremonies. But in approving that other people have their own ceremonies they do not understand why someone would give up their own. They do not think like we do that faith is a virtue. They believe because they do not know how to doubt, but they cannot be persuaded that there is one faith and one ceremony that ought to be the faith and ceremony of the whole world. (416)

Remaining on the threshold of religious relativism, and serenely accepting all kinds of principles and religious practices as proper to each community and tradition, was a typical mark of the Siamese mind, and of the

Asian mind in general, in La Loubère's opinion, which reacted to every attempt at conversion with a disarming refusal to acknowledge the reasons for a hierarchy of religious doctrines and, mainly, the absolute value of Christian truth (416–17).

Missionary goals, as we have said, are not the basic aim of La Loubère's representation, and this was the main reason why he could be more explicit in appreciation of many aspects of the religious manners and customs of the people he encountered. It was mainly the natural and social context that deserved attention, in his opinion, for correctly evaluating, beyond the apologetics of missionaries, the social and political functions—similar to Montesquieu's approach—of the various religious attitudes, principles, and rules. This could lead to a more correct understanding of religious diversity, whose links with geographical, historical, and social frameworks should always be considered. Missionary activity had not seemed to be always aware of this necessity, creating an image of Christianity which fostered a negative and misleading impression. Using an expression which recalls Voltairean judgments, La Loubère added to his report the reasons for a deep but justifiable distrust:

On the whole the Asians do not have much interest in any religion, and it should be admitted that if the beauty of Christianity has not persuaded them, that is principally because of the low opinion of Christians that the avarice, perfidy, invasions, and tyranny of the Portuguese and Dutch in the Indies gave them, and of the irreligion of the latter especially. (422)

The examples to which we have drawn attention—selected from a much larger number of documents—show sufficiently, we hope, the variety of attitudes toward toleration in China and Siam as seen by Europeans between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Travel literature offers, from this point of view, evidence of complex reflections and goals which go far beyond the level of preliminary materials for mature Enlightenment debates. The observation of toleration practices in Asiatic societies was not merely limited to the level of recording facts, but stimulated judgments and reflection involving more extended considerations concerning the problems of toleration on a universal scale, not only on the missionary side. We have considered La Loubère's case from this point of view, but the important example of Engelbert Kaempfer's analysis of Japanese toleration, which we have not dealt with in this essay, should also be added, along with other examples.²¹ These materials provide evidence of remarkable aspects of the complexities and tensions of the age of the "crisis of European conscience," in Hazard's definition, whose contents and periodization surely deserve further investigation. Travel literature had a major role in these developments, and its autonomous value and importance for the diffusion of ideas and perceptions of cultural

diversity—avoiding flattening it to a comparison with the *philosophes*—offers a field rich in suggestions and stimulation for further research.

NOTES

1. Voltaire, *Traité sur la tolérance*, ed. R. Pomeau (Paris: Garnier Flammarion, 1989), 50 [hereafter cited by page number in the text].
2. For a more extended treatment of the relationship between ideas of tolerance and orientalism, see my *Orientalismo e idee di tolleranza nella cultura francese del primo '700* (Firenze: Olschki, 2006).
3. See also Voltaire, *Essai sur les moeurs et l'esprit des nations*, ed. R. Pomeau (Paris: Garnier, 1963), vol. 2, 791–792.
4. Voltaire, *Le Siècle de Louis XIV*, in *Oeuvres historiques*, ed. R. Pomeau (Paris: Gallimard, 1957), 1109.
5. See particularly, from the large bibliography on Voltaire's thought, R. Pomeau, *La religion de Voltaire* (Paris: Nizet, 1969); *Voltaire et ses combats*, eds. U. Kölving and C. Mervaud (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1997); N. Cronk, ed., *Etudes sur le "Traité sur la tolérance" de Voltaire* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2000). See also, especially for China, R. Étiemble, *L'Europe chinoise* (Paris: Gallimard, 1988–1989), vol 2, *De la sinophilie à la sinophobie*, 132–306; J. R. Armogathe, "Voltaire et la Chine: Une mise au point," in *Actes du Ier Colloque international de sinologie (Chantilly, 20–22 septembre 1974)*. *La Mission Française de Pékin aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1976), 27–39; Shun-Ching Song, *Voltaire et la Chine* (Aix-en-Provence: Publications de l'Université de Provence, 1989).
6. See the classical synthesis by P. Hazard, *La crise de la conscience européenne* (Paris: Fayard, 1961); see also, for a more recent approach, J. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
7. For a suggestive reconstruction of the various attitudes toward toleration in ancient and early modern times, see *Religious Toleration: "The Variety of Rites" from Cyrus to Defoe*, ed. J. C. Laursen (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999).
8. See R. Minuti, *Orientalismo e idee di tolleranza*.
9. Louis Lecomte, *Nouveaux Mémoires sur l'état présent de la Chine* (Amsterdam: H. Desbordes et A. Schelte, 1698 [orig. Paris 1696]) [hereafter cited by page number in the text]. See also L. Lecomte, *Un Jésuite à Pékin. Nouveaux Mémoires sur l'état présent de la Chine 1687–1692*, ed. F. Touboul-Bouyère (Paris: Phébus, 1990). For more on the author, see L. Pfister, *Notices biographiques et bibliographiques sur les Jésuites de l'ancienne mission de Chine* (Changhai: Imprimerie de la Mission catholique, 1932), and J. Dehergne, S.J., *Répertoire des Jésuites de Chine de 1552 à 1800* (Roma: Institutum Historicum S. J., 1973).
10. See J. Davy, "La condamnation en Sorbonne des 'Nouveaux Mémoires sur la Chine' du P. Le Comte," *Recherches de Science Religieuse*, 37, 1950, 366–397. On the Chinese rites controversy, see, from a very extended bibliography, V. Pinot, *La Chine et la formation de l'esprit philosophique en France (1640–1740)* (Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1971 [orig. Paris, 1932]); D. E. Mungello, *Curious Land: Jesuit Accommodation and the Origins of Sinology* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1985); D. E. Mungello, ed., *The Chinese Rites Controversy. Its History and Meaning* (Nettetal: Steyler, 1994).
11. See Charles Le Gobien, *Histoire de l'édit de l'empereur de la Chine en faveur de la Religion Chrestienne: avec un éclaircissement sur les honneurs que les Chinois rendent à Confucius et aux Morts* (Paris: J. Anisson, 1698), 104–105.
12. On Confucianism in Jesuit culture, see P. Rule, *K'ung-tzu or Confucius? The Jesuit Interpretation of Confucianism* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1986).
13. This was a topic dear to Catholic apologetic literature, opposed to variation as synonymous with miscarriage and fault and particularly applied to Protestant com-

munities. See, for instance, Jacques-Benigne Bossuet, *Histoire des variations des églises protestantes* (Paris: Cramoisy, 1688).

14. Lecomte remarked that it was inconceivable "that a state without a king could be governed with order, and that a republic could be anything other than a monster with many heads, formed in troubled times by ambition, revolt, and the corruption of the human spirit" (II.3).

15. This topic is treated in quite similar ways in other contemporary missionary texts such as Charles Le Gobien, *Histoire de l'édit de l'empereur de la Chine en faveur de la Religion Chrestienne: avec un éclaircissement sur les honneurs que les Chinois rendent à Confucius et aux Morts* (Paris: J. Anisson, 1698) and Joachim Bouvet, *Portrait historique de l'empereur de la Chine, présenté au Roy* (Paris: Estienne Michallet, 1697). See Minuti, *Orientalismo e idee di tolleranza*.

16. Jacques de Bourges, *Relation du voyage de Monseigneur l'Evêque de Beryte, vicaire apostolique du royaume de la Cochichine, par la Turquie, la Perse, les Indes, etc. jusqu'au royaume de Siam, et autres lieux*, Seconde Edition (Paris: Denis Bechet 1668 [first ed., 1666]) [hereafter cited by page number in the text]. See also J. De Bourges, *Relation du voyage de Mgr l'évêque de Béryte au royaume de la Cochinchine par la Turquie, la Perse, les Indes*, ed. J.-P. Duteil (Paris: G. Monfort, 2001). Cf. D. Van der Cruysse, "Jacques de Bourges au Siam (1662): splendeur et misères du discours exotique missionnaire," in W. Leiner, ed., *Correspondances: mélanges offerts à Roger Duchêne* (Tübingen: Narr, 1992), 335–344; D. Van der Cruysse, *Louis XIV et le Siam* (Paris, Fayard, 1991), 155ff.

17. See Van der Cruysse, *Louis XIV et le Siam*; M. Jacq-Hergualc'h, *L'Europe et le Siam du XVIe au XVIIIe siècle. Apports culturels* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1993); D. Lanni, éd., *Le Rêve siamois du Roi Soleil. Récits d'une fièvre exotique à la cour du Très-Christien 1666–1727* (Paris: Cosmopole, 2004); A. Forest, *Les missionnaires français au Tonkin et au Siam. XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1998).

18. Guy Tachard, *Voyage de Siam, des Peres Jesuites, envoyez par le Roy aux Indes et à la Chine. Avec leurs observations* (Paris: Seneuze et Horthemels, 1686) [hereafter cited by page number in the text]; Guy Tachard, *Second voyage du Père Tachard et des jésuites envoyez par le Roi au royaume de Siam* (Paris: Horthemels, 1689). On Tachard see S. P. Dhiradhamrong, *A la découverte de la Thaïland sur les traces du Père Guy Tachard (1686–1689)* (Thèse Univ. Lettres de Caen, 1965); R. Vongsuravatana, *Un jésuite à la Cour de Siam* (Paris: France-Empire, 1992).

19. Simon de La Loubère, *Du Royaume de Siam* (Paris: Jean-Baptiste Coignard, 1691). Cited from M. Jacq-Hergoualc'h, *Étude critique du livre de La Loubère "Du royaume de Siam"* (Paris: Éditions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1987) [hereafter cited by page number in the text].

20. The various forms of ceremonies and worship, as honors paid to idols, were not at all evidence of a belief in deities, as for all other Indian nations. "Le culte extérieur des Indiens—he wrote—n'est pas une preuve qu'ils reconnaissent, du moins à présent, aucune divinité; et jusque-là on doit les appeler athées plutôt qu'idolâtres" (417).

21. See Minuti, *Orientalismo e idee di tolleranza*.